

## Stay order reshapes polls field

SPORTS REPORTER

A fresh twist has surfaced in the upcoming Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) election yesterday after a High Court bench issued a stay order on former president Faruque Ahmed's writ petition challenging the inclusion of 15 clubs in the board of directors' election, scheduled for October 6.

The bench of Justice Khizir Ahmed Choudhury and Justice Syed Hasan Zobair also issued a rule, asking why the inclusion of these clubs should not be declared illegal given allegations of corruption against them.

"These clubs are currently under investigation by the Anti-Corruption Commission; therefore, the court stayed their inclusion," Deputy Attorney General Ershadul Bari Khandaker told The Daily Star, added that while they cannot vote in the upcoming polls, they may appeal to the chamber court against the order.

The 15 clubs, absent from the draft but later added to the final voter list after EC hearings, now face a race against time to appeal before election day, with holidays and court closures leaving only extraordinary measures as their hope.

**Club candidates may withdraw nominations**

The stay order also prevents Israfil Khosru of Axiom Cricketers and Iftekhar Rahman Mithu of Vikings Cricket Academy from contesting, despite both having purchased nomination forms under Category-2, where 12 directors are to be elected.

"I'm really surprised this happened again," Mithu said, hinting that more club candidates may withdraw their forms in protest at what he termed a "mockery election".

Chief election commissioner Mohammad Hossain said his office was not yet formally aware of the court order but stressed they must "proceed by law".

Hossain confirmed that the nominations of S M Abdullah Al Fuad Redwan and Hasibul Alam had been approved after their hearings satisfied the commission. Redwan, councillor from Jamalpur District Sports Association, is now clear to contest in Category-1 Dhaka Division alongside sitting board president Aminul Islam Bulbul and vice-president Nazmul Abedeen Fahim. Hasibul, representing Rajshahi Divisional Sports Association, will run from Rajshahi Division against three other candidates.

In contrast, the appeal of Md Sawkot Hossain, councillor of Chandpur District Sports Association and an aspiring director from Chattogram Division, was rejected due to "a dispute in the signatures", said the chief election commissioner.

Two directors will be elected from Dhaka Division and one from Rajshahi Division in the October 6 polls.

Hossain added that five appeals were heard on Tuesday; two were granted and three rejected. The final list of candidates will be announced today at 2 pm, while approved nominees may withdraw between 10 am and 12 pm the same day.



India's Amanjot Kaur (L) celebrates her half-century with Deepti Sharma during the opening match of the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup against Sri Lanka at the Barsapara Cricket Stadium in Guwahati yesterday. Amanjot's 57 and Deepti's 53 helped the hosts post 269 for eight in 47 overs in this rain-curtailed match after India were in a spot of bother, having been reduced to 124 for six in the 27th over.

PHOTO: AFP

## Yamal takes centre stage as Barca host PSG

STAR SPORTS DESK

Lamine Yamal, fresh off almost becoming the youngest Ballon d'Or winner at 18, will be the centre of attention when Barcelona host defending champions PSG in Wednesday's Champions League group-stage clash at the Olympic Stadium.

With the new Ballon d'Or holder, PSG star Ousmane Dembele sidelined through injury, the stage is clear for his Barcelona successor to stake an early claim for next year's crown. Yamal has already returned from a groin problem to inspire Barca's win over Real Sociedad at the weekend, a result that pushed them above Real Madrid in La Liga.

PSG, however, remain a daunting hurdle. The French champions have haunted Barcelona in recent years, knocking them out in the 2021 round of 16 and again in the 2024 quarterfinals, winning on both trips to Camp Nou.

Even so, the stakes are not as brutal under the competition's revamped group format. Both sides are also heavily weakened by injuries. PSG will miss captain Marquinhos, Dembele, Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Desire Doue, while Barcelona will be without goalkeeper Joan Garcia, winger Raphinha and long-term absentee Gavi.

