

SPORT



A contentious appointment

SPORTS REPORTER

Former captain Khaled Mashud was appointed team operations manager for Bangladesh's tour of New Zealand this month following a meeting of the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) board of directors meeting yesterday. CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury confirmed the 42-year-old's appointment, who played 42 Tests and 126 ODIs during his long career.

As a cricketer, Mashud invariably made an immense contribution to Bangladesh cricket. His hardworking approach was exemplary for many young cricketers and in that regard there was nothing wrong to see a player of his stature taking the job. Still, questions were raised yesterday while BCB president Nazmul Hassan was speaking to the press about the outcomes from the meeting.

And there was a valid reason behind the curiosity because when it came to disciplinary issues, the man from Rajshahi's behaviour was a far cry from his on-field contributions -- especially if we recall what happened during Bangladesh's disastrous 2003 World Cup campaign in South Africa that saw the board

form a two-member inquiry committee.

The body of Commodore (ret) Mujibur Rahman and Syed Shamim Ahsan in its findings said: "There were complaints of his [Khaled Mashud's] arrogance, his behaviour, and there were complaints of him using foul language with his teammates as well as the senior management of the team, but above all, there were complaints about his total lack of self-discipline. He had fought with the manager on the issue of tickets, and there are instances where he spent nights out of the hotel."

However, Hassan expressed optimism saying that "hopefully there won't be any trouble". "He [Mashud] has been with us for a while now. He has not done anything which would render us unable to include him. Naturally with his experience, he was in charge of a few responsibilities for some time now (such as recently going on tour with the HP team). So, after looking at him there was confidence and everyone agreed he could be sent along with the team," Hassan said.

With the World Cup approaching, many had raised eyebrows at the board's decision to reduce a ban in order to accommodate a player and that has been repeated after the appointment of someone with a questionable disciplinary record to an important position.



KHALED MASHUD



Comilla Victorians opener Tamim Iqbal gives his cap to Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's son after his side succumbed to a nine-wicket defeat against Rangpur Riders in a BPL encounter in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Dhoni boost for India

Fifth ODI against New Zealand today

PTI, Wellington

Former skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni has regained full fitness and will play the fifth and final ODI against New Zealand, India's assistant coach Sanjay Bangar confirmed on Saturday. India and New Zealand will meet for the final ODI at the Westpac Stadium here on Sunday. Although the visitors have sealed the series 3-1, they will look to bounce back after the eight-wicket defeat in the fourth ODI where they were bundled out for a paltry 92.

India's most experienced ODI player was out of the last two games with a hamstring injury.

Playoff line-up

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The penultimate stage of the sixth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) came to a close as Dhaka Dynamites secured their playoff spot with a six-wicket triumph in a must-win

encounter against Khulna Titans at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The tickets for the Eliminator match, Qualifier-1, Qualifier-2 and the final will be available from February 3. Visit our online portal by scanning the QR code for more details.



FIXTURES				
Date	Match	Venue	Time	
Feb 4	Dhaka Dynamites v Chittagong Vikings	SBNS	1:30 pm	ELIMINATOR
Feb 4	Rangpur Riders v Comilla Victorians	SBNS	6:30 pm	QUALIFIER 1
Feb 6	Losers Q1 v Winner Eliminator	SBNS	6:30 pm	QUALIFIER 2
Feb 8	Winner Q1 v Winner Q2	SBNS	7:00 pm	FINAL

