



Before flying out for Colombo today, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza signed with Legends of Rugganj for the Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

# Mashrafe signs for Rugganj

SPORTS REPORTER

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza hogged the spotlight on the opening day of the two-day players' transfer for the Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The Bangladesh limited-overs captain, who will fly for Colombo today to lead the Tigers in the three-match ODI and two-match T20I series against Sri Lanka, signed for Legends of Rugganj at almost the last second of the bourse after he had mistakenly gone to the Bangabandhu National Stadium -- where the event had been taking place for a long time before shifting to the home of cricket in Mirpur this season.

Mashrafe was excited that the transfer system returned to its traditional form after the player-by-choice system was used in last two seasons.

"I am excited that players transfer returned to the traditional system because it gives players the freedom to choose their team," he said. "It's a good occasion to celebrate," he added.

Among the other Colombo-bound players, Shuvagata Hom signed for defending champions Abahani along with uncapped left-arm spinner Sanjamul Islam, while wicket-keeper batsman Nurul Hasan signed for Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club. Even in his absence, Mahmudullah Riyad was

another centre of attention. According to Legends of Rugganj officials, the all-rounder -- who was dropped from the team for the second Test against Sri Lanka and included in the ODI team after a lot of drama -- informed them at the eleventh hour that he had changed his mind and would be joining Abahani. It was said in shushed voices that Riyad was going to receive the highest payment, Tk 60 lakhs, this season.

When attention was drawn to Riyad's last moment change, Mashrafe said: "I cannot say anything about the other two national pool players. During the transfer we talk with lots of players."

Abahani are most likely to fill their national pool quota by roping in Tamim Iqbal and Mosaddek Hossain.

A useful all-rounder in domestic cricket, Nasir Hossain joined Gazi Group Cricketers along with Suhrawardi Shuvo, Naeem Islam, Abu Hider, Nadif Chowdhury and Shafiqul Islam.

Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club were also busy on the opening day as they registered experienced campaigner Abdur Razzak alongside Elias Sunny, Tanvir Haider, Nurul Hasan and Fazle Rabbi. They are also expected to rope in Imrul Kayes.

"I am happy with my team as there are several players with huge amount of experience in domestic circuit," said Sheikh Jamal skipper Razzak.

Mohammad Ashraful also turned up to Mirpur to sign for Kalabagan Kirira Charka on a day when a total of 87 players participated.

## QUICK SINGLES

The following are a few samples of stories that did not make the print edition. However, if they pique your interest, you can always read them online on The Daily Star website by simply scanning the QR codes listed below:

### Southgate can't promise Rooney's return

Wayne Rooney faces a battle to get back into the England squad due to his lack of playing time at Manchester United manager Gareth Southgate has said.

### Mali banned from int'l football

Mali has been suspended from international football after the West African country's sports minister sacked the executive committee of its football federation, as said by soccer's governing body FIFA.

### Pogba will miss Boro match

Manchester United midfielder Paul Pogba will miss Sunday's Premier League trip to Middlesbrough with a hamstring injury, manager Jose Mourinho has said.

### De Kock, Bavuma give South Africa lead

Quinton de Kock and Temba Bavuma fell short of centuries but drove South Africa to 349 for nine, at the close of play on the second day of the second Test against New Zealand.

# Foreigners' quota decision welcomed

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has finally reduced the quota of foreign players eligible to play in a match of the professional football league from three to two, a decision which has come after demands by different quarters in the face of continuous dismal performances of the national team.

The decision is expected to help locals get more space to play and prove their worth despite the fact that there is serious lack of quality in front of goal in the domestic circuit. However, the move has been praised by club officials, coaches, experts and current players.

"There may be two types of opinions but reducing the quota of foreign players is a demand of time. Now the local players, who I think are not interested in taking up the challenge, have to cash in on this opportunity."

"If the local strikers get exposure in domestic league, then they will definitely do well at international level. Let's see what happens in future as we are in experimental stage," opined former national coach Golam Sarwar Tipu.

Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club's football manager Anwarul Karim Helal however criticised the BFF move but admitted that the national team will be benefitted in future if the clubs take care

of the local strikers.

"We wouldn't have any complaints if there are available players in the country. The 13 participating clubs of the Bangladesh Premier League need at least 400 players but the question is whether there are 400 quality players in country."

"Before reducing the number of foreign players, we should groom up players by restarting the tournaments in schools and district level."

"To be honest, we have taken two to three local strikers, who didn't impress in practice. We also don't want to field foreign players but the situation is forcing us to do so," said Karim.

"However, we support the BFF decision for the greater interest of football. I think we will initially suffer due to the reduction of foreign players but national team will be benefitted if the clubs arrange special training to create good strikers," opined Karim.

Rahmatganj MFS coach Kamal Babu believes the reduction will make the title race more open as the foreign players will have less impact in matches.

"Due to reduction of foreign players, we can now field local players in places where only foreign players used to be fielded."

"So the players will get the opportunity to gather match experience and exploit it at international matches," said Kamal who is known for producing promising players every season.

# Real reunion for Carlo

## Barcelona pitted against Juventus

AFP, Nyon

Holders Real Madrid were drawn to face their former coach Carlo Ancelotti's Bayern Munich in the Champions League quarterfinals on Friday as Juventus take on comeback kings Barcelona.

English champions Leicester play their first quarterfinals in the top-tier European competition against Atletico Madrid as France's Monaco clash with Borussia Dortmund over two legs in April.

Ancelotti, who led Real to their tenth Champions League title in 2014, was looking forward to a special tie.

"It is going to be exciting to play against them. We are very confident and want to win the Champions League this season," said Ancelotti, who also won the European title twice with AC Milan.

"I think we have the ability to beat Real Madrid."

Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge was relishing a 'classic' as his five-time winners target more than just a sixth straight semifinal appearance.

"This is a classic, which is probably the absolute top draw that lay in the pot," said the former Germany striker.

"All football fans in the world can look forward to it."

Real Madrid director Emilio Butragueno, however, appeared downcast.

"It is one of the worst draws we

could have got without a doubt but it is also for them," said Butragueno.

"We would have liked to have faced them further on in the competition," the former Spanish international said.

"It is not the best draw, but we too have top quality players with a lot of experience and it is a great tie. For sure the whole world will be watching these two games."

Italian giants Juventus can avenge their narrow 2015 final defeat against Barcelona, but face the daunting task of muting the competition's top marksman Lionel Messi.

FIXTURES
Atletico Madrid v Leicester City
Borussia Dortmund v Monaco
Bayern Munich v Real Madrid
Juventus v Barcelona

Juventus vice-president Pavel Nedved hinted at the size of the task ahead of them.

"You need to be at your best for 180 minutes or more to overcome Barca," said former midfielder Nedved.

"It's a fascinating tie. Juve have improved a lot since 2015 and this team can play without fear against Barcelona."

Leicester landed last year's beaten finalists Atletico Madrid, a draw which prompted British bookmakers to slash the odds making Atletico third favourites to lift the trophy in the June 3 final at

Cardiff behind Barcelona and Bayern.

The Foxes will travel to the Spanish capital for the first leg in the week beginning April 10, with the second match the following week.

Leicester are England's sole representatives following the elimination in the last 16 of Manchester City and Arsenal.

Diego Simeone's Atletico have reached the Champions League final in two of the last three seasons, losing to city rivals Real on both occasions, last year on penalties.

"Facing a team who have reached the final in two of the last three seasons is a massive challenge but it's just the kind of tie you expect in the quarterfinals of the Champions League," said Leicester replacement manager Craig Shakespeare.

"Atletico Madrid are a very good team with some fantastic individuals with experience in the competition, but we'll be ready to give everything to progress."

"It will be a brilliant occasion for our supporters and for everyone at the club but, before the players can begin to think about these games, we have Premier League matches to come that are of huge significance to our season. They will be our sole focus."

France's free scoring Monaco were drawn to meet Thomas Tuchel's Borussia Dortmund meaning goalking Pierre Emerick Aubameyang goes back to his old club.

# Mata fires United

AFP, Manchester

Juan Mata scored the only goal as Manchester United recorded an underwhelming 1-0 victory over FC Rostov on Thursday to reach the Europa League quarterfinals.

Mata struck 20 minutes from the end of a subdued game, completing a 2-1 aggregate win that sent United into the last eight of Europe's second-tier club competition for the first time since 1985.

