



In what was a rare move, UEFA displayed a banner that read "Stop killing children - Stop killing civilians" before the Super Cup final between PSG and Tottenham at the Stadio Friuli in Udine, Italy, on Wednesday. UEFA also had two refugee children from Gaza involved in the medal ceremony. The gesture comes after UEFA was criticised by Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah for not being specific about the killing of Suleiman al-Obeid, known as the "Pele of Palestinian football", in an Israeli attack while waiting for humanitarian aid in the southern Gaza Strip last week. Champions League holders PSG were the eventual winners of the contest, beating Tottenham 4-3 on penalties after coming back from 2-0 down in 90 minutes.

PHOTO: REUTERS/X

Champions Liverpool kick off PL tonight

STAR SPORTS DESK

Reigning Premier League champions Liverpool begin their title defence at home to Bournemouth on Saturday, with manager Arne Slot eyeing back-to-back titles after a record-breaking debut season.

Slot, who guided Liverpool to their 20th top-flight title last term, has already overseen nearly £300 million worth of new arrivals and could yet add more before the transfer window closes.

The Reds' revamped attacking lineup is led by German playmaker Florian Wirtz, expected to provide the creative spark for new striker Hugo Ekitike. On the flanks, Jeremy Frimpong and Milos Kerkez bring pace and width, while 18-year-old centre-back Giovanni Leoni, signed from Parma on the eve of the opener, strengthens a backline that has struggled with injuries.

Liverpool got off to a rocky start after a 3-2 defeat on penalties against Crystal Palace in Sunday's Community Shield.

Slot is cautiously optimistic Liverpool can retain their title.

"The main reason that it's so difficult [to

retain the title] is because there are so many competitors who can win the league," Slot said. "This year will be even harder. We've lost five to six players who played a lot of minutes last season, and brought in four, so it's normal there's adaptation."

Mohamed Salah, last season's top scorer with 29 goals, will once again be central to Liverpool's hopes.

Slot's first challenge comes against a Bournemouth side significantly weakened by departures. Goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga has joined Arsenal, while centre-backs Dean Huijsen and Illia Zabarnyi moved to Real Madrid and PSG respectively. Kerkez, too, has left for Liverpool.

The Cherrys have earned €186.96 million from sales and reinvested part of it in Balode Diakite, signed from Lille on Wednesday for €35 million plus €5 million in add-ons — the second-highest fee in the club's history, behind the €40.2 million paid for Brazilian striker Evanilson last summer.

Despite the exodus, manager Andoni Iraola will aim to build on last season's record 56-point haul, which matched Bournemouth's best ever Premier League finish of ninth.



Mushfiqur's exit wish EXPOSES RAJSHAHI RIFT

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

A storm is brewing in Rajshahi cricket. On August 7, the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) tournament committee chairman Akram Khan revealed that star veteran Mushfiqur Rahim had informed selectors of his interest to play for Sylhet Division in both competitions of the upcoming National Cricket League.

The news surprised many, as Mushfiqur, from Bogura, has represented Rajshahi Division throughout his career. Soon after, it emerged that several senior Rajshahi players, including skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto, were also unwilling to play for the side this season, citing a unhealthy dressing room environment and the inclusion of an irregular yet influential player in the preliminary 30-man squad.

Their protest centred on Myshukur Rahaman, a 33-year-old batter from Bogura, who has not played for Rajshahi since 2018, representing other divisions such as Sylhet in recent years.

He was also accused of failing to pay Brothers Union players after the last Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League (DPL) edition, despite signing them under a bizarre 'one-page agreement' — which stated that they are interested to play alongside Myshukur.

However, four months on, several players are still awaiting full payment.

Players and officials allege that Myshukur used political connections to

return to Rajshahi's squad and influenced the inclusion of underperforming players while overlooking standouts from this year's first division league, such as Sujon Hawlader, Emon Ali and Shakir Hossain Shuvro.

Senior players Mizanur Rahman and Sunzamul Islam were accused of supporting him to protect their own places, while an utterly unknown cricketer, Nur A Rayan Shammo — son of a top political leader in Pabna — was also included.

"If he [Myshukur] keeps doing this, Rajshahi cricket will be destroyed. Mizanur and Sunzamul knew they'll lose their places soon, so they sheltered Myshukur," a Rajshahi Division cricketer, requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star.

"He has pressurised coaches using political ties. Mushfiqur bhai hasn't been happy with the dressing room for the past year or two. The way everything is going, many senior cricketers might not play and juniors might follow."

Typically, divisional squads are formed after discussions between the coaches and captain, but this year's Rajshahi squad was finalised without following that

process. Alongside divisional coach Shahanowuz Shahid Shantu, assistant coach Alamgir Kabir and Rajshahi Divisional Sports Association secretary A.T.M. Golam Mahbob, Myshukur signed the primary players' list



sent to BCB for approval. When this reporter contacted Myshukur, he denied all allegations, claiming coaches and Shanto asked for his help in forming the squad.

"For the last six to seven years, I wasn't given a chance to play for Rajshahi Division. This year, they told me to play. We have two divisional coaches, eight district coaches and skipper Shanto, who

tried to form a 30-member squad as well as name a few backup cricketers. As I play in the [Dhaka] Premier League, I know cricketers who play in different domestic tournaments," said Myshukur.

"I was told to get involved in the matter, and the team was formed after taking consent from everyone involved in the selection matter. Shanto was absent from the meeting, so I signed on his behalf," he added.

Coach Shahanowuz later confirmed a new 30-man squad had been sent to BCB after backlash, with four changes from the initial list.

"We spoke to Shanto and formed what we thought was a good squad, taking suggestions from Myshukur as he was already practising with some of the cricketers. But Akram Khan didn't approve it, so we made changes and sent a new list. Then me, Alamgir and Shanto formed a new team and sent it to the BCB," Shahanowuz said.

Akram acknowledged the dispute but was optimistic of a resolution as Rajshahi have already sent a new team.

"Initially, the list came from two coaches and a current player. Senior players objected, so we told the coach to send a revised squad after consulting the captain. The players have started training. After the fitness test, selectors will finalise the 15-man squad — and decide whether Mushfiqur plays for Rajshahi or Sylhet this season."



Bangladesh 'A' appeared to be on course to chase down the 228-run target set by the Pakistan Shaheens, thanks to an 86-run second-wicket stand between opener Jishan Alam (33 off 17) and Saif Hassan (57 off 32) in the Top End T20 tournament opener at the T10 Stadium in Darwin, Australia, yesterday. However, the chronic batting woes of Bangladesh eventually reared its head, as the Nurul Hasan Sohan-led side lost their last nine wickets for just 56 runs, crashing from 92 for one in seven overs to being bundled out for 148 in 16.5 overs, suffering a crushing 79-run defeat.

PHOTO: BCB

Girona host Rayo in LaLiga opener

AGENCIES

The 2025/26 LaLiga season kicks off Friday at Estadi Montilivi, where Girona host Rayo Vallecano.

Girona, who finished a disappointing 16th last season after a stunning third-place finish in 2023-24, have refreshed their squad with four summer signings — Hugo Rincon, Axel Witsel, Vitor Reis and Thomas Lemar — while parting ways with several players. Without European commitments this term, Michel's side hope to focus solely on domestic success.

Rayo, meanwhile, secured eighth place last season, earning a Conference League playoff spot — only their second European campaign in history. Inigo Perez's team, bolstered by the permanent signing of goalkeeper Augusto Batalla, aim to push for the top seven again. The sides drew 0-0 in Girona last season, with Rayo winning the reverse fixture 2-1.

U-17 girls eye SAFF title

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh U-17 women's football team are looking to continue the recent success of senior teams in the SAFF U-17 Women's Championship, which begins in Bhutan on August 20.

In order to acclimatise with the conditions in the Himalayan nation, a 30-member contingent will leave for Thimphu on Friday morning under the guidance of Mahbubur Rahman Litu as head coach Peter Butler was given rest due to his workload in recent past.

The four participating teams — Bangladesh, India, Bhutan and Nepal — will face each other twice in the 12-day tournament and the team to top the table will be crowned champions. Bangladesh will begin their campaign against Bhutan on the opening day.

Bangladesh finished behind champions Russia, the lone invitee in the competition's history, in the 2023 SAFF U-17 Women's Championship in Dhaka and emerged champions in the 2024 SAFF U-16 Women's Championship in Nepal.

"Butler gave us some guidelines to follow and the girls will follow the style of the senior side," assistant coach Litu said yesterday.

Erratum

The Daily Star Sports ran a story titled "Bijoy set to get another lifeline" on its print edition of August 14, 2025 as well as on digital edition. We regret to inform that the story should have been about pacer Anamul Haque instead of batter Anamul Haque Bijoy. We regret the mistake and pledge to remain more cautious about such issues in future. The story on our digital edition has been removed.

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