



PHOTOS: FORTUNE BARISHAL/RANGPUR RIDERS

Fortune Barishal skipper Tamim Iqbal (left) seemed focused in their practice session in Mirpur yesterday as the defending champions, who finished top of the standings in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) league phase, will be looking to make it into their third final when they take on Chittagong Kings in the Qualifier 1 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium today. Meanwhile, allrounder Mohammad Saifuddin and opener Soumya Sarkar will try to help Rangpur Riders, who lost their last four games following a brilliant start in the tournament, bounce back to winning ways as they face Khulna Tigers in the Eliminator earlier in the day at the same venue. The losers of Qualifier 1, however, will have another chance to make it into the all-important final on Friday as they will be taking on the winners of Eliminator in Qualifier 2 next Wednesday.

## BFF committee interviews players as U20s join camp

SPORTS REPORTER

A seven-member special committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday began the process of interviewing the 18 rebel footballers who are boycotting the training camp under national women's team coach Peter Butler, demanding his resignation.

A member of the special committee, who wanted to stay anonymous, said they had interviewed two of the protesting players by yesterday evening to better understand their allegations against the coach and both players told the committee that they had no objection in playing under Butler.

The committee is expected to sit down with all 18 players who have boycotted the training camp which includes many of the top women's booters of the country like Sabina Khatun, Masura Parvin, Sanjida Akhter, Maria Manda, Monika Chakma, Ritu Porna Chakma and Shamsunahar Sr. The committee is expected to submit a report on the matter by Thursday.

Meanwhile, some 20 players from the Under-20 women's team joined the national team's preparation camp yesterday.

Butler had initially called up players from both the senior and the U-20 women's team for the preparation camp ahead of Bangladesh's upcoming FIFA friendly matches against hosts the United Arab Emirates, scheduled to take place on February 26 and March 2.

But most players from the U-20 team, many of whom are from Bangladesh Army and BKSP, could not join the training camp in the middle of January due to institutional training. They have now finally joined the camp after the delay.

"As many as 20 players from the Bangladesh U-20 women's team joined the ongoing camp today [Sunday] and they will be starting training under the coach from tomorrow [Monday]," BFF media manager Sadman Sakib told The Daily Star yesterday.

While 18 of the top national team players continued their boycott for the fifth consecutive day, 13 junior players again showed up to train under the coach at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday and had a gym session after conducting two training sessions.



## Marquee foreign players uncertain for BPL playoffs

SPORTS REPORTER

Pre-tournament favourites Fortune Barishal and Rangpur Riders are in a scramble against time and circumstance to secure the services of marquee foreign players for the knockout phase of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), which begins in Mirpur today.

In the day's opening game, Rangpur will take on Khulna Tigers in the eliminator at 01:30 pm while defending champions Barishal will face Chittagong Kings in the qualifier 1 at 06:30 pm.

Both Rangpur and Barishal are trying to fly in T20 stars from overseas for the knockout phases, something teams have often done in the previous editions of the tournament, however, many of their targeted players are still involved with the ongoing ILT20 in Dubai.

The Rangpur management insisted that they have contacted many star cricketers such as West Indies' Sunil Narine and Andre Russell and Australia batter Tim David to get their services in the knockouts.

Barishal, on the other hand, through a media release informed that Kiwi pacer Adam Milne will join the team on February 3.

However, as these cricketers are still tied up with their respective franchises in the ILT20 and there is uncertainty when their stints would eventually end, the chances of them landing in Dhaka in time to play in today's eliminator and first qualifier is very slim.

Rangpur's targets Narine and Russell's team Knight Riders played their last league phase match yesterday night against Dubai Capitals where if they win, they can still mathematically qualify for the playoffs.

But even if they lose and get eliminated, it will be interesting to see whether Rangpur can avail their service by flying them to Bangladesh on match day, a scene which has taken place in the previous BPL

editions as well.

Their other target David is playing for the Gulf Giants in the ILT20 and although his team's league phase matches are already over, they are still in contention to reach the playoffs and thus the chances of him being available for Rangpur in today's contest is very slim.

Rangpur's team director Shanian Taneem said they are also 'confused' over who they can actually bring in for the knockout phase.

"The foreign players need to complete their stints in other leagues before coming here. They are still playing in the ILT20. There is nothing concrete so far," said Shanian.

"No teams have been knocked out from that tournament [ILT20]. If a team is eliminated, only then a player from that team can board the flight. Before that, it will be inappropriate to say anything.

"A lot depends on the results of today's [yesterday's] matches. Actually, we are also confused," concluded Shanian, whose team lost four matches in a row after eight successive victories to lose their chance for a top two finish.

Meanwhile, Milne's Sharjah Warriors beat MI Emirates to qualify for the playoffs in the ILT20 yesterday, which all but nullifies the chances of the New Zealander to play for Barishal in the playoffs.

