

Chappell SMS on World Cup team creates furore

India coach Greg Chappell's month-old SMS to a journalist expressing his dissatisfaction over the World Cup team has created a furore, days ahead of a meeting at which the squad's cup disaster will be discussed.

Sharad Pawar, president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), has called a working committee meeting in [Mumbai](#) April 6 and 7 to discuss India's shock first-round exit from the World Cup in the West Indies.

The team is yet to return from the West Indies.

In the text message sent to Rajan Bala on Feb 17, essentially praising an article written by the veteran cricket writer, Chappell wrote that he wanted more youngsters in the 15-member team but senior players had resisted his demand.

'Even in the last (World Cup) selection meeting, I fought for the youth. Senior players fought against it,' Bala read out the message from his mobile phone in front of several television channels.

The message was sent five days after the squad was picked for the World Cup.

'(The) chairman of selectors (Dilip Vengsarkar) went with them out of fear of media, if they failed.'

Asked why he chose to disclose the contents of a private SMS at this point, Bala said he did so to save Chappell from the harsh criticism following the World Cup disaster.

Chappell's contract with BCCI ended with the World Cup.

Chappell's verbalisation of what he thought of the team composition could go against him as he has broken the confidentiality clause on selection issues, say his detractors.

But experts point out that Chappell cannot be censured or punished for three reasons.

First, they say, is the fact that it was a private SMS sent to a journalist with whom Chappell has very old ties. Bala has been covering cricket since Chappell's playing days, so their association goes back many years. And it was not Chappell who disclosed the contents; it was the journalist who did so.

Second, they argue, if Chappell is eventually punished, former India captain Vengsarkar is equally guilty of breach of confidentiality for revealing that Virender Sehwag was picked for the World Cup only after captain Rahul Dravid backed him.

Vengsarkar made this revelation in a television interview soon after the team was picked. He also agreed with the interviewer that had it not been for Dravid, Sehwag would have been dropped.

Experts also point to the recent utterances of Goa Cricket Association president Dayanand Narvekar, one of the five BCCI vice-presidents who has also publicly sought the sacking of senior members of the team and Chappell.

Like all other board officials, except selection committee chairman and captain, BCCI vice-presidents also cannot speak on selection matters.

Whatever the motive of the disclosure of the contents of the SMS - exchange of text messages is a normal occurrence between journalists and coaches -- the issue has inadvertently but inevitably forced its way into the agenda of the meetings April 6 and 7.

Pawar had said that on the first day, BCCI office bearers - the president, secretary, joint-secretary, treasurer and the five vice-presidents - will meet among themselves and then meet Dravid and Chappell in the afternoon.

Now, Chappell might be asked to explain why he commented, even though privately, on the World Cup team.

On April 7, the issues, including the World Cup reports from manager Sanjay Jagdale, Chappell and Dravid, will be discussed at the working committee meeting.

In the same message, Chappell had written that young left-handed Suresh Raina 'is a must. But he was not wanted'.

About wicketkeeper-batsman Dinesh Karthick, the coach felt that he was 'leadership material'.

Chappell also concurred with Bala's article on the issue of Yuvraj Singh. Bala had written in a newspaper column that including the left-handed batsman, who had just recovered from a knee injury, into the World Cup was a risk.

India lost two of the three Group B matches, including to Sri Lanka and minnows Bangladesh, to crash out of the 16-nation World Cup.

India's next assignment is a tour of the Bangladesh in May, followed by a visit to England and Scotland starting June.

(© IANS / India eNews)