

Faruque to stay or step away?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh cricket is going through a turbulent period both on and off the field as the men's team's disappointing defeat to Pakistan in the first T20I in Lahore on Wednesday was followed a day-long drama yesterday over the presidency of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) with Faruque Ahmed's position at the helm now looking more vulnerable than ever.

The rumours of a change in presidency was circulating ever since former Bangladesh skipper Aminul Islam Bulbul returned to the country on Monday and it gained further wind yesterday when Bulbul told The Daily Star that he has accepted a proposal from the sports ministry to become the next BCB president.

"I was offered the role a few days ago. I've been asked to come in. I don't know yet what the process will be," Bulbul said.

Bulbul's confirmation came a day after Faruque was reportedly asked to step down by sports advisor Asif Mahmud.

But despite mounting pressure, Faruque, who took over the BCB presidency on August 21 after being nominated as a board director by the National Sports Council (NSC) following the exit of ex-president Nazmul Hassan Papon, said that he will not resign.

"I'm not thinking about stepping down for the time being. Nobody has



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Cumilla Modern High School cricket team celebrate as luck smiled on them and handed them the title of the Prime Bank National School Cricket Tournament 2024–2025. The final between Cumilla Modern and Police Lines School & College Bogura was scheduled to be held at the Bashundhara Sports City Cricket Ground yesterday but persistent rain forced the outcome to be decided by a coin toss after the minimum required 20 overs and a Super Over decider got ruled out. The champions were awarded a cash prize of Tk 1.5 lakhs, while the runners-up received Tk 1 lakh.

Cracks apparent, what can Tigers do about it?

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

If Bangladesh's recent T20I showings suggest anything, it is that the Tigers are far from meeting the demands of the shortest format – particularly the ability to seize the initiative and shift momentum in their favor.

Liton Das and Co suffered a 37-run defeat in the first T20I of their three-match series against hosts Pakistan at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Wednesday – a result that added to the misery of a side that had endured a humiliating 2-1 defeat to an ICC associate nation, UAE, just a few days earlier.

Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium is known for producing run-fests, the type seen during the recently concluded Pakistan Super League (PSL). The 10th edition of the tournament featured several high-scoring contests at this venue, including the final in which the Lahore Qalandars chased down a 202-run target against the Quetta Gladiators to clinch their third league title.

The venue lived up to its reputation in the first innings when Pakistan batted, as the hosts posted 201 for seven.

However, Bangladesh fell flat in the very aspect where Pakistan thrived – getting bundled out for 164 runs, largely due to a lack of intent shown by the Tigers.

The Tigers faltered early, managing only 45 for two in the Powerplay, before the situation worsened as the innings progressed. The visitors scraped together just 81 runs for four wickets in the next 10 overs, effectively handing Pakistan the upper hand.

"Intent in T20Is has to be there. When you are chasing 200 runs, you can't let the required run rate go over 13. If you take the average to 13, it will be tough for you. If you lose one wicket, then there will be a new batter, and it will be tough for him," Bangladesh's spin coach Mushtaq Ahmed said after the opening match.

The lack of intent was clearly visible in the

mindset with which some batters approached the big run chase. Tawhid Hridoy managed only 17 runs from 22 deliveries, despite coming in during the fifth over of the innings – a contrast to how Pakistan skipper Salman Agha, Mohammad Haris, Hasan Nawaz, and Shadab Khan regained momentum with quickfire knocks in the middle after early setbacks.

Not only Hridoy, but even Liton and Tanzid Tamim threw their wickets away after settling at the crease. All of these point to one thing – the deficiency lies more in the Tigers' execution and ability than anywhere else.



"Tactically, we were less smart today," Mushtaq also admitted.

"The way Liton started, it seemed the game would be on our side. But [having to score] 13-14 runs per over is too much. So, as coaches, we need to speak to them and hopefully help them show better intent in the middle overs," he added.

It's probably unrealistic to assume that Bangladesh can bring changes in these areas overnight, but if they are to turn their fortunes around in this format and stay alive in this series with a win in the second T20I today, Mushtaq's words must get through to the Tigers.

SAARC players to get local status from next season

SPORTS REPORTER

Players from South Asian nations will be treated as local footballers for the upcoming 2025-26 season, decided Professional League Management Committee (PLMC) of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF).

An emergency meeting of the BFF executive committee held yesterday approved the PLMC's decisions.

"Other nations of South Asia, including India, are probably also going to implement this idea as per the suggestions of the South Asian Football Federation," PLMC chairman and BFF senior vice president Imrul Hasan told the reporters at BFF house.

The player registration window for the new season will run from June 1 to August 14, with the season kicking off on September 12 through a one-off Challenge Cup match.

