



Gazan archer here to fly Palestinian flag

Wearing black sunglasses and a white hat, with a quiver marked by the Palestinian flag slung across her shoulder, archer Rasha Yahya Ahmed drew attention at Dhaka's Paltan Outer Stadium on Thursday as she trained ahead of the 24th Asian Archery Championships, beginning November 8. For the first time, Palestinian archers are competing in an international event hosted in Bangladesh. Rasha, born in Gaza and now based in the UAE, expressed gratitude for the warm reception she received in Dhaka. Having taken up archery only three years ago, she has already represented Palestine in Korea and Qatar. "We came not just to participate, but to compete," said Rasha, who will contest in the women's recurve individual event. Representing her homeland, she added, "Every time we raise our flag, it means so much."

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Financial safeguards in place, but integrity unchecked

ASHFAQ UL-ALAM

While the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has implemented financial safeguards to prevent a repeat of last season's payment fiasco in the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), it has been far less proactive on the issue of ensuring the league's integrity.

On Thursday, the BCB named five franchises who will compete in the upcoming 12th edition. Out of the six teams that competed previous season, only two -- Dhaka Capitals and Rangpur Riders -- will feature in the next one, joined by new teams Chattogram Royals, Rajshahi Warriors and Sylhet Titans.

The BCB has already taken Tk 2 crores from each team as franchise fee for this season and all of them will have to submit another Tk 10 crores as bank guarantee by next Thursday.

Last season, the board had not taken bank guarantees from all of the teams -- only eventual winners Fortune Barishal had deposited Tk 3 crores. The BCB later regretted this decision once the season kicked off.

Players from many franchises started complaining that their dues were not getting cleared, the chief offenders being Durbar Rajshahi, whose overseas players boycotted matches over not receiving daily allowances, and Chittagong Kings, whose owner did not even bother showing up in an emergency meeting held mid-season by the board with the teams to address the league's issues.

Both of those franchises are not a part of the tournament this season as the board has seemingly conducted a much stricter vetting process this time.

"We have followed due process during screening of the interested organisations," member secretary of the BPL governing council Itekhaz Rahman Mithu told The Daily Star.

"Last season there were two key issues. One was players' payments being due at end of tournament. This is why we are asking for the Tk 10 crore bank guarantee," he added.

A profit-sharing model will be implemented in the upcoming BPL as the board will share 30 percent of its profits with the franchises. In the case of non-



payment, this amount will be withheld by the board and used to clear the dues.

However, the previous edition was also plagued by allegations of fixing, which tarnished the league's reputation globally and prompted the board to form a three-member inquiry committee in February.

After an extensive investigation, the committee recently submitted a 900-page report to the board in late October, which included names of players, support staff and others who are suspected of being involved in corrupt activities.

However, the BCB has chosen not to make the report public and has instead handed it over to Alex Marshall, the

chief of its new Bangladesh Cricket Board Integrity Unit (BCBIU), who is investigating the allegations.

"They [three-member committee] have taken interviews and created a list of players under suspicion. After Marshall completes his investigation, he will give his opinion on it. Of course, there would be further investigation, evidence will be collected. There is no proof yet, there is a list of suspects," a BCB official said on conditions of anonymity.

The only immediate impact the 900-page report will have in the upcoming BPL is that the suspected players will be monitored more than the rest, according

to sources.

According to BCB vice-president Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, the BCB will not reveal the names until it "knows for sure" as it does not want to put players who are under suspicion but not guilty in a tough spot.

But by not revealing the suspected individuals' names and allowing them to participate, the BCB is attracting suspicion over BPL at a time when the league is in desperate need of an image makeover. Like the decision of not taking bank guarantees, this could end up being a call the board ends up regretting later on.

Women's league gears up with Asian Cup in mind

SPORTS REPORTER

The 7th Women's Football League, scheduled to start on December 15, will allow each club to field up to two foreign players as the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) aims to boost competitiveness ahead of next year's AFC Women's Asian Cup in Australia.

The last edition, completed in May 2024, saw only three top teams -- champions Nasrin Sporting Club, runners-up Ataur Rahman Bhuiyan College Sporting Club (ARBCSC), and third-placed Bangladesh Army FC -- play just three matches among themselves.

