

In a move that seems to have garnered as much attention in Bangladesh as Neymar's record transfer to PSG and is the first of its kind, Bangladeshi cricketer Monimul Haqqe has decided to apply for an Irish citizenship.

It was learnt that Haqqe, who currently boasts of a batting average higher than any one else in the country, decided to take the step out of sheer frustration of being excluded from the national team. It was also learnt that the Cricketing Country of Ireland (CCI), which recently received test status, could barely wait to include the left-handed batsman in their team.

According to an official close to CCI, the Immigration Office of Ireland (IOI) is on the verge of tweaking its stringent migration policy in order to include Haqqe for CCI's maiden test match. "To be a citizen through naturalisation, one needs to stay in this country for five years. But we are willing to change the rules for the 'Cox's King'," said a CCI official who preferred to remain anonymous.

Star Weekend though is not certain as to why the CCI official did not disclose his name. It might have been because he was giving us sensitive information, but it also could have been the fact that he realised soon after he gave us his statement, that the title, Cox's King, which he used to describe Cox's Bazar-based Haqqe, was one of the lamest things that he had ever done in his life.

An emotional Haqqe, during an exclusive interview with the Star Weekend last week, explained the reason behind his decision.

"After I wasn't selected in the playing 11 of the test match, I thought that a dive in Inani beach could help me out. Unfortunately, I came out 10 times dirtier, and for a brief period, was stuck in quick sand.

"At that precise moment, a flyer flew onto my face. It read, 'coaching classes for scholarships abroad.' I knew it was a sign from God. I contacted the Cricketing Country of Ireland and they were thrilled," says Haqqe.

Initially when Haqqe's friends and former teammates heard of his decision, they asked him to undergo a plastic surgery and start playing cricket for Abahani as a new player. At first, that plan seemed to be a good one.

However, Haqqe rejected the idea after it was learnt that BCB (Best Cricketing Board, Bangladesh) had recently decided that it was going to conduct DNA tests before every international series. The results of those tests would be graded into three categories, namely: Not Monimul, Moderately Monimul and Fairly Monimul. Sources close to the BCB said that cricketers falling in the latter category had lesser chances of making it to the national team.



CARTOON: E R RONNY

## AN IRISH MONIMUL AND THE SUMAIYA CLAUSE

NAIMUL KARIM

When Haqqe was asked why he decided to choose Ireland over Afghanistan, a team which like the former also recently received a chance to play cricket at the highest level, Haqqe pointed towards his *lungi*.

"I prefer wearing the *lungi* at home and I noticed that in Ireland, people are fond of wearing the kilt, which is kind of similar to the *lungi*, except that it's a bit shorter. I am sure I will be comfortable in it," says Haqqe.

In other news, it was learnt that the BCB's selection committee has invented a machine called the Talent-o-Meter, which can apparently judge how much "talent" a player has based on a mere x-ray. As such for future international matches, players will be assessed based on their "talent" and not on their recent performances. Moreover, players who perform during training, and not during domestic matches, will be given bonus points. This new policy has been nicknamed 'The Sumaiya Sarkar Clause.'

Speaking on the issue, the chief of BCB's selection committee said: "I think this is a brilliant decision. This will save us a lot of time. From now on, we won't have to go to Khulna, Fatullah or Savar to watch local matches and analyse players, because the Talent-o-Meter can do that for us. Thank God for that.

"Look at Sumaiya. He has so much talent. It does not matter that he has not performed for most of the last two years. We know that when he clicks, the entire stadium will be dazzled. But until then, we need to keep giving him chances."

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