

Atahar Ali optimistic about Bangladesh's cricket future

Asif Khan

One of the finest cricketers of Bangladesh's pre-test era Atahar Ali Khan was in Sydney recently to attend an annual ICC award ceremony. The local cricket



enthusiasts and organizers took this opportunity to meet the handsome ex-cricketer, who is at present one of the four national cricket selectors of Bangladesh cricket team, at a restaurant in North Parramatta on the 14th of October (Friday). Organized by Dr. Sharif-ud-Dowla (Tapu), the informal gathering was

attended by Nazmul, Maghfur Chowdhury, Abu Chowdhury Duke, Zico, Saiful Chowdhury, Nawshad Shah, Rafiq Hasan, Fida Haq and Asif Khan.

Atahar keenly spoke to those who were present there about the present status and future of Bangladesh's cricket. He was very much optimistic about present domestic cricket structure which he thinks is the breeding ground for future test cricketers. Different age level cricket tournaments are organised all across the newest test playing nations. It helps cricketers to move up the ladder and be ready for test cricket. It also aids in the hunting for talented cricketers in different corners of the country. Atahar was full of praise for the Under 19 side. It may be mentioned that in a recent trip to Australia, the Bangladesh Under 19 team won all the matches including the ones against the Australian Under 19 and tied one match. Atahar, however, feels that though Bangladesh excels at age level cricket, often the jump to the test level is hard for most cricketers. Corporate league is the newest addition in the local domestic cricket fixture. Players are now more assured about their future as they work for different companies and represent them in the corporate league.

Atahar sought help from the Bangladeshi community in Australia to arrange stints with local cricket clubs for the budding cricketers so that they get exposure and match experience in different conditions. He was also of the opinion that the community can finance to set up indoor stadiums in different parts of Bangladesh and can send cricket equipments like bowling machines. It would help the spread of

cricket in Bangladesh and ensure that cricketers can practise round the calendar. Dr. Dowla said that he would do his best to look into these issues.

In answer to a question of a local budding cricketer Zico (Randwick Raiders), Atahar mentioned that promising Bangladeshi cricketers playing in club/grade cricket in Australia have to prove themselves in Bangladesh's domestic cricket before they can be considered for selection to play for the country. Even South African born star cricketers Kevin Pieterse, Atahar said, had to play well consistently for a few years before he was considered for England team. Atahar, however, sent a message to Zico and other budding cricketers here not to lose heart and encouraged them to work hard in order to represent their native country.

Atahar is the first Bangladeshi player to receive the man of the match award in one day internationals when he scored 78 not out against Sri Lanka in the 1990. He had already quit cricket when Bangladesh was granted test status in 2000. He was a right handed upper order batsman and a useful right arm medium pace bowler. He scored 532 runs in 19 one day matches at an average of just under 30 with 3 fifties. His biggest disappointment in cricket is not being selected for the Bangladesh team for the World cup in 1999. Besides being a selector, Atahar Ali is also involved in cricket as a respected international commentator.



From left: Nawshad, Asif, Zico, Dr. Dowla, Atahar Ali, Maghfur Chowdhury, Abu, Nazmul and Saiful.

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