

Sports Adviser’s mild wake-up call for Faruque and Co

ASHEFAQ-UL-ALAM

Yesterday, the most important figure in the country’s sports administration at the moment, youth and sports Adviser Asif Mahmud, openly spoke about the ‘haphazard’ manner in which the top brass of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), headed by president Faruque Ahmed, is running its operation – a scenario that was technically impossible even a few months back.

“It’s true that it [BCB] is running in a haphazard way because many directors are not present,” Asif told the media in a press conference held at the secretariat yesterday, where he spoke about the many activities and achievements of the youth and sports ministry in the first 100 days of the interim government.

This scenario – the honcho of the sports ministry taking indirect jabs at the BCB top brass – was impossible before August 5, when the student-led people’s movement led to the fall of the Awami League government, as till then the top post of the sports ministry and the BCB was held by the same man – Nazmul Hassan Papon.

The former Awami League lawmaker Papon went into hiding after the change in government and his 12-year tenure as BCB president ended unceremoniously on August 21, with the National Sports Council (NSC) nominated director and former Bangladesh captain Faruque taking his place.

Faruque took charge of a BCB that was practically at a standstill with many



directors in hiding and rest unsure about what the future held for them.

It has been almost three months since then and although the board is accomplishing its routine work, the BCB overall still feels stagnant. The Faruque-led committee is yet to form any standing committees which has severely impacted the internal operations of the board.

There are currently only 12 board directors active in the BCB as on October 30, the board accepted the resignation of three directors and cancelled the directorship of 11, including Papon’s.

With no standing committees in place, the role of the board directors

seems unclear at the moment and Faruque, as board president, has become the impromptu leading figure in every department, which Asif pointed out as an issue.

“New directors have to be added following the constitution of the BCB. We face many challenges in doing that. The reformation work of sports bodies is still ongoing. After it’s completed, we can appoint new directors in a systematic manner. The matter of distributing departments of the BCB is still there. By doing so, we can further mobilise BCB’s activities,” the Adviser said.

Aside from that, Faruque is yet to

lay out a long-term plan for the board – keeping things running rudderless in the different sectors, including women’s cricket, age-level, and regional cricket.

Other than Faruque, the only other BCB director who has been a prominent presence in recent months is his fellow NSC-nominated director Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, who, on October 30, was named the convener of the BCB constitution amendment committee, which has not had any visible activity since.

Faruque’s most publicised activity since assuming control has been the removal of Chandika Hathurusingha from the position of Bangladesh head coach.

But the manner in which he showed Hathurusingha the door – suspending and sending him a show-cause notice for a disciplinary incident in last year’s World Cup without once speaking with the coach – felt less like an executive decision and more like an act of personal vendetta.

On October 30, before the third board meeting in his tenure, when reporters asked Faruque about the many issues of the board, he was almost dismissive and accused the media of being impatient, saying, “Yes, there are agendas [to be discussed in the board meeting], but the way you are asking, it’s as if five-six months have gone by.”

But now, it seems that it’s not just the media that is losing its patience, especially now that even the Sports Adviser addressed the fixer-upper that is BCB.

Changes aplenty for Portugal in Croatia trip

AGENCIES

With already a spot in the Nations League quarters confirmed, Portugal are set to make a host of changes on Monday when they visit Croatia, who still need a single point to be absolutely certain of their place in the knockout stages.

Portugal, who top the table with 13 points from four wins in five games, are on a high after dismantling Poland 5-1 in Porto in their previous group game. The game saw skipper Cristiano Ronaldo rewrite the history books even at the age of 39 – scoring a stunning overhead kick for his 910th career goal and also surpassing Sergio Ramos to become the player with the most international wins (132).

Coach Roberto Martinez has allowed a few of his stars in Ronaldo, Bernardo Silva, Pedro Neto, and Bruno Fernandes – who is suspended for Monday’s game anyway – to head back to their clubs early.

Sure to make an abundance of changes for Monday’s game, the Portugal boss could introduce the likes of Joao Felix, Joao Cancelo, and Vitinha into the Portugal XI.

Swiss face Spanish test

Meanwhile, Spain, already in the quarters, will be welcoming a struggling Switzerland in their final League A Group 4 game on Monday.

Group leaders Spain will provide a stern test to a Swiss side who are already relegated to League B.

Spain have scored 10 times and conceded just twice in their five matches in the section, winning each of their last four matches.

On the other hand, Switzerland have only ever beaten Spain on two occasions – a famous 1-0 victory in the 2010 World Cup and a win over La Roja in the 2022-23 UEFA Nations League.



