

# SPORT

## ICC'S TWO-TIER TEST PROPOSAL

### 'We damaged ourselves'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) director Ahmed Sajjadul Alam said that the right the country has painstakingly earned in 30 to 40 years of international cricket was forfeited in the ICC meeting in February 2014 in Singapore. The meeting that is about to take place in Edinburgh is nothing else but a continuation of that day in Singapore, according to Alam.

"The people who are today shedding crocodile tears about the proposed two-tier Test table are the same ones who talked in favour of the system in Singapore. And it was the honourable [BCB vice president] Mahbub Anam who was one of those who took great pains to explain to us how the system would provide more matches and greater financial rewards.

"One has to understand that an initiative was taken during the tenure of [then ICC chairman] N Srinivasan about two years ago, through which there would have been major qualitative changes in the ICC constitution. A BCB meeting was held in this regard to discuss the changes. A vote was taken and I had voted against the proposal but I was massively outnumbered. I walked out. But all the changes that we are about to see were inherent in that controversial proposal two years ago," Alam said.

Then a two-thirds majority was required for that proposal to be adopted by the ICC; South Africa, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and to some extent the West Indies were against it. But when Bangladesh voted in favour of those changes, the aforementioned boards gave up their opposition.

"We did the damage to ourselves. Those who are trying to say that the two-tier system is news to them are not telling the truth. This did not happen overnight. It is a continuation of that Singapore meeting two years ago. There was nothing new that they learnt today.

"If this two-tier proposal is ultimately adopted, it will mark the end of our dreams as a cricketing nation.

"Instead of shedding crocodile tears now, I only wish that these gentlemen had voted with me [in the board] against the ICC proposal," he added.



AHMED SAJJADUL ALAM

### 'Two-tier will push us back'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) vice president Mahbub Anam has strongly criticised the proposed two-tier concept in Test cricket that may begin from 2019 onwards.

Speaking to reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday he said that if the proposal goes through it would push Bangladesh's cricket back by at least 10 years.

"I don't support this because I still think that the more competitive team you play with, the more you will improve. If we hadn't played with such big teams in ODIs then our standard in this format would not have improved.

"Before we became a Full-Member nation, the level we played in we used to think we were the kings of that level. But when we came to the top level, we got a shock. That was the real world, where the competition was of a different level. From that level if we go back again I feel that our cricketering quality will degrade and we won't progress at all," said Mahbub.

"A team playing for the premier league and a team playing for first division is not the same. Yes, in the last 10 years we did struggle after getting Test status but at least we have arrived at a position after struggling for a decade. Now if this decision takes place we will once again go back by 10 years.

"The ICC's duty is to globalise the game and not to create a special class. If you see in other sports, like in football, teams increase from 12 to 20 to 32. The game expands. Whereas in cricket it is reducing. We don't think that such a move should be passed in a global organisation," he added.

A two-tier system may separate the top seven Test sides from the bottom three with two Associate Members joining the latter.



MAHBUB ANAM

### Aus technical director for BFF?

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) flew in another high-profile individual for a discussion over the post of technical director at the game's governing body.

Australian Paul Smalley, a footballer-turned-coach, has worked as the coach of the youth team of England in the World Cup and European Championship. He was also technical director of New Zealand Football Association, regional director for English Football Association and director of youth at Portsmouth Football Club in England, according to available information.

"We sought help from FIFA to find a suitable technical director and FIFA recommended Paul Smalley, who was supposed to arrive here tomorrow [Tuesday], but we flew him in today [Monday] to give him an opportunity to watch the Federation Cup final," informed BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag.

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin is likely to sit with Smalley tomorrow as he will fly out on June 30th.

Smalley, who is an FA and UEFA A licensed instructor, also worked as the National Premier League structure in Queensland, Australia as general manager and technical advisor at the Northern Fury Football Club before concentrating on his executive director role with RPM Coaching.

He is currently working at the Australia FA delivering FFA/AFC A and B coaching course.

Meanwhile, the game's governing body is close to signing up Belgian coach Tom Saintfiet, who is scheduled to leave here today after having held fruitful talks with BFF high-ups over the last few days.

## Tuck ends Abahani's title-drought

SPORTS REPORTER



A first-half strike from English midfielder Lee Tuck helped Abahani to a 1-0 win over Arambagh Krira Shangha in the final of the Walton Federation Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday as the Sky Blues ended their five-year title drought in domestic football.

Lee, who missed the semifinal against Sheikh Russel KC due to injury, featured in the starting eleven ahead of Camara Sarba, and the 27-year old paid back the coach's faith by scoring the decisive goal in the 11th minute. That goal was enough to deny Arambagh a maiden top-flight trophy and enough for the big boys from Dhanmondi to win their ninth Federation Cup title, their first since 2010. The Sky Blues had won the Super Cup in 2011, but remained shorn of success since, their latest brush with glory ended in defeat to Chittagong Abahani in the Independence Cup final last month.

