



Sabbir Rahman (L) and former Australia vice-captain David Warner might both be talented cricketers but due to their respective bans from international cricket the two must make the most of their time with BPL franchise Sylhet Sixers when the tournament gets underway tomorrow.

Opportunity, not pressure: Miraz

SPORTS REPORTER



All-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz, who is hailed as the potential next big thing of Bangladesh cricket after the Big Five of Shakib Al Hasan, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad now has a new challenge ahead. The 21-year-old will be leading Rajshahi Kings in the sixth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) as he was named captain of the side at their jersey unveiling ceremony in Hatirjheel yesterday.

Although captaincy is not a new thing to Mehedi as he already captained Bangladesh in the Under-19 World Cup in 2016 -- a tournament where he led the team to their first third-placed finish -- this is likely to be very different. After having played for the Kings in the previous two editions, this is the first time Mehedi will be leading the franchise -- a team comprising many senior players and overseas players.

"It is a big opportunity for me. I never captained a side in such a big tournament before," Mehedi said during the ceremony. "There was an age constraint when I led the under-19 side but here there are many over-

seas players and also many local players, so this is really a big tournament. I think it's a huge experience and a very good opportunity for me. I will try to give my 100 per cent and use my under-19 and age-level captaincy experiences here."

Mehedi, who earned the player-of-the-tournament award when he was at the helm of the Under-19 side in the World Cup, opined that he enjoys the responsibility.

"I don't think of it as pressure. Since childhood I have always enjoyed captaincy. It is also good news for me as there are many senior players in the side from whom I can take advice."

The 21-year old also thought of BPL as a big opportunity for him to work on his batting.

"It is an option for me that I can bat, so if I can do well here [BPL] I think I could try to fill gaps in the national team in the upcoming international matches."

Although it is a bit early to say that Mehedi has what is needed to lead Bangladesh in the future but leading the Kings in the BPL is surely a huge opportunity for the young all-rounder to make a statement to be considered as an option to shoulder the national team's responsibilities after the Big Five.



Following a great year, Mehedi Hasan Miraz (L) has been catapulted to the forefront of Bangladesh cricket as he will captain Rajshahi Kings for this edition of the BPL.

BPL FIXTURES			
Phase One (Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka)			
DATE	MATCH	TIME	
Jan 5	Chittagong Vikings v Rangpur Riders	12:30pm	
	Dhaka Dynamites v Rajshahi Kings	5:20pm (D/N)	
Jan 6	Comilla Victorians v Sylhet Sixers	12:30pm	
	Khulna Titans v Rangpur Riders	5:20pm (D/N)	
Jan 8	Dhaka Dynamites v Khulna Titans	12:30pm	
	Comilla Victorians v Rangpur Riders	5:20pm (D/N)	
Jan 9	Chittagong Vikings v Sylhet Sixers	12:30pm	
	Khulna Titans v Rajshahi Kings	5:20pm (D/N)	
Jan 11	Dhaka Dynamites v Rangpur Riders	2:00pm	
	Comilla Victorians v Rajshahi Kings	7:00pm (N)	
Jan 12	Chittagong Vikings v Khulna Titans	12:30pm	
	Dhaka Dynamites v Sylhet Sixers	5:20pm (D/N)	
Jan 13	Rajshahi Kings v Rangpur Riders	12:30pm	
	Chittagong Vikings v Comilla Victorians	5:20pm (D/N)	
Phase Two (Sylhet International Cricket Stadium in Sylhet)			
Jan 15	Khulna Titans v Rajshahi Kings	12:30 pm	
	Comilla Victorians v Sylhet Sixers	05:20 pm (D/N)	
Jan 16	Dhaka Dynamites v Rajshahi Kings	12:30 pm	
	Rangpur Riders v Sylhet Sixers	05:20 pm (D/N)	
Jan 18	Dhaka Dynamites v Sylhet Sixers	2:00 pm	
	Comilla Victorians v Khulna Titans	07:00 pm (N)	
Jan 19	Rangpur Riders v Sylhet Sixers	12:30 pm	
	Chittagong Vikings v Khulna Titans	05:20 pm (D/N)	
Phase Three (Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka)			
Jan 21	Comilla Victorians v Rajshahi Kings	12:30 pm	
	Chittagong Vikings v Dhaka Dynamites	05:20 pm (D/N)	
Jan 22	Khulna Titans v Rangpur Riders	12:30 pm	
	Comilla Victorians v Dhaka Dynamites	05:20 pm (D/N)	
Jan 23	Chittagong Vikings v Rajshahi Kings	12:30 pm	
	Khulna Titans v Sylhet Sixers	05:20 pm (D/N)	
Phase Four (Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram)			
Jan 25	Rajshahi Kings v Sylhet Sixers	2:00 pm	
	Chittagong Vikings v Rangpur Riders	07:00 pm (N)	
Jan 26	Khulna Titans v Sylhet Sixers	12:30 pm	
	Chittagong Vikings v Rajshahi Kings	05:20 pm (D/N)	
Jan 28	Khulna Titans v Comilla Victorians	12:30 pm	
	Dhaka Dynamites v Rangpur Riders	05:20 pm (D/N)	
Jan 29	Chittagong Vikings v Comilla Victorians	12:30 pm	
	Rajshahi Kings v Rangpur Riders	05:20 pm (D/N)	
Jan 30	Chittagong Vikings v Dhaka Dynamites	12:30 pm	
	Rajshahi Kings v Sylhet Sixers	05:20 pm (N)	
Phase Five (Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka)			
Feb 1	Comilla Victorians v Dhaka Dynamites	2:00 pm	
	Chittagong Vikings v Sylhet Sixers	7:00 pm (D/N)	
Feb 2	Comilla Victorians v Rangpur Riders	12:30 pm	
	Dhaka Dynamites v Khulna Titans	05:20 pm (D/N)	
ELIMINATOR (Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka)			
Feb 4	3rd placed team v 4th placed team	12:30 pm	
QUALIFIERS			
Qualifier 1			
Feb 4	1st placed team v 2nd placed team	5:20 pm (D/N)	
Qualifier 2			
Feb 6	Loser of Qualifier 1 v Winner of Eliminator	5:20 pm (D/N)	
FINAL			
Feb 8	Winner of Qualifier 1 v Winner of Qualifier 2	7:00 pm (N)	