Don’t see improvement under Cabrera, says Alfaz

ANISUR RAHMAN

With a month and a half left to Javier Cabrera’s extended contract, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is yet to take any decision whether to extend with the Spaniard or look for a replacement.

The national team management committee, headed by BFF president Tabith Awal, will analyse his performance over the last three years before taking a final decision but Mohammedan coach Alfaz Ahmed feels Cabrera has failed to turn Bangladesh into a team during his tenure.

“To be honest, he could not make Bangladesh a team, something George Kottan did during his two-year stint. That is why Bangladesh had emerged SAFF champions and then finished second in the following edition under Kottan,” Alfaz told The Daily Star.

“Can you show me a new player Cabrera brought that can represent Bangladesh in next four to five years? He could not find a striker to solve the goal-scoring problem of Bangladesh,” the former national striker said, further asking whether there was any



PHOTO: STAR

problem in fielding a good striker from the Bangladesh Championship League.

Former coach Jamie Day was dismissed due to deteriorating performances of the team, which was reflected in downward movement in FIFA ranking. The Bangladesh Football Federation and its former president Kazi Salahuddin had appointed Cabrera with a target of making progress in ranking through

improved performances on the pitch.

However, Cabrera could improve barely improve the team’s rankings in three years as his team won only eight out of 29 matches during this period, drawing six and losing 15 matches. The figures are quite similar to those under Day, who had helped Bangladesh win nine matches, draw five and lose 15 in 29 matches.

When Cabrera took responsibility,

Bangladesh’s FIFA ranking was 186 and it fell further to 192 in December, 2022. The Spaniard saw a bit of improvement as the team climbed to 184th at the end of the following year. The men in red and green moved up a place in February this year 2024 before slipping back to 185 in November.

Alfaz said that there is still no replacement for veteran defender Tapu Barman or midfielder Sohel Rana.

“It’s acceptable if you don’t get results initially but there must be signs of improvement. But unfortunately I did not see any such signs and still don’t see Bangladesh improving in the future under his guidance,” added Alfaz.

Alfaz also criticised the ambiguity of the Spaniard’s game plan during the last match against Maldives where he could not exploit his speedy wingers in absence of genuine striker.

Whether BFF retains Cabrera or not, the game’s local governing body must think about grooming technically and tactically sound players from grassroots level, instead of giving emphasis on the senior team if it really wants the team to climb up in ranking.

Martin wins first MotoGP world title

AFP, Barcelona



Spanish rider Jorge Martin claimed his first MotoGP world championship title after finishing third in the season-ending Barcelona GP on Sunday.

Defending two-time champion Francesco Bagnaia, who started the race 19 points behind Martin, took the chequered flag for the 11th time this season but it was not enough to wrest the title from the Spaniard.

“It sounds amazing,” said an emotional Martin after being addressed as a world champion for the first time.

“I don’t know what to say, I am completely shocked.

“This is for my people, for my family, for the people who are supporting me. I started crying at the end, it was a very emotional race. I hope we can keep improving and enjoy the moment.”

Martin, who will be leaving his Ducati satellite team Pramac for Aprilia next season, had made himself the favourite for the title with a remarkably consistent season.

He had only won three grand prix all season, but his third-place on Sunday was the 32nd time this season across the 40 sprints and grand prix that he made the podium.

After finishing third in Saturday’s sprint he knew he had only to finish in the top nine to secure the title.

Seven-star Germans’ ‘good fun’

AGENCIES

Germany dismantled visitors Bosnia and Herzegovina 7-0 – the heaviest in the six-year history of the Nations League – on Saturday with two goals apiece from Florian Wirtz and Tim Kleindienst to secure top spot in their Nations League group A3 with a game to spare.

The Germans, who had already qualified for next year’s quarter-finals of the competition, are on 13 points with Netherlands in second place on eight, and are eager to re-establish themselves as an international force ahead of the 2026 World Cup.

“It was good fun tonight. After a couple of goals, we did the work defensively and then everything came together offensively. The more that happens, the more fun we have on the pitch,” German attacker Jamal Musiala told UEFA’s website.

Musiala opened the floodgates after two minutes with a header before Kleindienst scored his first goal for Germany in the 23rd minute and Kai Havertz made the game safe eight minutes before the break, slotting home after a slick one-two with Florian Wirtz.



Wirtz then made it four on 50 minutes with a sublime swerving free-kick from wide on the left, before doubling up seven minutes later.