Rangpur riding high

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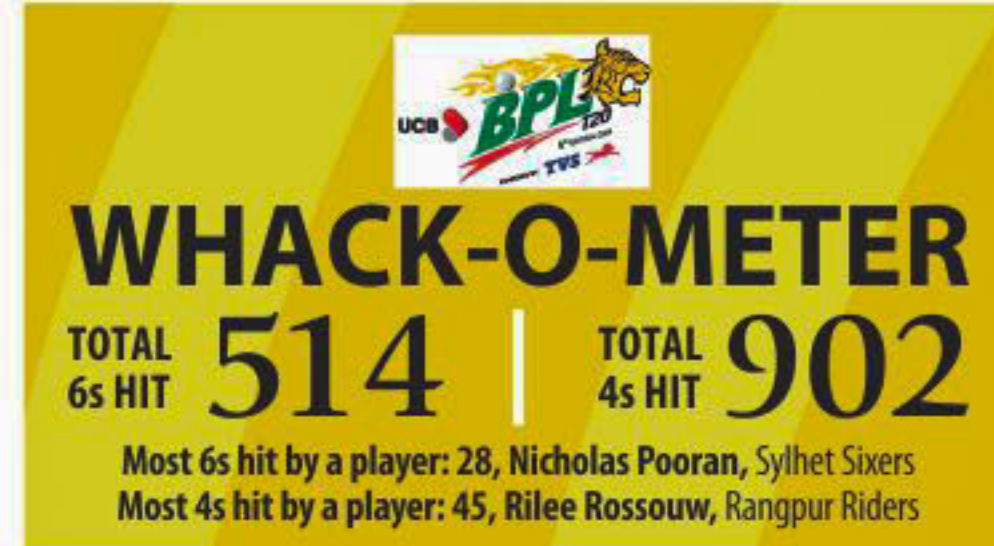
Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's Rangpur Riders look to have hit top gear when it matters most, confirming first place in the Bangladesh Premier

League (BPL) with a whopping nine-wicket victory over Comilla Victorians in their last league match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Rangpur's climb to the summit was quite unexpected as they had started the tournament with just two wins from their first six games before exploding into life with six straight wins and skipper Mashrafe hailed his team's turnaround when speaking at the post-match press conference yesterday.

"We were really in a bad position at one point, winning just two matches out of six. We were in a situation where we were not sure if we could even make it to the semifinals. I think to come from that position to here is a very positive and good thing for the team. But still I think the matches ahead are very important," Mashrafe said.

Mashrafe and Co. dominated yesterday's game from the word go as they bundled out Comilla for a meagre 72 runs -- their second lowest total in BPL history -- after Comilla had elected to bat. Ziaur Rahman added crucial 21 runs to help Comilla avert the humiliation of being bundled



SCORES IN BRIEF	
COMILLA VICTORIANS v RANGPUR RIDERS	
Comilla:	72 all out in 16.3 overs (Ziaur 21, Mashrafe 18; Bopara 3-7, Nahidul 2-9, Mashrafe 2-18)
RANGPUR:	76 for 1 in 9.3 overs (Gayle 35 not out, de Villiers 34 not out, Mahedi 5; Sanjib 1-32, Hider 0-11)
Result:	Rangpur won by 9 wickets.
Player-of-the-match:	Ravi Bopara.

out for their lowest-ever BPL total before falling prey to all-rounder Ravi Bopara. On a day that saw Rangpur bowlers dictate terms, Bopara was the pick of the bunch, ending with figures of three wickets for just seven runs in three overs.

Interestingly, Comilla's lowest-ever total in the history of this tournament -- 63 all out in 16.2 overs -- was also recorded in this edition of

the BPL against the same opposition. Rangpur also won that game by the same margin when the two sides had met early on in the tournament at the same venue.

