

‘If there is forgery, Shohag did it individually’

SPORTS REPORTER

Absolving themselves of any blame, the top brass of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) formed a seven-member investigation committee to look into FIFA’s suspension of its general secretary, Abu Nayeem Shohag.

The decision to form the committee was made at an emergency meeting of the BFF executive committee yesterday, three days Shohag was suspended from all kind of football activities for two years “for having used false and/or falsified documents to justify payments made by the BFF with FIFA funds”.

It was also decided that Shohag would not get any further opportunities to work at the BFF.

The probe committee members are the federation’s four vice-presidents – Kazi Nabil Ahmed, Imrul Hasan, Ataur Rahman Bhuiyan Manik, Mohiuddin Mohi – and three executive committee members– Satyjit Das Rupu, Zakir Hossain Chowdhury and Ilias Hossain.

“We have made a seven-member special committee to inquire about the matter. Our internal audit committee will also work with the committee and place their report about what happened and why it happened within 30 days,” a gloomy BFF president Kazi Salahuddin told journalists after an hour-long meeting at the BFF House.

“We also did not like the thing that happened and we want to make sure it does not happen again in our lifetime. That was our meeting’s main concern,” said Salahuddin.

He was also unwilling to shoulder any of the blame. “My office had done wrong, which was proven. But I can’t see everything like a clerk. It is a general thing; FIFA banned him for misusing his power. There is no blame to share,” said the BFF boss.


BFF protocol chief and personal assistant to the BFF president, Emran Hossain Tushar, will be acting general secretary for three-six months until a new general secretary is appointed.

BFF Finance Committee chairman Abdus Salam Murshedy claimed there were no complaints against his committee. He maintained that Shohag’s issue was regarding non-compliance.

“The report [FIFA investigation] didn’t mention any grievances about the finance committee, which has shown a great improvement in the recent past,” Salam said. “There is no corruption mentioned in the FIFA report, but here proper compliance was not maintained while making purchases.”

Replying to query, he said: “If there is forgery, he [Shohag] did it individually. We, the finance committee, will not take any blame. We have also decided that Shohag won’t get any opportunity to work here in future.”

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Everyone in the BFF was more keen to impress the president [Kazi Salahuddin] but nobody worked to save football in Bangladesh. They were always busy with all these. I think those accused should immediately resign with dignity. And, definitely the BFF president should be accountable for that [FIFA’s ban on BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag]. He [Salahuddin] always tried to come up with surprises by announcing heavy prize money but the fact is football in the country is declining day by day.

Sheikh Mohammad Aslam, former captain of Bangladesh football team, said during an episode of The Daily Star’s multimedia programme ‘Star Special’ on Monday.



Rugpanj Tigers' Shamim Hossain, who hit a fifty in their 56-run win over Brothers Union in Mirpur yesterday, takes a drinks break as the current heatwave sweeping the country takes a toll on players in the ongoing Dhaka Premier League. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

No respite in sight for sweltering DPL players

SPORTS REPORTER

Imagine yourself, if you may, attending a Dhaka Premier League game at Mirpur, Fatullah or the BKSP at 10:00am. The sweltering heat shows no respite even to those sitting in the stands, but for the players it has become an arduous task. There has been no rain to speak of around Dhaka, with temperatures rising as the day progresses.

On Sunday, Nasir Hossain and Mushfiqur Rahim were at the crease for Prime Bank against Agrani Bank in chase of 274. The pair put on 111 runs for the fourth wicket with Nasir eventually taking his side to victory with a ton while Mushfiqur struck a fifty before falling in the 39th over.

The pair, batting under sweltering temperatures, were often seen splashing water on their face and head.

That has been the image of the ongoing DPL, being held in March-April and the heat is set to continue according to the forecast.

“The extreme heat is making life very difficult for everyone so you can imagine how difficult it is for the cricketers. Pace bowlers are struggling the most. It’s tough for them to bowl more than three overs on the trot, which hampers the game plan,” one of the players said.

However, the clubs wanted this schedule since national team stars would be available. It is a double-edged sword, which the BCB president felt they could not do much about.

“It’s definitely (hot). In Kolkata, schools and colleges have been closed since yesterday. But the matches are on. The games did not stop. This heat is completely unexpected. We have never seen this before. It will definitely be on our minds. But I don’t think there is much that can be done about it,” Nazmul Hossain Papon told the media after a food distribution

programme for the less fortunate.

“Nobody wants to play without national cricketers. It is very difficult to find the time. Eventually, we have to accept that the Premier League will have to be played without national-team players. The schedules can’t be moved if the clubs don’t want to play without the national players.”

The Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) discussed pushing back the dates, so as to escape the heat wave for the Super League phase.

The CCDM chairman informed that the original schedule prescribed was to begin matches in February instead of the actual start date of March 15. “If that was done, the tournament would have ended by now.”

CCDM said they would try to talk about scheduling again.

