

HC questions BCB over women crickets' safety

SPORTS REPORTER

The High Court yesterday issued a rule questioning the inaction and failure of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and other authorities in ensuring a safe, harassment-free and gender-sensitive environment for women cricketers.

In the rule, the court asked the government and BCB officials to explain why the cricket board's failure should not be declared "unlawful and against public interest". While the rule remains pending, the court directed BCB to implement an anti-sexual harassment policy in line with the guidelines laid down in a previous judgment and to submit a report on the implementation of the interim order.

The HC bench of Justice Ahmed Sohel and Justice Fatema Anwar passed the order following a writ petition filed by former national shooter Sabrina Sultana, seeking necessary directives.

BCB had formed a three-member independent inquiry committee—later expanded to five members—to investigate sexual harassment claims by former national women's team captain Jahanara Alam against coach Manjurul Islam. The report was handed over to BCB president Aminul Islam yesterday.



Bangladesh U-19 Women's team celebrate a convincing 2-0 win over India in the SAFF U-19 Women's Championship in Pokhara yesterday. The defending champions struck twice in the first half -- through captain Arpita Biswas and Alpi Akter -- to remain perfect with two wins from two matches in the group stage. The victory keeps Bangladesh top of the table and firmly on course for a place in the final as the young ones bid to retain regional honours.

PHOTO: BFF

SHORT CORNER

Robiul, Sharmin off to India

Shooter Robiul Islam and coach Sharmin Akter left Dhaka on Monday afternoon for India to take part in the Asian Shooting Championships, scheduled to be held in New Delhi from February 2 to 14, after uncertainty over their participation was finally resolved.

From Mustafizur's IPL removal to global cricket turmoil: What next?

The spark that lit this wildfire wasn't a war, a border clash, or even a match. It was the quiet exclusion of Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman from an Indian Premier League franchise in early January -- a decision that, at the time, felt like just another cricketing call. But that single move slowly snowballed into something far bigger, now culminating in Pakistan's decision to boycott their T20 World Cup match against India on February 15 in Sri Lanka. What began as a controversial removal has transformed into a full-blown geopolitical and sporting standoff.

'Insulted' Benzema seeks to switch Saudi teams

Striker Karim Benzema, who is at odds with his club Al-Ittihad, has entered into negotiations to join rivals Al-Hilal, the Saudi Arabian league leaders, a source told AFP on Monday. "Negotiations are underway between the parties: Al-Hilal would like to sign Benzema for the remaining six months of his contract with Al-Ittihad, but the player's agent is demanding a one-and-a-half-year contract," the source told AFP.

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Ranjit Das no more

STAR SPORTS DESK

Legendary footballer Ranjit Das, one of Bangladesh's greatest goalkeepers, passed away early this morning at a Sylhet city hospital following a cardiac arrest. He was 94.

Das, a towering figure in pre-independence football, represented the East Pakistan football team from 1955 to 1961. He leaves behind his wife, four daughters, one son, and countless admirers who mourn his loss.

His funeral was held at Sylhet's Talibandar Crematorium in the evening.

A goalkeeper par excellence, Das played for Ispahani Club, Azad Sporting Club, and Mohammedan before Bangladesh's liberation. He also served as a coach for the East Pakistan youth team and Azad Sporting Club.

His contributions to the sport earned him the National Sports Award, cementing his place as a legend in Bangladeshi football history.

Will Taskin retain A-plus status?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is in the process of finalising its central contracts, but doubts remain over whether any player will be retained in the A-plus category this time -- particularly Taskin Ahmed, who has not played Test cricket for some time despite previously being an all-format fast bowler.

Taskin last featured in a Test in Kingston, West Indies, in November 2024. He missed three Test series thereafter: the home series against Zimbabwe in April last year, the away Tests against Sri Lanka in June, and the series against Ireland in November.

In fact, Taskin's red-ball future remains uncertain, as he did not play any Tests last year, with any potential return dependent on further medical assessments due to his injury history.

"We have spoken to Taskin and asked him to rethink his longer-format commitments. His doctors in England had a similar assessment," BCB chief physician Debashish Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

"He has not been given a specific timeframe for a return to the longer version. When he feels ready, he will play, but for now, he has been advised not to."

"If he can play the shorter versions seamlessly, then we will think about his Test commitments. We have a five-



day tournament and then the BCL [Bangladesh Cricket League], so we will see. He wants to play all formats, but we have to see whether his body allows it. He has had Achilles issues, as well as knee and shoulder problems, so it's not just workload -- we have to focus on injuries."

Bangladesh named 22 players in central contract list last year. Board sources claim that six players are set to be added this time, taking the total to 27. Mahmudullah

Riyad will not be part of the list, having already retired from all formats.

Whether Shakib Al Hasan features in the contracts will depend on discussions between the player and senior BCB officials. One official claimed that the selectors did not propose Shakib's name to the board, although the current delay is believed to be linked to ongoing talks regarding his status.

