

NO SHAKIB, MORE CONFUSION

The stunned faces of chief selector Minhajul Abedin and head coach Russell Domingo (R) during yesterday's practice match between Red Team and Green Team in Mirpur perhaps perfectly depicts the sentiments of BCB president Nazmul Hassan when he told The Daily Star yesterday that, 'everything is foggy'. Initially, it was said that the Test squad for the tour of India would be announced yesterday. However, it was later learnt from cricket operations committee chairman Akram Khan that they would announce a revised T20 squad today while it would take a few more days to form the Test team, making it almost seem as if the BCB were waiting for the Shakib Al Hasan conundrum to end. Shakib did not turn up for the practice match and although Hassan was left puzzled by the star all-rounder's absence, Akram said Shakib had taken permission from the coach to rest. However, amid all the chaos Mahmudullah Riyad (L) gained some confidence by scoring 81 runs off 51 balls during the second practice match.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Match fee hike for NCL players

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officially announced yesterday that they have increased the match fees, travel allowances and other benefits for cricketers participating in the National Cricket League (NCL). The changes will take immediate effect from the ongoing edition of the tournament.

The BCB made this decision following the players' strike which began on October 21.

Lead by national team players, the cricketers placed an 11-point demand, where they asked for the revision of the NCL's pay scale, before the media and pledged to refrain from all cricketing activities until said demands were met.

According to a BCB media release yesterday, the match fees for a Tier-1 player will be raised from Tk 35,000 to Tk 60,000, a 71 percent increase, while Tier-2 cricketers will be given Tk 50,000 as opposed to the previous amount of Tk 25,000 BDT. It should be mentioned here that the players had asked for a minimum of Tk one lakh for first-class cricketers.

The travel expenses for both tiers has been increased from Tk 2,500 to Tk 3,500 for travel by land while airfare would be covered by the BCB entirely.

Lastly, the players' daily allowance was increased by 67 percent, from Tk 1,500 to Tk 2,500.

'Shakib's explanation must be convincing'

The country's cricket descended into chaos with Test and T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan keeping the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) guessing about his availability for the tour of India. Without informing the team management, Shakib missed three of the four days of the pre-tour training camp in Mirpur, including missing the practice game on Sunday even though his name was on the players' list. This was after he breached the terms of his contract with the board by signing a deal with telecom giants Grameenphone last Tuesday. BCB President Nazmul Hassan, still reeling from a three-day players' strike last week that was spearheaded by Shakib, talked with The Daily Star's Bishwajit Roy, Mazhar Uddin and Sakeb Subhan about the trouble and uncertainty caused by Shakib's actions and his discontent at the players' strike. The following are excerpts from the interview:



Specific allegations have been brought against him (Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan). Nobody with a tainted reputation should discharge the responsibilities of a BCB (Bangladesh Cricket Board) director. I will talk with the BCB president again about what you (journalists) are telling.

OBAIDUL QUADER
Road Transport and Bridges Minister

On calling up players from the NCL and selectors' job

Any person will say that. That eight players would have to be called up, does anyone need directive about that? Why didn't you postpone the third round of the NCL since the game is tomorrow? The thing is that everyone got confused. The players' strike messed up our plans. We didn't even know whether they were coming to the camp even the day before.

See, it's actually not that we don't have leg-spinners. We are not allowing leg-spinners to be created. I don't know why. The clubs don't play them and, in this season's NCL, even after pushing for it many times, they didn't play leg-spinners. Think about the risk we took with [Aminul Islam] Biplob. Even after knowing that we might not play the final if we lose against Zimbabwe, we took the risk. Why would we have to trial a leg-spinner in international tournament?

I have been in a professional environment for a long time. Here, I have seen something different. Changes were not possible in all areas. But I have tried to bring changes. Not everyone is capable of doing everything. Personnel are not available in the board. I don't even see 60 percent of the directors. These are the reality.

On defeat against Afghanistan in Test
We had decided three months earlier about the kinds of pitch and our strategies. We decided on a sporting wicket since Afghanistan are stronger than us in spin department. Before I left the country [for ACC meeting] I heard that we were not playing any pacers. I asked Akram [Khan], [Minhajul Abedin] Nannu. They said they weren't being heeded. I don't know if they were telling the truth. I am now investigating that just to know. Most of them said that Shakib chose the pitch himself.

After first day's play, I saw Shakib's interview where he said that "I haven't

seen a worse pitch in my life". I was shocked. Everyone said that Shakib had chosen this pitch. I don't know what was happening. Either everyone is lying or what Shakib said is not right. So I am looking for an answer and running an independent search.