“We always ask clubs why we need national players? We can keep our schedule and hold the tournament. But it’s difficult if the clubs don’t agree. Next season we will try to change things since it’s impossible to play like this,” he said.

As the DPL takes a hiatus for the Eid vacations, Gazi Group became the sixth side to reach the Super League. They will have a short respite, but players and clubs will need to adapt in some way when the tournament returns.

‘They don’t know which way it’s going to spin’

EKUSH TAPADER

Jake Lintott has been instrumental for Mohammedan Sporting Club in the ongoing Dhaka Premier League. The English left-arm wrist spinner played a pivotal role in the Black and Whites qualifying for the Super League stage following a lousy start – that included four defeats in first five outings.

With 17 wickets in six games at an average of 18.35, including a match-winning five-wicket haul against Brothers Union, Lintott once again proved the importance of having a wrist spinner in the squad – something that the Bangladesh team know very well after spending more than decades without a proper wrist spinner in their ranks.

“They [batters] don’t really know which way it’s spinning and they’re finding it hard to read. So yeah, I’ve had lots of success with bowling googlies, leg-spin, sliders and mixing it up is making things difficult for batters,” Lintott explained why he had success in Bangladesh.

According to the 29-year-old, the captains and coaches in the country should be more patient with the young wrist spinners to allow them to master the difficult art.

“I think, as a whole in Bangladesh, they’re crying for wrist spinners as club batters struggle against such bowlers. So, if the Bangladeshi players, and the coaches and captains, could be more patient with young wrist spinners, then they’ll have more of an impact and get more opportunities,” Lintott added. He also informed that as batters here are more used to playing against finger spinners, the option of a wrist spinner can make a huge difference in the domestic circuit.



Ancelotti returns to crumbling Bridge

AFP, Madrid

Less than a fortnight ago, Chelsea owner Todd Boehly picked up the phone and called Blues great Frank Lampard to come back and try to steady the ship, with the team in shambles.

In another world, it might have been Carlo Ancelotti on the line to the American.

Instead, Ancelotti returns to Stamford Bridge dug-out strictly as an opponent, representing Real Madrid in the Champions League quarterfinal second leg clash on Tuesday.

It was Madrid president Florentino Perez who brought the Italian back for a second stint at the helm, after Zinedine Zidane walked away again in 2021.

Ancelotti’s Madrid picked off the Blues in the first game, carving out a 2-0 lead through Karim Benzema and Marco Asensio, and they could have added further goals as they controlled proceedings.

At the other end, former Chelsea duo Thibaut Courtois and Antonio Rudiger made important saves and blocks to leave Lampard’s side empty-handed.

Ancelotti’s return to Chelsea evokes warm memories of one of the finest ever Premier League sides, which he led to the club’s first ever league and FA Cup double in 2010, halcyon days in stark contrast to



the Blues’ recent slump.

The Italian’s Chelsea side featured big characters including Didier Drogba, John Terry, Michael Ballack and Lampard himself, and they racked up 7-0, 7-1 and 8-0 triumphs at the Bridge as they strolled to domestic glory.

Chelsea’s current hodgepodge of players lacks both the leadership and quality of that group, as was laid painfully bare in their defeat at the Santiago Bernabeu last week.

Ancelotti said he hopes ‘Lampard does a fantastic job’, but the Italian will hope his coach is nowhere near as magnanimous on Tuesday under the lights in London.

Ancelotti was let go by then-owner Roman Abramovich in 2011, ending his brief but memorable two-season spell in charge. Madrid are aiming to win a record-

extending 15th Champions League, defending the title after their triumph over Liverpool last season, and looked streets ahead of the 2021 victors in the Spanish capital.

“I am ‘fantastic’ at managing but there are other things, because this team is well-trained,” said Ancelotti before the first leg.

“If we win the Copa del Rey, we will have won every title possible in two years and there are teams who won’t win that in their whole lives.”

Ancelotti has kept squad players like Dani Ceballos, Nacho Fernandez and Asensio both hungry and helpful, with the latter netting again at Cadiz at the weekend. Most of them, anyway.

Former Chelsea star Eden Hazard has remained a fringe presence and his former fans will hope not to see him on Tuesday – if the Belgian appears, it will mean Madrid have clinched progression and the key players are getting rested.

Ancelotti, the 63-year-old, has lifted the trophy six times, twice as a player, and four times in the dug-out, recently observing he is approaching his 1,300th game as a coach.

His experience and stability are in stark contrast to Chelsea’s haphazard project, and on Tuesday they may help him highlight chasms where he once left silverware and memories.



Napoli’s Victor Osimhen is set to return for the second and decisive leg of their all-Italian Champions League quarterfinal with AC Milan, who hold a slender 1-0 lead in the tie. The Partenopei will rely heavily on Osimhen, the top scorer in Serie A, to find the finishing touch they missed in the first leg in order to progress further from their first-ever outing in the tournament’s last eight. PHOTO: NAPOLI