



Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan leaves the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium's indoor facilities after Bangladesh team's practice session due to incessant rain yesterday.

## Mustafizur given icon status

BPL reverts to five foreigners per playing 11

SPORTS REPORTER



The fifth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) is now set to start from November 2; two days before the previously announced date. A proactive Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has started their homework much earlier than usual, and accordingly they disclosed some major information yesterday at a press conference.

Among all the information, the announcement of Mustafizur Rahman as a new icon player and the confirmation of the much talked about five foreign players in the playing eleven hogged the spotlight. Many senior players had expressed their concerns once the BPL governing council disclosed that they were considering five overseas players in the playing XI like in the 2012 and 2013 editions, saying that it will deprive the local players. The governing council however ultimately honoured the opinions of a majority of franchises regarding the issue.

"We were under pressure from the franchises who gave us a written statement that they want five foreigners in the playing eleven. Seven franchises expressed their opinion and five were in favour of it," BPL governing council member secretary IH Mallick explained.

"We, the BPL governing council, also feel the same since now the number of participating teams has increased to eight. A franchise can sign as many foreign players as they want, and whenever they want. We have not put any restrictions on it. One team can field a maximum of five foreign players in the playing eleven and must field a minimum of three. A franchise has to sign at least

13 local players and two overseas players from the draft," he added. The draft is scheduled to be held on September 16.

Mustafizur, who had missed the last BPL as he was rehabilitating following shoulder surgery, will be the eighth icon player after Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim, MahmudullahRiyad, Sabbir Rahman and Soumya Sarkar.

"There were seven teams last year so the number of A-plus (icon) players was seven too. Since Sylhet has been added, we have increased the category by adding Mustafizur Rahman. We have also opened up the market for the A-plus players. Bangladesh's senior players had raised the issue with the BCB president last year saying that since they are experienced cricketers, they should not be paid a fixed amount. I feel they will also be paid well this time," said Mallick, adding that since the A-plus players' payment will be negotiated between them and the franchises, the board will not take responsibility. He also said that the payment for players in other grades will be the same as the previous season and that they want to be realistic.

So far, Mashrafe has been signed up by Rangpur Riders while Khulna Titans and Comilla Victorians have announced Mahmudullah and Tamim as their icons respectively, while Shakib will continue with Dhaka Dynamites. Mushfiqur Rahim may join Rajshahi Kings.

Sabbir, Soumya and Mustafizur will now negotiate with the three remaining franchises - Barisal Bulls, Chittagong Vikings and Sylhet and places will be up for grabs until August 24, when the franchises have to announce their icon and retained players from last season.



BPL Chairman Afzalur Rahman Sinha (C) presides over the governing council meeting at the ACME Centre in Kalyanpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Aus cricketers press for fair share

May skip Bangladesh tour if demands not met

STAR SPORT DESK

Australia's Test squad for Bangladesh assembled in Sydney yesterday, demanding the Cricket Australia (CA) to agree to a six-point terms for next month's tour to go ahead.

Australia's players are due to convene in Darwin for a pre-tour camp on August 10, with departure for Bangladesh set for August 18 for the two-Test series. The pre-tour security visit by representatives of both CA and the ACA is going ahead as scheduled this week.

Captain Steven Smith, his deputy David Warner and all other playing members of the touring party either met in person or dialed in for an update on pay talks from the Australian Cricketers Association (ACA) chief executive Alistair Nicholson, player liaison officer Simon Katich and ACA executive member Shane Watson.

And after the two-hour meeting the cricketers have resolved to continue

their fight for a "fair share" of pay and conditions.

Warner also took to social media, declaring state and international players just want to take to the field.

"Players are as frustrated as anyone else. We want to play. Offering even more to grassroots to get a deal!!! #fairshare," he said.

The players want the CA to agree to a six-point terms sheet they offered last week in a bid to finding common ground before intense negotiations over a new memorandum of understanding begin. As part of what the players say is a "peace plan", they have agreed to redirect \$30 million of money they are due to receive to grassroots cricket over the next five years.

CA however says, overall, more than \$200 million is needed over the next five years to bankroll what it has claimed is a chronic shortage of funds directed to junior and club cricket, sparking claims some of the money shared by the CA executive should also be redirected.

In order to avoid such a scenario, a

basic agreement must be reached in the next three weeks, as mid-August would be both the latest time at which the Bangladesh tour could be cancelled and also about the same time that commercial partners -- both of CA and its host broadcasters Channel Nine and the Ten Network -- would be unable to commit to advertising, marketing and promotional campaigns for summer.

Players remain united in their bid to continue to share in the gross share of revenue they have enjoyed since 1997, which the CA wanted to change.

CA said discussions were "progressing well", but the players will not play or tour Bangladesh unless there are at least a heads of agreement is agreed upon. They were riled when CA removed the "revenue share" term in their response to the players last week.

Players are set to share in about \$450 million of revenue over the next five years -- should the MOU be brokered. More than 200 cricketers have been unemployed since July 1, saving CA \$2 million in wages.

## FARAAZ CHALLENGE CUP Green, Fareast in final

SPORTS REPORTER



Green University and Fareast University qualified for Wednesday's final of the Walton Inter-University Football tournament after winning their respective semifinal matches at the Birseshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Green University breezed past Brac University 3-0 after Fareast University came from behind to hand a 2-1 defeat to City University in front of some hundred students who had gathered at the Big bowl to support their teams defying consistent downpour.

In the first semifinal, Biplob gave City University the lead in 10th minute before Sujoy leveled the margin in the 20th minute.

ute with a long-range shot. The second half was a keenly contested affair but it was Fareast University who got the winning goal through Ashanullah Khan, who saw his freekick deflect off a City University defender into the net.

In the second match, Green University fielded at least six professional footballers including two national discards while Brac University fielded players with experience of amateur and underground football.

It were the professional players of Green University who made the difference as Suman Reza, an Uttar Baridhara Club striker, struck two goals in the first half by availing two defense-splitting passes from former national player Alamgir Kabir Rana. The Sheikh Russell KC midfielder later sealed the fate of the match scoring his first goal in the second half.



A City University defender (L) inadvertently deflects the ball into his own net during their match against Fareast University in the first semifinal of the Walton Inter-University Football tournament at Birseshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. Fareast won the match 2-1.

## Rahul out of first SL Test

AFP, Galle

India have ruled opening batsman Lokesh Rahul out of the first Test against Sri Lanka starting Wednesday due to viral fever.

Rahul, who scored a half-century in a two-day warm-up match last week, stayed in Colombo as the rest of the squad practised in Galle.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India said Monday that Rahul has "no major health concerns" but will miss the first Test as a "precautionary measure".

Rahul, who missed the Champions Trophy last month and a short tour of the West Indies with a shoulder injury, played a vital role in India's Test series win over Australia in March despite getting injured during the first match.

The 25-year-old averages over 44 in 17 Tests since making his debut for India against Australia at Melbourne in 2014. He has scored four hundreds and seven half-centuries.

Shikhar Dhawan, who replaced injured Murali Vijay in the 16-man squad for the three-Test series, and Abhinav Mukund are the other openers in the Indian squad.

India, the world number one side, are to play three Tests in Sri Lanka.

## Shastri's mission to keep India on top

AFP, Galle

New India coach Ravi Shastri will Wednesday look to prove his team remains the world's best Test side when they take on Sri Lanka in the first of three matches.

Shastri, who took over the demanding role after Anil Kumble's acrimonious exit last month, has backed India to continue the "fearless brand of cricket" that helped them regain the number one position last year from Pakistan.

While India lost the Champions Trophy final to their arch-rivals, the Virat Kohli-led side is on a roll after winning 10 of the last 13 Tests, overcoming top sides like New Zealand, England and Australia.

"They know their job. They are professional cricketers. Once they step on the field they take over. That is how it should be," said Shastri, who became head coach after Kumble quit over his "untenable" relationship with Kohli.

"My role will be to get the guys to express themselves and play a fearless brand of cricket," the former all-rounder added.

While India start as overwhelming favourites after the seventh-ranked Sri Lanka scraped past Zimbabwe in a one-Test last week, Shastri has warned against complacency.

"Sri Lanka can't be taken lightly at home. Their track record playing at home is as good as any another team. We would look to improve in the series," said the 55-year-old.

The visitors have played a two-day warm-up game in Colombo with returning batsman Shikhar Dhawan among the scorers.

India could start with three spinners and use left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav with the experienced Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja.

Sri Lanka, whose new Test skipper Dinesh Chandimal has been ruled out through flu, will need all the experience of stand-in captain Rangana Herath.

The left-arm spinner, who took 11 wickets against Zimbabwe and his 31st five-wicket haul in 81 Tests, is key for Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's pace lineup has been bolstered by the return of veteran Nuwan Pradeep, who is likely to start at Galle International Stadium.

Dhananjaya de Silva adds muscle to their strong batting arsenal, comprising former captain Angelo Mathews, Upul Tharanga and Niroshan Dickwella.

Sri Lanka's interim coach Nic Pothas said the team should take inspiration from Kohli's men, who overcame a 1-0 deficit to beat the islanders in a three-Test series in 2015.

## Tillakaratne SL's interim coach

CRICINFO, Colombo

Hashan Tillakaratne has joined the Sri Lanka team as temporary batting coach, and will be with the side until at least the end of the Test series against India. Sri Lanka have been without a permanent batting coach since Marvan Atapattu was raised to the position of head coach in 2014.

"Hashan has been with us since the recent Test match against Zimbabwe, actually," Sri Lanka Cricket manager Asanka Gurusinha said. "At this stage, for all the Tests he will be batting coach. Most probably after the Indian series we'll discuss with coach Nic Pothas and see what's happening from there. With all his experience, there is a lot the batsmen can learn from him."

Tillakaratne has been a coach in the SLC system since December last year, largely working with the sides that feed into the national team. He had also previously served as a national selector, between January 2013 and April 2015.

A former captain, having led Sri Lanka in 11 Tests, Tillakaratne had 11 Test centuries across 83 matches. His is the latest in a spate of recent appointments in the Sri Lanka set-up. Chaminda Vaas replaced the outgoing Champaka Ramanayake as bowling coach on Friday.