



Rangpur Riders' in-form off-spinner Sheikh Mahedi trains alongside his teammates, including pace sensation Nahid Rana, at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday. The 30-year-old, who had a remarkable West Indies tour with the national team earlier this month, will look to extend his purple patch when Rangpur go up against Dhaka Capitals. Liton Das, who has been on the other side of the form spectrum, having struggled for months, will be in-charge of making sure Dhaka's batting gets off to a sound start.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Five of the seven teams named their captains yesterday, on the eve of the 11th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League. On Sunday, Thisara Perera of Sri Lanka, Bangladesh's Mohammad Mithun, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Anamul Haque Bijoy, and Ariful Haque were named captains of Dhaka Capitals, Chittagong Kings, Khulna Tigers, Durbar Rajshahi, and Sylhet Strikers respectively.

Fortune Barishal, to be led by Tamim Iqbal, and Rangpur Riders, to be led by Nurul Hasan Sohan, had named their captains earlier.

No captain's photoshoot was held before the start of the tournament.

In the sole team-swapping this year, left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny has been allowed to join Chittagong Kings from Sylhet Strikers. Sunny, who was initially picked by Sylhet from the players' draft, has been given NOC by the franchise to play for Chittagong.

For the first time since BPL's inception in 2012, fans will be provided with free water, courtesy of the tournament's official drinking partner, Pusti Drinking Water. In memory of one of the earliest martyrs of the July Uprising, Mir Mugdho, 'Mugdho corners' will be set up in six counters around the stadium from where fans will be able to drink water.

Onus on local players to make BPL 2025 SUCCESSFUL



"It's an honour to be named captain of such a franchise. I never expected that because I have played in the BPL a number of times before and this will be my first as a captain."

Thisara Perera, Dhaka Capitals skipper



"We have a good young team. Also, there are some experienced cricketers as well who played for Bangladesh. So, we have a good combination of young and experienced cricketers."

Ijaz Ahmed, Durbar Rajshahi head coach



"This is my first time in Bangladesh. I think all three venues are very different. I am going with an open mind and open approach to assess conditions and have as much fun as possible."

George Munsey, Sylhet Strikers' Scottish opener



"We have a good collection of local players. Apart from that, the foreign players we have, if they are free for most of the time, we can really do well."

Alif Hossain, Khulna Tigers batter



"It's inspiring that we became GSL (Global Super League) champions recently. For it, there will be a good vibe in the team. But we have to start fresh in this tournament."

Nurul Hasan Sohan, Rangpur Riders skipper



"I think we have missed Shakib [Al Hasan] enough. We don't miss anyone when we go to the field. We will focus on not having any lacking in the team just because he [Shakib] is not playing."

Mohammad Mithun, Chittagong Kings skipper



"I feel that if we want to arrange a different type of BPL, we need to invest in cricket. That's the most important thing. We need to invest in the tournament, not in the concerts or anything else. If we invest in cricket and also in the tournament, we can say that it's a new type of BPL."

Tamim Iqbal, Fortune Barishal skipper

Fans protest after failing to purchase BPL tickets

Fans protested in large numbers in front of the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium Gate-1 after failing to secure Bangladesh Premier League match tickets. Some fans said they waited for hours for physical tickets in front of the stadium but were unable to reach anyone in that regard. Later, some protesters tried to break Gate-1 of the stadium before Police and Ansar members dispersed them. There were still reports of protests around the BCB headquarters late into the evening. BCB decided to not have any designated booths for tickets around the stadium for the matches, meaning fans will have to secure tickets online or from Modhumoti Bank PLC branches.



Read the full story on The Daily Star website

SPORTS REPORTER

The onus will be on the local players to make the 11th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), scheduled to start today in Mirpur, a successful one as this year's tournament will see fewer foreign stars compared to the previous editions.

In previous years, star cricketers like Sunil Narine, Andre Russell, Jason Holder, and Imran Tahir, who are generally seen ruling the franchise tournaments across the world, featured for different BPL franchises but this year, none of

these players will be playing in the country's sole franchise-based T20 tournament.

Even two of Bangladesh's biggest stars -- Shakib Al Hasan and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, both of whom were lawmakers of the ousted Awami League government -- are unlikely to participate in the tournament following the change in the political atmosphere in the aftermath of the July uprising.

However, according to Tamim Iqbal, skipper of defending champions Fortune Barishal, the tournament can still be a success, but only if the players are able to step up.

"Cricket on the field depends on how the players are performing," said Tamim during a pre-tournament press conference yesterday.

"The organisers are here to give the best of the facilities, to provide the best of the wickets and to make sure you get the best commentators in the world and to ensure the best technology.

"But they can't decide whether the matches will see 200 runs or only 60 runs. Teams and players have to take the responsibility. If we can do our job properly, I think it will be a successful tournament," Tamim added.

Although there are foreign stars like Shaheen Shah Afridi of Pakistan, England's Jason Roy and Alex Hales, and Afghan star Mohammad Nabi, they will not be available for the entirety of the tournament. They will be leaving to participate in other foreign leagues such as ILT20, SA20, and Big Bash League, which are clashing with BPL this year.

What will lend some hope to franchises that will lose big names during the tournament is that the National Cricket League T20, held in Sylhet ahead of the BPL, saw a number of local players come up with brilliant performances.

Mohammad Naim, Jishan Alam, Nurul Hasan Sohan, Habibur Rahman Sohan, and Azizul Hakim Tamim showcased their batting prowess while Alauddin Babu, Ahmed Sharif, Rakibul Hasan, Aliss Al Islam, and Abu Hider proved their mettle with the ball in the NCL T20, played as a prelude to BPL.

Most of the national players, who failed to participate in the NCL T20 due to their national team commitments, will also be available for the BPL. And the expectations on them will be to take the tournament forward in the absence of star foreign players.

Bumrah gives India GLIMMER OF HOPE

AGENCIES

Jasprit Bumrah unleashed more destructive bowling but Australia stubbornly battled back to reach 228-9 on Sunday, leading by 333 runs in an absorbing fourth Test. Bumrah scythed through the middle order on day four in Melbourne to record figures of 4-56 off 24 overs and hand India an outside chance of victory in a match the home side have mostly dominated. However, India's hopes were diminished by a stubborn, unbeaten final-wicket stand of 55 from 17.5 overs. Nathan Lyon was at the crease on 41 while number 11 Scott Boland had seen off 65 balls to be 10 not out at the close. Up by 105 runs on the first innings, Australia were rocked by losing four wickets for 11 midway through the second session to slump to 91-6. Marnus Labuschagne (70) and Pat Cummins (41) responded with a vital partnership of 57, taking the steam out of Bumrah's assault.



Bumrah reached the 200-wicket landmark with the lowest average - 19.56 - amongst any bowler in the format. He is the first bowler to concede fewer than 4000 runs for his first 200 wickets.

Bumrah became the fastest Indian player and the fourth-fastest bowler overall to take 200 wickets (in terms of balls bowled), behind Waqar Younis (7725 balls), Dale Steyn (7848 balls), and Kagiso Rabada (8154 balls).

India will have to defy the odds to win this Test as the highest fourth-innings total for a win at the MCG is England's 332 for 7 which they achieved in 1928.

A crowd of 299,329 has watched the match across the first four days, the highest-ever attendance for a Boxing Day Test.

Unlikely batting hero Rabada takes South Africa to WTC final

REUTERS

Fast bowlers Kagiso Rabada and Marco Jansen turned batting heroes on Sunday as South Africa edged Pakistan by two wickets to win a thrilling first test at Centurion and book themselves a place in next year's World Test Championship final in June 11-15.

Rabada scored 31 and Jansen 16 in an unbeaten partnership of 51 off 50 balls to see South Africa over the line and deny Pakistan a dramatic comeback victory after Mohammed Abbas took six wickets as he shredded through the home batting order.

The test had a finish more like that of a T20 match as the tailenders delivered success after South Africa had slumped dramatically before lunch and offered Pakistan



"It is an emotional moment for me. As a team, we have overcome a lot. We haven't been super-dominant with our performances, we haven't been ruthless but we have always found a way to ensure the result was on our side."

South Africa captain Bavuma

South Africa's win meant that only one of Australia and India can qualify for the final at Lord's in June.

the chance to win a test in South Africa for the first time in 18 years.

Rabada, who is ranked second best test bowler, emerged, however, as an unlikely batting hero while Jansen delivered the winning runs with a classy drive to the boundary, amid scenes of delirious celebration.

It was heartbreaking for Pakistan as Abbas had brought them close with four wickets in a marathon spell of 13 successive overs before lunch as South Africa made heavy work of chasing a modest target of 148.

Abbas, whose overall figures were 6-54 off 19.3 overs, engineered a dramatic collapse when South Africa looked headed for a comfortable victory with 50 runs needed and six wickets in hand as the Proteas slumped from 96-4 to 99-8.