Warner's one 'good' Bangla word

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Former Australia vice-captain and Sylhet Sixers' new skipper David Warner showed his jovial side yesterday before the official event to announce his captaincy. He came on time but had to wait for coach Waqar Younis's arrival and took to casual conversation with reporters.

When asked if he knew any Bangla, he shook his head and with a smirk on his face, replied: "Only bad words, no good ones. Well I do know one, it's Bhalobashi", to general laughter from those present.

Warner has fond memories of playing with Mustafizur Rahman, forging a strong bond with the Bangladesh pacer during Sunrisers Hyderabad's maiden IPL title in 2016. Asked if Fizz taught him any Bangla, Warner began shaking his head before saying with a smile that he is to Bangla what Fizz is to English. "Him in English, me in Bangla. That's me and Fizz."

He also joked about Waqar's tardiness.

"Must be stuck in the elevator," the left-handed opener smirked and was not shy about commenting on Dhaka's infamous traffic. "Chaos, but same traffic in Sydney. You haven't been to the M5, ask Waqar, he knows. He lives there and traffic is getting bad."

The new captain, nearing the end of a one-year international cricket ban for tampering, was looking to make a positive impact. "Excited to be here. Great opportunity to work with some experienced players but it's also about helping the younger players [here], who hopefully can one day put on Bangladesh national colours and achieve their dreams. I was able to do that for my country and have seen a lot of young Indians come through, having played in the IPL. I think that's what important about the BPL."

Sachin pays tribute to mentor

AFP, New Delhi

Indian cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar paid a glowing tribute on Thursday to Ramakant Achrekar, his childhood coach and lifelong mentor who has died aged 87.

Achrekar, a club-level coach, discovered a 12-year-old Tendulkar's extraordinary talents in Mumbai and nurtured him on his way to becoming cricket's most prolific run-scorer of all time.

Achrekar died at his home in Mumbai on Wednesday.

"Cricket in heaven will be enriched by the presence of Achrekar Sir. Like many of his students I learnt the ABCD of cricket under Sir's guidance," Tendulkar said in a statement.

"His contribution to my life cannot be captured in words. He built the foundation that I stand on.

"Achrekar Sir taught us the virtues of playing straight and living straight. Thank you for making us a part of your life and enriching us with your coaching manual. Well played Sir and may you coach many more," the 45-year-old Tendulkar added.