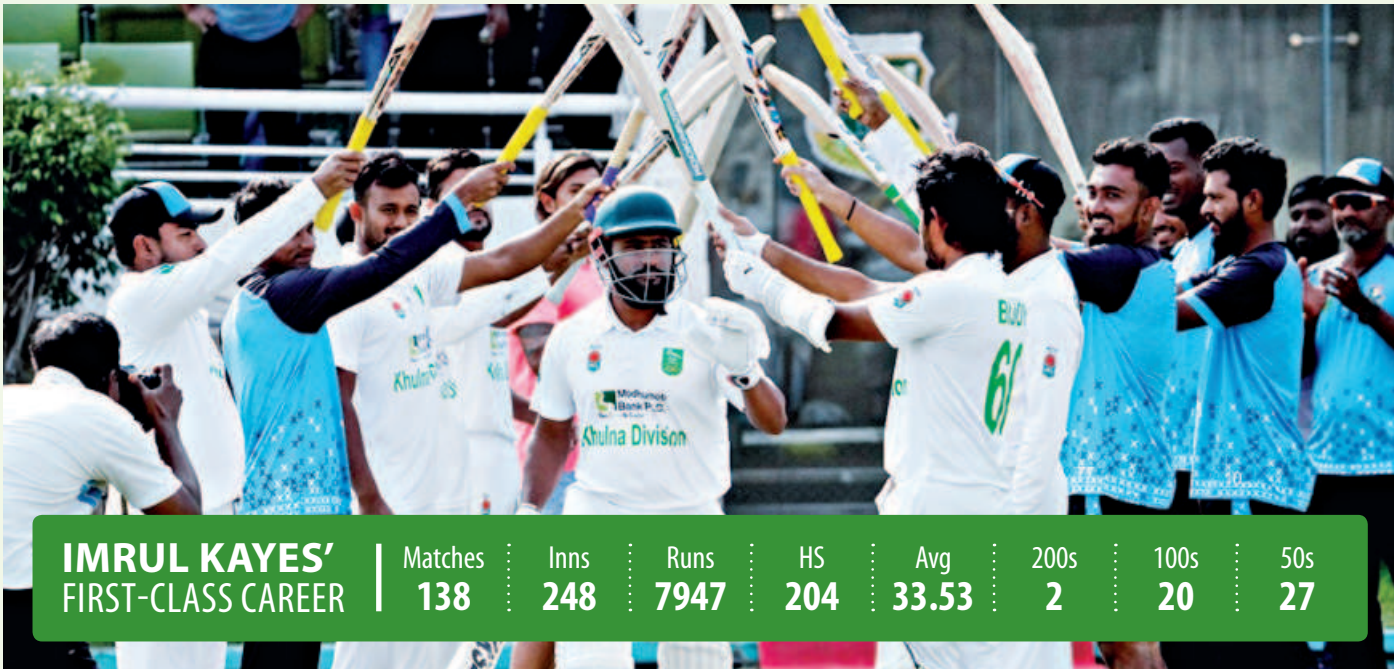
Substitute Leroy Sane scored Germany’s sixth in the 66th minute and Kleindienst completed the rout just over 10 minutes from time..

Meanwhile, Netherlands outclassed Hungary with a 4-0 victory in their winner-takes-all encounter. Netherlands and Hungary went into the match tied on five points each and with the winner set to join Germany in ensuring their progress from Group A3 to the quarterfinals.

First-half penalties by Wout Weghorst and Cody Gakpo sent the Oranje on their way, before Denzel Dumfries and Teun

Koopmeiners made the game safe in the second period. The match at the Johan Cruyff Arena was briefly interrupted in the seventh minute following a medical emergency on the Hungarian bench as assistant coach Adam Szalai received treatment after fainting. Szalai, 36, was stretchered off and the Hungarian FA later released a statement saying he was “conscious” and in a “stable condition” at an Amsterdam hospital.

END OF IMRUL’S RED-BALL CAREER



IMRUL KAYES’ FIRST-CLASS CAREER

Matches	Inns	Runs	HS	Avg	200s	100s	50s
138	248	7947	204	33.53	2	20	27

PHOTO: BCB

A very familiar figure in Bangladesh’s cricket, Imrul Kayes played his final red-ball game yesterday, ending a 17-year-long career. The swansong of Kayes, once a regular face even in the national team, did not go as well as he would have expected. The Khulna Division batter lasted only two deliveries, scoring just a solitary run in his final innings on Day 2 of a fifth-round National Cricket League (NCL) game against Dhaka Division at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. He scored 16 in the first innings of the game.

Imrul also made his first-class debut against Dhaka Division in an NCL game back in 2007.

Imrul scored his maiden first-class double ton in 2014 when he made 204 for South Zone against North Zone in a Bangladesh Cricket League game.

His second came five years later when he scored an unbeaten 202 for Khulna Division in an NCL game against Rangpur Division.