



UK-born Bangladeshi sprinter Imranur Rahman gets off the blocks during a practice session at the National Stadium in Dhaka on Monday. The 32-year-old has been competing in Bangladesh's national athletics events since 2021 but took a break from appearing in both domestic and international meets following Paris Olympics last year. The Navy athlete, who arrived in Dhaka on August 15, will be looking to regain the fastest-man mantle from Mohammad Ismail when the 17th National Summer Athletics Championship kicks off on Friday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

BCB's unique move to bridge gap with players

SPORTS REPORTER

In what was a unique move by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), its president Aminul Islam Bulbul held an open value-sharing session with the players and coaches in the presence of the board's directors yesterday, less than 24 hours after arriving from a vacation in Australia.

The players, who left for Sylhet to continue preparations for the upcoming three match T20I series against the Netherlands later this month and the Asia Cup in September following the meeting yesterday, shared their opinions on issues affecting performance and suggested developments that could help improve the national team's output.

The session, termed a "share & care" programme, was aimed at strengthening the bond and encouraging direct and open communication that would help guide both the team and the board, with Aminul quoted in the press release as saying that the board is "committed to acting on the insights shared."

It was learnt that one key concern raised was the lack of quality practice wickets. Players also pointed to domestic scheduling, particularly the Dhaka Premier League (DPL). They requested the league to be played earlier than its usual March-April window to avoid excessive heat. Traveling to BKSP for matches was another challenge, as players cited Dhaka's heavy traffic congestion.

All-rounder Mehidy Hasan Miraz stressed on importance of expertise and facilities, citing these as key to "create an environment where players can truly grow and perform at their best."

Addressing the infrastructure issues, Aminul mentioned that they are preparing new venues for next season's DPL. The outer stadium in Fatullah is being developed with new soil and raised wickets, while two new grounds in Purbachal are also under construction.

QUEST FOR COMPLETION

Girls begin hunt for SAFF U-17 crown today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh girls are set to step onto Bhutan's Thimphu's Changlimithang Stadium today with one mission: to claim the only regional trophy missing from their glittering cabinet.

The booters, led by stand in coach Mahbubur Rahman Litu, begin their SAFF U-17 Women's Championship campaign against the hosts. The match kicks off at 6:00pm (Bangladesh time), following the tournament opener between India and Nepal, and will be streamed live on the Sportzworkz YouTube Channel.

Under the new format, all four teams will face each other twice in a double round-robin league, with each side playing six matches. The team topping the table after the final matchday on August 31 will be crowned champions.

Since its introduction in 2017 with FIFA's financial backing, the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) has staged six categories of women's age group tournaments -- ranging from U-15 to U-20 -- as preparation platforms for AFC competitions. Bangladesh have won every edition except the U-17s, last held in 2023 in Dhaka, where invitees Russia edged them to the title.



Opening match: Bangladesh vs Bhutan, 6:00pm (Bangladesh time), Thimphu.

Bangladesh's record: Champions in every SAFF women's age-group except U-17s.

Coaching change: Mahbubur Rahman Litu leads the charges, filling in for Peter Butler.

Squad mix: Nine newcomers plus players from last year's SAFF U-16 title-winning side.

Women's football in Bangladesh has enjoyed a breakthrough year. The senior side reached the Women's Asian Cup for the first time, while the U-20s also progressed to the AFC U-20 Asian Cup finals after lifting the SAFF U-20 Championship in Dhaka.

The squad -- with nine fresh faces blending with several players who clinched last year's SAFF U-16 title -- arrived in Thimphu four days early to adjust to the high altitude. The only major change is on the touchline, with local coach Litu continuing the commendable work of Englishman Peter Butler -- who

had overseen their development alongside the senior and U-20 teams and is currently enjoying a rare vacation back home.

"We are ready after a month and a half of preparation and... this championship is a chance to learn and grow," coach Litu told the media yesterday.

Joakim Alexandersson, head coach of title aspirants India, reckons that Bangladesh will be their toughest opponents. "From what I know, Bangladesh will be a big challenge, Nepal also strong, and Bhutan perhaps struggled more."

'BPL needs image rehabilitation'

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Nearly six months into its formation, the three-member inquiry body set up by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to look into the suspicious activities in the previous Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), is set to submit its preliminary report next week.

Former cricketer and committee member Shakil Kasem told The Daily Star yesterday that they will submit the preliminary report to the board president Aminul Islam Bulbul. According to BCB insiders, the probable date of submission is August 25.

"The reason why we are putting this preliminary report right now, is to assist the cricket board in its readiness for the upcoming BPL season. Complete details of our findings and recommendations will be in our final report, which we are going to submit in September," Shakil said.

Earlier this year, some reports in the media have suggested the ACU has identified eight matches in the previous BPL as suspicious, potentially involving spot-fixing and match-fixing, based on anonymous tips and media reports. Ten players and four franchises were reportedly under observation.

