

Improper response to a crime?

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For the last two days, Bangladesh batsman Tamim Iqbal has been the unfortunate focus of news that transcends sport and enters the realm of race relations in a global climate already toxic with intolerance. It was learnt on the night of 11 that Tamim, who was in England with his wife and one-year-old son for an eight-match commitment to county side Essex Eagles for the NatWest T20 Blast, had cut his stay short after one match because of an attempted hate crime the previous night in Stratford.

Hours before news of the attempted hate crime was intimated to this newspaper and a Bengali daily by a source close to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), Essex, on their website had released a statement saying that Tamim had chosen to go home because of 'personal reasons' and that 'it would be appreciated if Tamim's privacy is respected during this time'. Yesterday morning after news of the attack broke, presumably when Tamim was in transit on his way back, he posted the following message on Facebook:

"I want all my fans and well-wishers to know that I cut short my season with Essex to come back home early for personal reasons. Some media reported that we were the target of attempted hate crime. This is really not true. England is one of my favourite places to play cricket and Essex have been entirely gracious even though I had to leave early. I thank all my fans and well-wishers for their concern and messages and look forward to going back to England for future matches."

Despite Tamim's message, after further information gathering there has been no reason to doubt the veracity of the information this newspaper received, which was corroborated further by a report on ESPNcricinfo which said that "a nervous Tamim reported an altercation to Essex Cricket on Monday, the day after his debut in a NatWest Blast match against Kent at Beckenham, and asked that his contract be terminated so the family could return to Bangladesh."

It has also been learnt that he informed BCB of his intention to return the day following the alleged attack. After his return to Bangladesh yesterday evening, he told The Daily Star over phone: "My Facebook status is true and I request everyone to respect mine and my family's privacy."

If, according to mounting evidence and corroboration, the attempted attack is taken as fact, the picture that emerges is of severe mishandling on the part of Essex, the BCB and to a lesser extent Tamim himself. For the record, the incident in question was a group of miscreants

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chasing Tamim, his wife Ayesha Siddiqui -- who wears a hijab -- and their toddler when they had gone out to dinner.

In the aftermath of such an incident, assuming it happened, it is very puzzling why one of the victims (Tamim) and his temporary employers in England (Essex County Cricket Club) chose not to report the incident to law enforcement while his permanent employers in Bangladesh (BCB) failed to persuade him to do

so. Instead, Essex issued a misleading statement on their website and Tamim flatly denied it while the BCB took the strange step of informing the media while not presenting a united front and issuing a press release, which is the usual course of action in such matters.

Among the three, least culpable is of course Tamim -- as one of the victims he cannot be expected to think rationally so soon after the event. Even if he was unwilling to report the

incident, whatever his justification for that stance, it fell first to Essex and then the BCB to take the correct course of action and pursue the matter with law enforcement.

As said earlier, if the reports are true this is not sports news but another incident in a growing narrative of hate crimes against Muslims in England. If true, it would also have been an event that greatly endangered the safety of a prominent Bangladeshi in a foreign country. As such, the 'privacy' that Essex so disingenuously asked to be protected becomes secondary to the actual pursuance of legal avenues to bring the perpetrators to task.

It also may be mentioned that any endangerment of foreign players in Bangladesh becomes international news. The West Indies team has been pelted with stones when they left the Mirpur stadium after a game against Bangladesh during the 2011 World Cup received worldwide coverage and condemnation, and rightly so. It helped to address problems in security and crowd behaviour in Bangladesh; there is no reason that the same is now not true of England.

As for the BCB, this response is not new. In New Zealand earlier this year, instead of reporting the illegal pitch watering during the match in Wellington to the ICC, the matter was litigated in the media.

They had received news of the event involving Tamim yesterday morning, but not only failed to convince Tamim of the need to report the incident and put out a clear press release, but created a scenario that will have only increased the pain for Tamim and his family.



The Bangladesh cricket team continued their fitness camp at the BCB Academy Ground yesterday, but they enjoyed the session a little more as rain provided them with some welcome respite.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

CA chairman lashes out at 'reckless' ACA

AGENCIES, Melbourne

Cricket Australia (CA) chairman David Peever has lashed out at the Australian Cricketers Association (ACA), saying its "reckless" tactics can only "damage the game" and the interests of players, sponsors and broadcasters.

Peever said the ACA had launched a campaign of such "sustained ferocity that anyone could be forgiven for thinking CA was proposing the reintroduction of slavery rather than healthy pay rises".

Writing for The Australian, Peever also took aim at the role of ACA adviser Greg Combet and lambasted their decisions over the course of the bitter dispute.

"Not content with that level of overreaction, the ACA has gone much further, refusing to allow players to tour, threatening to drive away commercial sponsors and damage the prospects of broadcast partners, lock up player IP [intellectual property] into its own business ventures and even stage its own games," he continued.

The players have resolved not to tour or cooperate with CA while they are out of

contract, a situation that has led to the cancellation of the Australia A tour of South Africa and puts in danger coming series against Bangladesh and India. There are even concerns about this summer's Ashes.

