



Chattogram Challengers' left-arm seamer Mehedi Hasan Rana, who is among the top bowlers with 17 wickets, playfully tosses the ball during a practice session yesterday ahead of today's eliminator of BBPL against Dhaka Platoon at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

BBPL's business end begins today

SPORTS REPORTER



The ongoing special edition of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) was touted as a platform for local players to showcase their talent, and with the country's biggest T20 franchise league having entered its business end, now is perhaps the best time for the cricketers to do so.

The last four stage of the BBPL will hit the field today with Chattogram Challengers taking on Dhaka Platoon in the eliminator game in today's first fixture while Rajshahi Royals will face Khulna Tigers in the first qualifier later in the evening.

Chattogram's left-arm seamer Mehedi Hasan Rana has been the brightest spot for his side throughout this edition. The 23-year-old bagged 17 wickets in eight matches and is in third place on the highest wicket-takers list, just behind Rangpur Rangers' seamer Mustafizur Rahman and Khulna's Robbie Frylinck, who have 20 and 18 scalps respectively.

Chattogram, led by Mahmudullah Riyad, will also probably bet on another local player, Imrul Kayes, for today's encounter. The left-hander has been in fine form so far, having scored 405 runs, featuring four fifties, in eleven matches at an average of 57.85.

Needless to say, the presence of 'Universe Boss' Chris Gayle on the side will likely play a huge role even though the big hitter is yet to flourish in the two fixtures he has played up till now.

Likewise, Dhaka will bank on their locals as well with the likes of Mahedi Hasan having been a revelation for the side with his all-round performances.

The 25-year-old played a vital role to help Dhaka reach this point, having scored 256 runs and scalped 11 wickets till now in this BBPL. Meanwhile, Dhaka's Tamim Iqbal and Mominul Haque can also be devastating on their day.

However, Dhaka will surely miss the services of skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who was injured while fielding in their final group match against Khulna on Saturday. The inspirational cricketer needed 14 stitches on his left-hand and so, will likely miss out on the remainder of the BBPL.

Later in the day, it will be an interesting battle between the tournament's top two sides -- Rajshahi and Khulna -- in the first qualifier, which will decide which of the two teams will go through to the final.

Khulna skipper Mushfiqur Rahim has led his side from the front and is the second highest run-getter with 449 runs in twelve games at an average of 74.83. First place is held by his South African teammate, Rilee Rossouw with 458 runs.

Meanwhile, Khulna's Najmul Hossain Shanto is the only local player to complete a century in the ongoing BBPL so far.

However, Khulna's opponents for the day are Andre Russell's Rajshahi, who have displayed good cricket all round.

Liton Das has been in prolific form, scoring 422 runs in eleven games. Paired with Afif Hossain, the duo have provided some blistering starts for Rajshahi throughout the tournament.

Rajshahi's mix of local talent and experienced foreigners, such as Shoaib Malik, Ravi Bopara and Russell, has helped the side emerge as a side to be reckoned with and so, one can expect an interesting battle between the sides.

'No Tests, only T20s in Pak now'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan informed yesterday during a press conference that the board has been given directives from the government to only go for a short tour of Pakistan. After a board meeting yesterday, the board has decided that they are only willing to play the T20 series in Pakistan at the moment and cited that the present unrest in the Middle East was the reason behind this particular directive from the government.

"After we got security advice regarding the Pakistan tour, we applied for government order (GO) for the whole series. While we haven't got all the papers in our hand yet, we received a screenshot and have known of the salient points. The situation in the Middle East is different from other times. Considering the escalating situation in the Middle East, the government has told that the tour should be as short as possible. We have been given directives to come back following a very short T20 tour, and if the situation improves, then to play the Tests later," the BCB president said.

"This is what we have received and we are going to communicate the same thing to the PCB," he added.

Pakistan had previously communicated to the BCB that they wanted to prioritise the Test series and play the longer format first and reschedule the T20I series for another time.

During a four-hour long meeting, the board had discussed various issues with the central contract of players a major issue in the agenda. The central contract is being updated to accommodate recent changes, especially to include some new faces. ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who was previously in the 'A+' category, has asked the board to not include him



BCB president Nazmul Hassan (C) speaks at a board meeting on different issues at the home of cricket in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

in the central contract list, according to the BCB boss.

"Mashrafe has asked me not to include him in the central contract. He will still be playing but his reason for the request was so that someone new can get a central contract. So the central contract will possibly not have Mashrafe in it," Hassan said.

Test matches are also going to be prioritised with a significant increase in match fees. The new proposal will see match fee for T20s increase to Tk 2 lakh from Tk 1.25 lakh. ODI match fee will be bumped from Tk 2 lakh to Tk 3 lakh while the match fee for Tests will rise from Tk 4 lakh to Tk 6 lakh.

The BCB also discussed 'steps to excellence' from 2020 till 2022. Hassan informed that the board approved consultant Ross Turner's proposal of a three-year training program. "Major emphasis will be on educational programs of umpires, coaches and curators, to increase their

standard, and the program will start very soon this year," Hassan informed.

Playing grounds were also discussed to reduce the scheduling pressure on the limited number of grounds present at the moment. The Sylhet ground is already undergoing changes while improving Barishal divisional stadium was discussed. An MOU has been signed with the Mymensingh Agricultural University to get two grounds ready.

National team sponsorship rights will come to an end soon and a new tender will be floated for the next two years. The BCB president also informed that three names have been shortlisted for the role of bowling coach, but no name has been finalised. Nazmul also added that he would travel to Dubai today to meet ICC Chairman Shashank Manohar.

He also informed that the BCB was planning to permanently name BPL as Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL).

I'm ready to quit: Malinga

AFP, Colombo



Lasith Malinga said Sunday he was ready to stand down as Sri Lanka's Twenty20 skipper after the team's humiliating 2-0 loss to India in their latest foreign tour.

Returning from the series, the 36-year-old told reporters that Sri Lanka was just not good enough to make an impact in the 20 over game.

He said Sri Lankan bowlers weren't able to restrict opponents while the batsmen were incapable of putting up the 170 runs needed for a fighting chance in a match.

"We don't have that," Malinga said, adding that it was unfair to expect a winning performance from the team given they were ranked just ninth in the world when returned to the captaincy just over a year ago.

But he added that he was "ready to accept" his responsibility for the team's performance.

"I am ready any time. I am ready to quit," he said. Malinga led Sri Lanka to the T20 World Cup title in 2014 and remained in charge until early 2016.

His return to the top job in December 2018 was a surprise as he had lost his spot in the team after recurring injuries forced him to sit out several tournaments.

Frictions were evident in the Sri Lankan team under Malinga's leadership, the Sunday Island newspaper reported.

"There seems to be deep divisions in the side. As captain, he has also sidelined his predecessors" including Thisara Perera and Angelo Mathews, the paper said.

The first match in Guwahati was abandoned after rain, but India won the second by India by seven wickets and the third by 78 runs.



Ricky Ponting (R) and Shane Warne (L) will lead teams comprising of retired Australian cricket legends in a charity match to raise funds for people affected by the bushfires.

PHOTO: ICC

Aus legends to pad up for bushfire victims

AFP, Sydney

Cricket Australia chief Kevin Roberts said he hoped it would play a part in helping those impacted by the devastating fires that have killed at least 27 people and destroyed more than 2,000 homes.

"People the world over have seen the overwhelming images of hundreds of thousands of hectares burnt, precious lives lost, hundreds of properties destroyed and the devastating loss of wildlife as a result of the fires," he said.

Cricket Australia also injected Aus\$2 million (US\$1.38 million) into a fund to assist community cricket clubs impacted by the fires.

It is the latest initiative by sports stars to stomp up memorabilia and cash to help in the relief effort.

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India is always tough to play at home: Richardson

PTI, Mumbai



Australian speedster Kane Richardson says coach Andrew McDonald "camped out" at the Wankhede Stadium on Saturday night to check on dew as his players prepared to practice with wet balls.

"Andrew McDonald camped out here last night to try and see what time the dew came in. Who knows, everyone is guessing. I think everyone is prepared," Richardson said.

"We're going to train today with some wet balls so we can practice that. We'll just wait and see on game day. It's nothing new, we have dew back home as well."

He said the Virat Kohli-led Indians were the favourites at home, calling his team the underdogs for the three-match ODI series, beginning here on Tuesday.

"I think the home team is always favourite. I think on the back of last year, I think Finchy (Aaron Finch) has said no team has ever won here back to back. It's going to be so hard,"



Australia's Adam Zampa (L) goes past teammates with a rugby ball during a training session ahead of the upcoming three-match ODI series against India in Mumbai yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Richardson said.

"India in India is always the biggest challenge and after what happened last year they will be ready for it. Confidence is up but the home team is always favourite. We are the underdogs," he said.

Last year, Australia had made a spectacular comeback to record a 3-2 win in the limited overs series in India.

The 28-year-old pacer, who has played 22 ODIs, also said playing in India, where the grounds are smaller, is the biggest challenge.

SHORT CORNER

Buttler apologises for outburst

England wicketkeeper Jos Buttler on Sunday apologised for the language that landed him with a fine during the second Test against South Africa in Cape Town.

Buttler was fined 15 percent of his match fee and given one demerit point by the International Cricket Council for an expletive-laden outburst against South Africa's Vernon Philander.

The incident was captured on the stump microphone and widely distributed on social media.

"I fully understand that as role models we have a duty to behave in a certain way," said Buttler as England started their preparations for the third Test starting at St George's Park on Thursday.

"I'd like to apologise. I understand that's not the way to behave so I'll take the slap on the wrist and move on."

He ascribed his behaviour to "heat of the moment and a bit of redness".

Asked his opinion on stump microphones staying switched on during play, Buttler said he believed there were arguments both for and against.

-- AFP

Stoinis smashes BBL record

Melbourne Stars' Marcus Stoinis scripted history as he slammed his maiden century during the team's Big Bash League (BBL) encounter against Sydney Sixers at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) on Sunday.

Stoinis tore apart Sixers' bowling line-up and hit 13 boundaries and eight



sixes as he powered Stars to 219/1 in 20 overs.

Stoinis now holds the record for highest individual score in the BBL as he went past D'Arcy Short, who slammed a 69-ball 122* two years ago.

Overall, this is the 13th highest individual score in T20 history.

Stoinis' Indian Premier League (IPL) team Delhi Capitals were quick to take note of the right-hander's heroics.

-- AGENCIES

National school badminton back after 20 years

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel National Shishu Kishor Parishad, in association with Bangladesh Badminton Federation, is all set to bring back the National School Badminton Competition after 20 years. The event will get underway at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium in Paltan tomorrow.

A total of 60 schools across the country sent entries with some 200 budding shuttlers being expected to compete in four events -- boys' singles and doubles, girls' singles and doubles -- in three-day competition.

"There is no alternative but to start from grassroots through schools if we want to take badminton forward," tournament secretary and former national shuttler Ohiduzzaman Raju said at a press conference yesterday.