"He [Milne] is currently playing for his side [Sharjah Warriors] at the ILT20 today [yesterday] and it depends on his team's result. He has commitment with the other franchise at the moment. Once he is available, we can say he is coming," Barishal's batting coach Nafees Iqbal told The Daily Star yesterday ahead of their match against Chittagong which will determine the first finalist of the competition.

The 11th edition of the BPL has failed to attract many big names so far as most top players have preferred to play in the ILT20 and the SA20 and it seems like it will continue to be the case in the playoffs as well.

**"The foreign players need to complete their stint in other leagues before coming here. They are still playing in the ILT20. There is nothing concrete so far."**

Rangpur Riders team director **Shanian Taneem** on uncertainty over foreign players coming for BPL knockout phase.

## Salah first to 20 goals in Europe this season

AGENCIES

Mohamed Salah scored twice to take Liverpool nine points clear at the top of the Premier League by beating Bournemouth 2-0 on Saturday.

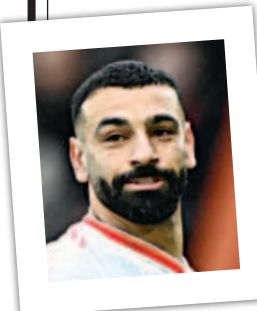
Salah's double took him above Frank Lampard as the sixth-highest goal-scorer in Premier League history on another significant day in the Reds' charge towards a record-equalling 20th English top-flight title.

Bournemouth had not lost in 12 games in all competitions and had beaten Arsenal and Manchester City at home earlier this season.

"It feels good to be scoring goals, to be winning, but my main target this season is to win the Premier League with the team so we must keep going," said Salah, whose contract at Anfield expires this summer.

Saturday's brace saw Salah reach 20 Premier League goals in a season for a fifth time. Only Alan Shearer (7), Sergio Aguero (6) and Harry Kane (6) have done so more times than him. He became the first player in Europe's top five league to reach 20 league goals with his first strike, while his second was his 178th goal which took him past Lampard in the all-time record books.

The 32-year-old also leads the charts for most assists in the league this season, providing 13 for his teammates. This season he has needed just 23 games to reach 20 goals—fewer games that he has ever taken to reach the landmark.



## 'Real Madrid still up for title fight'

AGENCIES

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said his side are still in the driving seat in the LaLiga title race despite a shock 1-0 defeat by Espanyol on Saturday.

Real lead the Spanish top flight on 49 points, one ahead of Atletico Madrid, who beat Mallorca 2-0, with the city rivals set to meet next weekend.

"We had chances and could have scored, but despite the defeat we are still in the fight. We have to focus on the next game," Ancelotti told a press conference.

"Espanyol played a very good game in my opinion, they defended very well, they did what they had to do. Could we have done more? Yes," he added.

The Italian manager also criticised the decision not to show a red card to eventual goalscorer Carlos Romero for a foul on Kylian Mbappe, who was running up the field on a breakaway attack.

"It's important to protect the players. It was a clear foul, a very ugly tackle, lucky there's no serious injury.

"To us it's inexplicable that they didn't send him off," the coach said.



LaLiga top-scorer Robert Lewandowski netted his 18th goal in the league on Sunday as hosts Barcelona beat Alaves 1-0. The win saw third-placed Barca, with 45 points from 22 games, cut the gap with league leaders Real Madrid to four points.

PHOTO: AFP



India continued their dominance right till the end of the ICC Women's Under-19 T20 World Cup, thrashing South Africa by nine wickets in a one-sided final at the Bayuemas Oval, Kuala Lumpur yesterday to retain the title that they won in the inaugural edition two years back. After bundling out South Africa for just 82 runs in 20 overs, India cruised over the line in just 11.1 overs, with opener Gongadi Trisha smashing an unbeaten 33-ball 44 and Sanika Chalke scoring 22-ball 26 not out.

PHOTO: ICC

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**ADMISSION SCHEDULE**

- Application Date: 30.01.2025 (Thursday) -19.02.2025 (Wednesday)  
- Verification of Applications (If Necessary): 25.02.2025 (Tuesday) from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm  
- Publication of the Shortlisted Candidates: 04.03.2025 (Tuesday)  
- Admission Test: 08.03.2025 (Saturday)  
- Publication of Merit List: 16.03.2025 (Sunday)  
- Modification of Program Choice: 17.03.2025 (Monday)  
- Publication of Merit List with Selected Program: 19.03.2025 (Wednesday)

**NOTE**

- Candidates have to apply through (<https://iums.aust.edu/admission/>) by paying the necessary application processing fees through bKash.  
- Candidates passing SSC or O-level or equivalent examinations in 2020 and onwards, and HSC or A-level or equivalent examinations in 2022 and onwards can apply.  
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