

SPORT

HOW IMRAN PLAYS HIS INNINGS AT TOP LEVEL

S'porean says that having no vested interests is crucial in his role as ICC deputy chairman

V.K. Santosh Kumar

In the cut-throat world of international cricket administration, rich and powerful men have found it difficult to get a proper foothold.

Indian industrialist N. Srinivasan had grand visions to make the International Cricket Council (ICC) the preserve of the Big Three – India, England and Australia – but fell by the wayside.

Former Australian prime minister John Howard made a bid for the presidency with the support of Australia, England and New Zealand, but was thwarted by six member boards.

So, it was a charming surprise that a Singaporean, from a country whose national team do not even have a ground to call their own, is now the ICC's deputy chairman.

Lawyer Imran Hamid, 61, was appointed to the post on June 23 at the ICC's annual conference in London. He became the first person from a non-Test playing nation to be elected to the highest echelons of the sport's governing body.

"Playing with a straight bat has obviously helped," he said. "I am able to participate without fear or favour because I have no vested interest in larger issues. This is a fine example of a Singaporean sports administrator walking the talk on good governance."

Singapore's national team are ranked 23rd in the world. Only 12 national teams have Test status and traditionally, representatives from their boards have held high positions in the ICC.

"Imran has played a significant role in the recent transformation of the governance of the ICC, enabling the long-term growth of the

sport. He has passionately represented the views of associate members on the board and has the respect of everyone in the sport," said ICC chief executive David Richardson, 57, a former South Africa international.

"His appointment as deputy chairman was unanimous and uncontested, which reflect the esteem in which he is held by colleagues."

For David Peeper, the chairman of Cricket Australia, Imran's skills in drafting difficult resolutions and tactfully handling big egos and bringing them to the same table have been the qualities that have seen him become an important administrator.

Said the 60-year-old: "Imran has shown himself to be a hard and assiduous worker in the interests of global cricket. He always brings very balanced, thoughtful views to the table, and seeks solutions and outcomes in the game's interests."

Imran has been attending ICC meetings since he became president of the Singapore Cricket Association (SCA) in 2005, a post he held until 2015.

In 2011, he was elected deputy chairman of the ICC's 95-member associate nations and in 2015 the chairman – which gave him a place on the executive board.

Last year, he was also made chairman of the development committee and elected vice-president of the Asian Cricket Council.

Since early this year, Imran, along with ICC chairman Shashank Manohar, an Indian lawyer, has played a crucial role in extensively revising the ICC constitution and introducing a radical new governance structure.

The various changes they sug-



ICC deputy chairman Imran Hamid (right) talking to ICC chairman Shashank Manohar, who reportedly wanted the 61-year-old Singaporean to be his successor earlier this year. PHOTO COURTESY OF INTERNATIONAL CRICKET COUNCIL

gested – including having just two levels of membership (full and associate), bringing in an independent female director, increasing the votes on the board, creating a new position of deputy chairman and giving Test status to Ireland and Afghanistan – were adopted at the ICC board meeting last month.

"Cricket worldwide owes Imran a great debt of gratitude for the work he has done in helping to modernise the governance of the ICC," said Tony Brian, chairman of Cricket Scotland.

"He has been a key player in framing the changes which have made the organisation more transparent and meritocratic."

Imran always wanted to do well in the sport since he started playing backyard cricket at the age of five with his three older brothers, and then at Whitley Secondary School and St Joseph's Institution.

It became more serious when the barrister from Lincoln's Inn was picked for the national team and subsequently became captain.

After leading the Singapore Recreation Club in the local league for years, he stopped playing competitively at the age of 35, turning his attention to administration.

"Imran has always shown the spirit of fair play and unity on and off the field," said M. Neethi-anathan, 65, a former SCA vice-president and Singapore inter-national who has known Imran for

50 years. "He is deeply passionate about the sport and has worked honestly for its development."

SCA president Mahmood Gaznavi, 55, admires Imran's "right temperament to deal with issues", adding: "He takes into account all views and facilitates discussion aiming, wherever possible, to reach a consensus."

Imran's diplomatic skills and reasoning prowess helped dismantle Srinivasan's move to turn the ICC into the domain of the Big Three, ensuring a level playing field.

"The ICC is a little like the United Nations in which there are many competing interests, and deci-

sion-making calls for delicate tactfulness and diplomacy," said Imran. "Often many decisions are made in the corridors of the meetings rather than at the meetings."

His contributions were so impressive that the board members reportedly ignored a proposal by Thilanga Sumathipala, the president of Sri Lanka Cricket, to make himself the ICC chairman when Manohar suddenly decided to quit the post in March, citing personal reasons.

According to sources, Manohar wanted Imran to take over as chairman, but the Singaporean declined and, along with Peeper, managed to persuade Manohar to remain in the post until the reforms were carried out and to complete his two-year tenure next year.

Again, England and Wales Cricket Board president Giles Clarke made a strong pitch to become deputy chairman when the position opened up in June. However, the board unanimously endorsed Imran, whose tenure will be for two years.

"There is still a lot to be done at the ICC and Imran for certain will be part of the glue that will bind the board and members together," said Peeper. "He will continue to work on issues like strategy for global development and bring his legal knowledge to the table, which is so important."

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY

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IMRAN HAMID, ICC deputy chairman, on his rise to the top of cricket's governing body.

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Changes Imran wants to see

MORE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF FINANCES

The Indian board will receive US\$405 million (S\$560.6 million) for the 2016-2023 period – three times more than England (US\$139 million).

Australia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, New Zealand and the West Indies receive US\$128 million each, while Zimbabwe gets US\$94 million. Ireland and Afghanistan, who were granted Test status last month, will share US\$240 million.

OPEN UP TOURNAMENTS FOR ALL MEMBERS TO RISE

At present only the 12 Test-playing nations and a few top associate nations take part in the World Cup and Champions Trophy.

INCREASE ICC MEMBERSHIP

Spread cricket to more countries and bring more members than the current 105 to the ICC fold.

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF FULL MEMBERS

Currently only 12 nations have Test status.

BUILD AN INDEPENDENT ICC BOARD OVER TIME

The new constitution has opened up a place for an independent female director but male representatives from the Test-playing nations and a couple of associate nations constitute the board.

Imran wants greater gender representation and people with a high profile and experience of good governance and financial matters to be made directors.

GET CRICKET INTO OLYMPICS AND MAJOR GAMES

Cricket has been removed from the programme list of the 2018 Asian Games. But Imran is confident the sport will be reinstated at the 2022 Asian Games.

The ICC is also pushing for cricket to be included in the 2024 Olympics.

MAKE IT EASIER TO FOLLOW

The frequency of rule changes being made has made the sport more complicated and consequently it is difficult to attract new fans.

V.K. Santosh Kumar

4 days to ST Run

Running to the right kind of beat will set your pulse racing

Nicholas De Silva

For local band Jack and Rai, running has always been close to their hearts. The duo, comprising Jack Ho and Rai Kannu, will be performing on Sunday at The Straits Times Run post-race festivities.

Aside from dashing in between gigs, soundchecks and rehearsals, the full-time musicians also make it a point to squeeze in runs and occasional races into their own fitness regimens.

Of the two, Kannu has the more notable sporting background, as he ran for Raffles Institution's track and field team together with U.K. Shyam, who still holds the national 100m sprint record. The promising sprinter won bronze in the 400m boys' race at the 1996 Schools National 'A' Division Championships.

Kannu had planned to continue running competitively after junior college, but injuries cut short his fledgling athletics career.

"I wanted to carry on with a running club called Swift, but then I tore two ligaments in my knee during National Service and realised maybe it was time for it to take a back seat," said the 38-year-old.

Kannu now runs leisurely to complement his high-intensity interval training workouts at a local gym.

Maintaining fitness has become a habit for the former physical education teacher, who added: "It's a funny thing... If I don't go to the gym, I feel weird."

Ho nodded, saying: "Even when we travel overseas together, he'll be the one asking to work out."

While Ho describes his musical partner as "the ideal representation of a fit and well-balanced lifestyle", he is not a complete slob himself, as he goes on evening runs twice a week around his neighbourhood.

"I try to make sure I do 3km to 4km and that's manageable for me. I want to have a good sweat and let the heart pump a bit. I'm a happy man that way," the 40-year-old said. "Running is the main thing that I do. I'm a very lightweight exercise kind of guy."

Both agree that music plays a vital part when they run. Ho finds that music helps him take his mind off the fatigue.

"You just feel the beat and rhythm and just go," he said.

"It keeps you going if it's driving enough. Some songs have lyrics that helps to push you. It tells you that you can do this," Kannu added.

According to them, a good running song should have a strong riff and backbeat with driving drums.

The band promises a good time on race day with a set list featuring high-energy songs and a debut of their latest single.

"We'll keep your spirits up. It'll be a nice way to end off your run with a party," said Kannu.

"Don't worry, there'll be no Adele's Someone Like You," Ho quipped, referring to the British singer's tear-jerking hit.

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Local duo Jack and Rai say their performance at The Straits Times Run in the City post-race festivities will feature a set list of high-energy songs as well as the debut of their latest single. PHOTO COURTESY OF JACK AND RAI



JACK AND RAI'S RUNNING PLAYLIST

- 1 Killing In The Name (Rage Against The Machine)
- 2 The Pretender (Foo Fighters)
- 3 More Human Than Human (White Zombie)
- 4 Sixteen Saltines (Jack White)
- 5 Seven Nation Army (The White Stripes)
- 6 You Could Be Mine (Guns N' Roses)
- 7 Are You Gonna Go My Way (Lenny Kravitz)
- 8 Howlin' For You (The Black Keys)
- 9 Kashmir (Led Zeppelin)
- 10 Testify (Rage Against The Machine)