

What the racism scandal of English cricket tells us



KAMAL AHMED

WHEN Indian-born Muslim cricketer Nasser Hussain captained the England team, no one could have imagined that after nearly two decades, the game would be facing a storm of this magnitude and compel the wider society to confront one of the most sensitive issues: racism. Over the years, England's cricketers of South Asian origin, like Monty Panesar, Ravi Bopara, Moeen Ali and Adil Rashid, who have all shown their on-pitch talents, never talked about racism. But since cricketer Azeem Rafiq's revelation about his sufferings and pain, the issue of racism has now become a subject of much bigger debate around race relations, Islamophobia and division in Britain today. The racial abuses he was subjected to include repeatedly being called a "pa*ki," and referred to by the name "Kevin," a dehumanising moniker for black and Asian players.

The racism scandal that engulfed the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has finally made them acknowledge that racism and discrimination is a "blight" on their game and they "apologise unreservedly." The apology came after a crisis meeting of the board and representatives from the Professional Cricketers' Association, Marylebone Cricket Club, the National Counties Cricket Association, and the First Class and Recreational County Cricket network. It followed a hearing of the parliamentary select committee on Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on November 16, 2021, where former Yorkshire cricketer

Azeem Rafiq alleged that English cricket was "institutionally racist." The select committee hearing, too, was held hurriedly amid weeks of turmoil over revelations by Rafiq about his harrowing experience at the Yorkshire County Club at subsequent cover-ups.

A joint statement issued after the meeting said: "Azeem Rafiq has shone a light on our game that has shocked, shamed and saddened us all." Making a commitment to publish a "tangible action plan," the statement said: "To Azeem and all those who have experienced any form of discrimination, we are truly sorry. Our sport did not welcome you, our game did not accept you as we should have done. We apologise unreservedly for the suffering you have faced."

Rafiq first spoke out in September 2020, prompting the club to open an investigation the following month. But according to the testimony given before the parliamentary select committee by the former chairman of the Yorkshire Club, Roger Hutton, though the investigation upheld seven of the 43 allegations made by Rafiq, the club's management decided against punishing anyone. It also refused to publish the full report of the investigation that led to further accusations of institutional racism in the club and in the wider arena of English cricket, as the ECB stayed away from intervening in the club's affairs.

The ensuing outrage was so widespread that the ECB's suspension of Yorkshire from hosting international matches at Headingley appeared to be an action too little too late. Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston issued a warning, saying that if the ECB does not "put its house in order" over racism, the UK government might take the "nuclear option" of creating an independent regulator.

Amid the racism scandal, the Independent



English cricketer Azeem Rafiq, who played for Yorkshire Country Cricket Club, gets emotional while recounting the racism he faced at the club in front of a parliamentary committee on November 16, 2021.

PHOTO: AFP

Commission for Equity in Cricket (ICEC), on November 9, made an appeal to potential victims of racism and discrimination to come forward with evidence. Media reports suggest that more than 1,000 people have contacted the commission within less than a fortnight. Few other former players of Yorkshire academy, too, have come forward to speak about alleged racist abuse they suffered at the club. Similar allegations of racist behaviour have emerged at Essex county club, warranting more investigations, and the prospect of more to come looms large.

Some grim statistics, too, came to the fore, which the ECB needs to look into with urgency. In England, the British-Asian community accounts for 30 percent of

recreational cricket at grassroots level, but only to see this drop to four percent at professional level. Another set of figures show that about a quarter of top-level players are members of the families of former cricketers, which critics say is reflective of elitism in the game, instead of talent.

Once again, businesses have shown extraordinary courage and stance against racism, which is similar to those actions taken during Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Yorkshire Club's primary sponsor Emerald Publishing and Yorkshire Tea announced that they were ending their deals with the club. Leisure club operator David Lloyd said his business had chosen not to reinstate its partnership, and Tetley's beer said its

sponsorship would not be extended beyond the end of the current contractual agreement. Yorkshire's kit supplier, global giant Nike, also announced that it would stop supplying kits. Losing so many sponsorships and the right to host international matches at its home ground, Headingley, forced the club management to step aside and welcome the new chairman from ethnic minority community.