This season, seven of the nine previous teams -- excluding ARBCSC -- have applied for club licensing, alongside six new clubs including Bangladesh Ansar, Bangladesh Police FC, BKSP, and Rajshahi Star.

"So far, 13 clubs have applied for licensing, and the First Instance Body is working on it and will issue licences on Saturday," BFF women's football committee chair Mahfuza Akhter Kiron told The Daily Star yesterday, adding that they can organise the league with 13 teams if all meet the criteria.

"Once licensing is complete, the transfer window will open this month... We decided to allow two foreign players to boost league competitiveness and give national team players a challenging environment ahead of the Women's Asian Cup."

Plans to create a pool of national players were dropped after approving foreign signings. "The league will initially be a single round-robin, but a double-leg format is possible if a sponsor is secured," she added, further informing the competition is likely to be held at either Kamalapur stadium or the National Stadium.

SHORT CORNER

Rishad gets full NOC for Big Bash during BPL slot

January 19, 2015 was the last time that a Bangladesh player appeared in the BBL, when Shakib Al Hasan played the tournament. Last season, Rishad Hossain could have been just the second player to appear but did not get an NOC from the board to play for Hobart Hurricanes last season due to BPL commitments. This season, Hurricanes roped in Rishad again and BCB has granted him full NOC for the tournament.

India thump Australia to take 2-1 lead in T20 series

India took a 2-1 lead in their T20 series against Australia with a 48-run demolition of the home side on Queensland's Gold Coast on Thursday.

Chapman blitz powers Black Caps to thrilling win over West Indies

Powerful batting by Black Cap Mark Chapman carried New Zealand to a three-run victory in the second T20 against West Indies in Auckland on Thursday night.

Djokovic to face Alcaraz in ATP Finals groups

Novak Djokovic will take on Carlos Alcaraz in the group stage of the upcoming ATP Finals while Jannik Sinner could face a derby with Lorenzo Musetti.

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Financial firepower fuels English dominance in UCL

England's top clubs are dominating this season's Champions League, showcasing the Premier League's unmatched financial strength. With all six English representatives sitting in the top 12 of the 36-team group phase, and five recording victories in the latest round of fixtures, their collective power has been hard to ignore. Fueled by record-breaking transfer spending, English clubs look poised to rewrite Champions League history if all six progress to the knockout stage.

PHOTO: REUTERS



➡ For the second time in four rounds, five English clubs won in a single Champions League game week -- an unprecedented feat before this season.

➡ All six Premier League clubs are in the top 12 halfway through the group stage; four are currently in the top eight.

➡ A potential record six English clubs could reach the last 16 -- surpassing the five that advanced in 2017.

➡ Premier League clubs' summer spending exceeded £3 billion, more than the combined outlay of the Bundesliga, La Liga, Serie A, and Ligue 1.

➡ Arsenal are second overall, level on points with Bayern Munich, and are the only side yet to concede a goal.

➡ Manchester City moved up to fourth after a 4-1 win over Borussia Dortmund.

➡ Liverpool climbed to eighth after defeating Real Madrid, while Newcastle United sit sixth following three straight wins.

➡ Tottenham Hotspur, unbeaten and 10th, crushed FC Copenhagen 4-0 -- highlighted by Micky van de Ven's standout strike.

➡ Chelsea, in 12th, were held 2-2 by Qarabag but remain in strong contention for a playoff spot.



PHOTO: REUTERS



A high-flying Erling Haaland struck to haunt his former club Borussia Dortmund in Manchester City's 4-1 Champions League rout on Wednesday. The strike was his 27th of the season in just 17 matches for club and country, and it also made him the first player to score in five consecutive Champions League appearances for three different clubs -- Red Bull Salzburg, Dortmund and City. Phil Foden netted a brace, while Rasmus Hojlund added another as City climbed to fourth on 10 points. [Inset] Meanwhile, Barcelona rescued a 3-3 draw in a thriller at Club Brugge, with teenage sensation Lamine Yamal involved in all three equalisers. Brugge were denied a late winner after a soft foul on goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny, who counted his lucky stars.