



## BCB seeks ‘secure return’ for Nahid, Rishad

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is working to bring home Nahid Rana and Rishad Hossain from the Pakistan Super League (PSL) “in a timely and secure manner” following rising tensions between India and Pakistan.

The escalation has not only cast doubt over Bangladesh’s upcoming T20I series in Pakistan but also raised immediate concerns for its players currently in Islamabad. Both Rishad, representing Lahore Qalandars, and Nahid, playing for Peshawar Zalmi, are awaiting safe passage home.

BCB sources confirmed that the players would be flown back as soon as Pakistani airspaces reopen. One source noted that if a window had emerged yesterday, the board was ready to act quickly to arrange their departure.

Amid the tense situation, Pakistan’s Airport Authority announced the suspension of flights at Lahore, Sialkot and Karachi airports until noon yesterday, citing “regional tensions and operational considerations.”

In a statement, BCB said it had been

in constant touch with both players and is working closely with Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and the Bangladesh High Commission in Islamabad.

“BCB is coordinating with the relevant authorities to ensure that all arrangements are in place to facilitate the eventual departure of the players from Pakistan in a timely and secure manner,” stated the BCB press release.

The urgency heightened after a drone reportedly fell within the Rawalpindi Stadium complex, prompting the PCB to postpone and reschedule several PSL fixtures.

“The PCB is reviewing the situation and will be rescheduling some of the PSL matches,” the PCB said in a statement. “Further updates will be provided as matters are finalised,” it added.

According to ESPNcricinfo, foreign players in the PSL are believed to be keen on the idea that the remainder of the PSL be moved to Dubai. Several foreign players reportedly sat with PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi after the drone incident at Rawalpindi Stadium.

Regarding the May-June’s T20I series, PCB officials have told local media in

Bangladesh that they are hopeful of the series taking place. However, BCB is also placing the highest priority on players’ security.

BCB director Akram Khan told The Daily Star, “The situation is something that’s difficult right now, since if things turn bad, we need a decision from their end [Pakistan] while we are concerned about the players and that’s our priority.”

“I think if a development comes, PCB and concerned authorities will let us know. There has been no discussion here regarding the series being postponed or anything.”

Meanwhile, in India, Indian Premier League has also felt the impact. The match between Mumbai Indians and Punjab Kings, originally scheduled for Sunday in Dharamsala, has been shifted to Ahmedabad, Gujarat, after Dharamsala airport was closed due to rising security concerns.

With the cricketing world watching closely, both PCB and BCCI continue to navigate logistical challenges while keeping contingency plans in place should further relocations or adjustments become necessary.

### SHORT CORNER

#### Could Bangladesh still play in hockey’s Asia Cup?

Bangladesh failed to qualify for the upcoming Asia Cup after finishing third in the AHF Cup, with only the top two teams, Oman and Chinese Taipei, earning spots. However, escalating India-Pakistan tensions may prevent Pakistan from participating in the India-hosted tournament. If Pakistan withdraw, a vacancy would open, and Bangladesh, as the next-best team, could be selected to maintain the tournament’s structure. While no formal decisions have been made, hosting the tournament in India without Pakistan appears more likely, potentially allowing Bangladesh to enter the Asia Cup unexpectedly.

#### Shamit thanks Bangladesh fans

Canada-based Shamit Shome has thanked his fans for their support and gratitude to Bangladesh’s football officials for expediting the process of his switch through a video message. The 27-year-old midfielder, in the video message shared by BFF, said: “Very excited to represent Bangladesh at the international level of football. A huge thanks to everybody for your support and a huge thanks to everybody who have sped up the process and made this possible.”

#### Gill, Bumrah in race to succeed Rohit as India’s Test captain

Top order batter Shubman Gill and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah are locked in a two-horse race to be India’s next Test captain following Rohit Sharma’s exit. Rohit, 38, was dropped from the fifth test in Sydney earlier this year after a prolonged run drought, and announced his retirement from Test cricket on Wednesday.

#### Rising star Rew called up to England squad for Zim Test

Somerset young gun James Rew was drafted into the England squad on Thursday for the upcoming one-off Test against Zimbabwe in Nottingham starting on May 22. The 21-year-old, one of the most promising batters in the English game, replaces Jordan Cox, who suffered an abdominal injury while scoring a century in Essex’s County Championship defeat by Somerset on Sunday.

*\*\*Read full stories on The Daily Star’s website*



Bangladesh under-19 football team players go through drills ahead of a training session at RG Stadium in Naharlagun, Arunachal Pradesh in India yesterday. Golam Rabbani Choton’s charges will start their SAFF U-19 Championship campaign today when they take on Maldives in the opening match of the six-team tournament at the Golden Jubilee Stadium in Yupia. PHOTO: BFF

## PSG cruise to final as Gunners misfire

AGENCIES

PSG made things happen when it mattered, and Arsenal could not – this is what decided the Champions League semifinal tie that ended with the French champions claiming a 3-1 victory on aggregate.

Arsenal, who were trailing the game following a 1-0 defeat in the first leg at home last week, looked more threatening in the opening 25 minutes of the second leg against hosts PSG on Thursday night.

Yet, the night ended in PSG’s favour, with Luis Enrique’s side clinching a 2-1 victory to seal only their second berth in the Champions League final.

About a week ago, PSG were the ones who hounded the Gunners right after the whistle blew at the Emirates, and they found the net inside four minutes when Ousmane Dembele finished from outside the box. That lone goal eventually decided the first leg.

However, Arsenal did at the Parc des Princes what PSG did to them at Emirates, but failed in the most crucial aspect – converting at least one of the flurry of chances they created at the very beginning.

Despite 19 attempts at goal, five of which were inside the first 25 minutes, Arsenal paid the price for failing to make those moments count as they were undermined by a lack of ruthlessness in front of goal as well as the brilliance of PSG’s Italian goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Arsenal caught PSG cold in the



➔ Arsenal produced an xG (Expected Goals) of 3.14 on Thursday night, the most by a team against PSG in a Champions League game this season. Their 19 shots were also their most in a knockout match since having 20 away at Barcelona in March 2016.

➔ Arsenal have now failed to progress from each of their last four major cup semifinals (2020-21 Europa League, 2021-22 League Cup, 2024-25 League Cup, 2024-25 Champions League).

➔ PSG have reached just their fourth major European final, also featuring in the 1996 and 1997 Cup Winners’ Cup finals and the 2020 Champions League final.

opening 15 minutes with Declan Rice heading wide of an open goal and Donnarumma blocking a close-range effort by Gabriel Martinelli before making a stupendous low save to keep out Martin Odegaard’s fizzing shot.

PSG rode their luck and then made Arsenal pay in ruthless fashion with sublime goals by Fabian Ruiz and

Achraf Hakimi putting the French champions in total command.

It still felt as though Arsenal were not out of the tie and when Bukayo Saka did finally beat Donnarumma in the 76th minute, there were jitters in the French ranks.

After outplaying Real Madrid at home and away in the quarterfinal,

“If you score one of them chances, probably in the first 15 or 20 minutes, the game completely changes on its head.”

Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice rued the missed chances.

“A win over all four Premier League teams [against Manchester City, Aston Villa, Liverpool, and Arsenal in this Champions League]? Well... farmers’ league, you know? We are a farmers’ league.”

PSG coach Luis Enrique.

it was a tough way for Arsenal’s run to end and it left Mikel Arteta again contemplating another trophy-less season, and critics sure to label his side the ‘nearly men’.

PSG will now face Inter Milan in the final on May 31 in Munich, looking to win the trophy that has always eluded them.

## After 9-year gap, swimming talent hunt begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

After a gap of around nine years, the Bangladesh Swimming Federation (BSF) with the help of Bangladesh Navy is all set to hold a talent hunt programme titled “Bangladesh in search of best swimmers-2025”, starting today in Dhaka.

The BSF had last conducted a talent hunt in 2016, from which it selected some 60 budding swimmers for a three-year-long training programme. Around half of those swimmers are still active and of them Samiul Islam Rafi and Kajal Mia have gone onto become country’s leading swimmers, winning medals in national competitions and representing Bangladesh at the international level.

“Current swimmers like Rafi, Kajal, Omar [Ali], [Mohammad] Islam, Rabiul [Islam], Tofayel Ahmed, Mukti Khatun, Mukta Khatun, Anna [Akhter], Anny Khatun and Rupa Khatun are products of the 2016 talent hunt programme and most of them have represented Bangladesh at the international level,” former



South Asian Games gold medalist swimmer Shahjahan Ali Rony said.

Rony, also a swimming coach, said the lengthy gap between the talent hunts didn’t allow Bangladesh to build a proper pipeline of swimmers, saying, “Truth be told, we don’t have a proper pipeline of swimmers at the moment. The talent hunt programme will help build a strong pipeline in coming days.”

The local game’s governing body is expecting that some 12,000 budding swimmers will

turn up in 15 different venues in the first phase which will run from May 10 to June 30.

“We will search for talented swimmers from underprivileged background across the country. We have kept the BKSP swimmers and swimmers who participated in age-group national championships out of the talent hunt programme,” said BSF general secretary M Mahabubur Rahman Shahin at a press conference at the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) auditorium yesterday.

After the initial phase, 600 swimmers will be selected, who would then undergo a two-week training programme in the second phase, at the end of which the number will be trimmed down to 100. After the third and final phase, 50 swimmers would get selected for a two-year training programme.

“It is an initiative to turn talented swimmers into national treasures. Bangladesh Navy chief and BSF president admiral M Nazmul Hassanwae wants to provide them long-term training, accommodation and education during their training under foreign and local coaches,” said Mahabubur, adding that they are all set to hunt for talent in all 64 districts and eight division with an 18-member coaching panel which will work in two groups.

Swimmers aged 9-11 will participate in ‘A’ group and swimmers aged 12-15 will participate in ‘B’ group. The estimated costs for the whole programme is Tk 6 crore. Prime Bank has come forward as one of sponsors with a contribution of Tk 50 lakh.



Iga Swiatek dismissed Elisabetta Cocciaretto in just 52 minutes as she opened her account at the Italian Open on Thursday. World number two Swiatek came to Italy on the back of a demoralising straight-sets defeat to Coco Gauff in the semifinals of the Madrid Open. But the 23-year-old Pole dropped just a single game in winning 6-1, 6-0 against the Italian yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS