



During a press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, Bangladesh Cricket Board President, Nazmul Hassan, lambasted the cricketers who are currently on strike and their 11-point demand. Although it could be said that calmness was the need of the hour, the BCB boss seemed rather bent on venting his frustrations to the media.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

With due respect...

SPORTS REPORTER



When the cricketers started putting forth an 11-point demand for the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Monday with Naem Islam starting things off, one of the first things he said was that the cricketers wanted more respect. Perhaps he was talking about the general level of respect afforded to domestic cricketers, but BCB President Nazmul Hassan's utterances yesterday may have provided further insights into what Naem meant.

He was fuming over why the players had not come to the BCB before presenting their demands to the media and in doing so, went on a rant about how he had been doing personal favours for players.

"I have a personal relationship with the players. They come to me with their problems, even with personal

matters and I try to solve those.

"Imrul [Kayes] called me at night suddenly and said that his child is in severe condition and that he had to take his child to Singapore. Then he said that he does not have the visa and that he needs it by tomorrow. I told him to book the tickets and that I'll see to the other things. I arranged for their visa by that night. He also asked me to make VIP arrangements as his child was very sick and I did that too."

He also talked about how he had granted Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Tamim Iqbal's request for greater prize money after the 2017 tour of Sri Lanka. "They came to me at the airport lounge and asked to improve the fees. It was Tk 1.5 lakh, I increased it to 2.5... someone else asked for a further increase and it came to Tk 4 lakh."

He then moved on to Shakib Al Hasan, one of the leading figures behind the 11-point demand.

"When I last met Shakib, he told me that 'I played so well in the World Cup, won't you give me bonus?' He does not talk about these things [with the media]. I want the people to know everything."

The 11-point demand was made by cricketers in a united fashion, with international stars at times talking about domestic issues and domestic players focusing on national team players' problems.

Hassan mocked this yesterday. "Someone who never plays league cricket [Shakib] is talking about domestic leagues. Then someone else who never gets called up by foreign franchises [Mushfiquur Rahim] was talking about that."

"What bad treatment? Forget me, cricketers go to the honorary prime minister with their children, and the prime minister carries the child around and plays with the child," Hassan said in an apparent jab at Shakib.

Will the real custodians please stand up

SAKEB SUBHAN



Over the last two days two press conferences took place at Bangladesh cricket's headquarters in Mirpur: the first a 15-minute affair on Monday and the second yesterday stretching to nearly an hour and 40 minutes. The first, with a coherent message and delivery from the country's top cricketers demanding improvement of the fortunes of domestic cricketers at large, went to the heart of the problems facing Bangladesh cricket. The second, delivered mostly by Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) President Nazmul Hassan yesterday, was an exercise in shifting blame on the cricketers, attacking the messengers while ignoring the message and propagating conspiracy theories.

It opened a strange chapter in Bangladesh cricket. In their conventional roles, players issuing an ultimatum would be seen as fomenting revolution and a cricket board should ideally be the ones proposing and implementing reforms. In light of Hassan's animated press conference, it appeared that the roles were reversed and the board was revolting against demands that board members had called 'logical' the previous day.

The likes of Junaid Siddique, Mahmudullah Riyad, Naem Islam, Tamim Iqbal, Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiquur Rahim put forward an 11-point demand to improve the lot of players and also the overall structure of the sport in the country. Apart from demands for salary and allowance increases across the board, there were such cricketing aspects as improving the quality of balls used in first-class cricket so that players would not be caught unawares when they make the step up. Mention was made of the pipeline of cricketers and the need to halt the plague of match-fixing in the lower divisions.

There were calls for improved infrastructure outside the capital so players would not need to come to Dhaka to get the best facilities as well as better accommodation and transport for first-class cricketers who are on the field for 90 overs a day for four days.

All of the demands, as BCB media committee chairman Jalal Yunus agreed on Monday, were logical. Jalal did question the need for the cricketers to go to the media before presenting the demands to the board. While that may be

a bone of contention, most of the demands seemed to be for the development of cricket made in a unified voice -- while big names of the national team were present, the focus was on domestic cricket.

Yet Hassan, charged with improving cricket at all levels, repeatedly narrowed the focus to the national team yesterday.

"Tk 24 crore was given as bonus to 15 players of the national team," Hassan said at the start of a half-hour monologue yesterday. "I can't believe that they would stop playing just because of money."

Near the end of the diatribe, he asked: "Do you know how much national players get?"

While most were commending the cricketers' demands to improve the financial situations of umpires and groundsmen, Hassan seemed to mock the sentiment.

"What do they have to do with the staff?" he asked. "Anyway, their salaries have been increased. You can understand why they bring it up... it's part of the conspiracy."

He went about trying to dismantle the demands one by one and all roads seemed to lead to his conspiracy, one he insisted that 'you all know', which drew puzzled looks from journalists. He insisted that they had increased salaries of first-class cricketers (not by the amount the players had demanded), umpires and groundsmen and that cameras were being installed in the Dhaka Premier League as well as lower leagues to stop match-fixing.

"Now that we are taking the measures, why are they making these demands? When nothing was being done, they were not making demands. There is something suspicious here," Hassan argued, and went on to further the conspiracy narrative. "You all know that there is a conspiracy to destabilise Bangladesh cricket, and there have also been efforts to go to the ICC so that Bangladesh would be suspended like Zimbabwe."

While saying that most of the cricketers were not aware of the conspiracy, he thought it possible that one or two were and said that he was determined to find out who they were.

In the question-answer session that followed, not much could be gleaned except that it was an exercise in evasion. When asked why the DPL's player-by-choice system, which first appeared in 2013 and which Hassan said would be in place for one season, did not revert



as promised to the traditional players' draft that gave cricketers more say and greater earning opportunities, Hassan deflected and said he had instructed a director to carry it out.

That inaction lies at the heart of the dysfunction of cricket governance in Bangladesh. Cameras have recently been installed,

according to Hassan, in the lower divisions, but corruption in the lower leagues has been there from the start of his administration seven years ago. He said that they could not do anything without proof, but scorecards -- for instance the one that showed a bowler conceding 94 runs in an over -- should serve that purpose.

The players' protest and boycott were on the basis of that inaction. But that only continued yesterday when the board president sought to create a narrative blaming the players for wanting to improve cricket, instead of taking measures to enact the logical demands to improve the country's cricket.

'Will step aside but through a process'

SPORTS REPORTER

Cricket Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) president Naimur Rahman said that he would leave his post if that is what the players' demand, however, he also mentioned that this should be done through a process during a press conference in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladeshi cricketers put forward an 11-point demand to the media and announced that they will be on strike until the demands are met during a press conference in Mirpur on Monday.

One of the demands stated that CWAB president, Naimur, and general secretary Debabrata Paul must step aside and the players would choose their replacements through elections.

"We will definitely step aside. CWAB is an association that includes both current and former players. So whatever the association decides, we will accept it but there is a process," said Naimur.

Series will go on: Ganguly

AGENCIES, New Delhi



The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president-elect Sourav Ganguly has stressed that he's confident of Bangladesh's tour of India going ahead as per schedule despite the uncertainties borne out of an ongoing strike.

Bangladesh's top cricketers went on strike and released a list of 11 demands to be fulfilled by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) before they would step back on to the field. The side is scheduled to play three T20Is and two Tests in India from November 3.

"It's an internal matter, they will sort it out. No,

no, they'll come," Ganguly said on Tuesday. "We [he and the BCB president Nazmul Hassan] speak every other day, but this [the strike] is not my job."

Grand plans are put in motion ahead of the second Test in Kolkata, for which Ganguly is hoping to invite Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi as well as the state Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

"We will write now to the Bangladesh board - Bangladesh's first Test was with India, so we want to invite those players [who played the match]. And I will write, as the BCCI president as and when I get elected, to players of that team. The Indian players too. So we will do a felicitation when the game [day's play] finishes," Ganguly said.



Despite being one of the leading faces in the cricketers' strike, Shakib Al Hasan found the time to sign on as brand ambassador to Grameenphone, who are looking to work with the star all-rounder in their efforts to 'build an empowered digital society'.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Waiting game on both sides

MAZHAR UDDIN



Bangladesh cricket was rocked after the players, led by national team stalwarts, suddenly chose to boycott all cricketing activities on Monday unless an 11-point list of demands was met by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

After an emergency meeting with Dhaka-based board directors at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday, BCB president Nazmul Hassan lashed out at the cricketers' demands during an hour-long press conference, stating that there was a conspiracy to tarnish the image of Bangladesh cricket.

However, Hassan also played the waiting game and said he expected the players to deliver their demands to the board instead of going for a strike. He also seemed confident that the national team's upcoming tour of India would go on as planned along with the third round of the National Cricket League (NCL), which is scheduled to start from tomorrow.

The national team's training camp for the tour of India is scheduled to begin from October 25 and Hassan said that he would wait and see how many of the players took part in the national camp and also the NCL.

It was a completely alien scenario at the home of cricket in Mirpur as there was no presence of cricketers.

There is tremendous speculation about what the cricketers' next step will be and, according to sources, the players are united in their movement and are also playing the waiting game. It was learned that they would bring everything to light in the next one or two days.

Although none of the players were willing to divulge their next move, they sounded determined about what they were doing.

The million-dollar question that is still up in the air is why the cricketers did not go to the BCB with their demands and instead opt to reveal them to the media first. To that, they echoed the same sentiments expressed on Monday.

"As the players get to know about the board decisions through media, we also opted to do the same," a cricketer requesting anonymity told The Daily Star.

DPL to return to players' transfer system from upcoming season

One of the most important points in the cricketers' 11-point demand was a return to the traditional players' transfer system -- through which players can choose their own clubs and negotiate salaries -- in the Dhaka Premier League, instead of players-by-choice system which was first introduced in 2013.

In an almost instant response, Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis chairman Kazi Inam Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday night that they had decided to return to the players' transfer system from the upcoming season.

"I discussed a return to the players' transfer from the players-by-choice system in the DPL to the BCB president a month ago and he instructed me to do so. I announce that the CCDM has decided to re-introduce players' transfer system from the upcoming season," said Inam.