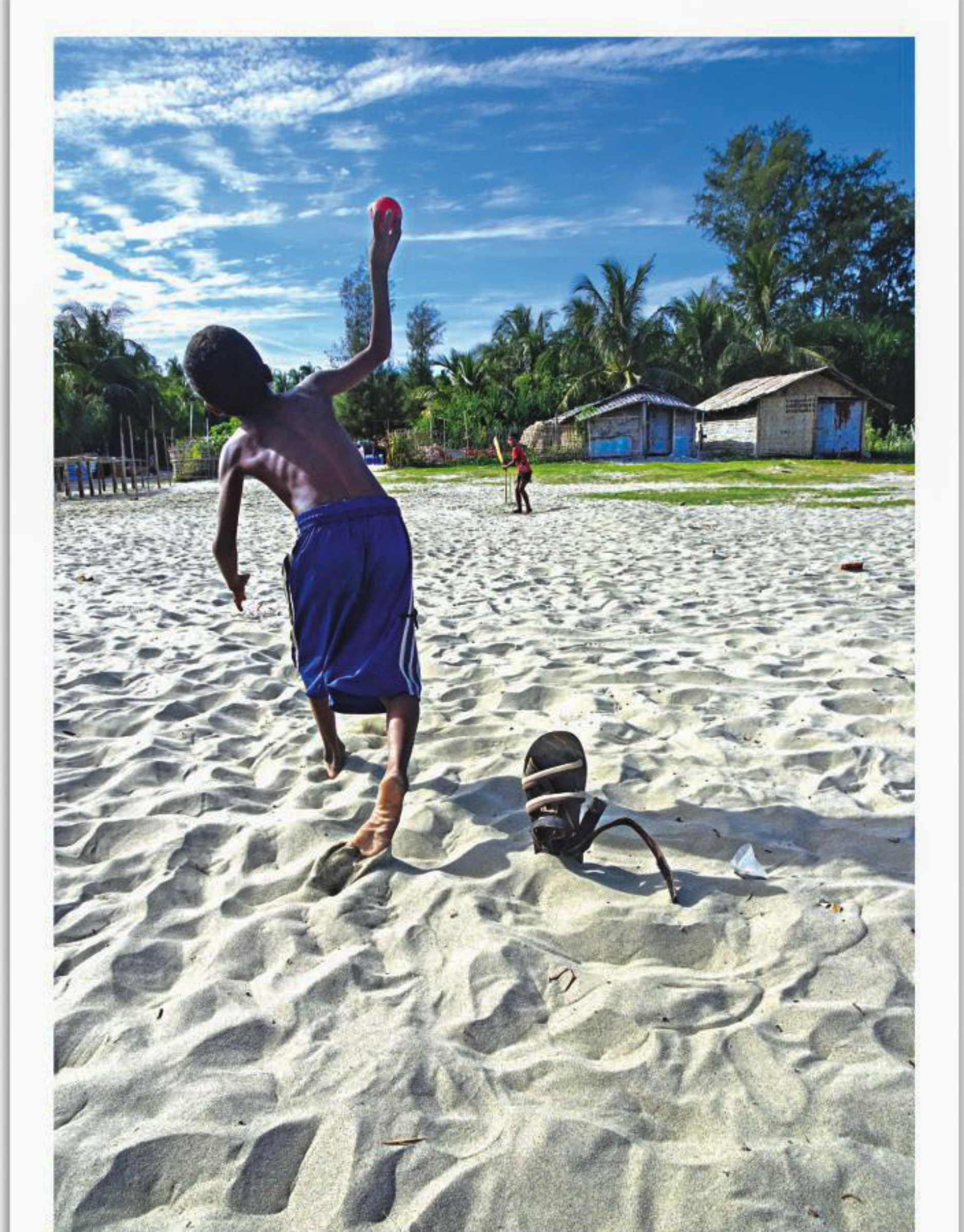
After the exchange, Rangpur batsmen Chris Gayle and AB de Villiers remained unbeaten for 35 and 34 runs respectively and wrapped up the chase in just 9.3 overs.

Although both Comilla and Rangpur went into the match yesterday having already confirmed their spot in the last four, the massive win will surely give Rangpur a momentum boost going into a Qualifier against the same opponents tomorrow.

However, Rangpur will be missing the likes of Alex Hales and de Villiers. The former has already returned to England after suffering an injury against Rajshahi Kings while de Villiers will be unavailable as yesterday's was the final of his six-match commitment.

Mashrafe, however, said that they were prepared for such events.

"I think Gayle and de Villiers are different from others, especially in this format. Hales was also in form but he will be leaving. About de Villiers, we knew that he would leave after playing six matches, so we were mentally prepared. And the thing is that in this type of tournament, such things happen. Anyone could have been injured."



