

## Fuss over BPL tickets continues

SPORTS REPORTER

Before the start of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) day game between Dhaka Capitals and Durbar Rajshahi yesterday, some fans vandalised and set fire to the ticket booths adjacent to gate five of Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium (SNCS).

According to officials affiliated with security, fans set fire to the booths due to the unavailability of BPL tickets. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had earlier announced that fans can secure tickets online and from Modhumoti Bank PLC branches anytime or from the stadium ticket booths on matchdays.

There was an added demand for tickets on Thursday, as two heavyweights – defending champions Fortune Barishal and Rangpur Riders – faced off in the evening.

Members of police informed that crowd got increasingly irritated upon seeing unavailability of tickets. The furor reached its peak when the agitators found that scalpers were selling tickets at a much higher price. Some fans even claimed that “200 taka tickets were being sold at 1000 tk” by scalpers.



## Ankon develops helicopter shot to counter yorkers

SPORTS REPORTER

On his way to hitting an 18-ball half-century against Chittagong Kings in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) on Tuesday – the fastest ever 50 by a Bangladeshi in recognised T20s – Khulna Tigers' Mahidul Islam Ankon hit Shoriful Islam for a six with a helicopter shot, a stroke made famous by former India captain MS Dhoni.

Ankon said that the shot was the outcome of the hours he spent in training, trying to find different ways to dispatch fuller length deliveries, focusing more on timing than brute strength.

“I just wanted to time the delivery. I anticipated that the ball would be in my zone which is why I was able to play that shot,” Ankon said.

“I practiced specifically on how to score against yorkers. That's where it all came from, trying to score off yorkers or low full tosses.

“I tried to improve day by day. I knew what would be expected from me batting at six or seven and those are the things I worked on in training,” Ankon said.

## BFF welcomes back Choton in new role

European coaches shortlisted for national teams

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has shortlisted three European coaches each for the men's and women's teams, with Javier Cabrera and Peter Butler among the candidates after the duo's respective contract expired earlier this week.

“The final decision on the coaches' appointments will be made by January 10,” BFF president Tabith Awal confirmed to The Daily Star over the phone on Wednesday.

The BFF boss further informed that they have been focusing on other priorities of late, keeping in mind the contracts for both Englishman Butler and Spaniard Cabrera were going to end on December 31, and that the former is likely to be offered a contract renewal after having guided the women's team in defending the SAFF Championship crown last year.

In a parallel development, former national women's team head coach Golam Rabbani Choton has returned to the BFF in a new capacity. Effective from January 1, Choton has been appointed head of youth development and the BFF Elite Football Academy for a one-year tenure.



This marks a significant return for the 56-year-old, who previously coached the women's team to their maiden SAFF Championship title in 2022.

Choton had stepped down from his earlier role in May 2023, citing family reasons, and subsequently joined the Army women's football team as head coach. At the time, he had ruled out any possibility of rejoining the BFF. However, the emergence of Tabith Awal as the new BFF boss following BFF elections in late October and a subsequent reshuffling within the federation prompted a change in direction.

“I have come here afresh with new responsibility as the head of youth development. I believe there are a lot of areas to work and improve in youth development,” Choton told reporters after receiving his appointment letter at the BFF headquarters yesterday.

Choton brings a wealth of experience to his new role. As an AFC Pro License holder, he worked extensively at the grassroots level before transitioning to women's football in 2008.

With Choton at the helm of youth development and the upcoming decisions on senior team coaching appointments, the BFF are setting the stage for a transformative year.



Young pace sensation Nahid Rana made his presence felt, casting the stumps of Tamim Iqbal and Mahmudullah Riyad, to help Rangpur Riders bundle out defending champions Fortune Barishal for just 124 in 18.2 overs in the Bangladesh Premier League in Mirpur yesterday. Following Nahid's figures of two for 32, Alex Hales and Saif Hassan smashed unbeaten 49 and 62 respectively as Rangpur chased down the modest total in just 15 overs to beat Barishal by eight wickets.

PHOTO: STAR

## ‘This is my time to give back’

SPORTS REPORTER

Hard work and self-belief are the two hallmarks of Taskin Ahmed's international career.

After bursting onto the scenes in 2014, Taskin had seemingly lost his way in the international arena after ICC suspended him for having an illegal action in 2016 which was followed by bouts with injuries and a prolonged lean period which led to him not getting picked for the ICC World Cup 2019.

But the right-arm pacer persevered through the many challenges, worked hard on his fitness and his craft and never lost belief in his ability in making a comeback.

The blood, sweat and tears shed by the pacer did not go to waste as he has turned a new leaf in his career and has become the leader of Bangladesh's attack across three formats.

Taskin, who was named player-of-the-series in the Tiger's recent Test series against West Indies, added another feather in his cap yesterday while playing for Durbar Rajshahi against Dhaka Capitals in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), when he claimed 7 for 19 in his four overs – the best ever bowling figure in BPL history.

He was on point from his very first delivery in the match, making the ball whisk past Liton Das, zipping off the surface while moving away. Wry smiles appeared across Liton and Taskin's faces, both acknowledging the unplayable delivery.

“My dream is to end my career as a legendary fast bowler. I want to get lots of wickets and heavily contribute in winning matches for the country.”



But Taskin was just getting warmed up, as the next delivery was of the same ilk and this time Liton could not get his bat out of the way and departed caught behind.

Tanzid Tamim would perish too soon after, nicking an out-swing. After Dhaka revived their innings, Taskin came in with his variations and picked up two more wickets in the 17th. In the final over, the variations and yorkers saw him pick up three more inside four balls.

Taskin overtook Pakistan's Mohammad Amir, who had taken six for 17 for Khulna Tigers against Rajshahi Royals in 2020 and

is also one of only three bowlers to pick seven wickets in a recognised T20 after Malaysia's Syazrul Idrus and Netherlands' Colin Ackermann.

Claiming seven wickets in a T20 game is an improbable thought for most bowlers, but not Taskin, as the supremely confident 29-year-old pacer claimed that he manifested his seven-wicket haul into reality.

“Yes, I thought of it, otherwise it wouldn't happen. And yes, you need a bit of luck but Alhamdulillah, I am happy with how I have been able to execute what I want to do,” Taskin expressed his feelings.

“Alhamdulillah, this is a big achievement for me. Since I am a Bangladeshi, it's a proud moment for me that even after leaving the game, my name will remain in BPL history,” he added.

He also said that is just the beginning for him in terms of giving something back to the country.

“Truth be told, this is my time to give back. The reason is that for so many years the board has supported me and I have gained experience. I am reading situations better and game awareness has improved. I feel like it's my duty to support the team whether I am playing for Bangladesh or a franchise,” he said about being able to perform with regularity.

“My dream is to end my career as a legendary fast bowler. I want to get lots of wickets and heavily contribute in winning matches for the country,” he concluded.

## Striking back from troubled past

ANISUR RAHMAN

Al Amin, a 21-year-old forward for Bangladesh Police Football Club, sent a chill down the spine of defending champions Bashundhara Kings twice during their Federation Cup encounter on Tuesday.

Both of Al Amin's goals at the Kings Arena drew significant attention from the country's football fraternity, but his brilliance went in vain as Police lost 3-2.

First, the young forward displayed incredible pace, tapping the ball home between two Kings defenders after teammate Isa Faisal delivered a low cross from the right flank. The lanky forward then kept his composure to strike a stunning goal from a tight angle, clearly announcing his arrival in top-flight football.

Both strikes in the Federation Cup match were not a fluke for Al Amin, who has been in the limelight during the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL). With five goals, he currently sits as BPL's joint-top scorer alongside Mohammedan SC's Malian forward Souleymane Diabate, Rahmatganj MFS's Nabib Newaj Jibon, and Brothers Union's Senegalese forward Cheikh Sene.

Interestingly, such remarkable performances might not have been possible for Al Amin, who was once banned for a year – from September 2021 to September 2022 – after being involved in online betting and spot-fixing as an Arambagh KS footballer during the 2020-21 season.

Al Amin, hailing from Nilphamari, returned to Shams-Ul-Huda Football Academy in Jashore – his grooming academy – to rectify his mistakes and hone his skills under the guidance of coaches Kazi Maruf and Emadul Hossain. Sheikh Jamal DC

then recruited him on loan for the 2023-24 season. However, his top flight career faced another hurdle this season when Sheikh Jamal decided not to form a team for the 2024-25 season, leaving Al Amin frustrated and without a team. Fortunately, national team defender Issa Faisal and Joyonto Kumar Roy brought him to Bangladesh Police, where Al Amin has been repaying their faith with his performances.

“I learned a lot from coach Kazi Maruf, who taught me how to score and how to keep cool to net goals. I could assist in scoring goals twice last season for Sheikh Jamal, and I was also struggling to get goals for Bangladesh Police in practice matches. Then, head coach Mahbulul Haque Jewel sir worked separately with me and made me hungry to get goals,” Al Amin told The Daily Star over the phone on Wednesday.

“It has always been a pleasure for me to get a place in the playing eleven ahead of foreign players,” he added.

Quick running has always been Al Amin's strength, a skill he developed in childhood and plans to continue refining. His initial target is to remain at the top of the scorer's list with seven to eight goals by the end of the first phase, and he also hopes to achieve a hat-trick soon, having already struck a double in three matches.

“Based on my performances in the seven matches of the BPL and Federation Cup, I can hope for a call up to the national team,” Al Amin said confidently.



## SA look to turn the tables in Cape Town

REUTERS, Cape Town

South Africa have already sealed their place in this year's World Test Championship (WTC) final ahead of the second and final Test against Pakistan at Newlands on Friday but will want to keep their momentum going in the longest format.

South Africa beat Pakistan by two wickets in a tense first Test in Pretoria and have won their last six red ball matches in a row, their joint best run since a team record nine victories in succession in 2002 and 2003.

South Africa will give a debut to firebrand 18-year-old fast bowler Kwena Maphaka as one of three changes to their side for the second Test.

Maphaka has only bowled 60.5 overs in first class cricket and was writing his school exams a few months ago. He takes the place of Dane Paterson, who took 5-61 in the first innings at Centurion Park.

South Africa's form has propelled them into the WTC final at Lord's in June but questions around their brittle batting line-up will be a major focus on what has recently been a perilous Newlands pitch.

The previous Test played there against India 12 months ago lasted only 107 overs as the visitors won by seven wickets inside two days, the shortest Test that has had a winner in history.

The wicket should be better this time round, but at a ground that used to be a fortress for the home team, they have lost two of their last three Tests in Cape Town.

## ‘Just want to keep scoring’

Gabriel Jesus is determined to keep scoring as Arsenal look to end their more than 20-year wait for a Premier League title. Jesus cancelled out Bryan Mbeumo's 13th-minute opener for Brentford before Mikel Merino and Gabriel Martinelli scored for the Gunners early in the second half during a 3-1 win on Wednesday. It was the Brazil striker's scoring his sixth goal in four games – a far cry from a previously woeful run of just one goal in 33 appearances for the 27-year-old Brazilian. “I just want to keep winning and scoring and helping the team, the club, to be there always fighting for the title,” Jesus told TNT Sports.

