

# SPORT



Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman, who returned to action in the Chittagong leg of the Bangladesh Premier League, gears up ahead of the Dhaka leg which starts from Saturday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Al-Amin reported

SPORTS REPORTER

Comilla Victorians paceman Al-Amin Hossain has been reported for suspect bowling action during the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League. Al-Amin's delivery in the 15th over of the match between Khulna Titans and Comilla Victorians which yielded the wicket of Titans batsman Ariful Haque has raised suspicions about his action.

"Al-Amin was reported for one delivery from the November 28 game between Comilla Victorians and Khulna Titans," BCB media committee chairman Jalal Younus told The Daily Star. "His action will now be reviewed by BCB's five-member panel and if anything is wrong with his action then he will go through a rehab program."

Al-Amin can continue playing in competitive matches and has 14 days to respond to BCB's bowling action review committee. The bowler's action had previously been reported in August 2014 and he was cleared in November 2014 after undergoing tests in Chennai at an ICC-accredited centre.

## PCB seeks \$70m from BCCI

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan has kicked off a legal battle against India for not honouring a bilateral cricket series agreement, the sport's governing body confirmed Thursday. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is seeking \$70 million in compensation from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) after the country failed to attend two series in 2014 and 2015 as part of a memorandum of understanding signed between the two boards.

The International Cricket Council confirmed receiving the notice. "The ICC has received a Notice of Dispute from the PCB's lawyers, which will be forwarded to the Chairman of the Dispute Resolutions Committee next week," a spokesman for the ICC said. The ICC Dispute Resolution Committee is headed by Michael Beloff QC who will appoint independent adjudicators to hear the case.

The PCB sent a legal notice to their counterparts earlier this year but Indian officials rejected the memorandum as "a piece of paper".

## Three pillars standing, two crumbling

SPORTS REPORTER



Tamim Iqbal's gentlemanly gesture hogged the spotlight at the end of the Chittagong leg of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL). The Comilla Victorians skipper was applauded all over social media for his comments after the match against Dhaka Dynamites.

"We call cricket a gentleman's game, so I have to be honest and I just did it. Even if my team was in a position to lose the match, there would have been no difference," said Tamim when asked about recalling Kevon Cooper after the batsman had bumped into a player and fallen victim to a run out.

However there were many more reasons for the left-hander to start the second phase of the Dhaka leg - which will kick off tomorrow at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur -- in good spirits as his side won two of three matches in Chittagong to finish on top and he led his side from the front with scores of 63, 64 and 37.

Another national hero Mashrafe Bin Mortaza also had good outings in the port city, where he emerged with his big-hitting ability during two match-winning knocks of 42 and 17,

helping his side Rangpur Riders brighten their chance of reaching the last four. Mashrafe also contributed with the ball and took three wickets in as many matches in Chittagong.

Mahmudullah Riyad will also make a happy return to Dhaka; not only because of his 59-run knock and two wickets but also because his side Khulna Titans notched two wins from three matches to secure second place in the table as well as confirm their place in the final four.

Among the five pillars of the current Bangladesh cricket team, Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim will not share that spirit. Shakib's Dhaka Dynamites, who dominated the first phase of the Dhaka leg, slipped to third position after winning one of two matches.

On the other hand, Rajshahi Kings kept their hopes alive by winning two matches out of three in Chittagong, but Bangladesh Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim failed to make any notable contributions to his side and the injury to his left index finger in the last game against Chittagong Vikings compounded his worries.

"The pain is bit less. I will go to practice tomorrow and after practice our physio will assess my condition and whether I can play the next match [against Dhaka Dynamites]," informed the wicketkeeper-batsman.

| TEAM               | M  | W | L | N/R | PT | NRR    |
|--------------------|----|---|---|-----|----|--------|
| Comilla Victorians | 9  | 7 | 2 | 0   | 14 | 0.682  |
| Khulna Titans      | 10 | 6 | 3 | 1   | 13 | 0.120  |
| Dhaka Dynamites    | 10 | 5 | 4 | 1   | 11 | 1.195  |
| Rangpur Riders     | 9  | 5 | 4 | 0   | 10 | -0.189 |
| Rajshahi Kings     | 10 | 4 | 6 | 0   | 8  | -0.582 |
| Sylhet Sixers      | 10 | 3 | 6 | 1   | 7  | -0.813 |
| Chittagong Vikings | 10 | 2 | 7 | 1   | 5  | -0.425 |

## All eyes on Kremlin

World Cup draw today

AFP, Moscow



Germany will find out who stands between them and a successful defence of the World Cup as the draw for the 2018 finals in Russia is held in a glitzy ceremony within the Kremlin in Moscow on Friday.

After beating Lionel Messi's Argentina in the final at the Maracana in Rio to lift the World Cup in 2014, the aim for Joachim Loew's side now is to become the first nation since Brazil in 1962 to retain the trophy.

Having already won the Confederations Cup in Russia earlier this year with a fringe squad, the Germans are leading favourites for glory in 2018, a status that Loew himself has said there is no avoiding. Then again, not everyone agrees.

The Germans can expect stiff competition from the Brazil of Neymar -- revitalised after their nightmare 7-1 loss to the Germans on home soil -- and Spain in particular.

The first step, though, is discovering who they will meet in the group stage as the focus turns to the State Kremlin Palace, where the snow and freezing temperatures of a Russian winter will greet the footballing world for a ceremony starting at 6pm local time.

For all the talk of the controversial award-

ing of the tournament in the first place, of the friction between Vladimir Putin's Russia and the west, and of fears over hooliganism and potential terror attacks, the draw marks the moment when excitement really starts to build towards the actual competition.

Coaches, players and fans will get an idea of who their teams will face, when and where in this enormous country which will see games staged at venues in 11 different cities, often thousands of kilometres apart, between June 14 and July 15.

Germany, Brazil and Argentina are all in the first pot along with France, European champions Portugal, Belgium, Poland and the hosts.

But if those nations are certain of avoiding each other, danger lurks in pot two, where the Spanish -- rebuilt into a formidable force by Julen Lopetegui after poor showings in 2014 and at Euro 2016 -- lie along with England.

This will be the penultimate 32-nation tournament before FIFA's grand plan for 48 teams comes into effect for 2026 and world football's governing body will keep apart sides from the same continent with the exception of Europe, which has 14 representatives to go into the eight groups.

As a result, most of the sections will contain two European nations, raising the prospect of England or Spain meeting Germany or France in heavyweight contests right from the start.



Obviously you think about the teams we might get and how the matches work out, how we can qualify depending on the group and how difficult or easy the group might be. Obviously, I'm going to be watching [the World Cup]. If we don't have a match or training session then I'll definitely be watching.

Messi



I'm relaxed because I know while some teams are stronger than others all the groups are going to be pretty evenly balanced. I know that when the time comes, the team's going to be ready. What I'm expecting is that Portugal will have a good World Cup. We have to beat whoever comes; as that's always the case.

Ronaldo



The Brazil that everyone respects and admires is back; a team that enjoys good football. And that makes us happy. The mood of our fans and our country has changed. Everyone's confident and happy looking ahead to the World Cup. You can't put a price on that. We aren't scared of anyone.

Neymar



STAGE SET: The stage for today's World Cup draw is seen here during a rehearsal session at the State Kremlin Palace in Moscow yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## England bank on pace duo

Second Ashes Test starts tomorrow

AFP, Adelaide



England aim to overcome mounting distractions and save their Ashes campaign against Australia through their potent pace duo James Anderson and Stuart Broad in the day-night Adelaide Test starting Saturday.

Diverted by the Jonny Bairstow-headbutt incident on top of the festering Ben Stokes availability saga, the tourists cannot afford another defeat after their 10-wicket first Test mauling in Brisbane.

A win in Adelaide looks essential to England's hopes of retaining the Ashes, especially with the third Test to follow at Perth's WACA Ground, where they have not won since 1978.

Bairstow's headbutt "greeting" of Australian opener Cameron Bancroft at the outset of the tour in Perth is the latest self-inflicted wound, leading to a midnight curfew imposed on the squad by team management.

The first-ever Ashes Test under lights has long been earmarked as England's best chance of a win in Australia given the extra swing and movement of the pink ball in the twilight conditions.

Anderson and Broad, with 899 Test wickets between them, will have to be on their game as England have not won or drawn a series in Australia after losing the first Test since 1954-55.

"We have a great opportunity in Adelaide to bounce back, the day-night Test match should suit our bowling attack and make sure we play as we did in Brisbane, but for longer periods of

time," captain Joe Root said.

Australia have beaten New Zealand and South Africa in the two day-night Tests played in Adelaide, where the groundsman has to leave extra grass on the pitch to ensure the pink ball doesn't quickly deteriorate which may suit the English seamers.

Australian fast bowling great Glenn McGrath does see some hope for the beleaguered tourists.

"Jimmy Anderson, for one, will be in his element, Stuart Broad will get a bit of seam movement and if Chris Woakes will just pitch the ball up a little more then he could be dangerous," McGrath said.

But Australia coach Darren

Lehmann believes his team's pace trio - Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins -- will be equally effective.

"When the (Gabba) wicket quickened up we could go after them a bit harder," Lehmann said.

"That's the blueprint, it's no secret we're going to attack their middle and lower order like that. Hopefully that success continues."

Hazlewood has been Australia's most lethal bowler in the two pink-ball Tests in Adelaide with a total of 15 wickets.

England's Australian coach Trevor Bayliss is expecting more from his batsmen after collapses in Brisbane.



England captain Joe Root has a drink during a training session at the Adelaide Oval yesterday ahead of tomorrow's second Ashes Test.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## First Division lost among BPL's glamour

SPORTS REPORTER



With all the glamour surrounding the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) seems to have forgotten about the First Division cricket league as the clubs are still in the dark regarding its start for the 2017-18 season.

The leagues -- also including the second and third division cricket leagues -- are the bread and butter for cricketers across the country and they have already missed the scheduled starting time this season.

"Previously the first round of the First Division league was normally completed by November. But this season there has been no meeting so far regarding the league. We have no idea when the league is going to start this season. We are also not sure whether the board is interested to hold the league," said Ziaur Rahman, the organising secretary of Partex Sporting Club.

When contacted, BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury told The Daily Star that they would take a decision regarding the leagues next week but did not elaborate further.

After its elections last month, the BCB is yet to form its standing committees -- including the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis, which looks after the Dhaka leagues.

"The board meeting will take place in December and the standing committee will be formed at the first meeting," said BCB director Jalal Yunus.

## Ajmal quits cricket

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan's ace spinner Saeed Ajmal has brought the curtains down on his cricket career with a "heavy heart", criticising the ICC's protocol to assess bowling actions on his way out.

After a successful but controversial career, off-spinner Ajmal finished with 178 wickets in 35 Tests, the last of which was at Galle in Sri Lanka in 2014, where his bowling action was reported for a second time.

His action was first reported during an ODI series against Australia in the UAE in 2009.

His time in the limelight cut short following a temporary ban for chucking, Ajmal returned to the sport in 2015 with a re-modelled action but without much success.

"I am retiring today and at 40 years of age I thought it is now time for me to make way for younger players," Ajmal told PTI.

"I am retiring with a heavy heart because firstly I think the ICC's protocol is too harsh and if all bowlers today playing international cricket are tested I am sure that 90 percent will fail to clear this protocol," Ajmal said.

He felt that if the Pakistan Cricket Board had fought his case more vociferously at the ICC, he would have left a satisfied man.