

## Salahuddin questions drafting Mithun, Raja

SPORTS REPORTER

Prime Bank coach Mohammad Salahuddin questioned the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) and cricket organisers' motives behind taking two of Prime Bank's key players in Mohammad Mithun and Rezaur Rahman Raja to South Africa with the national team despite neither being part of the ODI or Test squad.

Salahuddin said that teams had been formed with the national team's assignments in mind, but the latest scenario had proven difficult for Prime Bank.

"Mithun and Raja aren't with the ODI squad or the Test squad. We already don't have six players. If two more leave, then it's very difficult to set up the side. If these two were playing, it would have been alright but they are not in the squads and they will only train there. Other teams have cricketers too but not one was taken. It's only Prime Bank's players who had to leave and that doesn't seem right to me," Salahuddin told the media yesterday.

Prime Bank, who finished second in the DPL last year, will miss the services of key players such as Tamim Iqbal, Mustafizur Rahman and Shoriful Islam, who will feature for the Tigers in South Africa, for a major part of the tournament.

Salahuddin asked why Abahani's Mohammad Naim, who had played a Test in New Zealand this year, was not taken despite being available. "Mithun was not part of the national set-up for 6-7 months but he had to leave suddenly. Naim was available. He could have been taken."

The DPL will return this year tomorrow as a 50-over competition after it was held in the T20 format last year due to time constraints resulting from the pandemic. But for the first time since being given List A status, it will be an 11-team tournament.



### HIGHLIGHTS

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Cristiano Ronaldo etched his name in the record books as professional football's all-time leading scorer with 807 goals.  
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The all-time top goalscorer title in football is much contested and FIFA does not keep an official record, but the world governing body estimates that Austro-Czech Josef Bican netted 805 goals during a career that lasted from 1931 to '55.  
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The Czech FA has said that Bican's total was actually 821 goals following a review of his statistics. Brazilian strikers Pele and Romario each scored more than 1,000 goals during their careers, but those statistics include strikes in amateur, unofficial and friendly matches.  
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It was the 59th treble of Ronaldo's career and his first for the Old Trafford side since 2008 following his return.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## 'He showed why he is Cristiano Ronaldo'

AGENCIES

There was an extra fire in Cristiano Ronaldo's performance on Saturday and Manchester United's World Cup winning French midfielder Paul Pogba addressed the issue head on.

"He has never been a problem. You have the best striker in history in our team, it cannot be a problem. Today he showed why he is Cristiano Ronaldo. The performance from him and all the team was very brilliant," he said.

"Everybody knows Cristiano - there's no need to talk about him. That's what he does. He didn't play in the last game, but he comes back and scores three goals. Everybody's happy."

Ralf Rangnick admitted managing Ronaldo is "challenging" after the 37-year-old rolled back the years with a hat-trick to beat Tottenham 3-2 and keep Manchester United's chances of playing in the Champions League next season alive.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner had scored just once in his previous 10 games, but three fantastic finishes took



As the NFL's greatest Tom Brady walked onto the Old Trafford field to greet Cristiano Ronaldo after the Manchester United striker's hat-trick in Saturday's 3-2 Premier League win over Tottenham Hotspur, there was a knowing smile on his face. What would surely have most impressed the record seven-time Super Bowl winner, who retired last month aged 44, was not the stunning 25 metre opener nor the well-placed header to win the match nine minutes from time but the look of determination, bordering on anger, that the 37-year-old Ronaldo had throughout the game.

him clear as the highest scorer in professional men's football history according to FIFA's records with 807 goals for club and country.

Ronaldo's second spell at Old Trafford has so far proven to be an anti-climax with his poor form sparking debate over whether his powers are waning.

He missed United's thrashing in the Manchester derby last weekend and was criticised for a perceived lack of commitment as he jetted off to Portugal to rehab a

hip injury rather than watch his teammates lose 4-1 at the Etihad after reports he would have been dropped by Rangnick even if fit.

The Portuguese has scored 18 goals so far this season, after returning to United from Italian club Juventus, but there has been continuous chatter from pundits that he is a 'problem' for the club and more recently suggestions that all is not well in his rapport with interim manager Ralf Rangnick.

"It is challenging with

players like him but he showed today he still has the quality to play for Manchester United," said Rangnick. "He's part of the team and if we want to be successful we have to do it together."

"Today it was his best performance, at least since I arrived. Not only because he scored three goals, but he was also energetically good today and part of the whole team when we had to defend. A top performance by him, but also the rest of the team."

"Tremendously happy with my first hat-trick since I came back to Old Trafford!" Ronaldo wrote on Instagram. "Nothing beats the feeling of being back on the pitch and helping the team with goals and effort."

Tottenham's Italian manager Antonio Conte had no doubt about the impact of the five-times Ballon d'Or winner on the game.

"Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi are the two best players in the world in this era. When you play against this type of player, they're decisive. Without Cristiano Ronaldo, for United it wouldn't have been a good night," he said.

## PSG extend lead but fans voice discontent

AGENCIES

Paris St Germain extended their Ligue 1 lead to 15 points when they beat bottom side Girondins de Bordeaux 3-0 at home on Sunday, but their latest Champions League failure still loomed large at the Parc des Princes.

Kylian Mbappe, Neymar and Leandro Paredes found the back of the net to put PSG on 65 points from 28 games, four days after being knocked out of Europe's premier club competition by Real Madrid at the last-16 stage.

The PSG players were met by a cold reception from the crowd, with Neymar heavily booed as he took a free kick after the ultra fans had called for club president Nasser Al Khelaifi and sporting director Leonardo to resign.

Lionel Messi and Neymar received the loudest abuse as fans whistled as their players were introduced before the game.

As the announcer read out the team sheet before kick-off supporters at Parc des Princes made clear their feelings

about the club's latest Champions League disappointment. All but one name was greeted with whistles. The exception was Kylian Mbappe. The volume rose for the names of Neymar and Messi. Coach Mauricio Pochettino's name as also whistled.

For the fourth time in six seasons PSG crashed out in the last 16, self-destructing against Real Madrid on Wednesday.



AGENCIES

India pacer Jasprit Bumrah took five wickets to bowl out Sri Lanka for 109 on Day-2 of the pink ball Test yesterday.

It was Sri Lanka's second-lowest Test total against India as Bumrah's fiery spells gave him his eighth five-wicket haul in 29 Tests and his first on home soil on a pitch that heavily favoured the spinners on day one.

Meanwhile, former India captain Kapil Dev had also registered his 8th five-wicket haul in his 29th Test match. With this achievement, Bumrah is now the fourth Indian bowler to claim a five-for in Day-Night Tests following Axar Patel, Ishant Sharma and Umesh Yadav.

Bumrah claimed five wickets for 24 runs; the third-best bowling figures by a seamer after James Anderson's 5 for 16 in Leeds (2016) and Pat Cummins' 6 for 23 in Brisbane (2019).

After Bumrah's remarkable bowling, a record-breaking half century from Rishabh Pant helped India build a commanding lead of 342 runs as the hosts finished the second session at 199-5.

Pant took the game away from the Lankans by going after the bowling as soon as he walked to the crease and the wicketkeeper quickly brought up his fifty with seven fours and two sixes.

Made from 28 balls, his half century was the fastest by an Indian batsman, breaking the record set by Kapil Dev 40 years ago.

## 'A lot will depend on the pacers'

SPORTS REPORTER

Against the backdrop of a historic Test win at Mount Maunganui against New Zealand earlier this year, there was a sense of growing self-belief among the Tigers as they traveled to South Africa for a three-match ODI and two-match Test series.

Like their record in New Zealand until that Test victory, Bangladesh have never won a game in any format in South Africa over the years. But ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal stated before boarding the flight that the win in New Zealand could prove to be the tonic.

However, South Africa's conditions are among the toughest for Bangladesh. The Tigers have played six Tests, nine ODIs, and four T20Is, losing them all.

Experienced pacer Rubel Hossain, who was part of the last tour to South Africa in 2017, informed that pacers would have to play a major role if Bangladesh want to flip the script.

"Conditions and pitches in South Africa are challenging. Nowadays we don't get to see a lot of bouncy tracks. Instead, we see sporting

tracks that help both batters and bowlers. If I talk about white-ball cricket, a majority of bowlers tend to bowl fuller. But it will be important to read the pitch and bowl accordingly. Accuracy will be key for our bowlers and it will be important not to give any room," Rubel told The Daily Star.



The 32-year-old, who has 129 wickets in 104 ODIs, also prescribed the pacers to bank on their strengths and bring in variety.

"Every bowler is different and each has their strengths. If I talk about Taskin Ahmed, his strength is pace. So he needs to bank on that and try to exploit the conditions. On the other hand, Shoriful Islam has got some variations up his sleeve, which is very important in ODIs. Mustafizur

Rahman needs to adjust when he plays abroad and I think he needs to be more accurate and look to utilise his cutters accordingly," he said.

Rubel, who last played a Test against Pakistan in 2020, shared his experiences with other pacers like Abu Jayed and Khaled Ahmed on how to approach the longest format in South African conditions.

"A lot will depend on the pacers if we want something positive in South Africa, similar to New Zealand. However, our pacers do not have a good record abroad. If the bowlers only want to bowl fast, I'm afraid it won't work. It is important to bowl fuller in Test cricket and to get swing and seam movement from the surface. If you only bowl fast, it won't give you wickets consistently. I spoke with Jayed and Khaled before they left for South Africa and tried to share my experience.

"Ebadot can be a good example. He was a little wayward before but recently has become consistent with his line and length. He bowls a lot fuller now. You can see the results for yourself. He picked up a hifer in New Zealand and I think our pacers need to be consistent to get a favourable result," Rubel concluded.



(From R to L) Prime Bank Cricket Club players Mahedi Hasan, Alok Kapali and Rubel Hossain wear a smile during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday ahead of the Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League, which starts tomorrow.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED