

## BCB in turmoil as resignations mount, probe adds pressure

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Since returning from Melbourne in late March, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Aminul Islam Bulbul has remained active in board affairs even as growing internal instability has continued casting a shadow over his tenure.

On Saturday, Bulbul spent nearly nine hours in the fourth board of directors' meeting at the BCB headquarters in Mirpur and the following day, he visited the national team's practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium. Despite the outward appearance of routine operations, Bulbul's leadership is under increasing strain.

In recent months, seven board directors have resigned, with six stepping down within the last three weeks, of which four resigned following Sunday's meeting, highlighting deepening instability within the current administration.

Most outgoing directors cited personal reasons in their resignation letters, but while speaking to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, many of them cited a variety of causes including frustration over their limited influence, lack of consultation in key decisions and feeling excluded due to not having political backing.

"It's not just one issue. There have been consistent problems in how we operate. Changes are made in departments without consultation, whether by the president or others. If we are not informed, what is our role?" one of them said.

However, the question remains whether uncertainty surrounding the future of the current board and internal political dynamics influenced the directors' decision to step aside.



Adding to Bulbul's concerns is a probe report submitted yesterday by a five-member investigation committee, led by retired Supreme Court justice AKM Asaduzzaman, to the National Sports Council (NSC). The committee was formed by NSC on March 11 to investigate alleged irregularities in last year's BCB elections.

"We submitted a neutral report without accusing anyone. It objectively analyses the election process and includes recommendations for ensuring smoother elections and necessary reforms," Asaduzzaman said.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Aminul Haque said the government would consult the International Cricket Council (ICC) before taking further steps. "The report was submitted this morning. We have already held an inter-ministerial meeting to discuss its findings. We will inform the ICC and then decide our next course of action," he told reporters at BKSP.

With mounting resignations, internal discontent, and the implications of the probe report, the BCB finds itself at a critical juncture and the coming weeks are likely to be decisive for both the board and its president. Bulbul, however, is ready to see the matter to the end, declaring in a recent interview that amidst this exodus of directors, "I will be the last person to go."

# 'Plenty of time left for politics, not much for cricket'

**Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, a former Member of Parliament in the ousted Awami League government, has not returned to the country following the fall of his party in August 2024. However, the current State Minister for Youth and Sports, Aminul Haque, mentioned that the 39-year-old cricketer – who is now staying with his family in New York – would be welcomed back once he is able to clear all legal hurdles. In an exclusive phone interview with The Daily Star's Ekush Tapader, Shakib spoke openly about his desire to return to the country, his political standpoint, and many other issues. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:**

**The Daily Star (DS): Having been out of the country for almost two years, how much do you miss home?**

**Shakib Al Hasan (SAH):** Naturally, when someone is unable to go to his own country, he is bound to miss it. I am no exception; I miss the country immensely. I hope to return soon, and it will certainly feel great when that happens.

**DS: What is the probability of you returning to Bangladesh?**

**SAH:** I am hopeful. The legal processes have begun. If I can resolve things as quickly as possible... otherwise, it might take time. But I am trying my best to settle these issues quickly. The faster these matters are resolved, the sooner I can return.

**DS: Are you in communication with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) or the Ministry of Youth and Sports?**

**SAH:** From what I know, communication (with the Sports Ministry) is happening through BCB. I haven't had any direct contact. As for the BCB, sometimes there is communication, and sometimes there isn't. So, I am trying to handle everything on my own.

**DS: What is your desire – returning to international cricket or retiring after playing a farewell match?**

**SAH:** That is actually secondary. My first priority is returning to the country. I have seen in interviews and comments from the BCB and others that they want me to come and play. But since a legal process is ongoing, these things cannot just be said verbally; the issues must be resolved for me to return. Since I am far away, it would have been easier for me if the BCB had handled these matters on my behalf. I am not saying they haven't done anything at all, but if it had been done a bit better, there would have been a possibility of a quicker solution. Since that didn't happen and I am being delayed, I am doing my level best to find a solution.

**DS: In what way would it have been easier if the BCB had stepped in?**

**SAH:** If the legal processes were handled through the BCB, things could have been resolved much faster. Perhaps it isn't possible to do it that way. Since it is my matter, I have to do it myself. As I said, I will request [BCB] for any necessary help.

**DS: There is currently a sort of instability within the BCB. Is it becoming difficult for you to maintain communication in this situation?**

**SAH:** I am not communicating with any specific individual; I am maintaining contact with the BCB as an institution. It doesn't matter who is there or who will come; rather, I am communicating with that specific post or chair.

**DS: Have you spoken with your teammates about the current state of the Bangladesh team and not getting to compete in the World Cup?**



PHOTO: STAR

**SAH:** Yes, I talk to many of them. Many call me, and we talk. Not playing in the World Cup is definitely disappointing. The BCB cannot really speak against the decision the government took at that time. Because of the then government's decisions, Bangladesh could not play in the World Cup.

**DS: As a former captain, how do you view the suspension of the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) and the conflict between the board and the clubs?**

**SAH:** One thing I understand is that the only victims here are the players; no one else is suffering. I don't think anyone has the desire to understand the players' pain. Everyone is actually busy with their own power struggle and is using the players as tools... The biggest issue is that not playing the DPL is having a big impact on players' personal and financial lives.

**DS: So, are the players helpless?**

**SAH:** The players really have nothing to do. Suppose I am a club owner and I say I won't play. What can you do? If you are the BCB, at most you can request. Whatever everyone is doing, they are doing it to grab power. The BCB has a role to play here. It takes two to tango; it is happening from all sides. If there isn't sincerity to start the game, I don't see any chance of the league happening. The relationship has reached a point where it doesn't seem like anything will happen easily – unless it goes through the legal route.

