

SPORT



Dhaka Dynamites skipper Shakib Al Hasan will be hoping that his plans find the target when his side, boasting the likes of (inset from R to L) Kieron Pollard, Sunil Narine and Luke Wright, take on defending champions Rangpur Riders in the second BPL qualifier in Mirpur today. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



ACC investigating BFF finances

SPORTS REPORTER



The Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) has sent a letter to the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), bringing allegations against its president Kazi Salahuddin and women's wing chairperson Mahfuza Akter of 'irregularities and embezzlement of funds through corruption'.

The letter, signed by ACC's deputy director Mohammad Nasiruddin and addressed to BFF's chief financial officer Abu Hossain, asked questions regarding expenditures of its various activities. The letter also asked the game's local governing body to produce documents regarding the allegations before Nasiruddin, who has been appointed as the investigative officer of the case, within February 7.

"I have received the letter and my office will reply and cooperate with the ACC duly. As I only returned to the country on February 3, we may ask for a bit of time to produce the documents before the ACC," Salahuddin said when contacted last night. It has been learnt that the ACC has asked

for documents regarding 11 issues, including the BFF's various bank accounts, the federation's audit reports of the past 10 years, receipts and disbursement details of funds from FIFA for the Sylhet BKSP football academy, the compensation paid for non-participation in AFC Solidarity Cup, salary and bonus details of former coaches Lodewijk de Kruijff and Rene Koster and expenditure for former FIFA president Sepp Blatter's visit to Bangladesh.

"This is nothing serious. They [ACC] have wanted to enquire about a few things and we will cooperate," the BFF boss said, adding that there was a similar investigation from the Youth and Sports Ministry a few years ago which eventually found nothing against him.

He also said that he feels this could be part of a continued campaign from a vested quarter to malign him and his office with the governing body's election only a year away.

Salahauddin, one of the best footballers of Bangladesh, became president of the game's local governing body in 2008 and is currently enjoying his third straight term at its helm. It is believed that he will run for a fourth term when the polls are held in April, 2020.



KAZI SALAHUDDIN

Big guns set to blaze

Dhaka to take on Rangpur in Qualifier 2

SPORTS REPORTER



A cracker of a match seems to be on the cards with defending champions Rangpur Riders taking on Dhaka Dynamites in the second qualifier of the sixth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) today at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium with a place in Friday's final at stake.

There was no dearth of entertainment when Rangpur, led by Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, took on Shakib Al Hasan's Dhaka in two league games as both witnessed plenty of exciting action and some records being registered.

Dhaka's mystery off-spinner Aliss Al Islam surprised the world as he became the first player ever in T20 history to bag a hat-trick on debut in the sides' first meeting - a high-scoring one in which Dhaka edged a narrow two-run victory.

The next time, however, it was Rangpur who won another high-scoring duel comfortably by eight-wickets, courtesy of an unbeaten 184-run third-wicket partnership between Alex Hales and AB de Villiers - the highest partnership for the wicket in BPL. While de Villiers, hailed as Mr. 360, entertained the crowd with a 50-ball 100, opener Hales partnered him well throughout with a 53-ball 85.

However, none of the players who lit up the previous two contests will be featuring in today's all-important qualifier. Rangpur will be without Hales and de Villiers as the former has returned to England because of

an injury during their league encounter with Rajshahi Kings, while the latter had already completed his six-match commitment at the end of the league phase.

Aliss could also not recover from an injury he suffered during his side's league encounter with Sylhet Sixers and Dhaka coach Khaled Mahmud dismissed any possibilities of the 22-year-old's return for the big game while talking to reporters yesterday.

A thriller can still be expected today as Rangpur have players like Rilee Rossouw, Chris Gayle and Benny Howell and skipper Mashrafe while Dhaka boast the likes of Shakib, Kieron Pollard, Andre Russell and Sunil Narine, all of whom could change the complexion of a game at any moment.

Dhaka coach Mahmud however felt that Rangpur will be on the back foot today as they will be without the likes of Hales and de Villiers, but was still confident that there would be an exciting game of cricket today.

"Obviously, it is a matter of relief. AB is a dangerous cricketer and I don't need to say anything about Hales. But AB de Villiers is a fantastic cricketer. The way he played in BPL, to be honest it was magnificent. Again, Hales also batted brilliantly for them. So not having them will definitely put Rangpur on the back foot and this will also boost confidence in our team. Still, cricket is a funny game and if we look at how brilliantly [Benny] Howell batted in the last game. And a team under Mashrafe's captaincy cannot be neglected. We also have a balanced side. So I think it will be a cracking contest."

SPORTS REPORTER



The inclusions of pacers Shafiu Islam and Ebadat Hossain in Bangladesh's ODI and Test squads respectively for the upcoming tour of New Zealand as replacements for injured pacer Taskin Ahmed were simultaneous reflections of the selectors' foresight and the contrasting tendency towards nearsightedness.

It was expected that Taskin -- who lost his place in the national squad after the tour of South Africa in 2017 because of injury and poor form -- would get a recall to the national side after a Bangladesh Premier League season during which he picked 22 wickets in 12 games for Sylhet Sixers.

The 25-year-old Ebadat Hossain's inclusion in the Test team as Taskin's replacement after the latter twisted his ankle in his franchise's last BPL game is in the same vein because the uncapped Ebadat is one of the up-and-comers in Bangladesh's pace scene. The selection showed foresight as he was not part of the well-trodden age-level setup and instead was plucked from the High Performance squad. He also bowled with lively pace for Sylhet Sixers, which caught the eye of national head coach Steve Rhodes.

