



BFF CALENDAR

Less than half of what was promised

ANISUR RAHMAN



Exactly one year ago on this day the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) unveiled its four-year calendar, terming it football's development plan, in the face of huge criticism following the national team's debacle against lowly Bhutan in the Asian Cup Qualifying Play-Off.

The BFF's technical and strategic director Paul Smalley prepared a calendar for 2017 that included 18 competitions from grassroots to the top level for men and women separate from the six international tournaments abroad and two international tournaments at home.

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin, who retained his post for a third successive term in April 2016, stated then that after having seen through his primary objective of keeping football rolling through the first eight years of his tenure, he now wished to see the country's football take a step forward by implementing a number of new objectives over the next four years.

And with almost two years of his third four-year term having passed, Salahuddin has still not managed to take football outside the capital as district football continues to be overlooked year after year, which has caused the pipeline of footballers to shrink.

At the one-year mark of the much-hyped BFF calendar, the Salahuddin-led committee has managed to implement less than half of the planned activities for 2017 so far. The Dhaka-based football competitions have been partially completed, although there is still uncertainty looming over the Independence Cup and Youth Football Tournament for professional football clubs.

However although most of the Dhaka-based competitions are being held every year,

Football League were staged after two-to-three-year gaps, unfortunately the National School Championship, last held in 2012, continues to be overlooked.

The district football leagues are also in limbo and have not taken place for the past two years despite the BFF boss promising that he would provide the District Football Association with enough funds to run their leagues.

Besides those, tournaments such as the National District Championship, National District Youth Championship and National Club Cup Championship have all but disappeared from the calendar.

In the 14 months since their defeat to Bhutan, the national football side has sat idle as the BFF failed to arrange any friendly international matches while the age-group teams were regularly sent to AFC and SAFF tournaments.

Aside from the calendar, the BFF made some commitments under the FIFA Forward Programme, which includes football festivals among different age-groups for both boys and girls as well as Elite Youth Development for U14 to U19 boys and girls. However nothing as such has appeared in the past one year, with only short training camps being arranged for age-group teams ahead of their participation in the SAFF Championships and AFC Championship Qualifiers.

Despite the short training camps, Bangladesh fared quite well in different age-group international tournaments to provide a glimpse of hope but unfortunately, there is no follow-up programme for any of those budding footballers.

Although Salahuddin could not implement the full programme mentioned in the calendar, there is still something that the BFF boss should be praised for and that is coaches' education.

The game's governing body conducted six certificate courses -- four AFC C License and one AFC B License Part-1 and AFC A

'He had nothing more to give'

MAZHAR UDDIN

It was a long day for the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officials and also the media at the Radisson Blu Water Garden hotel in the capital where the centre of discussion was the Tigers head coach, both the outgoing one and incoming one.

Chandika Hathurusingha, who has been appointed as the new coach of Sri Lanka, finally returned to the country after his resignation as the Tigers' coach and the media were eager to know the reason behind his decision.

After concluding a one-and-a-half hour meeting with BCB president Nazmul Hassan, CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury and directors IH Mallick, Jalal Yunus and Khaled Mahmud, Hathurusingha maintained his silence by waving and heading for the elevator, depriving the awaiting pack of journalists a chance to speak to the best person to explain the reason behind his sudden resignation.

Though Hassan initially said it was just a courtesy call from Hathurusingha, in essence the Sri Lankan gave the BCB boss a few slivers of information, such as his frustration over Shakib Al Hasan's decision to rest for the South Africa Tests.

"What he has given importance to is the mindset that no matter how big a player is, he has to remember that the country is bigger than an individual. I may have a personal issue with someone but you can't harm the country for that. He urged us to explain that to our players and make them realise that," Hassan told reporters.

Hassan informed that Hathurusingha was still giving his observations orally and would also provide his report on the South Africa tour by the next few days.

"He had some dissatisfaction over the South Africa tour right from the beginning and he also had problems with the players' mentality. For example Shakib, who did not go for the Test



No coach, no problem

SPORTS REPORTER

Former West Indies head coach Phil Simmons arrived in Dhaka last night to give his presentation to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) for the vacant post of head coach.

English-born coach Richard Pybus has already made his case to the BCB and Simmons will be the second candidate.

The BCB will have a board meeting today to discuss the candidates for the role, but in a meeting with BCB president Nazmul Hassan yesterday the three captains -- Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim -- asked him not to rush the decision and assured they were ready to

play the upcoming home series against Sri Lanka in January without a coach.

"[Chandika] Hathurusingha is not here with us and at this moment we do not have a coach. It may be the case that we do not appoint a coach ahead of the next series. So I asked them to plan how we can play the next series," Hassan said. "First of all I asked them if they were confident of playing the next series without a coach and they all said that they were confident."

"We are not saying that no coach will be appointed. It may be that we will appoint a coach tomorrow [Saturday] or the day after. I told them to be mentally prepared in case we do not appoint a coach ahead of the next series," the board president concluded.

matches. He couldn't accept that as he is a different type of person and his question was why Shakib wouldn't play in such an important series despite being a vital player."

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leave," Hassan added.

Hassan said that the board never asked the Sri Lankan to re-think his decision and added that Hathurusingha having taken the decision meant that he had no feelings left for the team.

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