Nasser Hussain, who currently works as a Sky Sports commentator, says that the problem is far more widespread than Yorkshire. In his *Daily Mail* column, he wrote: "[Racism] is prevalent throughout the game." Explaining the reasons for past silence, he wrote: "And it has not been picked up because it has become the norm. It's been a 'that's what we do' attitude and that has been allowed to fester for far too long. Those constant little digs and comments take their toll and the victims have just been forced to laugh it off because they have to fit in and conform."

The ongoing turmoil in English cricket over racism also reveals the helplessness of players in voicing their grievances against bullying, and the lack of accountability of their powerful bosses. We, in our country, can proudly say that we don't have any trace of racism, but can we claim that there is no bullying? Making players attend political campaigns or often subjecting them to public humiliation are not unheard of. And what about the accountability of cricketing bosses on issues like allegations of match-fixing in domestic leagues? Why does the national team's jersey carry sponsors' branding larger and more prominently than the national identity? Waiting for a whistle-blower is never a good idea for any organisation.

Kamal Ahmed is an independent journalist who writes from the UK. His Twitter handle is @ahmedka1

Chinese trade expos are gateways to export opportunities

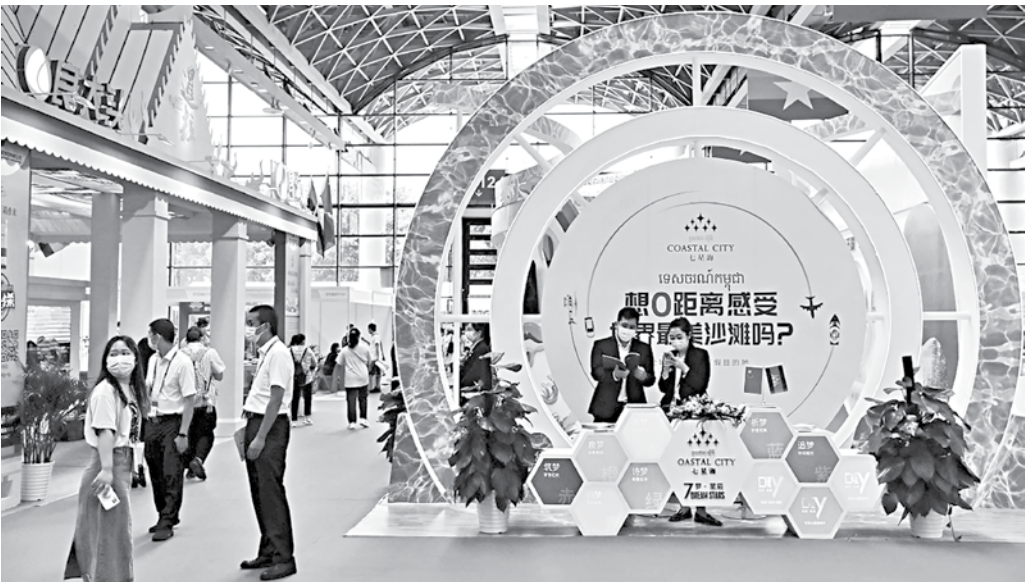
Bangladesh can take advantage of these expos to expand its export destinations

PARVEJ SIDDIQUE BHUIYAN

THE South Asian developing countries today face challenges of economic vulnerability due to the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change and the rise of serious geopolitical rivalry posed by emerging military groupings and showdowns. Simultaneously, a rising trend of trade protectionism, with new hidden barriers and deglobalisation in the global market, are restricting the ability of the economic and investment sectors to promote global trade sustainably. In this context, China's open door and cooperation policy offers some opportunities for the region's prosperity and development, resuming economic growth at a faster rate. In order to fulfil President Xi Jinping's pledge to turn the Chinese market into a market for the world—a market shared by all and accessible to all—China has taken a number of concrete steps in recent years, including an all-round opening-up strategy that allows foreign enterprises greater access to the domestic market, and a foreign investment law that ensures a business-friendly environment. At the same time, China has taken new steps to strengthen bilateral, multilateral, and regional cooperation by joining trade blocs such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), hosting a series of mega trade exhibitions and improving connectivity through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Of them, China Import and Export Exhibition (Canton Fair), China International Import Expo (CIIE), China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS), China-Asean Expo, China-South Asia Expo, Euro-Asia Economic Forum and Trade Cooperation Expo, Intertextile Shanghai Apparel Fabrics, and China Yangling Agricultural High-Tech Fair are all key exhibitions that will undoubtedly be of great significance to developing economies like Bangladesh. It is expected that Bangladesh's participation in these forums would open vistas of business opportunities and further enhance bilateral relations and cooperation.

According to government data, from January to July in 2021, the overall import-export volume between Bangladesh and China was USD 13 billion—a 58.9 percent increase year on year.



Visitors at the 18th China-Asean Expo in Nanning, the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, China on September 13, 2021.

PHOTO: CHINA DAILY

Despite the fact that bilateral trade favours China heavily, Bangladesh has enormous potential that has yet to be realised. Dr MA Razzaque, head of the Dhaka-based Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID), conducted a research that showed that Bangladesh could earn USD 25 billion if it could grab only one percent share of China's imports. It should be noted that China imported goods worth USD 2.4 trillion in the 2019-20 fiscal year, in which Bangladesh's share was highly insignificant—just 0.05 percent. In the next 10 years, China is expected to import a total of USD 22 trillion worth of goods. Hence, China's exposition platforms will provide a great opportunity for Bangladesh to explore the vast Chinese market and expand export opportunities, to bridge the bilateral trade gap and increase revenue.

Bangladesh's major export items—ready-made garment (RMG) products, leather goods, jute and jute goods, agricultural products, frozen and live fish, pharmaceutical products, plastic, sports goods, handicrafts, and tea—have a strong competitive edge in the international market. But its limited export destinations—mainly the US and the European Union—may

put Bangladesh in a more challenging position in future, especially as the US suspended the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) for Bangladesh in June 2013 and India imposed anti-dumping duty on the export of Bangladeshi jute goods in January 2017 for a period of five years. It should also be noted that there is no guarantee to get into the EU's GSP+ scheme on expiry of the EBA initiative, after Bangladesh officially graduates from the LDC group in 2026. Amid such looming economic uncertainty, the good news is that China has provided duty-free access to 97 percent of Bangladeshi products (a total of 8,256 products) from July 2020. The expos are important ways to learn about Chinese consumer preferences and to tap into the vast market. Participating in these expos, Bangladesh can display and popularise its flagship products and diversify its export destinations as a large number of buyers, entrepreneurs and companies from Europe, America, Australia, Southeast Asia, Middle East, and Africa will be in attendance there. For example, the China-Asean Expo (CAEXPO) could give Bangladesh trilateral trade expansion opportunities to enter markets in China as well as the Association of Southeast

Asian Nations (Asean), which has a combined population of two billion and a GDP of USD 18.5 trillion.

Bangladesh's development-first strategy, a 165-million-strong population, low-cost and skilled labour market, appealing geostrategic location, and investment-friendly policies make it an ideal investment destination. The country needs to highlight its vast investment potential and create confidence in a large number of foreign investors. It is noteworthy that Bangladesh is constructing high-quality infrastructures, such as power plants, bridges, highways, railways, and ports, in collaboration with China. The Bangabandhu Bangladesh-China Friendship Exhibition Centre (BBCFEC) was recently opened in Dhaka, to host export and sourcing fairs throughout the year, aiming at showcasing Bangladeshi products to new international markets.

In short, the expos offer a platform to understand the Chinese market and China's

development, as well as to make new links with consumers, companies, experts and different technologies which could lead to product specialisation and value addition in order to adapt to the conditions of China, a market with more than 1.4 billion people, over 400 million of whom are middle-income people. In this regard, China can provide technical assistance in framing policy positions and export-development strategies to help Bangladeshi products reach the Chinese market.