The committee confirmed five competitions for the season: Challenge Cup, Federation Cup, Independence Cup, Super Cup, and Bangladesh Premier League.

Last season, clubs could register six foreign players, of whom four were eligible to play. This time, though, each club can sign five foreign players, but only three can feature in any given match. Clubs will be allowed to make in-game foreign player substitutions.

Asked if the new policy would reduce opportunities for Bangladeshi players, Imrul hasan replied, "We want to see it in an another and a more positive way: that Bangladeshi footballers will also have the opportunity to play in leagues beyond Bangladesh."



- Aminul Islam Bulbul confirmed that he has agreed to replace Faruque Ahmed as president of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) after being approached by the National Sports Council.
- Faruque told The Daily Star that despite mounting pressure, he is not thinking about stepping down, seeing no "valid reason" to do so.
- Eight out of nine board directors at the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) sent a letter of no confidence against Faruque to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, urging the ministry to take necessary legal steps to revoke his directorship.

given me a valid reason to do so," Faruque told The Daily Star on Thursday.

"Why should I leave when others continue in their positions? First, I need to know the actual reason. Second, I didn't take this role on my own, I was selected. Since I was brought here, I deserve to know what my crime is and why I should resign," he added.

Further drama unfolded yesterday evening when it was learned that eight BCB directors had sent a signed letter of no confidence on Farque's presidency to sports advisor Asif.

The letter was signed by directors Nazmul Abedeem Fahim, Fahim Sinha, Mohammad Saiful Alam Swapon Chowdhury, Ittekhhar Rahman Mithu, Mahbub Anam, Kazi Inam Ahmed, Manjur Alam and Mohammad Salahuddin respectively. Akram Khan was the only board director who did not sign it.

The letter cited that Faruque took an autocratic role in decision making which has not allowed the board to function properly.

The letter also cited inconsistencies in the recently-concluded Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) and accused Faruque of favouritism while appointing people within the board. Since Faruque came into board directorship through NSC, the directors asked the ministry to take the necessary legal steps to revoke his nomination.

Later, media reports suggested that Faruque was considering legal steps and said that there is no jurisdiction for no confidence in BCB constitution.

All this drama surrounding the presidency is escalating the risk of an ICC suspension. The global cricket governing body has suspended Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka in the recent past citing government interference and it remains to be seen how ICC views what's currently happening in BCB.

The developments also append to the chaos in Bangladesh cricket no matter which way the tide turns.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Cole Palmer showed his quality, changing the complexion of the game with two assists, as Chelsea roared back after conceding first to beat Real Betis 4-1 to win the UEFA Conference League in Wroclaw on Wednesday. After a dismal first-half in which an early goal from Abde Ezzalzouli gave Betis the advantage, Chelsea turned things around in the second-half, with goals from Enzo Fernandez, Nicolas Jackson, Jadon Sancho, and Moises Caicedo. Chelsea are now the first club to win the full set of five UEFA club tournaments -- the Champions League, Europa League, Conference League, Super Cup and the now-defunct Cup Winners' Cup.

Nat'l Junior Athletics begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Athletics Federation (BAF) is mulling over selecting athletes for the 3rd Asian Youth Games from the 39th National Junior (Age-Group) Athletics Championships, set to get underway at the National Stadium today.

Athletics is one of 13 disciplines in which Bangladesh will participate at the upcoming Asian Youth Games from October 22-31 in Bahrain, and BAF has decided to pick the athletes from the U-16 group, as the junior athletics championships will also feature another category – U-18.

"We have decided to pick the best performers of the championships for the upcoming Youth Asian Games and then train them with the help of the Bangladesh Olympic Association," BAF general secretary Shah Alam told reporters at a press conference yesterday.

Some 500 athletes from different districts, divisions, educational boards and BKSP are expected to vie for 42 events – 14 events for U-16 boys and girls, and 28 events for U-18 boys and girls.

However, the throwing events of the championship will take place at the outer stadium in a bid to preserve the newly laid grass ground of the National Stadium ahead of Bangladesh's Asian Cup Qualifiers tie against Singapore on June 10.

BAF also decided to provide cash awards to the gold, silver and bronze winners – Tk 3,000, Tk 2,000 and Tk 1,000, respectively – while each athlete will also receive an additional Tk 10,000 for setting a national record under the electronic timer.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Mirra Andreieva showcased her claycourt prowess once again at Roland Garros, battling past Ashlyn Krueger 6-3, 6-4. The 18-year-old Russian, a semifinalist last year, overcame an early deficit with smart shot selection and composure. Avenging a US Open loss, she said, "I suffered, but stayed calm. I pushed myself to fight until the end."

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