

Look at the real fault lines

BISHWAJIT ROY

The grand corporate boardrooms, the lush-green fields and financial affluence does not necessarily guarantee good governance in cricket. However, it is believed that only strong governance can ensure long-term benefit for any cricketing nation in the modern era.

Good governance establishes a set of rules, practices and processes that not only influence the mechanism for success but also balances the interests of the game's stakeholders. It is essential for the sustainability of the success.

When that certain set of rules and processes are ineffective, it can have disastrous consequences. That is what we have seen in the three days' chaos following the country's leading cricketers' -- one of the main stakeholders of the game -- announcement last Monday when they boycotted cricketing activities until an 11-point demand was met by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

If the announcement had not come as 'shock' as said by the BCB high-ups, than it must have come as a big surprise for every cricket follower in the country. Soon after the drama unfolded at the BCB's Academy ground in Mirpur, everybody including board high-ups were unanimous in one point. The players' demands were logical.

Questions too were raised on why the players didn't place their demands to the board before taking such a stern action of boycotting cricketing activities? The way they had showcased their grievances, including the dramatic appearance of a barrister as a spokesman, to the nation, might lead many to say that leading cricketers set a bad example. The players, who showcased a united front, did not follow the rules and due process but a major question must be asked; why they did it?

What could be understood from the movement is that they actually wanted to show a motion of 'no confidence' in two vital organisations -- the BCB and the Cricket Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB). If the processes had been maintained at CWAB, the players would have gotten a true platform to negotiate their demands. Similarly, if the BCB was functioning properly rather than being under the influence of a few powerful individuals, the chief executive



The meeting between the BCB and the players regarding their search for an agreeable resolution after a three-day strike by national cricketers, could have been avoided altogether only if there was a proper institutional structure followed by the board in the first place.

PHOTO: BCB

officer could have been the right man for the players.

The extent of the power wielded by the few individuals, rather than BCB as an institution, was in evidence when it was time and again proudly uttered that "they [players] have easy access to us". There seemed to be a complete lack of understanding of the difference between an institution solving problems through a process and an individual doing the same in ad-hoc fashion.

Many cricketers gave the impression that they just wanted to deliver a jolt as everything was descending into darkness and that they had no intention to harm cricket in the long term.

It is a common notion that promises by the incumbent office-bearers are made to be broken.

If we examine the cricketers' demands, we will find that they were mostly related to the revamp of first-class infrastructure. To see how promises have been broken in this sector, we can go back to BCB President Nazmul Hassan's comments in November 2017.

The formation of regional cricket associations or the decentralisation of cricket has been a long-

standing demand, but it has remained unfulfilled for a decade. When Hassan was re-elected in 2017, his immediate reaction was: "Our first job will be to form the regional cricket association and we will try to finalise that in the next six months."

Nearly two years since that promise, Ask them about it and they will say: "We are working on it, but there is no significant progress."

Ironically, rather than being decentralized, the concentration of power is shrinking into the pockets of a select few.

When Hassan needed to do the necessary groundwork so that cricketers like Shakib Al Hasan need not cry for the lack of good infrastructure and long-term planning, he has instead been unnecessarily showing more interest to technical issues like who would bat at which position.

It would be dangerous and suicidal for Bangladesh cricket if cricketers and not institutions are searched for fault lines when it comes to solving systemic problems. We want to echo Shakib's sentiment that someone with foresight at the helm of the board is the need of the hour.

Normal service to resume

SPORTS REPORTER

For the past few days, there were doubts over whether Bangladesh's tour of India, starting from November 3, will happen or not. Following three days' strike, the cricketers found an agreeable resolution with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB). The board agreed to nine of their initial 11-point demand -- with the two points that were added on last day of the protest left for further discussion -- on Wednesday.

While the last few days' newspapers were expected to be filled with updates regarding Bangladesh's upcoming tour of India -- featuring a three-match T20 and a following two-match Test series, the unprecedented event of the strike had halted all national cricketing activities and grabbed all the focus.

And after such an event, it might take a bit more time for the nation's cricket to get back to complete normalcy. However, normal operation will resume when the national cricketers start their camp -- originally scheduled for October 23, today, ahead of the India tour at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Newly appointed spin consultant Daniel Vettori is set to join the camp and begin his 100-day tenure today while head coach Russell Domingo is expected to be available in two to three days.

Meanwhile, the BCB has confirmed that all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin has been ruled out of the India tour with a recurring back injury.

"Due to a reoccurring back injury, Saifuddin will be rested from the India tour this year, giving him an opportunity to consolidate his recovery over a longer period of time. He now will also have the opportunity to spend more time strengthening his body and his situation will be reviewed by the medical team again in the upcoming weeks for further

updates." Bangladesh physiotherapist Julian Calefato was quoted as saying in a BCB media release.