From the outset, Abahani looked confident of exacting revenge for their group-stage defeat against the same opposition, and they put tremendous pressure on the opposition during the first quarter of the game. The Sky Blues saw two chances wasted, one six minutes and the other, 10 minutes before the English forward broke the deadlock.

Having made a cut-back to Nabib Newaj Jibon, Tuck entered the danger zone to control Jibon's forward-pass and curled the ball with his left foot to beat Arambagh goalkeeper Mitul Hasan. Abahani created more chances in the first half but failed to capitalise. Arambagh, who were playing their third Federation Cup final and first since 2001, played comparatively better during the second half, but they too failed to breach Abahani's goal.

Winger Jafar Iqbal frustrated the Motijheel outfit by depositing the ball straight to Abahani goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Soheli from a promising position while Cameroonian midfielder Yoko Samnick wasted two chances despite finding himself in a dangerous position with only the goalkeeper to beat.

"I am happy because of the win but unhappy with the way my players have been performing," opined Abahani coach George Kottan, who was lofted up in the air by his charges after the victory, bringing back memories of similar scenes when he had guided the Bangladesh national team to SAFF Championship title back in 2003.

"I am proud of my boys because they showed tough mentality throughout the tournament. We could have been happier had we won the trophy, but luck was not with us today [Monday]," said Arambagh KS coach Saiful Bari Titu.



Abahani players celebrate with the trophy after slaying Arambagh KS 1-0 in the final of the Walton Federation Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. This is Abahani's first major triumph since 2011.

### Tangail School emerge winners

SPORTS REPORTER

Tangail School and College beat Dinajpur High by 3 wickets at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday to lift the Prime Bank Young Tigers National School Cricket trophy yesterday.

Batting first, Dinajpur were bundled out for just 133 in 47.4 overs. Rifat Hasan, who scalped a three-wicket haul was the key wicket-taker. He also scored a responsible 44 with the bat to lead Tangail to the title after the exchange.

The winners of the tournament received Tk 50,000 while the runners-up pocketed Tk 25,000.

A total of 534 schools from all over the country took part in the tournament, which witnessed 965 matches and at least 10,800 players participated in the last four months.

In a step-by-step process, the district champions first battled each other to earn the rights of the division. And then the divisional champions played each other in the final round, which began last week.

## Surprise & sympathy for Messi in Spain

AFP, Barcelona



Lionel Messi's shock international retirement after Argentina's Copa America final defeat generated surprise and sympathy in the Spanish press for a superstar who has won everything with Barcelona and nothing with his country.

"Leo Mexit" was the main headline on the website of sports daily Marca. "The curse of Argentina and Messi has no end."

Messi was distraught after missing a spot-kick as Chile snatched victory in a penalty shoot-out in New Jersey -- Messi's fourth straight defeat in a major final while representing Argentina.

By contrast the 29-year-old forward has won 24 titles since joining Barcelona in 2004 including eight Liga crowns and four Champions League trophies with Barcelona.

"There is no explanation or advice possible, we know very well that Leo is the X factor of this team. His trophy cabinet is full with the Blaugrana (Barcelona), but the one he reserves for Argentina is empty, and it's

not for lack of trying," Marca added. "Messi was clear, Argentina will never be Barca," wrote the deputy director of Sport, Lluís Mascaró, in an editorial.

"For his club, Messi has won everything, and had everything he needed to succeed ... (in Argentina) he could never benefit from a football which protected him and allowed him to play at his best level. At Barca and in Barcelona, Messi is God. But not in Argentina," continued Mascaró.

"Leo will not return to the national team, he's reached a point where he has the impression that everything is his fault," wrote journalist Cristina Cubero in El Mundo Deportivo.

According to Cubero, the five-time Ballon d'Or winner has always been hampered by comparisons with Diego Maradona.

"Maradona gave Argentina what Leo Messi could never give on the pitch, even being the best footballer in the world. And Leo said 'enough'. No more tears, no more suffering and guilt."

"The latest failure of Argentina in the Copa America was the final straw for Messi. He quits Argentina to focus in what really makes him happy: playing in Barcelona."

## Kiron propels Mariners

SPORTS REPORTER



Goalkeeper Mehrab Hossain Kiron put on a valiant display to lead Mariner Youngs Club to a 2-1 win over Abahani at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday as the Motijheel outfit took a two point-lead at the top of the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League. The former national team goalkeeper made a string of breathtaking saves in both halves to thwart a wave of attacks from the joint champions of the last edition.

Mariners took the lead, somewhat against the run of play, through Waqas Sharif in the ninth minute, only to see Shafqat Rasool equalising 13 minutes later. Mariners had the last laugh though as Czech defender Thomas Prochazka converted a penalty corner in the 63rd minute while Kiron made sure Mariners didn't concede any more.

The win took the Motijheel outfit to 40 points from 15 matches and took them two points clear of Usha Krira Chakra, who will take on Mohammedan in their 15th match tomorrow. Whatever the outcome in that

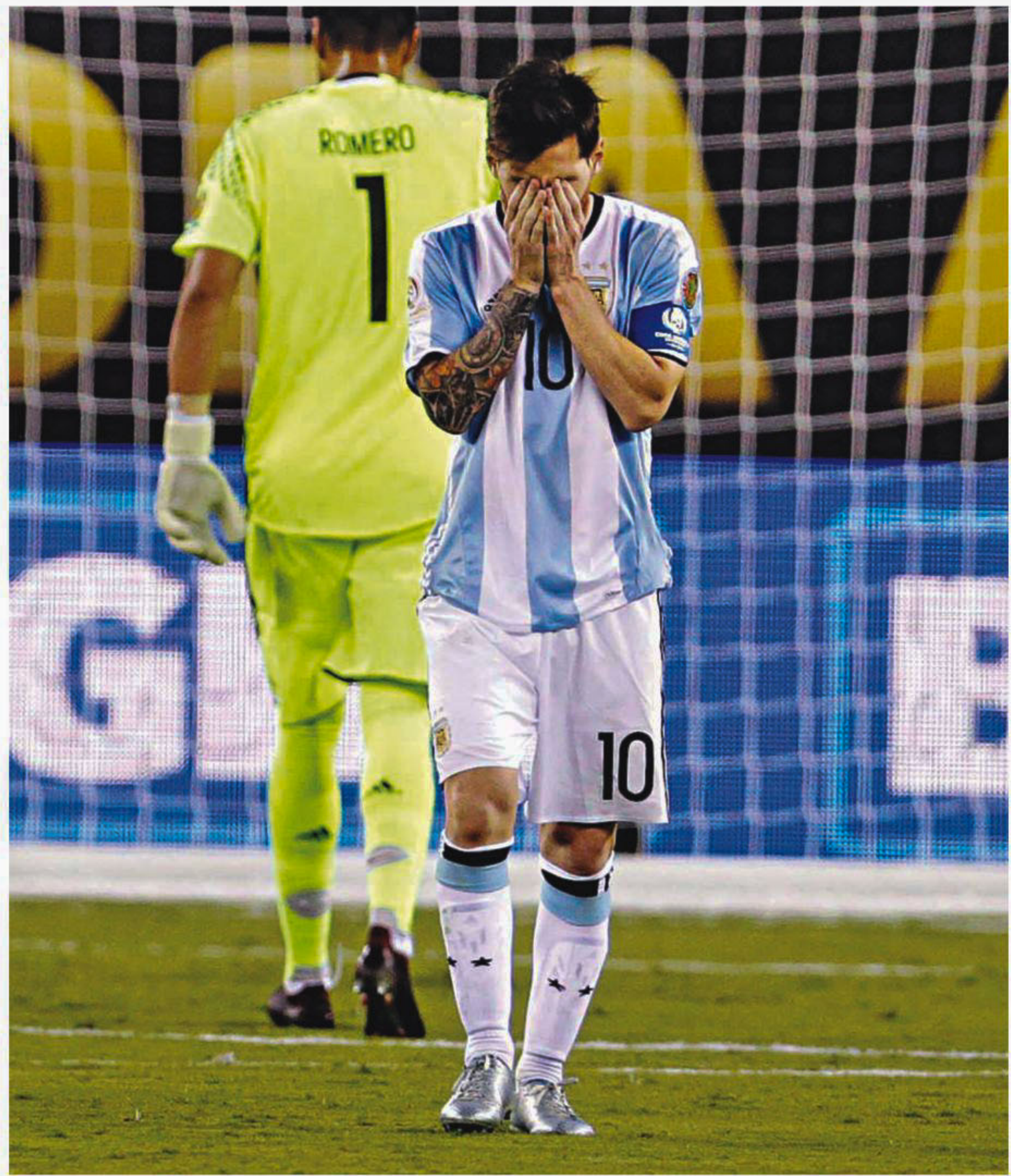
match, the league will be decided when Mariners meet Usha in the final match of the league on July 1st.

The start of the match was dominated by Abahani, but Kiron and the defenders kept the Mariners goal guarded. Then Waqas hit on the counter, tapping in from in front of goal after his fellow Pakistani forward Isteaque Ahmed had teed him up with a quick run down the right side of the box.

Kiron and his opposite number Asim Gope made two excellent saves in the space of a minute before Abahani got back into the game as Shafqat brilliantly controlled a long-range lob from Kasif Ali before rounding up the goalkeeper and putting the ball at the back of the net with a tumbling effort.

Both sides wasted a string of penalty corners, and there were long delays regarding umpire's decisions and video referrals, while Kiron kept thwarting Abahani's attacks. His valiant efforts were at last rewarded as Prochazka snatched the victory, flicking home an intelligently worked penalty corner seven minutes before the final whistle.

Meanwhile, Rasel Mahmud Jimmy scored four goals as Mohammedan beat Wanderers 5-1 in the first match of the day.



This image of Lionel Messi will haunt the world's best player and his millions of fans for a long, long time because it's not just miffing a mere spot-kick but an opportunity lost for the Barcelona magician to lay a hand on his first silverware sporting the Argentina shirt.

PHOTO: AFP

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED