

## BCB caught off-guard after Fizz's surprise IPL call-up

SPORTS REPORTER

Indian Premier League franchise Delhi Capitals have confirmed the signing of Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman on Wednesday for the remainder of the IPL season for INR 6 crore, but interestingly, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) was not aware of the development.

The news surfaced at a time when the first contingent of the Bangladesh team had already departed for Dubai on Wednesday morning for a two-match T20I series against the UAE, and the second contingent of players, including Mustafizur and a few others, were on their way to the airport to catch the Dubai-bound flight. The 29-year-old eventually departed for UAE with the other players and officials later in the evening.

Earlier, the news of IPL signing caused confusion on Mustafizur's availability for the UAE series – slated to be played on May 17 and 19 – and the five-match T20I tour of Pakistan.

Mustafizur had a base price of INR 2 crore in the auction list for this year's IPL. It was learnt that Delhi Capitals were in competition to secure the Bangladesh pacer's services alongside another franchise as a number of foreign players, including ones from Australia, South Africa and England, were reluctant to return to the IPL

following the India-Pakistan conflict. Given the competition, things moved fast as Delhi secured the left-arm pacer for a six-crore-rupee signing fee.

But BCB had no inkling about the development. "Mustafizur is supposed to go with the team to UAE and that's what the schedules are at the moment. We have not received any communication from the IPL officials. I am not sure whether Mustafizur asked for any NOC," BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

IPL franchises usually communicate to the board regarding availability of players. However, BCB's cricket operations department, too, did not know about the development.

"We, too, learnt from social media and journalists regarding Mustafizur's signing with Delhi Capitals. Since we did not receive any official request from the player or the BCCI, we can't make a comment on an official basis," a BCB official said.

Given the delicate nature of the security situation surrounding the upcoming Pakistan series, it remains to be seen what decision comes regarding the series, and in the event the series is played as scheduled, whether Mustafizur gets NOC from the BCB.



Bangladesh team's second contingent, including skipper Liton Das, Mustafizur Rahman, Soumya Sarkar, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Towhid Hridoy, Shoriful Islam, and senior assistant coach Mohammad Salahuddin, departed the country in the evening yesterday for the UAE, where the Tigers are scheduled to play a two-match T20I series, starting on May 17 in Sharjah. The first contingent left in the morning.

PHOTO: BCB

## Extreme weather conditions see BCL deferred

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is likely to scrap its plan of holding this season's Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) from next month and defer it till next September, keeping in mind the extreme weather conditions.

The four-day league was expected to start from June 15 after it was deferred for one month from its original scheduled start in May due to a few series of Bangladesh 'A' team and the Emerging Team.

However, as there is a heat alert and also a high chance of rain and thunderstorms in the coming month, the BCB is now planning to organise BCL at the start of the next domestic calendar year in September.

"as there is a warning of a heat wave, we are now thinking of holding the league at the start of the new season," BCB's tournament committee chairman Akram Khan told The Daily Star yesterday.

Akram also added that the league would still be considered as a tournament of the ongoing 2024-25 season even if it is held next season.

Meanwhile, the BCB is facing difficulties in attracting sponsors for all four teams in the BCL, the country's only franchise-based four-day tournament.

In recent years, two of the teams – East Zone and Central Zone – were patronised by Islami Bank and Walton, while the other two teams were managed by the BCB.

## Wasting a golden gen?

ANISUR RAHMAN

When Bangladesh clinched their second straight SAFF Women's Championship title in October 2024, it felt like a turning point – a sign the team were ready to move beyond South Asian dominance and step onto a larger Asian stage.

Seven months later, that hope is dimming fast, giving way to uncertainty and increasing skepticism.

Calls to raise the bar – to arrange matches against stronger second-tier Asian nations like Vietnam, Thailand, Iran, and the Philippines – were loud and clear after the SAFF success. Yet little action followed. Infrastructure remains stagnant. Facilities haven't improved.

And more worryingly, even the existing resources are being mishandled.

The root of the current crisis is a deepening rift between head coach Peter Butler and a group of senior players. That fallout, which began with a training boycott in January, continues to overshadow preparations for the upcoming fixtures in Myanmar, Bahrain and Turkmenistan in AFC Women's Asian Cup qualifiers in June and July.

Despite Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) efforts at crisis management, the cracks are widening. Butler – a former Premier League player with a respectable coaching record – is back at the helm with eight of the boycotting players reintegrated.

Ten others, however, including national stalwarts like Sabina Khatun, Maria Manda, Monica Chakma, are currently playing in Bhutan's Women's League – just when the national team needs unity the most.

Playing abroad offers valuable exposure, especially given the limited international opportunities at home. Still, it's hard to ignore the timing. Shouldn't preparing

for a crucial international campaign take precedence?

