

# Lokuge a discredit to government - Arjuna

by Rex Clementine

Former Sri Lanka captain and ruling party MP Arjuna Ranatunga made a stinging attack on Minister of Sports and Public Recreation Gamage Lokuge when he said the latter is a discredit to the government. Ranatunga blamed the Minister following revelations that the two television deals signed by him, running into 73 million US\$, lacked transparency.

'The Island' revealed yesterday that Lokuge entered into two lucrative television deals with Dubai based Taj TV and India's Nimbus Pvt. Ltd. without the knowledge of the Marketing

Department of Sri Lanka Cricket.

"I have serious doubts whether I was removed from the board to facilitate these two television contracts," Ranatunga queried when 'The Island' contacted him for his views on the developments.

"I am stunned to hear that the five-match ODI series and the Twenty-20 early this year were signed for a sum of US\$ six million. In 2008, when India played five ODIs, we got US\$ 11 million. That's the rate that Indian teams generally attract. This time, there was an additional day-night game and a Twenty-20 game which we didn't have in 2008. I am just stunned to hear what's going on," Ranatunga said.

If entering into a contract with a company (Nimbus) that had been blacklisted by SLC was bad enough, the Indian company is still to pay 2.8 US\$ and SLC is on the verge of sending a letter of demand to Nimbus Pvt. Ltd.

"We already have experience where a previous board agreed for arbitration with Nimbus in Singapore and ended up losing millions of dollars. I am told that the Sports Minister has repeated that blunder this time. I would like to know whether the Minister consulted anyone before entering into these contracts," Ranatunga asked.

"I am told that with Nimbus, the Minister opened bids on

Friday and closed bids on Monday. Now if you want the best price for Sri Lankan cricket, why would you do that?"

"Our President and the Government will go down in the history for finishing this war and heralding in a new era. At the same time the actions of this Sports Minister too will put our government in history books for all the wrong reasons."

"There's too much of interference by the Minister on sports. Look at what he has done for rugby. At a time when the government's popularity is sky high, the Sports Minister is bringing discredit to the government with his

shameful acts."

"This is the first time a Sports Minister has got himself involved in selling cricket rights. In signing these deals he has kept the cricket community in complete darkness and, as a result, our cricket will suffer."

Lokuge sold television rights for the short Indian series for a sum of six million US\$ and later hurried negotiations with Taj TV for a four-year period.

He signed a deal worth 67 million US\$ in January 2009, but a few weeks earlier, had cancelled an existing contract with the same company.



Arjuna Ranatunga

## Cricket Interim on the watch out?

The Cricket Interim Committee is believed to have marked down as many as eight employees at Sri Lanka Cricket headquarters for their loyalties for some of the past administrators of the board and for leaking out information. It is believed that the present set of administrators are closely monitoring every single move of these eight employees during working hours fearing they have been controlled by outside forces leading them to discredit the current set of administrators.

It is believed that the eight employees who have been earmarked involve some high profile figures and some junior staff.

When contacted by 'The Island', a member of the Interim Committee refused to comment on the developments, but added that they would reveal certain matters in the near future.

The Cricket Interim Committee didn't hesitate to terminate the services of B.H. Perera, better known as 'Podi Sir' two weeks ago despite his political clout

## PCB takes ICC to court over World Cup office

ISLAMABAD (AP) - Pakistan has taken the International Cricket Council to court, filing a case Wednesday against the ICC's attempt to move the headquarters of the 2011 World Cup to India.

The move was the latest in Pakistan's efforts to retain the 2011 event despite being stripped of it on security grounds by the ICC.

Last month, the ICC's board shifted the central secretariat for the World Cup from Lahore to India's financial hub Mumbai.

"The (ICC) board has no authority to move the secretariat and that's why we have filed the case," PCB's legal adviser Tafazzul Rizvi told the AP.

Civil judge Mohammad Younis Anis sent notices to the ICC, IDI - a commercial arm of the ICC - and the central organizing committee to respond to the PCB's suit by May 18.

"The judge has recorded our preliminary statement and now let's see how the three parties respond to the notices," Rizvi said.

## Dilroy defends high fee charged by rugby referees

by Ravi Nagahawatte

The Society for Rugby Referees in Sri Lanka (SRRSL) President Dilroy Fernando says the rugby fraternity should consider referees as professionals.

Responding to a statement made by Rugby Interim Committee Chairman Dr. Maiya Gunasekera, who said, at recent press briefing, that the fee charged by referees was excessive, Fernando said that referees needed money to train and maintain standards, just like professional rugby players.

"Referees need money to buy boots, travel, for special nutrition and acquire membership at a club so that they can train and be fit for matches. All this needs money and who do you think will meet these expenses if the referees are not paid," questioned Fernando in an interview with 'The Island'.

Fernando said that all attempts should be made to make refereeing a lucrative occupation.

"At present, most of the ex-national players prefer coaching to refereeing because there is so much money involved in coaching. What people have failed to

realise is that poor quality refereeing can ruin a team's preparations. Referees need to be paid and people with rugby experience should take to refereeing because the referees' society is short of people who have played the game at the highest level," explained Fernando.

According to Fernando the SRRSL charges the host team Rs.15,000 for an 'A' Division inter-club rugby match, Rs.10,000 for a top tier school match, Rs.7,500 for 'B' Division school rugby match and Rs.6,000 for a Division 'C' school rugby match.

"This fee charged per match is utilized to pay the referee, the two assistant referees, the referee coach and the fourth referee," said Fernando.

He said funds were needed to send referees overseas for training and to video matches so that the performances of referees' could be analysed.

Fernando said that he was in the process of negotiating with a company to sponsor the SRRSL.

"Still referees will charge a fee because even if this sponsorship comes through that money will be used for the training and development programmes for referees," said Fernando.

He said that plans were being mapped out to have a website soon which will carry information on referees and their assignments.

The following is the list of matches for the upcoming week and the assignments of referees:

**May 15** - St. Joseph's vs St. Anthony's at Longden Place (Referee D. Nimal)

**CH&FC vs Police** at Maitland Crescent (Referee Aruna Rankothge)

**May 16** - Kingswood vs Dharmaraja at Bogambara Stadium (Referee Gamage Indrasena)

**Mahanama vs Isipatana** at Londen Place (Referee Dinka Peiris)

**S. Thomas' vs Trinity** at Mount Lavinia (Referee Dilroy Fernando)

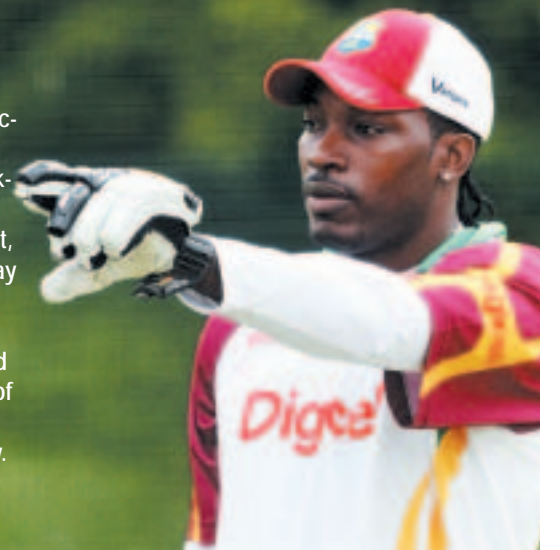
**St. Peter's vs Royal** at Reid Avenue (Referee M. Cader)

**Havelocks SC vs Army SC** at Havelock Park (Referee Nizam Jamaldeen)

**May 17** - Kandy SC vs Navy SC at Nittawela (Referee Aruna Jayasekera)

**Air Force vs CR&FC** at Ratmalana (Referee Pradeep Fernando)

West Indies Captain Chris Gayle, is seen during a net practice at the Riverside's cricket ground, Chester-le-Street, England, Tuesday May 12, 2009. West Indies will face the England in the 2nd Test of the Series starting on Thursday. (AP Photo/Scott Heppell)



**CHESTER-LE-STREET, England (AP)** - West Indies' chances of drawing level in its two-test series against England appear even slimmer after Chris Gayle's public declaration of ambivalence toward captaincy, his English counterpart and test cricket in general.

England comprehensively routed the tourists by 10 wickets at Lord's last week to go 1-0 ahead and Gayle's comments seem unlikely to inspire his players to a stirring response.

Gayle, who scored just 28 runs in two innings, said he wouldn't care if test cricket withered in competition with Twenty20.

But with just 50 days between the end of the second test and the first Ashes meeting with Australia, England's players certainly do care.

"For me personally, test cricket is the ultimate form of the game," England captain Andrew Strauss said Wednesday.

"It tests your character and your technique and I think a majority of players around the world feel the same way.

"We're very determined to make it 2-0 this week."

Strauss' determination is likely to be stoked further by Gale's criticism of him.

Strauss had said that it was

## Gayle undermines Windies ahead of England test

not ideal preparation for Gale to arrive in England from the Indian Premier League just two days before the test series started, prompting his counterpart to criticize his all-round game and tell him to mind his own business.

"I said what I had to say earlier," Gale said. "It's just how it is. He should be focusing on his own team."

The key to England's huge win at Lord's was a reshaped bowling attack that dismantled the tourists' batting lineup.

England is expected to stick with an unchanged team for the match at Durham, with Graham Onions staying in the attack on his home ground after taking seven wickets on his debut.

Graeme Swann, who hit 63 not out and took six wickets, will likely be the sole spinner, with Stuart Broad, James Anderson and Tim Bresnan filling the other bowling spots.

With opener Dale Richards having left the touring party because of a shoulder injury, West Indies' options are limited.

The most likely change, if any is for Lionel Baker to make way for allrounder Darren Sammy or one of uncapped pace bowlers Nelon Pascal and Andrew Richardson.

## England submits plans for biggest Rugby World Cup

LONDON (AP) - England is proposing the biggest ever Rugby World Cup if it is chosen to stage the 2015 tournament, with eight football stadiums among the 12 venues it plans to use.

The Rugby Football Union said Wednesday that, by using grounds including Wembley, Arsenal's Emirates Stadium, Liverpool's Anfield, Manchester United's Old Trafford and Elland Road in Leeds, it would be able to sell 3 million seats - an increase of 30 percent on the 2007 World Cup in France.

England, which last hosted the World Cup in 1991, was presenting its bid to the International Rugby Board on Wednesday along with Japan, South Africa and Italy.

"In 2015, it will be 24 years since England last hosted a Rugby World Cup and we believe the time is right," RFU chief executive Francis Baron said. "The RFU is 100 percent committed to delivering an outstanding RWC 2015."

"These are turbulent and difficult times but we believe the bid we have put together represents a low risk but high potential

return." An IRB-commissioned report last year suggested that hosting the 2015 World Cup in England could raise about 2.1 billion pounds (\$3.2 billion) of revenue.

The bid team, which includes former England captain and World Cup winner Lawrence Dallaglio, suggests staging games in nine cities.

The RFU has proposed four regions with Twickenham, Wembley, Emirates Stadium and Southampton's St. Mary's football stadium in the south; Kingsholm,

Welford Road and Coventry City Football Club's Ricoh Arena centrally; Elland Road, Anfield, Old Trafford and Newcastle's St. James' Park in the north.

The Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, Wales forms the final zone alone.

The 2011 World Cup will be in New Zealand and the IRB will decide the hosts for the 2015 and 2019 tournaments on July 28.

"The quality of the presentations this morning was extremely high," Rugby World Cup Ltd. chairman Bernard Lapasset said.