Like Bangladesh, other South Asian countries, too, can use the expos to promote their brands, build new trade images and expand their business opportunities in China and in the worldwide market. Along with economic and commercial gains, such platforms would forge stronger cultural cooperation too, which will further enhance the bilateral relations and promote partnerships for common prosperity.

Parvej Siddique Bhuiyan works at Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF).

QUOTABLE
Quote

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE
(1880 - 1918)
French poet

*Now and then
it's good to pause
in our pursuit of
happiness and just
be happy.*

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 Emmy winner
Alan
5 Beg
10 Field crop
11 Big wave
13 Easy run
14 Morphine, for one
15 Taking a sabbatical
17 Filmmaker Burns
18 Passed on
19 Quaint lodgings
20 Toe count
21 Poker payment
22 Forest makeup
25 Fury
26 Back
27 Crude abode

28 Stipulations
29 Ennui
33 Chart model
34 Queued up
35 Like come kicks
37 Wallet bills
38 Low cards
39 Corals
40 Wasn't thrifty
41 Whirlpool

DOWN
1 Cast member
2 Greene of "Bonanza"
3 Wry
4 Mammal with a long snout
5 Shown to be true
6 Ran easily

7 Quarterback Manning
8 One way to serve chicken
9 Cold War easing
12 Jeremy of "The Avengers"
16 Pro votes
21 Serengeti grazer
22 Camera support
23 Purifies
24 Lessens the pressure
25 Mystique
27 Truthful
29 46th president
30 Had a feast
31 Without break
32 Unkempt
36 Bar cubes

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS
M A D D E R C A R E P
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T I M E S N O M A D
S E A S S O N A T A
S A S Q U A T C H
C O G U N D O
A M E L I A P E L T
S A L A D L I V E R
A L E S F A C A D E
L I S T A C A D I A
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PROCUREMENT & LOGISTIC SUPPORT DIRECTORATE
REF: DACPF/INT'L TENDER & RE-TENDER/010 &005/2021-2022 & 2019-2020 DATED: 22-NOV-2021

INTERNATIONAL TENDER
Sealed tender are hereby invited for supplying following items to Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd.

S/N	TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION	QTY
01.	DACPF/INT'L TENDER/ 010/2021-2022 DT. 22-NOV-2021.	2/3 TRAY MAT NON SKID (AS PER SPECIFICATION)	10,00,000 EA
02.	DACPF/INT'L RE-TENDER/ 005/2021-2022 DT. 22-NOV-2021.	EYCL DISP. HEAD SET (AS PER SPECIFICATION)	4,80,000 EA

Tender schedule with detailed specifications, terms & conditions will be available at price of BDT. 2,500.00 (BDT two thousand five hundred) only or equivalent US Dollar per set (non-refundable) from Manager Accounts, Cash & Banking, Balaka, Head Office, Kurmitola, Dhaka and from Biman's outstation in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Dubai & London on cash payment during all working days up to 13-DEC-2021. A formal application in bidder's letterhead pad mentioning Tender Number and date shall be required for purchasing the Tender schedule. Tender schedule and other related information may also be viewed at Biman's website www.biman-airlines.com.
Last date for submission of tender/offer is: 14-DEC-2021 at 1100 hrs (LT).

Swapan Kumar Dey
Manager (Commercial Purchase)

GD-2126

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Govt. Shah Sultan College, Bogura
Sherpur Road, Banani, Bogura
Website: www.govssc.edu.bd

Memo No. gssc/bog/dgsp/cedp/2021/221 Date: 22/11/2021

e-Tender Notice 02/2021-2022
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following package:

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of works	Last date and time of tender security submission	Tender closing date & time
1.	629767	Supply and Installation of 40 KVA Diesel Generator	13 Dec 2021, 11.30	13 Dec 2021, 14.00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted.
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.
The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks' branches up to 13 Dec 2021, 11.30am.
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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GD-2127