New Zealand's James Neesham hit a 13-ball 47 after Martin Guptill's ton in the first ODI against Sri Lanka in Tauranga yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



Pujara gives India ascendancy

AFP, Sydney



Irrepressible Cheteshwar Pujara stroked his third century of the summer Thursday to put India in a commanding position in the decisive fourth and final Test as they strive for an historic series win in Australia.

At stumps on day one, they were 303 for four with the rock-like number three not out 130 and Hanuma Vihari on 39. Mayank Agarwal made 77, with Josh Hazlewood the best of the bowlers with 2-51.

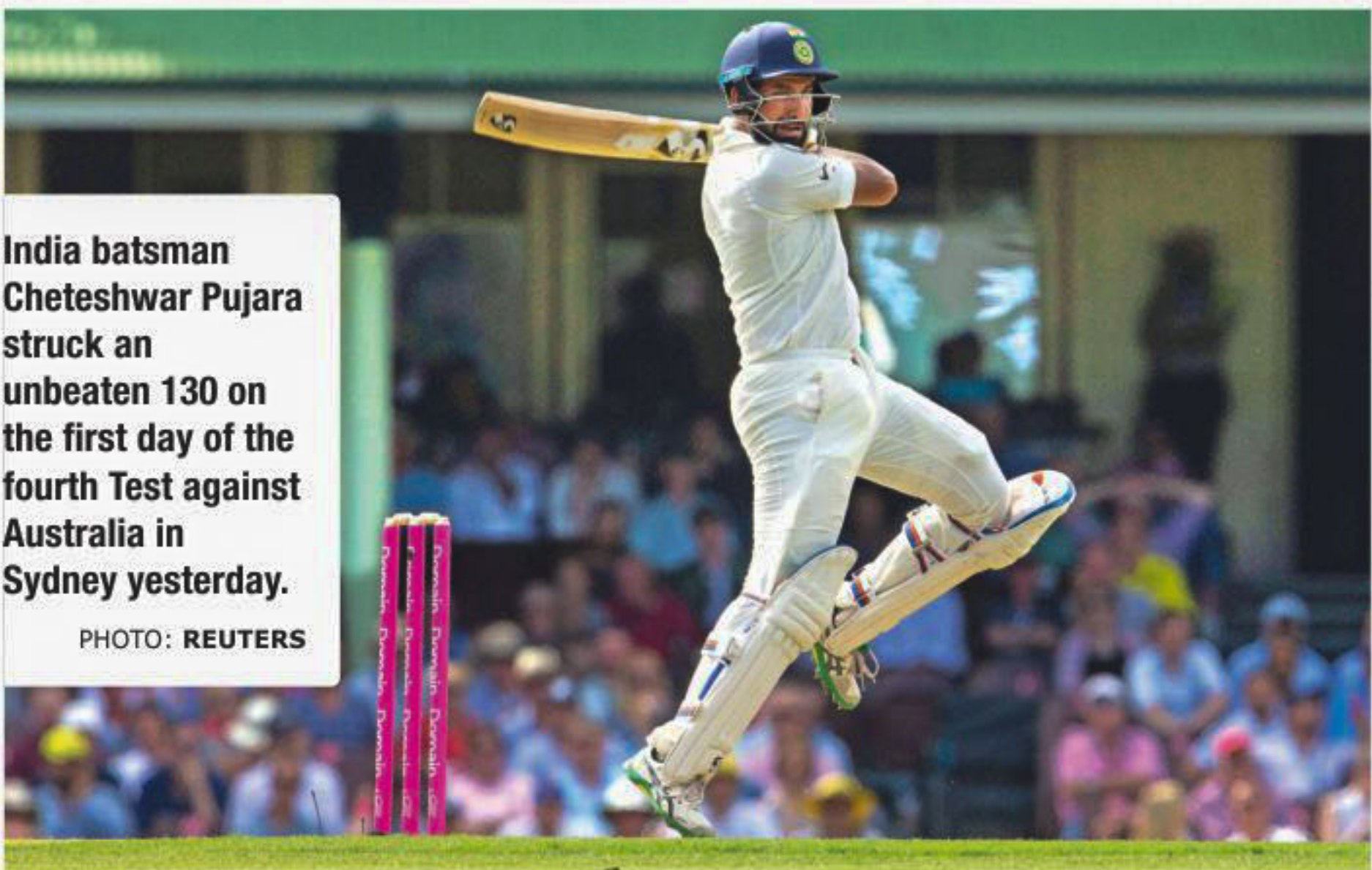
After toiling on a hot Sydney day,

I think we are in a great position," said Agarwal, who paid tribute to Pujara.