**DS: You have been playing in franchise leagues. How much longer do you want to continue playing?**

**SAH:** My interest in the game is still as it always has been. The day I see that the interest is no longer there, I will step away.

**DS: You entered politics but couldn't work for long. Do you think you will be able to resume your political career?**

**SAH:** Politics can be done until death; there is plenty of time for politics. What I don't have a lot of time left for is cricket. I am trying to fix that first. As for politics, I believe it is a great platform from which significant changes can be brought. If I can do something for the people, I will feel good about it, and I still have that hope. I always will. Situations don't remain the same forever; they change. I hope a normal situation will return in the future where all parties will get equal opportunities and the people will decide who they want.

**DS: How do you view the current situation in Bangladesh?**

**SAH:** A new government has come, regardless of how it came. Immediately upon arrival, they face a massive challenge. At this moment, I feel their biggest responsibility is to work together with everyone. There is a difference between saying and doing. If they can work with everyone, Bangladesh can be freed from its problems. Although it is a global crisis, Bangladesh's crisis is even more severe than other countries – it is in the front row of crises. Here, everyone should work together. It is the responsibility of the politicians to bring back a sense of relief to the people of Bangladesh. I don't believe relief will return by pushing anyone away. And this doesn't happen in a democratic process either. I hope everything will be resolved soon.

**DS: How do you view Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's urge for professional athletes to stay away from politics?**

**SAH:** Look, I believe every citizen of Bangladesh has their own opinion on this matter. The Prime Minister has said what he felt was right from his position. It is his personal opinion, and I respect that.

**DS: How are you spending your time nowadays?**

**SAH:** Now it is just about giving time to the family. Spending time with family and getting the opportunity to think about the future – you could say that's a positive side in one way. Since our party doesn't have activities, I am trying to continue playing cricket. When the party activities start or we are able to do them, I might try to do politics again.

**DS: Compared to the previous Sports Adviser's harsh stance, is the current Sports Minister's flexible attitude making your path back to the country easier?**

**SAH:** I cannot say; we will understand whether it was easy or difficult while overcoming the legal hurdles. If I personally overcome the legal hurdles, then nothing else remains. I hope everything stays flexible. The main point is to overcome the legal obstacles. You are all seeing that the cases filed against me have no evidence, no basis – everyone is saying this. This has also come up in various news media. In Bangladesh, the system can wrap it up quickly or take a long time. It is a matter of goodwill. Just because you were attacked doesn't mean you should attack me too – I don't think that's right. If this continues, no change will come to the country. But I hope, the current government, which has been operating for a short period, will look at things neutrally, and those who are innocent will get proper justice. And it will happen within the fastest time. We must get out of the mindset that just because someone suffered before, others must be made to suffer now.

**DS: Even if you cross the legal hurdles, the ones who oppose you might want to obstruct you.**

**SAH:** No one in the world has everyone in favour of them. Despite everything, one has to move forward; everyone has to live together in a country. As we all are citizens of Bangladesh, we all will have to live together.

**DS: Would you like to say something about those killed during the July movement?**

**SAH:** No death is ever desirable; every death is painful. Every life is precious. I have said this many times before. I want a proper and impartial investigation into every incident to ensure justice. But no one should be falsely implicated.

**DS: Have the bitter experiences or controversies of the last few years brought any change to your thinking?**

**SAH:** People learn from mistakes; they keep learning. From that perspective, I am being able to learn even more new things.



## Barca go seven points clear in LaLiga

Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski came off the bench to score a lucky late winner in a 2-1 victory away to 10-man Atletico Madrid on Saturday that moved the defending champions seven points clear of Real Madrid at the top of LaLiga. Barca had plenty of motivation after Real's 2-1 loss at Mallorca earlier on Saturday, but it was the hosts who took the lead six minutes before the break through Giuliano Simeone. The visitors responded with a Marcus Rashford goal three minutes later and Atletico had Nico Gonzalez sent off on the stroke of halftime. Lewandowski was in the right place to net a fortunate rebound three minutes from time.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK



## Saints dump out Gunners in classic FA Cup upset

Southampton produced a classic FA Cup upset, knocking out Premier League leaders Arsenal with a 2-1 win in the quarterfinals at St Mary's yesterday. Ross Stewart gave the hosts a 35th-minute lead before Viktor Gyokeres equalised midway through the second half, with Mikel Arteta's side looking the likelier winners. But a late counter on 85 minutes saw Shea Charles strike to seal a memorable giant-killing. Wearing a special yellow kit to mark 50 years since their 1976 FA Cup triumph over Manchester United, Southampton advanced to the semis alongside Manchester City and Chelsea. The defeat, following their EFL Cup final loss to City, leaves Arsenal's quadruple hopes over, with only the Premier League and Champions League remaining.



PHOTOS: REUTERS

## 66 DAYS TO GO

**Asia's first quarterfinalists**

In the 1966 World Cup, North Korea scripted one of the tournament's most memorable underdog stories, becoming the first Asian side to reach the quarterfinals. Their defining moment came in the group stage, where they stunned Italy with a famous 1-0 win, sending shockwaves through the tournament. In the quarters against Portugal, the fairytale soared as North Korea raced into a remarkable 3-0 lead but the dream unravelled just as quickly. Portugal mounted a stunning comeback to win 5-3, ending North Korea's historic run.

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