NO GEAR, NO PROBLEM

The lack of a field or equipment -- barring a taped-up tennis ball -- could not stop two kids in St Martin's Island from getting caught up in cricket fever, as they use a hand-crafted bat along with shoes and sticks as makeshift wickets to play their beloved sport at the tourist destination.

PHOTO: COLLECTED FROM NASIRA MANSOOR

Imrul included, Liton promoted

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan informed yesterday that the centrally-contracted players' list was extended by four players from last year to 17.

The contracts were divided into A+, A, B+, B and rookie categories with the Big Five of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza -- who was elected a member of parliament in the recent elections -- Tamim Iqbal, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad all handed A+ contracts.

Liton Das, who made inroads into the ODI side and also pushed for a place in the Test team with his performances last year, was promoted to category B contract after being handed a rookie contract last year.

Young left-hander Nazmul Hossain, who impressed in last season's Dhaka Premier League but did not make the most of

In:	Imrul Kayes; Liton Das (promoted to B category)
Out:	Nazmul Hossain Shanto
Players excluded last year:	Soumya Sarkar, Mosaddek Hossain, Kamrul Islam Rabbi, Imrul Kayes, Taskin Ahmed and Sabbir Rahman.
PLAYER GRADE	
A+:	Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad.
A:	Imrul Kayes, Mustafizur Rahman, Rubel Hossain.
B:	Mominul Haque, Liton Das, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Tajjul Islam.
Rookie:	Abu Hider, Abu Jayed, Mohammad Saifuddin, Nayeem Hasan, Khaled Ahmed.

his opportunities with the national side, was the only one from last season's rookie list to be excluded. The other of last year's rookies, Abu Hider, was retained under the same category.

Imrul Kayes, who has been excluded from the squad for the upcoming tour of New Zealand and had not been awarded a central contract last year, was awarded a category A contract alongside Mustafizur Rahman and Rubel Hossain.

Soumya Sarkar, Taskin Ahmed and Sabbir Rahman -- part of Bangladesh's ODI squad for the New Zealand tour -- also missed out on central contracts along with Mosaddek Hossain and Kamrul Islam Rabbi. All five were excluded from last year's list as well.

There were many new faces in the rookie list, with 18-year old Nayeem Hasan -- who impressed with his performances during the Test series at home against the West Indies -- joining all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin and pacers Abu Jayed and Khaled Ahmed in that category.



Dhaka Dynamites captain Shakib Al Hasan (L) celebrates one of his two wickets which helped the side defeat Khulna Titans by six wickets and secure their place in the playoff phase in a BPL encounter in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Taskin out of NZ tour?

SPORTS REPORTER



Taskin Ahmed's injury misery has continued as the right-arm pacer's New Zealand tour is all but over after he suffered an ankle injury on Friday during the Sylhet Sixers' last group match against Chittagong Vikings at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The 23-year-old returned to the national fold for the upcoming tour after suffering lengthy spells on the sidelines due to injury but chief selector Minhajul Abedin informed yesterday that the selectors were set to announce Taskin's replacement today as the latest injury might set Taskin back quite a bit.

"He [Taskin] has a very slim chance to be fit for the New Zealand series, so hopefully we will announce his replacement tomorrow [Sunday]," said Minhajul yesterday.

Bangladesh Cricket Board chief physician Debashish Chowdhury added: "The scans were done today and we will get the report tomorrow [Sunday] and only then can we tell you about the exact gravity of the injury and how much recovery time he will need. But the initial idea we have is that his recovery will take a considerable amount of time as his condition is not good at all," he informed.

Taskin, who had hobbled out of the ground on Friday after twisting his ankle while attempting a catch, was in a good vein of form recently, becoming the highest wicket-taker in the BPL with 22 wickets even as Sylhet were unable to make the playoffs.

Pacers Shafiqul Islam and Ebadat Hossain are likely candidates to be included in the squad for the New Zealand tour if Taskin is unable to make it. Bangladesh begin their series against New Zealand with the first ODI on Feb 13.