The episode exposes deeper problems. Bangladesh women's football now stands at a crossroads – between building on progress and watching it unravel. The decision to let core players drift away without resolving internal disputes signals a worrying lack of leadership and strategic thinking.

Coach Butler has described the current squad as the "future" of Bangladesh. And while the younger players do show promise,

federation's inaction has only deepened the divide.

Seven months into the tenure of the Tabith Awal led executive committee, women's football remains without a functioning domestic structure. Beyond short-term contracts for 54 players, there are no meaningful pathways, leaving the sport's foundation increasingly fragile.

Unless reconciliation happens – unless Butler and the BFF work to reintegrate the veterans and unify the squad – Bangladesh



Bangladesh stars Sabina Khatun, Monika Chakma, and Rituporna Chakma share a light moment during Paro FC Women's training session yesterday, as they gear up for their 2025 Bob Women's National League opener at 4pm today. PHOTO: PARO FC WOMEN

pushing aside seasoned internationals without a clear transition plan risks derailing the momentum built over the past decade.

Players like Maria, Monica, and Sabina have carried Bangladesh through its rise since 2014, facing elite youth sides from Japan, Korea, and Australia. Their experience is irreplaceable. Yet, instead of bridging the gap and restoring trust, the

could head into the Asian qualifiers fractured, underprepared, and at risk of squandering hard-won momentum.

This is not just about picking sides. It's about safeguarding potential, preserving continuity, and respecting the journey that brought the team to this point.

Without belief, trust, and structure, even the brightest promise can collapse under its own weight.

## Miraz third Bangladeshi to win ICC Men's POTM

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz was named the ICC Men's Player of the Month for April 2025 on Wednesday.

Miraz became only the third men's cricketer from Bangladesh to win the men's monthly award and the first in over two years. Shakib Al Hasan was the last Bangladesh player to win the award, in March 2023, while Mushfiqur Rahim is the other one to have won it.

"It's an incredible honour to win the ICC Men's Player of the Month award. The ICC Awards are the ultimate recognition for any cricketer, and to receive this from a global vote means a lot to me," Miraz said.

Superb performances with both bat and ball in a two-Test home series against Zimbabwe helped him win the award, his purple patch also helping grab the number two spot among all-rounders in the ICC Men's Test Player Rankings for the first time in his career.

The 27-year-old was named Player of the Series after finishing with 15 wickets that comprised three five-wicket hauls and knocking up his second Test century (104) in the second match in Chattogram that Bangladesh won by an innings and 106 runs to draw the series 1-1.

"I am truly delighted. This award will be a big source of inspiration for me to keep giving my best and contributing to Bangladesh's success on the world stage. As cricketers, we dream of making an impact and bringing joy to our fans," Miraz added.



Jannik Sinner came through the first true test of his comeback from a doping ban with Tuesday's straight-sets win over Francisco Cerundolo which took the world number one into the Italian Open quarterfinals. Italian Sinner bested 17th seed Cerundolo 7-6 (7/2), 6-3 in a match which was delayed by a couple of hours due to a torrential downpour to set up a last-eight clash with Casper Ruud.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Barca get Lewy boost with LaLiga title in sight

REUTERS

Barcelona striker Robert Lewandowski is set to return to action in Thursday's LaLiga clash at Espanyol, manager Hansi Flick said, as his side prepare to wrap up the title this week.

A victory in their city derby against Espanyol would clinch the championship for the Catalans. Barcelona, now seven points clear at the top with 82 points, could win the title as early as Wednesday if Real Madrid fail to win at Mallorca.

The Polish striker missed Barca's last three league games and was also absent from their 3-2 Copa del Rey final win over Real Madrid on April 27 due to a muscle injury.

The 36-year-old has scored 25 goals in 31 league games, two behind Kylian Mbappe in the LaLiga Golden Boot race, with both having played the same number of matches.

"Lewandowski is doing good and of course he is ready to play," Flick told reporters on Wednesday.

Lewandowski featured for only 30 minutes in their Champions League semi-final second leg defeat by Inter Milan last week and missed their 4-3 home win against Real Madrid on Sunday.

After their last Clasic win, Barcelona have defeated Real in all four encounters

this season across all competitions, and Flick hailed his team's performance as a source of immense pride.

"We played 24 minutes with no contact from Real in our half, so it has something to do with the pressing, it has something to do with the right structure we had," he said.

"How we started to press them when they had the ball was unbelievable. When I heard this stat I thought it's really great... we can be very proud of that. I'm happy for the fans, for the club, because I know that's very important for them."

Asked about Real manager Carlo Ancelotti joining the Brazil national team at the end of the season, Flick, who coached Germany from 2021 to 2023, said: "I think he (Ancelotti) did a fantastic job in Madrid. He's a gentleman and one of the best and most successful coaches in the world."

"I wish him all the best for his new job. I think he will find a great team there, and he can follow success there."