There have been suggestions that the A plus category may be scrapped altogether, but BCB officials have clarified that the category will remain.

"We are working on it and will announce it shortly. We have categories A plus, A, B, C, D and a non-contract category. If no one is placed in A-plus, it doesn't mean the category is abolished," an official close to the development said.

"If the selectors and the board feel there are no A-plus category players, they simply won't name anyone there."

Pakistan Cricket Board last year did not retain any player in the A-plus category. Meanwhile, reports suggest Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is considering doing away with the category altogether after Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma stepped away from Tests and T20Is.

With Taskin the only three-format player last year, it remains to be seen whether BCB adopts a similar stance to PCB and BCCI.

BFL MID-TERM WINDOW Surge in foreign signings

SPORTS REPORTER

Foreign footballers dominated Bangladesh Football League's mid-term transfer window, which concluded on Saturday.

Across the window, seven clubs completed 49 new signings, excluding FIFA-suspended Bashundhara Kings, Abahani and Mohammedan. Of those additions, 20 were foreign players -- seven Pakistanis, five Guineans, three each from Bhutan and Ghana, and one each from Brazil and Russia. The remaining 29 signings were local players, with around 10 switching clubs from within the league.

Brothers Union, currently seventh in the 10-team standings, brought in 16 players in total, featuring five from Pakistan and four from Guinea, after releasing seven footballers -- three from Nepal, one Brazilian, one Ivorian and two locals.

Title challengers Fortis FC made only two additions, signing goalkeeper Nayeem Mia and Bhutanese winger Dawa Tshering. Rahmatganj MFS, meanwhile, recruited Ghanaian striker Ernest Boateng to bolster their bid to close the gap on table toppers and five-time champions Kings, who also released four players.

At the lower end of the table, PWD and Arambagh also moved to reinforce their squads in the fight for survival. PWD signed two Pakistani players along with one each from Bhutan, Ghana, Brazil and Russia, in addition to six local recruits.

Arambagh added Ghanaian forward Kwame Kizito and seven local players, while mid-table Bangladesh Police signed five footballers, including Bhutan's Sherub Dorji. Fakirerpool Young Men's Club were also active, bringing in six players, among them a Guinean forward.



PHOTO: ICC

A swashbuckling 84-run knock by Darwish Rasooli powered Afghanistan to a 61-run victory over Scotland, who replaced Bangladesh in the ICC T20 World Cup 2026, in the opening warm-up fixture in Bengaluru on Monday. Rasooli's 46-ball innings featured seven fours and five sixes, helping Afghanistan post 184-6. The 2024 semifinalists then bowled Scotland out for 123 in 19.3 overs.

Arsenal move closer to title as rivals stumble

AGENCIES

Arsenal moved a step closer to ending a 22-year wait for the Premier League title after a flawless weekend saw the Gunners extend their lead to six points.

A commanding 4-0 win at Leeds quelled doubts over Mikel Arteta's side succumbing to the pressure of being favourites, with Martin Zubimendi's header and a Karl Darlow own goal giving Arsenal a 2-0 half-time advantage.

Viktor Gyokeres and Gabriel Jesus added late goals, silencing criticism over the team's goal-scoring reliance on set-pieces. "We really wanted to show how much we wanted it, and I think we've certainly done that," Arteta said.

Manchester City and Aston Villa faltered as Arsenal surged ahead.

City, appearing unsettled despite a significant squad overhaul, surrendered a 2-0 half-time lead to draw 2-2 at Tottenham, with Dominic Solanke striking twice.

Villa, seven points adrift, lost 1-0 at home to 10-man Brentford, highlighting the gap between the top two and the chasing pack.

The battle for Champions League places remained fierce. Manchester United staged a dramatic comeback at



Old Trafford, overturning a 2-0 deficit to beat Fulham 3-2 thanks to Benjamin Sesko's late winner, lifting them above Chelsea and Liverpool into fourth.

Michael Carrick described the rollercoaster victory as capturing the emotion that makes fans "love it so much." Chelsea and Liverpool, meanwhile, both secured vital wins to stay in contention, keeping the top-five race tense.

Newcastle suffered heartbreak at Anfield, losing 3-1 to Liverpool despite Anthony Gordon's early strike. Hugo Ekitike's quickfire double and Florian Wirtz's goal showcased Liverpool's attacking firepower, with Ekitike now on 15 goals this season.

Wirtz, after a slow start at the club, has



scored six times in 10 games since his £100 million move from Bayern Leverkusen, proving Liverpool's summer recruitment is beginning to pay dividends.

Arsenal, in contrast, looked steady and composed, seemingly determined not to repeat the late season collapses of recent years.

With rivals dropping points and their own form peaking at the right moment, the Gunners appear poised to secure the title that has eluded them for over two decades.

The league's final stretch promises drama, but after a weekend of emphatic performances and slipping competitors, the question is no longer if Arsenal can win it, but when.