



The Boxing Day action gets underway with the fourth Ashes Test between Australia and England at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground, starting at 5:30am (Bangladesh time) on Friday. Star Sports 1 and 2 will broadcast the match live. Australia have already retained the Ashes, having secured dominant victories in the first three Tests of the series.

BPL 12

OFF-FIELD HURDLES on-field optimism

SPORTS REPORTER

As the newest edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) is quickly approaching, the old problems from previous seasons -- payments delays and last-minute scrambling for overseas cricketers -- have returned. The grand opening ceremony in Dhaka had already been scrapped owing to security concerns, and on Wednesday, the pre-season captain's photoshoot with the trophy was also been canned. Even amid all this, the players remain hopeful of a vibrant BPL.

Payment concerns resurface
Payment issues that plagued last season's BPL have resurfaced as several franchises have not cleared 25 percent of players' total payments -- as required under tournament bylaws -- with just two days remaining before the opening fixtures.

A Chattogram Royals' player told The Daily Star on Wednesday, "No payments have been made." Sources from Sylhet Titans indicated that payments were due and a source from Noakhali Express also revealed that payments were yet to be made.

Dhaka Capitals skipper Mohammad Mithun confirmed during a press conference that his team had received 25 percent of their payments, a claim corroborated by several players. Rangpur Riders' media department confirmed that 50 percent of payments to local players have been completed. Rajshahi Warriors' media officials said 25 percent payment has been made, along with nine days' travelling allowance and Dearness Allowance (TADA) for both local and foreign players -- a claim supported by two players.



Chattogram Royals opener Mohammad Naim was all smiles during a practice session at the Sylhet Outer Stadium yesterday. All eyes will be on Naim, the player with the highest price tag among locals, when his side take on Noakhali Express in the second match on the opening day of the 12th Bangladesh Premier League in Sylhet tomorrow.

PHOTO: BCB

Foreign player crisis hits Chattogram
With less than 36 hours to go before BPL 12 gets underway, Chattogram are yet to welcome any of their overseas player and even head coach Justin Kemp has not arrived as of Wednesday.

Chattogram had roped in Pakistani spinner Abrar Ahmed as a direct signing and bought Sri Lanka's Niroshan Dickwella and Angelo

Perera at the auction and post-auction, they confirmed Irish batter Paul Stirling, South Africa's Cameron Delport and Pakistan's Kamran Ghulam and Mirza Tahir Baig.

However, apart from Delport, Kamran and Mirza -- who themselves are yet to reach Dhaka

-- the rest have opted out.

Meanwhile, Noakhali's Sri Lankan recruit Kusal Mendis has been ruled out of the tournament owing to injury. Pakistani recruits Hassan Eisakhil and Haider Ali have arrived and the franchise is hopeful that a few more overseas players will join in Sylhet on Thursday.

No captains' photoshoot

BPL officials confirmed on Wednesday that there will be no captains' photoshoot before the tournament this season.

Officials also said heavy security measures have been put in place in Sylhet, where franchises are holding their final practice sessions ahead of the tournament opener.

Players remain upbeat

Nepali leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane, who last played in the BPL in 2019 and will represent Rajshahi, expressed optimism about his side's chances.

"The kind of potential our team is carrying, the local players have to step up. Here in Rajshahi Warriors, I find it amazing. I know most of the guys since we played against each other in the past as well. The team is shaping up nicely and they are all excited to give their best," he said. Meanwhile, Rangpur Riders' Khushdil Shah wants to replicate his last year's performance for the same team. "I have performed for every team I have played for [in BPL], and it is definitely lucky for me because I made my comeback to the Pakistan team after I performed well here last year. Inshallah, I will try to perform well this year as well and help my team win."

SHORT CORNER

Kohli breaks Tendulkar record on Vijay Hazare return

Virat Kohli marked his return to domestic cricket in emphatic fashion as he shattered a long-standing record on his first outing in the current Vijay Hazare Trophy season, while Rohit Sharma also made headlines with a blistering knock on Wednesday. After 15 years away from the competition, Kohli turned out for Delhi in the Vijay Hazare Trophy, with participation in domestic cricket made mandatory for players aiming to feature in the ODI World Cup. He made the return memorable by becoming the fastest batter to reach 16,000 runs in List A cricket, surpassing the previous record held by Sachin Tendulkar.



Arsenal reach League Cup semis

Kepa Arrizabalaga was Arsenal's League Cup quarter-final hero with the decisive penalty shoot-out save that completed a miserable evening for Crystal Palace defender Maxence Lacroix on Tuesday. Lacroix's own goal put Arsenal ahead with 10 minutes left at the Emirates Stadium before Marc Guehi snatched Palace's stoppage-time equaliser in the 1-1 draw.

Suryavanshi rewrites record books with 84-ball 190

Vaibhav Suryavanshi shattered multiple records on the opening day of the Vijay Hazare Trophy while playing for Bihar in the clash against Arunachal Pradesh in Ranchi on Wednesday. The prodigy smashed 190 runs off 84 deliveries with as many as 16 fours and 15 sixes at a strike rate of 226.19. In the process, Vaibhav broke AB de Villiers' world record, hitting the fastest 150 in List A cricket history.

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A LOOK BACK AT 2025

Plenty played, little settled

EKUSH TAPADER

At first glance, 2025 appeared to be a year of relentless activity for Bangladesh. Packed schedules and headline numbers hinted at momentum, but beneath the surface lay a more unsettling truth.

Statistically, it was a landmark year as the Tigers registered their highest-ever number of T20I wins. Yet the flip side told a grimmer story. They also suffered their second-highest number of defeats in the format, losing 14 matches, surpassed only by the 16 defeats in 2021. With Litton Das and company playing a record 30 fixtures in the shortest format, volume inflated both success and failure.

Four consecutive bilateral series wins -- including two against the Netherlands and Ireland -- offered brief encouragement, but a shock defeat to the UAE quickly punctured the optimism. Beyond the bilateral bubble, the Tigers once again fell into familiar patterns. While they have historically thrived in home series, even against the big guns, expectations continue to unravel as the moment they step into multi-

Cup, but those successes were largely bowler-driven and offered no lasting solution to the batting crisis. With the T20 World Cup looming in February-March and no international fixtures left, the focus now shifts to the Bangladesh Premier League -- a franchise tournament whose overall quality remains debated even within the corridors of Bangladesh Cricket Board.

A come-from-behind series win against Ireland late in the year did little to dispel a growing sense of complacency. The middle order's

sustained authority. They played six matches, winning three, losing two and drawing one, but the figures are misleading. Four of those Tests came against Zimbabwe and Ireland, teams ranked well below the Tigers. A clean sweep should have been routine, yet a shock defeat to Zimbabwe in April exposed lingering weaknesses.

Although Najmul Hossain Shanto's men later whitewashed Ireland, a series loss in Sri Lanka served as a timely reminder of the gap that remains. While the Test line-up appears more settled than the



struggles persisted, yet the team management appeared unmoved. Matters worsened when the selection process came under scrutiny, culminating in a public fallout between skipper Litton Das and chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu. The episode laid bare a lack of coordination and clarity. As the year closes, the T20 side remain clouded by more doubt than certainty.

In the 50-over arena, the slide continued unchecked, eroding a format that once defined the Tigers' rise. Languishing 10th in the rankings, Bangladesh showed no signs of revival. More alarmingly, direct qualification for the 2027 World Cup now hinges on a handful of high-stakes series next year.

Bangladesh lost seven of their 11 ODIs in 2025. Mehidy Hasan Miraz's leadership came under scrutiny, and the squad never looked settled. Constant reshuffling of the batting order and a shortage of consistent, match-winning performances reduced the side to a shadow of their former selves.

MARGINAL MEETING EXPECTATIONS

Even in Tests, where opportunities were limited and opposition modest, Bangladesh struggled to assert

white-ball sides, the overall quality of cricket remains underwhelming.

As 2025 draws to a close, the common thread across formats is not a lack of effort or opportunity, but a lack of direction. Bangladesh have played more, won some, lost plenty, and learned little when it mattered most. For casual followers, the numbers may hint at progress but the warning signs are hard to ignore, with the Tigers risking another year chasing momentum rather than shaping it.

POLITICS TRUMPED CRICKET AS PROTEAS ENDED DECADES OF HURT

International cricket in 2025 delivered major moments but was repeatedly overshadowed by politics. South Africa finally erased their 'bridesmaids' tag by winning the World Test Championship, India dominated white-ball cricket by claiming the men's Champions Trophy and the women's World Cup, while Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma retired from Test cricket. England's aggressive Bazball approach also unravelled during a disastrous Ashes tour of Australia.

***Read full story on The Daily Star website*

Be part of a Winning Team

Become our CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER (CPO)



Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC (AIBPLC), a leading Shariah-based Islamic financial institution in Bangladesh, is committed to excellence, innovation and sustainable growth. We believe our people are our greatest asset, and we are looking for a visionary HR leader to shape the future of our workforce. AIBPLC invites applications from suitably qualified, experienced and competent professionals for the position of **Chief People Officer (CPO)**.

Job Context

The Bank is looking for a competent Human Resources Professional who will play a crucial role in shaping the organization's human resources strategy and ensuring compliance with laws, rules and regulations.

Job Grade EVP - SEVP

Job Responsibilities

The CPO will be directly reporting to the Managing Director & CEO of the Bank and will be responsible to perform the following key responsibilities:

- Strategic HR Leadership:** Develop and implement HR policies that align with the bank's business objectives. The CPO will work hand in hand with the executive leadership team to ensure that the bank's workforce is agile, highly skilled, and aligned with both immediate operational priorities and future growth strategies.
- Talent Acquisition, Management & Manpower Budgeting:** Overseeing recruitment, onboarding, and retention strategies to attract top talent and ensure the implementation of Competency Development Program to create succession and build Talent Management Pipeline. Preparing short & long term Manpower forecast and HR Budget to translate the quantifiable headcount requirements and directing recruitment activities for ensuring that the best candidates are selected for each role.
- Employee Relations & Compliance:** Ensuring adherence to labor laws, banking regulations, and ethical HR practices and serving as the primary point of contact for employee relations matters, addressing conflicts, grievances, and disciplinary issues.
- Performance Management & Organizational Development:** Design and execute appraisal systems to enhance employee productivity and develop strategies to foster a strong, service-oriented culture to ensure continuous learning and skill enhancement throughout the organization.
- Training & Development:** Conducting Training Needs Analysis (TNA) to ensure employees remain skilled and support leadership development programs to build a pipeline of future bank leaders.
- Compensation & Benefits:** Develop and manage competitive compensation and benefits programs to attract, retain, and motivate talent by overseeing payroll and other benefits administration to ensure accuracy and timeliness and reviewing in regular intervals.
- HR Operations & Systems:** Manage HR processes, automation, and reporting for efficiency in day to day HR services provided to the employees and stakeholders.
- People Engagement & Culture:** Foster a positive work environment and drive employee engagement programs and enhancing external branding image through Job Fair participation, Internship Programs, provide guest lectures in career programs and sponsor relevant programs.
- HR Analytics & Reporting:** Lead HR analytics and reporting efforts, providing insights that guide decision-making and enhance HR processes. Ensure that data-driven decisions align with organizational goals.
- Operational Excellence & HR Transformation:** Beyond strategic planning, the CPO is also tasked with ensuring that HR operations are efficient and modernized. This might involve leveraging technology to automate routine HR processes, streamlining operations and implementing data-driven decision-making practices.

Job Requirements

- Postgraduation or Master's degree preferably in Economics, Finance or Business Administration from any UGC approved local or reputable foreign universities with no third class or equivalent in any certification. Diploma in HRM, CHRMP, CHRG, PGDHRM or any other professional degree holders or certified HR professionals will get the preference.
- Minimum 15 years of banking experience with a mix of minimum 3 years' experience in senior HR Managerial and Leadership role, preferably as CHRO, CPO, Deputy CHRO or Head of HRD.
- Age Limit: Not exceeding 55 years as of the application deadline.

Application Procedure

Interested candidates are requested to send your applications in a sealed envelope addressed to the **Managing Director & CEO, Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC, Head Office, Al-Arafah Tower, 63, Purana Paltan, Dhaka** along with detailed Curriculum Vitae (CV), cover letter outlining suitability for the role, copies of academic and professional credentials and a recent passport size photograph.

Application Deadline | 11 January 2026

Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

The Bank reserves the right to accept or reject any application without assigning any reason.

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