"Of all the claims swirling around the pay negotiations between CA and the ACA, perhaps the most tawdry is the suggestion that CA has been motivated by some extreme industrial relations agenda, supposedly imported from the mining industry," Peever added.

"It's a complete myth, and deeply insulting to many people across the cricket spectrum. It has been deliberately fabricated by those seeking to portray cricket as an industrial relations battleground, and pushed out for the explicit purpose of undermining CA's case for modest but necessary changes to the current player payment model."

The dispute hinges on a move by CA to remove the revenue-share model from its deal with the players, saying it is the only way to address a crisis of funding at the grassroots level.

And Peever says he and CA have been "flooded... with messages of support" from

Nasir edges towards IM norm

SPORTS REPORTER

FIDE Master Sheikh Nasir Ahmed is just half a point away from achieving his first international Master norm after he beat Spain's IM Lorenzo del Rio in the penultimate round of the 40th Open International Barbara Dell Villis Category A Chess in Barcelona yesterday.

Nasir played with white pieces and beat Lorenzo in 59 moves.

With six points from eight matches the Bangladesh Navy's player now shares the third position along with six others. He will need at least a draw against Morocco's IM Tishir Mohammad in the ninth and final round, which was scheduled to start at 9:00pm (BST) last night, to earn the IM norm, a Bangladesh Chess Federation press release said yesterday.

Dinesh, Upul to captain SL

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka appointed two new captains Wednesday to replace Angelo Mathews, who resigned after his side's humiliating home series defeat to bottom-ranked Zimbabwe.

Dinesh Chandimal will lead the Test side while Upul Tharanga will captain in limited-overs matches, Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) said.

The reshuffle caps a turbulent period for the beleaguered Sri Lankan side, whose loss to Zimbabwe followed a fitness and

coaching crisis and an early departure from the Champions Trophy.

"Mathews tendered his resignation a short while ago this morning," said SLC chief Thilanga Sumathipala said, "We want to regroup and restructure and move forward."

Mathews said he took the blame for Sri Lanka's recent woes, and was making room so his successor could prepare for the World Cup in 2019.

"There were times when I wanted to step down, but I did not want to let the team down at that time because there were no replacements as such," he told reporters. "But I feel this is the right time. The team's interests

supercede my interests. My honest opinion is that there are candidates who can take over the reins."

Mathews bore the brunt of the criticism levelled at Sri Lanka's cricketers in the aftermath of their 3-2 series loss to minnows Zimbabwe on Monday.

Mathews described the shock defeat as lowest point in his career and a "hard pill to swallow". Sri Lanka Cricket manager Asanka Gurusinge said the team had hit rock bottom but would bounce back.

"After losing to Zimbabwe, we have to go up. This side is too good to

keep going down," Gurusinge said.

Their first challenge starts Friday, when Chandimal will lead the side for the one-off Test against Zimbabwe.

"I am going to put my heart and soul into the team," Chandimal said.

Tharanga, who will take over in T20s and ODIs, said there was much room for improvement following the embarrassment against Zimbabwe.

"As a team we did not perform well," he said.

The team remains plagued by fitness problems, with up to 20 players battling injuries in the past year, said chief selector Sanath Jayasuriya.



The Bangladesh High Performance team pose for a selfie in Darwin. The players did not play a match yesterday but they will get back to business with a four-day match against a Northern Territory Invitational XI today.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



India captain Mithali Raj became the first woman cricketer to score 6,000 ODI runs after scoring 69 against Australia in their ICC Women's World Cup match in Bristol on Wednesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Mithali sets new world mark

AFP, London

Indian captain Mithali Raj broke the record for runs in women's ODIs after taking her total to 6,028 by hitting 69 in the World Cup match with Australia in Bristol on Wednesday.

The 34-year-old -- who made her debut back in 1999 and averages a superb 51.52 after 183 ODI appearances for her country -- surpassed retired England legend Charlotte Edwards's total of 5,992.

"I don't think Mithali Raj gets the credit she deserves at times," said Edwards.

"She is a quality player. The big hitters get the plaudits, but to average over 50 in ODI cricket is an outstanding achievement."

Raj's Indian male counterpart Virat Kohli also chipped in with his congratulations.

"A great moment for Indian Cricket, M. Raju becomes the highest run scorer in Women's ODI Cricket History today. Champions Stuff! (with an applause emoji)," tweeted Kohli.

Amir promoted to top category

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's star fast bowler Mohammad Amir was promoted into the country's top category Wednesday following his brilliant Champions Trophy performance just 19 months since returning to international cricket after a five-year spot-fixing ban.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) shuffled several players while issuing new lists of contracts for national duty, given on the basis of performances in international and domestic matches.

"A number of young players have been awarded contracts this year keeping in mind that the national team's performances in all formats," said a PCB release.

Amir, who was earlier listed in the 'B' category after his return to the game, was elevated to 'A' class in the reshuffle, joining the ranks of captain Sarfraz Ahmed, Azhar Ali, Mohammad Hafeez, Shoaib Malik and Yasir Shah.