However, the BCB selector Habibul Bashar informed that the team



management has not decided if there will be a replacement of the 22-year old for the India tour.

"The team management is yet to decide if there will be a replacement of Saifuddin. There are already three pacers in the [T20] squad and the team management will sit in two to three days and decide if another pacer or a player is needed to replace him," Bashar said yesterday.

Bangladesh star opener Tamim Iqbal might also miss out some part of the India tour due to a family emergency.

"It will be understood in two- or three-days' time. [Whether he plays or not]. It's what I have been hearing and nothing is decided yet. If he doesn't go then someone else will. Whether he will be able to play is the main thing. However, we always have backup," informed BCB operations chairman Akram Khan yesterday.

BCB names U-19 squad

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced the U-19 team for the two-match four-day series against Sri Lanka U-19s, with the hosts taking on their Sri Lankan counterparts in the first match at the Abdur Rab Serniabat Stadium in Barisal tomorrow. Bangladesh will also play five youth ODIs after the end of their two-match four-day series.

The young Tigers have been in excellent form, going into the series on the back of an impressive 4-1 youth ODI series victory against New Zealand at their own backyard earlier this month.

Squad: Amite Hasan (Captain), Sajid Hossan, Alvi Haque, Pritom Kumar, Shahadat Hossain, Mohammad Prantik, Shakib Shahriyer, SM Meherob Hasan, Minhazur Rahman, Naimur Rahman, Md Saidul Islam, Ashraful Islam, Md. Asadullah Hill, Mohammad Shahin, Noman Chowdhury

Kohli to sit out T20Is against Tigers

APF, Mumbai

India have left out captain Virat Kohli from the squad named for three Twenty20 internationals against Bangladesh starting next month, but he will return for two Tests between the South Asian neighbours.

Senior batsman Rohit Sharma will captain the Twenty20 team in the limited-overs series due to begin on November 3 in Delhi.

Uncapped allrounder Shivam Dube has been drafted into the squad in place of injured Hardik Pandya, while Sanju Samson and leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal have been recalled.

Bangladesh had threatened to call off the tour over a domestic pay dispute, but the national board and players resolved their differences late Wednesday.

The second T20 is on November 7 in Rajkot and the third on November 9 in Nagpur.

Kohli, described as the "most important man" in Indian cricket by new board president Sourav Ganguly on Wednesday, will captain the side in the Test series starting November 14 in Indore.

The Test squad is essentially the same that swept South Africa 3-0 in a series that ended this week. That gave India a world record 11th straight home Test series triumph.

T20I squad: Rohit Sharma (Capt), Shikhar Dhawan, KL Rahul, Sanju Samson, Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey, Rishabh Pant (wk), Washington Sundar, Krunal Pandya, Yuzvendra Chahal, Rahul Chahar, Deepak Chahar, Khaleel Ahmed, Shivam Dube, Shardul Thakur

TEST SQUAD: Virat Kohli (Capt), Rohit Sharma, Mayank Agarwal, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Hanuma Vihari, Saha (wk), R Jadeja, R Ashwin, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Shami, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Shubman Gill, Rishabh Pant

ANISUR RAHMAN

Weekend WINDOW

The hasty exit of the Bangladesh national swimming team's Japanese coach Takeo Inoki because of the punishment he witnessed being meted out to junior swimmers has forced the authorities to identify a new way to penalise rule-breakers during training camps.

Slapping athletes who have broken rules with extra exercise or training so that they correct their ways is an age-old punitive method in Bangladesh. Proponents of this line of thinking say that it also achieves the effect of sending a clear message to other athletes.

One such incident involving junior swimmers during a talent hunt at the Syed Nazrul Islam Swimming Complex in Mirpur on Sunday forced Inoki to part ways with the Bangladesh Swimming Federation (BSF), sparking a debate on the correct way to discipline athletes.

WHAT ACTUALLY TOOK PLACE

Some 40 young swimmers aged between 11 and 20, who were picked through a six-month talent hunt programme jointly organised by BSF and Bangladesh Navy in the hope of finding some quality swimmers for the South Asian Games, have been undergoing long-term training since late 2017. The use of mobile phones is strictly prohibited for swimmers residing in the camp but Sharifa Akter Mim of the U-15 age group violated the rule. She was caught with a phone and the junior team's coaches made her do additional training under the burning sun and unable to stand the heat, she fainted.

Ganguly promised full support to Kohli and said he will sit down with the captain to chart the way forward.

"He (Ganguly) is someone who has played a lot of cricket before, who knows the situation we are in, what the team needs, the requirements of Indian cricket," Kohli said.

"It will be a healthy discussion because I am playing currently and he has played before, there will be an understanding of these things."

"I have had good discussions in the past with him and I expect the same this time,"

A WIDESPREAD MALAISE

post on Tuesday.

"I felt it was important for me to show that I really mean zero tolerance to organisations or individuals who give physical abuse/ punishments and any harassment to the swimmers. I hope this sad incident would become critical turning point into building a new competitive swimming organisation and structure in Bangladesh," stated the veteran coach.

WAS IT THE FIRST TIME?

Preferring not to be named, one veteran swimming coach informed that such punishments are usual practice in swimming during training camps. He also said that some 17 swimmers at the talent hunt were expelled for different disciplinary breaches.

South Asian Games gold medal-

prevalent in swimming but is also commonplace in other disciplines, but the punishment varies from coach to coach. Out-of-favour national footballer Ariful Islam, who came under punishment from Brazilian coach Edson Silva Dido, said all footballers and especially the younger ones had to run additional laps around the ground after making mistakes in the national camp in 2009. Seven footballers even walked out of the camp in protest before the Bangladesh Football Federation intervened and sent them back.

The defender also mentioned that current coach Jamie Day levied fines if any of the current footballers broke the rules.

AMMURIAH Aurangzeb Chowdhury yesterday instructed the authority concerned to form another four-member committee comprising two high-level officials from the federation and Bangladesh Navy to investigate the incident and the loopholes, then submit a report with recommendations to prevent such incidents in future.

Lt Commander SM Mahadi-Ul-Hasan, who is working as camp commander of the talent hunt programme, said: "We always take constructive measures to correct the swimmers, who are prohibited from using mobile phones in the training camp. We even hold counselling sessions three or four times a week about the dos and don'ts. What I have understood is that there was a misunderstanding with the Japanese coach and he was perhaps emotional and could not take our measures simply. But I think the misunderstanding would have been solved if he gave the federation a chance to clarify matters. We would even have avoided such measures in future if he talked to us," said Mahadi, adding that Japanese assistance coach Yorikazu Tamayama returned Bangladesh on Wednesday night.

AN EYE-OPENER FOR ALL BKSP swimming coach Abdul Kader believes physical punishment can be avoided by warning athletes, counselling them and discussing matters with their respective guardians and former coaches.

"However much talent an athlete has, he will not succeed until he is disciplined," said Kader, who has been involved with swimming for last 20 years.

Kabaddi coach Jalil said, "A coach like a guardian, teacher and guide, who can instruct and punish their athletes in order to build a good future, but it is better to avoid any cruel or excessive training."

BSP joint secretary-cum-coach Abdul Hamid believed that imposing excessive training not only teaches them a lesson but also helps them build their physique.

Most coaches seemed to be motivated by the good intention of correcting wayward athletes, but excessive physical hardships may have a negative impact on the mental health of the athletes. The mental trauma may also lead to them withdrawing into a shell and could also contribute to them leaving the sport they love. The incident, while an unfortunate one, has provided the country a valuable opportunity to introspect and re-examine the methods they use to discipline sportspeople.

apart from poor performance. "One swimmer named Sumon from Bagherhat was excluded from the long-term training not due to his poor performance but it was his constant rule violations of keeping a mobile device that prompted us to exclude him from the training camp."

Another coach, who is involved with the junior swimmers' training and who wished not to be named, said: "They have dealt with such incidents some 15 to 20 times. Initially we warn them two to three times and then we impose punishment by making them do extra training, which also sends a message to other swimmers not to repeat the same mistakes in the training camp."

Is it a traditional method to rectify the athletes?

This practice is not just

winning swimmer Shahjahan Ali Rony also claimed that he went was punished similarly several times under a Chinese coach during his student life at BKSP and also during training for the national team under South Korean coach Park Tae Gun.

Former national kabaddi coach Abdul Jalil said that he also found many undisciplined players but made them mend their ways in his own way, without imposing physical punishment. He added that it varied depending on the coach, as not all have the capacity to teach the athletes in the same manner.

STEPS TAKEN BY BSF

The local game's governing body formed a three-member probe committee to look into the incident soon after Inoki left Bangladesh, but BSF president Bangladesh naval admiral



'He knows the situation we are in'

REUTERS, Mumbai

India cricket captain Virat Kohli said on Thursday he expects a healthy and professional discussion with Sourav Ganguly, a day after the newly appointed board chief termed the batting mainstay the "most important man" for the game in the country.

Ganguly promised full support to Kohli and said he will sit down with the captain to chart the way forward.

"He (Ganguly) is someone who has played a lot of cricket before, who knows the situation we are in, what the team needs, the requirements of Indian cricket," Kohli said.

"It will be a healthy discussion because I am playing currently and he has played before, there will be an understanding of these things."

"I have had good discussions in the past with him and I expect the same this time,"

Bangladesh Under-16 captain Nayeem Ahmed (R) and his Pakistani counterpart Aliyan Mahmood pose with the trophy ahead of their two-match three-day series, scheduled to begin today in Rawalpindi. PHOTO: COLLECTED