But victory came at the cost of an injury to world-record signing Paul Pogba, who left the fray with an apparent hamstring injury early in the second half at an unseasonably cold Old Trafford.

United manager Jose Mourinho said Pogba's injury was due to "fatigue" and hit out at unnamed "enemies" in an apparent reference to his side's jam-packed fixture schedule.

"Normally the enemies should be Rostov, but we have a lot of enemies," Mourinho told BT Sport.

"It's difficult to play Monday with 10 men (against Chelsea). It's difficult to play now. It's difficult to play 12 o'clock on Sunday (against Middlesbrough). We have a lot of enemies."

United, who have never previously won the Europa League, will discover their last-eight opponents in Friday's draw in Nyon.

Mourinho's men are seeking to add the trophy to the League Cup they won last month and have the extra incentive of knowing it will yield a place in next season's Champions League.

Mourinho kept faith with the back three he had deployed in Monday's 1-0 FA Cup defeat at Chelsea.

# India fightback after Smith's epic knock

AFP, Ranchi

All-rounder Glenn Maxwell hailed his "awesome" skipper Steve Smith after the duo's 191-run partnership helped Australia post a formidable first innings total against India in the third Test in Ranchi Friday.

Maxwell, returning to the five-day side after nearly three years in the wilderness, cracked his maiden Test century on day two but it was Smith's unbeaten 178 that was the bedrock of the tourists' 451.

Opener Lokesh Rahul led India's strong reply in the final session with the hosts ending the day on 120 for one. India still trail the visitors by 331 runs.

Murali Vijay (42) and Cheteshwar Pujara (10) were batting at the break after Rahul was out caught behind for 67 off fast bowler Pat Cummins.

Rahul, who hit 9 fours in his 102-ball stay, registered his fourth fifty of the series to put on 91 runs with opening partner Vijay.

But it was the epic partnership between Smith and Maxwell that steered Australia to the highest total of the series so far after the visitors resumed the day on 299-4.

"I think we were 4-140 and luckily I had Steve at the other end who is quite experienced," Maxwell told reporters.

"He probably lifts the team to another level because he makes the game look so easy."

"So he's a guy that people feed off. And he's a very inspirational leader with the way he's gone about his career," Maxwell said of his skipper who is the world's top-ranked Test batsman.

Left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja claimed his



Australian batsman Glenn Maxwell celebrates his century during the second day of the third Test against India in Ranchi yesterday.

Smith though registered the highest score by an Australian captain on Indian soil after surpassing Michael Clarke's 130 in Chennai in the 2012-13 series.

It was an especially satisfying innings for the Australian captain after the build-up to the match had been dogged by accusations that he had systematically abused the decision review system (DRS) in the last Test.

The 28-year-old Maxwell set the tone for Australia's continued dominance with his first Test ton in just his fourth game since making his debut in 2013.

The right-handed allrounder, known for his explosive limited-overs exploits, was delighted to make an impression in the five-day format.

"I was so happy to be able to walk back on the field with the Australian Test team with the Baggy Green cap on," said an elated Maxwell.

"I know how bad it felt when I played that last game in Dubai (in 2014) and didn't play again... I just wanted to make it count, every opportunity I get."

India's plight was deepened by the absence of skipper Virat Kohli who has been off the field since Thursday afternoon with an injured shoulder.

While vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane stood in as skipper, Kohli is expected to don the pads and bat in what remains a crucial Test for the hosts.

## SCORES IN BRIEF

**AUSTRALIA:** First innings 451 (Renshaw 44, Smith 178 not out, Maxwell 104, Wade 37, O'Keefe 25; Yadav 3-106, Jadeja 5-124)

**INDIA:** First innings 129 for 1 (Rahul 67, Vijay 42 not out; Cummins 1-22)

## Champions Trophy arrives

SPORTS REPORTER

The official ICC Champions Trophy 2017, which is travelling to all eight participating nations will arrive in Dhaka today, a press release from the Bangladesh Cricket Board informed.

The 3.1 kg trophy will be on put on display at the Centre Court of the Jamuna Future Park from 11:00AM to 09:00PM today and tomorrow.

On March 20, the trophy will be taken to an iconic location in Dhaka for a photo shoot which will be followed by a visit to the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.