[PCB’s shocker](https://nation.com.pk/29-Jan-2019/pcb-s-shocker" \t "_new)

KK Shahid January 29, 2019 the nation \

If sanity had prevailed, in the aftermath of the first bout of insanity, this space would be dedicated to grilling Sarfaraz Ahmed for exhibiting truly repulsive behaviour given his position as the leader of the most followed sports team of our country.

However, given the response of the Pakistan Cricket Board, one would have to start from the very top of that particular food chain that has quite often nourished downright embarrassing conduct among those tasked with representing the country.

Let’s take the matter one step at a time. Had Sarfaraz’s now infamous racist comments to Andile Phehlukwayo, been directed as some bigoted form of banter towards his own teammate, it would’ve merited a severe sanction. That it was directed towards an opponent was wretched enough, to so against a South African, in South Africa – the place which witnessed the ugliest form of racial apartheid as recently as the end of the 20th century, for which their cricket side was actually banned from participating in world events – is absolutely inexcusable.

It would’ve been inexcusable for a 17 year old debutant to do that. But for an athlete who has played international sport for 12 years, and who also happens to be the captain of the national side?

Therefore, one would’ve thought the PCB to take the needed action itself without the matter going to the International Cricket Council. This would’ve been similar to the previous regime’s action on the spot-fixing scandal in the Pakistan Super League, albeit with difference in the nature of misconduct.

What we’ve seen instead is absolutely shocking, even more than the original infringement.

After Sarfaraz Ahmed was given a perfectly deserved four match ban by the ICC – which, again, could’ve been avoided had the PCB chosen to take action itself – the national cricket board has actually, wait for it, condemned the ban.

“The PCB notes the ICC decision on Sarfraz Ahmed with its utmost disappointment. PCB had anticipated that the matter had been resolved amicably between the two players and the two Boards following Sarfraz Ahmed’s public apologies which were accepted by the player, the Board and South Africa cricket team,” a press release by the PCB said.

Utmost disappointment? What is beyond disappointing is that this is the official statement of the national cricket board after its captain has been found guilty of racism.

Unfortunately, the reaction also epitomises the nation’s attitude towards racism, as showcased by the prevalence of Sardar jee and Pathan jokes. As is further evidenced by the mainstream media still referring to the West Indies as ‘Kaali Aandhi’.

Perhaps the bigger predicament for the nation is the fact that there is bigotry of far worse kind prevailing in other aspects – often violently – that racism is quite low in the pecking order.

Often the lack of education of the national athletes is used as an excuse for their misconduct, but when it comes to racist or discriminatory language ICC’s codes is etched in stadia all over the world, including Pakistan with the Urdu word runng being clearly cited as one on which basis any derogatory language would not be tolerated.

Let’s also not forget that the issue has surfaced under the regime of Prime Minister Imran Khan, someone whose sportsperson spirit can’t even be discredited by his biggest detractors.

If nothing else, PM Khan has been saying the right things on the diplomatic front. And when that overlaps with sports, coming from him it has even more impact – as exemplified by his congratulatory message to Virat Kohli and India following their series win in Australia.

PM Khan should take the matter in his hand and underline why Sarfaraz Ahmed’s actions were inexcusable so that it sets the right example – especially at a time when the country has been taking steps towards undoing some of the damage that it has inflicted on its own credibility in the past.

The writer is a Lahore-based journalist.