



Bangladesh players jog during a training session yesterday ahead of today's opening match of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup against Laos. (Inset) Eyes will be as much on the goalkeepers as outfield players, with Ashraf Islam Rana and Rasel Mahmud Liton the first two choices between the sticks.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



## First teams add fire

SPORTS REPORTER



Football lovers across Bangladesh were engulfed by excitement when it was announced that a team from Brazil would take part in the 2nd Bangabandhu Gold Cup in 1999. However, spectators were shocked after watching the side's ridiculous performance in their opening match against the Thailand under-23 team.

After that, Brazil suffered a defeat to the South Korea U-20 team and were knocked out from the group stages.

The Bangabandhu Gold Cup faced a crisis to maintain its standards right from the inaugural edition in 1997. That crisis continued up till the fourth rendition of the competition, where all the participating teams aside from Bangladesh were U-23 sides as Nepal, Maldives and Sri Lanka sent Olympic squads in a bid to ready them for the 2016 South Asian Games while Malaysia sent a club named Felda United.

However, the scenario is different this time as most nations, with the exception of the Philippines, sent their first teams in an effort to clinch the title of the 5th Bangabandhu Gold Cup, which is set to get underway today with Palestine, Philippines, Tajikistan, Nepal, Laos and hosts Bangladesh vying for glory.

Palestine are the top ranked side at 100 in FIFA rankings and come into the tournament with 13 players who were a part of the squad that faced Qatar in a FIFA friendly on September 11 among the 30-member preliminary squad. Meanwhile, Tajikistan -- 120th in FIFA rankings -- also brought 13 first team players in their 30-member preliminary squad.

Laos brought 15 footballers who took on the UAE in an international friendly on September 11 while Nepal arrive having only made two changes to the team that played the SAFF Suzuki Cup last month.

The Philippines are the only team currently without any first team players but manager Josef Mari Malinay informed that

### FIXTURES

Date	Match	Venue
Group A: Palestine, Nepal, Tajikistan		
Group B: Bangladesh, Philippines, Laos		
Oct 1	Bangladesh v Laos	Sylhet
Oct 2	Nepal v Tajikistan	Sylhet
Oct 3	Philippines v Laos	Sylhet
Oct 4	Tajikistan v Palestine	Sylhet
Oct 5	Bangladesh v Philippine	Sylhet
Oct 6	Palestine v Nepal	Sylhet
Oct 9	Semi1: Winner B v Runner-up A	Cox's Bazar
Oct 10	Semi2: Winner A v Runner-up B	Cox's Bazar
Oct 12	Final: Winner Semi 1 v Winner Semi 2	Dhaka

## Hosts' chance to bounce back

Looking for a win against Laos in Bangabandhu Gold Cup opener today

SPORTS REPORTER



Following disappointment in last month's SAFF Championship, Bangladesh now seek redemption by confirming a semifinal berth in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup with the hosts set to take on Laos in the tournament opener at the Sylhet District Stadium today.

Maasranga TV and Nagorik TV will telecast the match, which gets underway at 6:30pm, live from the venue.

The booters gained prominence after qualifying for the Asian Games's knockout stage for the first time and expectations were high when they put up strong performances in the SAFF Championship's first two group matches. However the men in red and green fell short against Nepal and were subsequently eliminated from the group stages of the regional championship for the fourth consecutive time.

The team now have an opportunity to revitalise their spirits following by ensuring a spot in the semifinals of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup but to do that, Bangladesh need to start the tournament well by overcoming Laos, a team they never beat in their previous two meetings.

Bangladesh may, however, take inspira-

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BANGLADESH COACH JAMIE DAY



"Who is better, it can be learnt after 90 minutes but the hosts are always a good side but we are also a competitive side and we will be trying our best till the last minute."

LAOS COACH MIKE WONG MUN HEN



tion from the good fight they put up against Laos in a FIFA friendly in March. The booters came from two goals down to play out a 2-2 draw in that match.

"Laos are a good side but not as good as they seem because we only conceded the two early goals due to our silly mistakes. I recall that I made one mistake to award them a penalty. At the moment I think we have the capacity to beat Laos," midfielder Masuk Mia Jonny said after a training ses-

sion at the Sylhet BKSP yesterday morning. "We were disappointed after the Nepal defeat but that's past and we don't want to look back; rather we look forward to doing something better in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup," the former Mohammedan midfielder added.

Bangladesh coach Jamie Day only had 10 days to prepare for this tournament but he still believes that the team are ready for the tournament as they trained ahead of the Asian Games and SAFF Championship.

"It is a new tournament. We added a few new players to the squad, who are mostly young, to add pace in the attacking line-up. We can take confidence from the SAFF Championship, it's disappointing we didn't qualify for the semifinals but we played three matches well. Now, we want to use that in the Gold Cup. We are going to go out there and give it our very best go to try and get into the semifinals," said the 38-year-old English coach at a pre-tournament briefing at a hotel in Sylhet yesterday.

"We know the first match of the tournament is like a knockout tie so we need to go there and win. However, the match is going to be tough because they have a good coach and good players but we are looking forward to it nevertheless because we have good preparation," Day added.

The coach is set to bring two changes to the squad due to the absences of injured Saad Uddin and Atiqur Rahman Fahad.

Laos coach Mike Wong Mun Hen did not speak about grabbing a victory directly but he did hint that they would fight till the final whistle.

"Who is better can be learnt after 90 minutes but the hosts are always a good side. However, we are also a competitive side and we will try our best till the last minute," said Wong.

nine senior team members, who were preparing in Qatar for a match against Oman, would join their 11-member squad today.

"Our first team has only two U-23 players. Our first target is to prepare other assignments," Palestine coach Nouredine Ali said. "Our second target is to win the tournament."

"Laos are a young team which has been preparing for the upcoming ASEAN Suzuki Cup. We played against Bangladesh before but they are under a new English coach, who has certainly studied us. The match against Bangladesh will be tough but we'll try to put up a good performance," explained Laos coach Mike Wong Mun Hen.

Meanwhile, Philippines' manager Malinay admitted that they brought their second team because he wants to see how the young players perform ahead of the ASEAN Suzuki Cup and Asian Cup. However, they are still optimistic about winning every match as the players are eager to show their talent.

Nepal and Tajikistan were unable to attend the briefing following their late arrivals in Sylhet.

With the participation of first teams, this edition of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup is expected to be a much more competitive affair than before.

## Rashid topples Shakib from the perch

AGENCIES, Dubai

After his excellent performance at the Asia Cup 2018, Afghanistan spin sensation Rashid Khan has become the No.1-ranked all-rounder in one-day internationals topping Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan in the ICC ODI rankings.

Rashid was sensational with the ball, and did well with the bat in the Asia Cup. He topped the bowling charts, picking up 10 wickets from five matches, and also scored 87 runs at an average of 43.50.

Afghanistan were outstanding, beating Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in the group stage and then losing to Pakistan and Bangladesh in last-over finishes in the Super Fours before tying their game against India.

For his efforts in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Rashid has gained six slots and earned 67 points, which put him on top of the ICC ODI all-rounder rankings. Rashid's teammate Mohammad Nabi also gained one slot to reach the third position after aggregating 134 runs and taking five wickets.

## India, Sri Lanka crush lightweights

SPORTS REPORTER



With eight teams battling for glory in the U-19 Asia Cup, a platform for the continent's next generation to rise to prominence, The Daily Star will keep an account of their day to day performances in a nutshell. In the two fixtures of the day, favourites India posted yet another three hundred-plus score followed by yet another massive win. Meanwhile, Sri Lanka continued their fine form with a 10-wicket win against Hong Kong.

### HIGHLIGHTS

● India posted 354 for six against the United Arab Emirates, which is the highest total in the tournament so far. They won by a massive 227-run margin, which was almost double UAE's 127 all out in 33.5 overs.

● Two Indian batsmen scored centuries -- Anuj Rawat (102) and Devdutt Padikkal (121) -- while their left-arm spinner Siddharth Desai took six for 24.

● Hong Kong put up only 56 all out in 33.1 overs against Sri Lanka in the day's other game, which was worse than the 78 they scored in their tournament opener against Pakistan. Sri Lanka faced reached the target in 9.2 overs without losing a wicket.

● It took only the opening pair of Nipun Dananjaya (35 not out) and Nishan Madushka (21) to seal the victory with 244 balls to spare after Shashika Dulshan decimated Hong Kong's innings with a five-wicket haul.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: 354 for six (Rawat 102, Padikkal 121, Shah 45; Sharafu 2-46)  
UAE: 127 all out in 33.5 overs (Mirza 41, John 24, Nawaz 22; Desai 6-24)

Result: India won by 227 runs  
HONG KONG: 56 all out in 33.1 overs (Gorawara 10, Rana 9, Shah 4; Dulshan 5-19)

SRI LANKA: 58 in 9.2 overs (Perera 35, Fernando 21; Rana 0-13, Hassan 0-16)  
Result: Sri Lanka won by 10 wickets.

## Bangladesh put record 17 goals past Pakistan

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh registered their biggest margin of victory in women's football with a 17-0 thrashing of Pakistan in their first match of the SAFF Women's U-18 Championship fixture at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu last night.

The massive victory, which is a record for Bangladesh football at any level -- senior or age-group -- catapulted them into the semifinals and put them ahead of Nepal on goal difference on top of Group B.

Nepal had beaten Pakistan 12-0 in the first match of the championship on Friday. Bangladesh will go into their group deciding match against Nepal tomorrow full of confidence and with a superior goal-margin.

Bangladesh had beaten Pakistan by 14-0 goals in the SAFF U-15 Women's Championship at the same venue just over a month ago. Hence a big-margin victory was expected from the girls in red and green, however, the number of goals and how easy those goals came might have even caught themselves by surprise.

Golam Rabbani Choton's charges threatened the opposition goal right from the word go and kept the ball firmly in and around the opposition's penalty box for the entirety of the match. The strategy was simple -- get a long-ball in from the middle or manoeuvre it through the flanks as quickly as possible before finding a forward to put the finishing touches.

Striker Sirat Jahan Shopna was the most punishing of the lot as she bagged seven goals while winger Marzia Akter, who started the onslaught



Marzia Akter hugs Sirat Jahan Shopna after one of Bangladesh's goals against Pakistan at the Changlimithang Stadium yesterday. The two players shared 11 goals among them in the 17-0 drubbing.

PHOTO: BFF

in the seventh minute, ended with four goals to her name. Defender Sheuly Azim scored twice from the spot while skipper Mishrat Jahan Mousumi, Akhi Khatun, Krishna Rani Sarkar and Tohura Khatun bagged a goal each.

Having opened the scoring in the seventh minute, the girls in red and green went into the break with an 8-0 lead. They had to wait 13 min-

utes for their first goal of the second half, but then it became a one-way traffic once again.

The commanding win will boost Bangladesh's morale going into the semifinals as they would want to erase the memory of the final defeat against India in the under-15 tournament here in August. 13 players of the under-15 squad are in the under-18 squad.