"It's a different competition and we're playing against last season's best team. I loved what I saw from them last year," Barcelona boss Hansi Flick said on Tuesday. "It's a big challenge and we're looking forward to this match. We are Barcelona, and we like being favourites for the Champions League, but we know it



Since winning three straight Champions League games against PSG in 2014-15 -- all of which came under Luis Enrique - Barcelona have only won two of their last six meetings with the French side in the competition (D1 L3).

Robert Lewandowski has only scored one Champions League goal against PSG, netting for Bayern Munich in December 2017. His ratio of 450 minutes per goal against them is his worst versus any side in the competition.

takes a lot of work."

Flick also tried to keep the spotlight from burning too hot on Yamal. "I don't like this 'super' label. He's exceptional, but he's 18 and needs to focus on working hard. He has the talent to take another

step forward, but it's about effort and improving all aspects of his game, including defensively."

With 35-year-old Wojciech Szczesny expected to start in goal, Barca will lean on youthful flair and veteran stability.

## Tilak unlocks common sense

KHALID HOSSAIN

A rose in the battlefield: that's how Tilak Varma's innings felt.

As the Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Sunday pulsed with tension amid the politically charged theatre of the Asia Cup, a young player stood still in the storm, showing cricket's enduring principles could still survive spectacle and suspense alike.

Tilak walked in after India's chase of 147 began in turmoil. Their top order collapsed to 20 for three inside the Powerplay, with Pakistan's bowlers circling like wounded predators sensing overdue prey.

Yet his composure made the chaos recede -- a chaos feeding the revival narrative of Pakistan, who lost their last nine wickets for just 33 runs. In 53 balls, the southpaw scored an unbeaten 69, decorated with three boundaries and four sixes, forged not by force but judgment.

After Shivam Dube joined him at 77 for four, with required run rate going up, Tilak kept guiding his partner with steady presence. Near the crescendo, 10 runs were needed off the final over, and his towering six on the second delivery had all but sealed the fate of the game.

In the triumphant moment, Tilak became an ambassador of batsmanship, bridging modern aggression to the classical principles. India's No. 4 offered lessons beyond the runs and the corresponding strike rate: a study in technique and temperament.



Bangladesh cricket, in particular, must take note. The Tigers' own campaign in the UAE was a cautionary tale. In a virtual semifinal fixture against Pakistan, they collapsed in a chase of 136 as nerves overwhelmed skill and fundamentals were forgotten -- a far greater embarrassing batting than what preceded in their 169-run chase against India.

Wasim Akram, Sunil Gavaskar, and other legendary figures noted, what was missing was the very "basics" Tilak dumbed down for all to perceive, especially for young batters across cricket academies in the country. A masterclass worth revisiting over and over again, it also provided a minor but no-less-useful lesson.

After he went out to bat, Pakistan wicketkeeper Mohammad Haris verbally poked him in a non-English language which both teams understood: "This isn't Mumbai [Indians], and this isn't the IPL," said Haris. This could have rattled a youngster given the occasion.

However, the 22-year-old hailing from Hyderabad chose the only path approved by the so-called -- or what used to be -- gentleman's game. By letting the willow speak, he also reaffirmed the Indian Premier League's reputation in battle-hardening young talents.

Call it damage control at the end of the night, but Tilak -- like a chemist expert in titration -- did end up extracting a pure solution from a toxic mixture, sparing the spirit of cricket from further breaking bad, giving fans of the sport some scope to reflect on the refreshing, cricketing side of things.



Bangladesh captain Jamal Bhuyan leads the rest of the players as they make out of the pitch and into the dressing room of the National Stadium in Dhaka yesterday afternoon following a thunderstorm. The first training session of the team ahead of this month's Asian Cup Qualifiers fixtures against Hong Kong was cut short by the elements, with only a media briefing and warm-up session taking place.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



PHOTO: REUTERS

World number one Carlos Alcaraz of Spain celebrates with the Japan Open trophy after beating USA's Taylor Fritz 6-4, 6-4 in the final in Tokyo on Tuesday. However, the Spaniard then announced he was pulling out of this week's Shanghai Masters because of "physical issues".