"It's great to watch him bat from the other end, the way he grinds the bowlers. He understands his strengths and he sticks with that. He's very tight with his defence and just waits for the bad ball to come."

Marnus Labuschagne, who in a surprise throw of the dice was picked by Australia to be their number three, said his team must learn from Pujara.

"He was very classy. I think it's something I personally can take a lot from. He has just batted a lot of time and that's what we're going to need to do," he said.



India batsman Cheteshwar Pujara struck an unbeaten 130 on the first day of the fourth Test against Australia in Sydney yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Australia were rewarded with the wickets of KL Rahul, Agarwal, Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane, but despite a five-pronged attack the key scalp of Pujara remained elusive.

The visitors lead the series 2-1 after winning the opening clash in Adelaide and the third one in Melbourne. Australia claimed victory in Perth.

If India, the world's top-ranked nation, win or draw in Sydney they will clinch a first-ever series in Australia since they began touring Down Under in 1947-48.

"We are very happy, although we would have liked to be only three down. That said 300 for four on the first day, choosing to bat,

Kohli again won the toss and Australia got an early breakthrough with Hazlewood tempting Rahul into a defensive shot that took a outside edge and carried to Shaun Marsh at slip, and he was gone for nine.

But that only brought the stoic Pujara to the crease and like he has done all series, the 68-Test veteran dug in and blunted the new ball.

He survived a review decision for caught behind on 12, but otherwise gave a masterclass.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: First innings 303 for 4 (Agarwal 77, Pujara 130 not out, Kohli 23, Vihari 39 not out; Hazlewood 2-51)

TALK ON

We are excited to have him [Ali Khan; an American cricketer of Pakistani origin]. It will be good to have him and Lasith [Malinga] together. He can learn as well. Ali is quite exciting. He has just started the leagues so he is inexperienced in that manner. He is quite keen to learn from Bangladeshi conditions and quality opposition. We are glad to have him. We are quite happy with the squad since it has some really talented players. We are very excited to have young players from Bangladesh as well.

TOM MOODY
RANGPUR RIDERS COACH

I have been playing international cricket for the last ten years. I played lot of matches with AB de Villiers. Everybody knows they are big cricketers. It will not be fair for me to fear bowling against them. It will be really challenging to bowl a batsman like Ab de Villiers but I always love to take this challenge. I will just try to focus on good bowling. Shakib bhai [Shakib Al Hasan] is our T20 captain so if I do well here I might catch his attention.

MAHELA JAYAWARDENE
KHULNA TITANS COACH

I always enjoy [playing under the captaincy of Tamim Iqbal]. I played before under his captaincy... really feels good, especially since he gave me the opportunity to bowl. Local players performed well in this tournament and Tamim always played good cricket here. I will try my best to contribute for my team. In my opinion, Bijoy [Anamul Haque] is also a good T20 batsman, his inclusion brought balance to the team.

RUBEL HOSSAIN
DHAKA DYNAMITES BOWLER

IMRUL KAYES
COMILLA VICTORIANS BATSMAN

Guptill, Neesham hammer SL

AFP, Tauranga



Jimmy Neesham made a dream return to international cricket Thursday, crushing Sri Lanka with bat and ball as New Zealand won the opening one-day international by 45 runs in Tauranga.

Neesham, recalled after 18 months in the wilderness as New Zealand look to trial all-rounder options before the World Cup, played the Sri Lankan bowling with an unbeaten 47 off just 13 deliveries.

He then took three for 38 to share the spotlight with player-of-the-match Martin Guptill who set the New Zealand innings alight with 138 off 139 deliveries.

On a placid wicket favouring the batsman and on a ground with short boundaries, Kusal Perera also reached three figures with 102 for Sri Lanka while Niroshan Dickwella added 76.

But in reply to New Zealand's 371 for seven, Sri Lanka were all out for 326 with six balls remaining.

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: 371 for 7 in 50 overs (Guptill 138, Williamson 76, Taylor 54, Neesham 47 not out; Malinga 2-78, Pradeep 2-72, Perera 2-80)

SRI LANKA: 326 all out in 49 overs (Dickwella 76, Gunathilaka 43, Perera 102; Boult 2-65, Ferguson 2-65, Sodhi 2-53, Neesham 3-38)

Result: New Zealand won by 45 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Martin Guptill.