The case of Shafiu, who had a satisfactory outing in the BPL with 15 wickets from 12 games for Rangpur

Riders, does not seem as straightforward.

In a career of 11 Tests, 56 ODIs and 12 T20Is dating back to 2010, Shafiu has remained the selectors' first choice whenever they have needed a replacement for an injured player. In that respect it was an expected choice but one that is becoming more puzzling with each fresh inclusion.



SHAFIU ISLAM

Shafiu played his last ODI back in 2016 and although he was included in the national team during this period the pacer from Bogura has been little more than a passenger on tour who does most of his bowling in net sessions. His perpetual fringe role in the national team and the fact that he was not in the original squad also hints that he is not expected to be a part of

the squad for the 2019 World Cup in England and Wales this summer, towards which all national games now seem to be geared.

Assuming that the team management would want an injury replacement to be able to fit in as seamlessly as possible, the likes of Abu Jayed -- who bagged 18 wickets in 13 games for Chittagong Vikings -- and Khaled



EBADAT HOSSAIN

Ahmed, who was named in the Test side, and even left-arm seamer Abu Hider could have been more sensible choices as they have enjoyed more faith as far as being selected in the playing eleven goes.

The New Zealand tour could have been a valuable experience for them ahead of the World Cup. But it seems that foresight was expended on

Flight of the eliminated

SPORTS REPORTER

Eight members of the 15-man Bangladesh ODI squad whose franchises have been eliminated from the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) will be the first lot to fly to New Zealand today to prepare for the three-match series set to start on February 13 in Napier.

The eight players set to fly today are Mushfiqur Rahim and Nayeem Hasan from Chittagong Vikings; Mahmudullah Riyad from Khulna Titans; Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Mustafizur Rahman and Soumya Sarkar from Rajshahi Kings and Sylhet Sixers' Liton Das and Sabbir Rahman.

The remaining seven players whose franchises are still in the hunt -- ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Rubel Hossain, Mohammad Mithun, Mohammad Saifuddin and Shafiu Islam -- fly a day after the BPL final on February 9.

The Tigers' first assignment on tour is a warm-up one-dayer on February 10 in Christchurch.

TALK ON



It's a big game and big players step up in big games and it can happen, what we witnessed in the last game. I started off slowly and expected to pick up in the back end of the tournament and remain positive. At the same time, we need to back each other in the team as it's not one player's game and we all play collectively.

CHRIS GAYLE RANGPUR RIDERS OPENER

JU crowned first champs

JU CORRESPONDENT



Jahangirnagar University (JU) were crowned champions in the maiden Inter-university Women's Cricket Championship after they defeated Jashore University of Science and Technology (JUST) by six wickets at the Dhaka University Central Playground yesterday.

Bangladesh women's cricketer

Sharmin Akter Supta led from the front to ensure Jahangirnagar's triumph as her unbeaten 40 helped chase down JUST's 126 for four with 10 balls to spare in the 16-over game.

Jahangirnagar skipper Supta was excited about being a part of history.

"We are excited to be the first team to become champions of inter-university cricket in Bangladesh. We are excited to be part of history," she said after the game.

"Although Jashore University of

Science and Technology have some premier league players, our team put forward some excellent performances."

Supta's teammate and the side's opener Tazrin Islam Tonny thought that their triumph will serve as inspiration to other female cricketers in Bangladesh.

"It was a great experience as this is the first initiative and is also a brave initiative. Our university authorities have completely supported us.

"We have played good cricket. Hopefully our victory will inspire all female cricketers of Bangladesh," Tonny concluded.

The coach behind the successful team, Debabrata Paul, informed The Daily Star that the team have been practising for seven months for the competition and also mentioned that such initiatives will help enrich the Bangladesh national women's team.

"It is a good initiative as it will help bring good players into the pipeline for the national team and enrich our cricket.

"Initially, six universities had registered to play the tournament but only three played [Dhaka University was the third]. We actually lost the first game against Jashore but won the next one against Dhaka and then won the final against Jashore," Debabrata added.



JU women's cricket team pose with the trophy alongside Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dhaka, Professor Md. Akhtaruzzaman, after winning the first Inter-University Women's Cricket Championship. PHOTO: COLLECTED



Both are in the national squad but Rubel Hossain (C) will be playing the second BPL qualifier for Dhaka Dynamites today while Mustafizur Rahman will depart for New Zealand to prepare for the ODI series. PHOTO: STAR

Chandimal sacked

AFP, Colombo



Sri Lanka's skipper Dinesh Chandimal has been sacked and removed from the Test squad for the upcoming two-match series against South Africa, cricket authorities said Tuesday.

Chandimal, 29, was replaced by Dimuth Karunaratne, Sri Lanka Cricket said, listing a 17-member squad that did not include the right-handed batsman.

National selectors said in a statement Chandimal was dismissed to help him

"regain his form and be ready for future international tours."

His sudden sacking came a day after he insisted his team could lift their game during their upcoming tour against South Africa, following a thrashing by Australia.

Under Chandimal, Sri Lanka lost the opening day-night Test in Brisbane by an innings and 40 runs inside three days and followed it up with a 366-run thrashing in the Canberra Test.

It extended a dire run of results for troubled Sri Lanka who have been hit by injuries and off-field scandals.