However, Shakil was tight-lipped when it came to naming any individual currently under suspicion, and reiterating that as an inquiry committee, he and his fellow committee members -- Justice Mirza Hussain Haider and



advocate Dr. Khaled H. Chowdhury -- can only make suggestions.

"This is an inquiry committee. Before undertaking any decision, you have to investigate it. We are not an investigation committee. We will suggest if this warrants further investigation," he said.

"We can't just talk about assumptions or say the names that have come up. We have to inquire whether there is any cricketing merit, did they violate any cricketing logic by doing a particular thing."

"Somebody bowled a wide, but was a factor, did the ball slip out of his hands, we had to inquire these things from a cricketing perspective. Was it a freak incident or was it part of a pattern, whether this player has a history of doing this kind of thing before. We had to take everything into consideration," he added.

The former cricketer also said the board did not try to influence the inquiry committee in any way and that it was up to the BCB whether the preliminary report would be made public or not.

The BCB had formed the inquiry committee on February 3 and Shakil what detailed what lengths he and his fellow committee members have gone to in this inquiry in the past six months.

"Because of the gravity of this exercise and importance of it, the committee took its time. Information mining took its time. We engaged in over 61 sessions with over 60 individuals, we reviewed about 3500 pages of documents, listened to 300 hours of recorded depositions and testimonies, viewed countless video footages, listened to audio footages and all that."

Shakil was hopeful that the preliminary report, followed by the final one, will aid BCB in rejuvenating BPL.

"The report we will submit, should not be seen as a conclusion of an exercise, rather a stepping stone for a beginning of a new chapter for Bangladesh cricket in general and the BPL in particular. There is potential for BPL to be a high class franchise league, we will outline how the possibilities can be lined up to achieve that objective. The BPL needs both a restructuring as well as a rehabilitation of its image in the international arena. We are looking into ways and means on how it can be done," he added.



World number two Carlos Alcaraz consoles top seed Jannik Sinner after the latter retired due to illness in the first set of their Cincinnati Open title match at the Lindner Family Tennis Center on Monday. Sinner came into the contest feeling unwell and lost the first seven points of the match before throwing in the towel at 5-0 down in a game played in 30-degree Celsius heat. Sinner will now focus on recovery as he is due to begin his title defence of US Open, starting on Sunday.

SHORT CORNER

Bangladesh grouped with holders S Korea in Asia Cup hockey

Bangladesh have been placed in Pool B with defending champions South Korea, Malaysia, and Chinese Taipei in the AHF Men's Hockey Asia Cup, scheduled for August 29 to September 7 in India. The Pool A features Kazakhstan, India, Japan, and China.

Miraz set to miss Netherlands series for family reasons

Bangladesh all-rounder Mehidy Hasan Miraz won't feature in the upcoming three-match T20I series against Netherlands as he asked the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to be excluded from the series, citing family reasons.

SA crush Australia in first ODI

Aiden Markram hit 82 before Keshav Maharaj tore through Australia's new-look batting order as South Africa claimed the first ODI of the three-match series by 98 runs in Cairns on Tuesday.

Bangladesh 'A' bounce back

Bangladesh 'A' team returned to winning ways with a 22-run victory over Northern Territory Strike in their fourth match of the Top End T20 series in Darwin on Tuesday. The win lifted the Nurul Hasan Sohan-led side to seventh position on the 11-team table with four points from four matches as they have lost two games and won two.

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Gill, Bumrah return for Asia Cup

REUTERS, New Delhi

Defending champions India named top order batter Shubman Gill and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah in their T20I squad on Tuesday for next month's Asia Cup in the United Arab Emirates.

Opener Yashasvi Jaiswal and batter Shreyas Iyer, however, could not make the cut in the 15-member squad led by Suryakumar Yadav.

India's Test captain Gill has not played a T20I since July last year when he was Suryakumar's deputy on the tour of Sri Lanka. "That's where we started a new cycle," Suryakumar, who took over T20I captaincy from Rohit Sharma after India won the T20 World Cup last year, told reporters.

"After that he got busy with all the Test series and he didn't get an opportunity to play T20s because he was busy playing Test cricket and Champions Trophy."

India also included Bumrah, whose workload has been a major concern for the team think-tank, which played him in three of the five Tests in England recently. Bumrah last played in the T20 World Cup last year in June.

With three opening options in Gill, Abhishek Sharma and Sanju Samson -- India could not accommodate Jaiswal.

India begin their Group A campaign against hosts United Arab Emirates in Dubai before meeting arch-rivals Pakistan at the same venue four days later.

India squad: Suryakumar Yadav (captain), Shubman Gill, Hardik Pandya, Arshdeep Singh, Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Jitesh Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, Varun Chakravarthy, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Rinku Singh, Sanju Samson