On criticism over BCB director Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan

It [arrest] was a big shock and so was the discussion and criticism following his arrest. I have said it before that the person I know did not gamble or drink liquor. I have said that he is my friend. Mahbub Anam [BCB director] was brought in by Saber Hossain Chowdhury [former BCB president] and in an illegal way. He was vice-president during Kamal bhai's [AHM Mustafa Kamal] tenure. Why is it a problem when it comes to me?

I hear that I brought Lokman to the board. Councilors come from two places -- the clubs or district. How can I say who will come from where? So, from the Mohammedan club, Lokman and Mahbub arrived. It was Mohammedan's decision. I don't decide that. If you check, you'll find it is very hard to suspend councilors and that constitution has been there from the very beginning. The ICC has further reinforced it, especially in case of directors. I am not saying he cannot be evacuated from the board but a process has to be followed.

On players' strike

The countries [cricket boards] I have talked to, they asked me: "They didn't present the issues to you beforehand? Just throw the demands away." No country even wanted to believe that they went for a strike without presenting their demands first.

According to my knowledge, they were unified about their demands but they didn't know anything about stopping all cricketing activities.

On conspiracy

Not joining the national team camp was never in players' agenda. Even

some said that they didn't know that if the demands aren't met, they will stop playing. An unfounded source informed that there was a plan to scrap the India series. I didn't believe but then I heard that some players won't be going.

The shock I received was after the meeting with the players. It was when Tamim [Iqbal] told me that he will not be going on this tour. Earlier he had said that he may miss the last Test due



to personal reasons. After the meeting he came to me and said that he was not going.

Now I don't know who is going. I am confused. I am not saying they are not going but I am confused.

On Shakib going on tour to India
Actually, nothing is clear yet and that is my problem since the team is leaving day after tomorrow.

To my knowledge, he was going to the ground. When he talked to me, he said that he was going to go and I said I was going there as well. When I went there, I heard that he talked to the coach and he was in vacation or something, or resting. I heard it from someone else.

One thing is true. Whatever you are thinking, it's nothing like that. There is no relation between this and what you guys are thinking. My assumption is that we will know in a day or two. The team is going on the 30th so we will find out.

If Shakib doesn't go then the whole team combination will change. He did not turn up for the training on the first day and then arrived the second day only to leave after half of the session was done. Then on the third day he didn't come. Don't you think there is enough reason to be suspicious. Can't I be suspicious? I have to come up with an alternative but if I say that now, everyone will say that I am asking for Shakib to be dropped from the tour. Can't imagine what I am dealing with. I can only say that it's not normal what is happening.

Everything is foggy. If someone doesn't want to go, there is no issue if they communicate early. There is a kind of feeling of being indispensable within the team. Attitude has to be right. This [attitude] was not there before. There may be logical reason and I will see to those later. Right now, my concern is the India tour. I am not worried about the pipeline. We have many players.

I have told the coach to look at two players for this series. [To] Play one in the T20s and the other in a Test. We have to look at players or how will we play the World Cup ahead? We have to give exposure until the World Cup.

On Shakib not turning up for training
If we don't find a satisfactory answer for this, then he won't get any more chances. It has to be something really convincing. Let's see. It's one more day.

On the job he has done
When I came to the board, Bangladesh's Test status was going to be revoked along with Zimbabwe's. I tried talking to many people but nothing was going to change their minds. Even the press release was written and the board approved it. There was going to be two tiers and the lower tier teams will have to play amongst themselves before making a jump to play the top tier teams.

[Narayanawami] Srinivasan joined me on skype in the ICC meeting. I got

very emotional there and gave a half-hour speech. Srinivasan told them to scrap the two-tier idea. Two countries opposed but he remained firm on the decision and everyone else supported me after that. I was very emotional and I think I even cried. So we managed to keep the Test status.

Bangladesh didn't have any position in ICC meetings. It had to be changed and after so many activities it has come to a point where if Bangladesh does not support, a bill will not be passed. I saw that Bangladesh was earning half of they should be and I challenged that in a board meeting. They did not believe me but after looking at everything they agreed and from the next period we will be earning as much as Australia.

I tried to do my job as professionally as possible but in Bangladesh it's not easy. Change was not easy. If I had let things run as they were, I would have been very popular.

On luring sponsors
Next year we will have to sell the team's sponsorship rights. If I want to sell, the telecoms can pay us the most. So Grameen and Robi are the main ones. Last year we got Robi for 20 crores a year. Grameen didn't even participate. What they did was they got a player for 1.5 crore to make ads and then these players can't go and do ads for Robi. So Robi withdrew after filing complaints as we could not stop their rival companies from acquiring players. Then after a lot of discussion we decided that no player can have an agreement with a telecom and even if they go for other companies, they will have to take permission from the board. The objective was to get a sponsor. But will anyone come now? Shakib may have gotten 2-3 crores but we will lose at least 100 crores. So is the other players not affected by this? Does the board not get affected? He [Shakib] couldn't agree to that contract in any legal way.

Action heats up in Cox's Bazar

SPORTS REPORTER



Rajshahi Division were in a spot of bother against Rangpur Division as the defending champions were leading by just 56 runs with four wickets in hand in their second innings after the third day of the National Cricket League third-round match at the Sheikh Kamal International Stadium Academy ground in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

Resuming the day on 263 for six, Rangpur were all out after adding just 11 runs, with left-arm spinner Sunzamul Islam bagging three wickets for Rajshahi.

Rangpur however bounced back with the ball as Rajshahi kept losing wickets at regular intervals and ended the day on 129 for six, with Junaid Siddique top-scoring with 34. Spinners Sohrawardi Shuvo, Mahmudul Hasan and Tanbir Hayder picked up two wickets each for Rangpur.

At the nearby Sheikh Kamal International Stadium, Khulna were in commanding position, having amassed a lead of 200 runs with eight wickets in hand in their second innings against Dhaka Division after the third day.

Khulna had taken a first-innings lead of 55 runs as Dhaka were bundled out for 316 after resuming the third day on 206 for two. Despite a good start from the openers, apart from a top score of 72 from the in-form Saif Hasan, the Dhaka middle order totally collapsed to Khulna's spin duo of Mehedi Hasan and Abdur Razzak, who bagged four and three wickets respectively.

In reply Khulna lost opener Robiul Islam for a duck, but kept things steady with a 106-run second wicket stand between Anamul Haque and Imran Uzzaman before the latter departed for 66.

First-innings centurion Anamul remained unbeaten on 61 off 122 balls with six fours

SCORES IN BRIEF

RAJSHAHI V RANGPUR
RAJSHAHI: First innings 201 and second innings 129 for 6 (Shakir 29, Junaid 34; Suhrwardi 2-24, Mahmudul 2-21, Tanbir 2-23)
RANGPUR: First innings 274 all out (Mehedi 78, Naeem 54, Ariful 47, Nasir 62; Sunzamul 3-86, Iftekhar 2-59)
KHULNA V DHAKA DIV
KHULNA: First innings 371 and second innings 145 for 2 (Anamul 61 not out, Imran 66; Salauddin 1-17)
DHAKA: First innings 316 all out (Rony 73, Joyraz 51, Saif 72, Raqibul 56, Taibur 31; Razzak 3-72, Mehedi 4-92)
SYLHET V CHATTOGRAM
SYLHET: First innings 163 all out (Imtiaz 24, Zakir 21, Kapali 42; Mahmud 3-49, Irfan 6-57)
CHATTOGRAM: First innings 191 for 6 (Sadiqur 37, Pinak 100; Jayed 2-64, Enamul 2-35)

and a six and will look to press fume Khulna's advantage when they resume today on 145 for two.



PINAK GHOSH... 100

After the first two days were washed out at the Sheikh Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi it was an exciting day of cricket between Sylhet and Chattogram that included a century and a five-for as a total of 16 wickets fell.

It was Chattogram's right-arm seamer

Irfan Hossain who rattled through the Sylhet batting order, picking six wickets while fellow pacer Hasan Mahmud scalped three to bundle Sylhet out for a paltry 163. Skipper Alok Kapali's 42 was the highest score for Sylhet as none of the batsmen were able to make a significant contribution.

Chattogram despite losing wickets at regular intervals eventually took the first innings lead riding on Pinak Ghosh's maiden first-class hundred from Pinak Ghosh, who reached the feat off just 82 balls and hit sixteen fours and two sixes.

The left-hander was dismissed shortly after reaching his hundred as Chattogram ended the day on 191 for six. Pacer Abu Jayed and left-arm spinner Enamul Haque took two wickets each for Sylhet.

Meanwhile, the other third-round game between Barisal and Dhaka Metropolis in Bogura was abandoned for the third consecutive day due to rain and wet outfield.