

Women's BCL kicks off

SPORTS REPORTER

Left-arm spinner Nahida Akter shone on the opening day of the Women's Bangladesh Cricket League - the first-ever three-day women's first-class competition -- as the Central Zone player returned seven wickets for 48 runs against North Zone at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday.

North Zone declared their first innings at 240-9, courtesy of Farzana Haque's 86 and Ritu Moni's 57. Central Zone finished at 29-0 at stumps.

Meanwhile, in the other contest at the Bangla Trac Cricket Academy Ground, Sharmin Akther Supta struck 88 but her side, East Zone, could only manage 193 runs.

Ayesha Rahman made an unbeaten 82 while RH Jhelik scored 38 not out as South Zone finished the opening day at 164-1, trailing by 29 runs.

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is facing challenges in obtaining bank guarantees from franchises participating in upcoming Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), raising concerns over players' payments ahead of the T20 competition starting on December 30.

Despite collecting Tk eight crore in guarantees from each franchise in previous years, BCB has struggled to ensure timely payments to players, with several local and foreign cricketers voicing complaints about unpaid dues. Some even reported the issue to the Federation of International Cricketers' Associations (FICA), forcing BCB to step in and settle the payments.

After becoming BCB boss, Faruque Ahmed significantly reduced the bank guarantee amount following requests from franchises. Currently, BCB is asking Tk three crore from each franchise as a bank guarantee, which they wanted to confirm by December 24 after extending the deadline multiple times and reducing the amount on each occasion.

It was learnt that some franchises are unwilling to provide a bank guarantee this year, citing the current financial situation in the country, and have instead promised to clear the payments themselves.

Player payment concern looms over BPL



DECISIONS AT BCB MEETING

Members of the U-19 Men's squad to receive Tk three lakh each as prize money for winning the ACC U-19 Asia Cup.

In addition to central contract, 30 more women's cricketers will be added to first-class contract. Bonus money for winning international matches, ranking-wise, will also be introduced in women's cricket.

Decision regarding captain Najmul Hossain Shanto's captaincy will be taken next month.

When questioned about the matter, it seems the BCB boss is also aware of the situation.

"Our country is facing tough times financially now. We all live in Bangladesh, so we know about it. That's why we are increasing

the time (deadline for the bank guarantee)," Faruque told reporters following the board of directors meeting in Mirpur yesterday.

"We want to serve our purpose, and there shouldn't be any extra pressure on BPL teams. We definitely want to confirm the bank guarantee from them as we have increased the time. Apart from that, we reduced the amount due to the financial conditions right now," he said, adding that BCB is also struggling to secure other sponsors.

"It has been challenging for both the board and team owners to get sponsors. We want to make things easier, keeping everything in mind," he said, adding that the board has also started clearing last year's pending payments to players.

"The board has started to pay the local cricketers from those teams that are not participating this year. We have already cleared 25 franchises from last year," said Faruque, confirming that they secured Modhumoti Bank as the title sponsor for the BPL Music Fest, scheduled to be held in Dhaka, Sylhet, and Chattogram on December 23, 25, and 28, respectively.

"Modhumoti Bank has come on board as the title sponsor of the BPL Music Fest. They are kind enough to pay close to Tk five crore, which I think is a good amount," he concluded.

New lease of life for Jibon at Rahmatganj

SPORTS REPORTER

National discard forward Nabib Newaj Jibon scored in his third successive match in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) to help Rahmatganj MFS register an emphatic 3-1 win over Brothers Union at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Flight Lt Matiur Rahman Stadium in Mymensingh yesterday.

Jibon, who joined the Old-Dhaka outfit this season following a long stint at Abahani, struck in the second half in between a brace from Ghanaian forward Boateng.

Jibon's strike restored Rahmatganj's lead after Brothers' Senegalese recruit Cheikh Sene had cancelled out Samuel Boateng's second-minute goal by converting a penalty in the 70th minute. Boateng scored his second in the stoppage time of the second half.

"I was a victim of bias in Abahani and did not get many matches last season," Jibon told The Daily Star about his goal-less run for Abahani in the BPL last season.

"This season the coach has given me more minutes by drafting me in the starting eleven. I am also more focused on helping my club by scoring goals. That's why I am getting goals regularly," he added.

Jibon came off the bench in their league opener against Fortis FC but could not find the back of the net. He struck twice in the following match against Chittagong Abahani and netted one against Bashundhara Kings before scoring once again yesterday against Brothers.

With four goals, he is now second in the goal-scorer's list this season, one goal behind joint top scorers Al Amin of Police FC and Souleymane Diabate of Mohammedan SC.

"My target is to return to the national football team," said 34-year-old Jibon, adding that age is just a number and only fitness and performance matters.

Meanwhile, Fakirerpool YMC tasted their maiden victory in the professional football league with a 2-0 win over winless Chittagong Abahani in Mymensingh while promoted Dhaka Wanderers Club also secured their first point by playing a 1-1 draw with Fortis FC at Kings arena.



Rangpur qualify for NCL T20 final

Khulna, Metro face off in 2nd qualifier today

SPORTS REPORTER

Rangpur Division became the first finalist in the ongoing National Cricket League (NCL) T20 by handing Dhaka Metro a four-wicket defeat in the first qualifier at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Earlier on the day at the same venue, Khulna Division booked a place in second qualifier by knocking Chattogram Division out of the competition with a seven-run win in the eliminator.

In the first qualifier, pacer Robiul Hoque starred with the ball, claiming 3-19 while Alauddin Babu finished with 2-25 as Rangpur restricted Metro to 107-9 in their stipulated overs after they had been sent to bowl first.

Metro, who had won all seven of their league matches, were at risk of getting dismissed below the 100-run mark after opener Imranuzzaman, who made a dogged 30 off 42 balls, departed as the sixth batter in the 15th over with just 66 runs on the board.

But Aminul Islam Biplob's unbeaten 24-ball 23 and Abu Hider Rony's eight-ball 16 pushed their total beyond 100.

Rangpur were also in a spot of bother chasing the meagre target, getting reduced to 62-4 in 12.1 overs. But Tanbir Hayder and Ariful Haque then each scored 22, with the former remaining unbeaten, to take them across the finish line with four balls to spare.

In the day's first match, sent to bat, Khulna had set up the base for a big finish thanks to skipper Nurul Hasan Sohan's 39-ball 52.

But Chattogram pace duo of Ahmed Sharif (4-26) and Fahad Hossain (3-20) spoiled those plans, jointly dismantling Khulna's batting lineup by taking their last five wickets for just nine runs to bowl them out



for 146 in 19.3 overs.

In reply, Chattogram lost half their side for just 64 inside 11 overs before Yasir Ali (37 off 27 balls) and Nayeem Hasan (34 not out off 27 balls) shared a 53-run stand for the sixth wicket to bring their side back in the contest.

But after pacer Mehedi Hasan Rana (2-12) dismissed Yasir, Chattogram could not keep up with the asking rate and despite taking 16 runs in the last over from Al-Amin Hossain, could only manage 139-6 in their 20 overs.

Metro and Khulna will face off in the second qualifier today and the winner will take on Rangpur in Tuesday's final.



Shuttlers from 5 nations triumph

SPORTS REPORTER

The Yonex-Sunrise Bangladesh International Challenge came to an end yesterday, with top-seed Ukrainian shuttler Polina Buhrova expectedly emerging as champion in the women's singles in Paltan.

Polina, who participated in the Paris Olympics, handed a 21-19, 21-19 defeat to Thailand's Lalinnrat Chaiwan at Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium, while Sri Lankan Viren Nettasinghe lifted the men's singles title with a 21-12, 21-17 win over Canada's Xiaodong Sheng.

In the women's doubles, however, Polina and her compatriot Yevheniia Kantemyr narrowly lost 23-25, 21-18, 11-21 to Thailand's Kodchaporn Chaichana and Pannawee Polyiam. The men's doubles title went to Malaysia's Lau Yi Sheng and Lee Yi Bo, who overcame Indonesia's Muhammad Bariq Al Hanif and Ali Faathird Rayhan.

The mixed doubles saw Indonesians Hee Yong Kai Terry and Jin Yu Jia emerge victorious with a 21-14, 21-16 win over India's Navaneeth Bokka and Ritika Thaker.

SHORT CORNER

Afghanistan take ODI series against Zimbabwe

Teenage spinner AM Ghazanfar took 5-33 as Afghanistan defeated hosts Zimbabwe by eight wickets in the third and final one-day international on Saturday to claim the series 2-0 after the opening game was washed out by rain.

World Cup-winning England international Eastham dies aged 88

George Eastham, a member of England's 1966 World Cup-winning squad, has died at 88, his former club Stoke City said on Friday. Son of England international George Senior, midfielder and inside forward Eastham played for Newcastle United, Arsenal and Stoke City in the English top-flight league in a professional career spanning two decades, and earned 19 international caps.

*Read full stories on The Daily Star website



Bangladesh captain Sumaiya Akter and her Indian counterpart Niki Prasad pose with the ACC U-19 Women's Asia Cup trophy for which the two teams will battle out in the final in Kuala Lumpur today.

PHOTO: ACC

Slot says he is Postecoglou 'fan' ahead of Spurs clash

AFP, London

Liverpool manager Arne Slot says he is a fan of Ange Postecoglou's gung-ho approach to football and hopes he wins a trophy -- just not the League Cup -- after the teams were paired together in the semifinals.

Premier League leaders Liverpool also travel to face Spurs in the English top flight on Sunday, needing to win to keep fast-charging Chelsea at bay.

Tottenham, chasing their first trophy since 2008, beat Manchester United 4-3 in a chaotic League Cup quarterfinal on Thursday.

Postecoglou has been criticised by some for his unwillingness to compromise on his attacking instincts but he gave a passionate defence of his approach after the match, asking: "Are you not entertained?"

And Slot admits he is a devotee of the Australian's methods, saying his team are a "joy" to watch.

"I hope, hope, hope that he wins a trophy," he said on Friday. "Not the League

Cup but I'm completely a fan of his team for the Europa League because people always talk about trophies, trophies, trophies, and that is so important.

"Now, for me, his brand of football, his style of football is so much more important and if he can combine it with something, that would be so good for football in general because then people can stop talking about it as too attacking or whatever.

"How on earth can you play too much attacking football?"

Postecoglou said he appreciated Slot admiring his attacking style and backing

Spurs' bid to win the Europa League, where they are currently ninth in the standings.

"That respect is mutual for me. We've all got really difficult tasks and we go about it in our way," he added.

Liverpool had a nine-point cushion at the top of the Premier League earlier this month but Chelsea could be at the summit when Slot's team kick off in London on Sunday.

Slot said it was too early to make judgements about his team's title chances.



Aston Villa's Colombian striker Jhon Duran sets off in celebration after scoring the opening goal against Manchester City in their Premier League fixture at Villa Park in Birmingham yesterday. Unai Emery's side won the game 2-1, heaping more misery on defending champions City, who are in sixth position with 27 points from 17 matches. Liverpool lead the table with 36 points from 15 matches.

PHOTO: REUTERS