

Minister's statement on the World Cup Finals 2011.

During a panel discussion held by the Sirasa network recently, on the topic of corruption in the country, I happened to mention that the Cricket World Cup Final between India and Sri Lanka in 2011, was, in my opinion, also not free of corruption and that it was 'fixed' for several reasons I suspected.

When the initial squad for the Cricket World Cup 2011 was being selected, there had been several discussions between the Selection Committee and the Team Management, including the senior players about the inclusion of Sanath Jayasuriya in the squad. It had been the opinion of several cricket experts and past players that Sanath Jayasuriya was indeed suitable to be included in the squad, even if he may not be able to make it to the final 11. At this stage, I had a meeting with the then Chairman of the Interim Committee and former Captain D.S.De Silva and the Selection Committee headed by Mr Aravinda De Silva, who informed me that he was not in favour of selecting Sanath Jayasuriya to the squad, because there had been severe reservations expressed by the senior members of the team about his inclusion in the squad. However, it was pointed out that since this tournament was being held in the Asian region and since Sanath was an all rounder with vast experience, the majority opinion was that other teams will be wary of his enormous skills and that he should be selected to the squad. After lengthy discussions, Mr D.S.De Silva, the Chairman informed me that the entire Selection Committee had disagreed to these suggestions and had stated that they will resign en masse if we insist that Sanath Jayasuriya be included in the preliminary squad and that the squad selected by them be approved.

When the tournament commenced, the team performed exceptionally well and qualified to meet New Zealand in the semi finals, a game we won quite convincingly. The Sri Lanka spinners for the semi final win against New Zealand were, Muthiah Muralidaran (2 wickets), Rangana Herath (1 wicket) and Ajantha Mendis who bowled with plenty of skill and penetration. After this win, most cricket fans, both local and international, were of the opinion that Sri Lanka could easily win the finals of this tournament.

During the semi final game against New Zealand, a couple of players had suffered injuries. As far as I could remember, Angelo Mathews suffered a

hamstring injury and was unlikely to play in the finals and Muthiah Muralidaran who had also suffered an injury would be fit to play, I was informed. In discussions held after the semi final win, I remember inquiring why, if Muralidaran was fit to play, the selectors were trying to take an off spinner, Suraj Randiv as an additional member of the squad. They stated that not only Suraj Randiv, but also Chaminda Vaas needs to be taken as extra players and for me to obtain ICC approvals for the inclusion of these two players. Due to pressure exerted on me by the selectors and the request made to me by Sri Lanka Cricket, I approved the inclusion of these two additional players subject to ICC approval.

According to my recollection, Suraj Randiv was not included in the preliminary squad and neither did he join the pool in practices during the tournament, but both Chaminda Vaas and Sanath Jayasuriya had not only been practicing with the squad but their combined wicket aggregate being in excess of 400 since being members of the World Cup winning team of 1996, combined with their outstanding performances over the years, it baffled and saddened me by this negative attitude towards them by the selectors, the senior players and team management. Furthermore, my understanding was that if Suraj Randiv was to be included in the team for the finals, it would only occur if Muthiah Muralidaran was not fit enough to play and under no other circumstances.

On 2011/4/5 (Check date), as the Minister of Sports, I accompanied the then President His Excellency Mahinda Rajapakse and other member of the Cabinet of Ministers along with several Sri Lankan cricket fans to Mumbai for the Finals against India. When we arrived in Mumbai, I got to know that both Muthiah Muralidaran and Suraj Randiv were included in the team, and there had been four changes made to the team that beat New Zealand in the semi finals. This came as a surprise not only to me but the entire cricketing community of Sri Lanka and was totally unexpected and unacceptable, given the circumstances. The four players excluded from the team which had beaten New Zealand were Rangana Herath, Ajantha Mendis, Chamara Silva and Angelo Mathews and in their place, Thisara Perera, Nuwan Kulasekera, Chamara Kapugedera and Suraj Randiv had been picked for the team.

Match fixing and team selection fixing are very serious offences considered by the International Cricket Council. The seriousness of these offences and its

implications had been brought to the notice of players and officials, including the selectors from time to time.

It is a common and lucrative practice for Betting Syndicates to bet on the composition of the teams. Prior knowledge is crucial for the game's corruptors to act upon in their endeavor to gain maximum benefits. In particular, the selection of Suraj Randiv, who had not played a single game up to that point, being selected for this match, was known only by the selection committee. Thus his selection was highly suspicious as much as it was inexplicable.

Suraj Randiv's talent and his previous performances were considered questionable by cricket experts as well as past cricketers.

Another suspicious action was the toss, which was taken twice, a most unusual action under any circumstances, let alone a World Cup Final. It had been considered better to bowl first since the dew factor in the late evening would affect the gripping of the ball by our spinners and everyone, including the team members and coaching staff had expected the Captain to invite the opposition to bat first if he won the toss. He decided otherwise, which surprised everyone and caused consternation in the minds of the entire team and the management.

Ajantha Mendis, who was dropped for this match, had enjoyed much success with his 'mystery' wrist spin, especially against India and his omission was inexplicable. Having performed well in the semi finals, Ajantha Mendis being dropped in preference to playing two off spinners, was another suspicious factor.

Any investigation on my pronouncement that the World Cup Final of 2011 was suspicious of being fixed should consider the following factors:-

- Why was Suraj Randiv omitted from the initial squad selected for the World Cup?
- Why was Suraj Randiv included in the final team, especially since Muthiah Muralidaran was also fit to play?
- Why was Sanath Jayasuriya, who was a proven all rounder not considered for selection for the finals?

- When was the team selected for the finals? Who were the participants at this final selection meeting? Were the opinions of the team management and coaching staff obtained for consideration at this meeting? If not, why?
- When a majority of the team members were of the opinion that we should field first, why did the captain win the toss and opt to bat first?
- Why was the toss conducted twice? Who won the first coin toss?
- Why were two of our most experienced cricketers, Sanath Jayasuriya and Chaminda Vaas not considered for selection for the finals?
- Why was Suraj Randiv selected for the finals, when he had not participated in any of the previous tournament games and did his selection have the concurrence of the other selectors?
- Could there have been betting on the final composition of the team? Could Suraj Randiv's inclusion in a World Cup final have caused a lucrative betting opportunity for local and international gamblers? If so, has the ICC looked at this aspect and have they identified the miscreants?
- Did the ICC carry out an investigation based on the letter submitted by me? Have they communicated their findings to Sri Lanka Cricket? Have the investigations been completed? Has the ICC conducted a probe into corruption in this game? If so, what are their conclusions?