

TSPORTS

World Cup Qualifiers  
Kazakhstan vs  
Finland  
Live from 8:00 pm  
England vs Hungary

Live from 12:45 am  
(Wednesday)

TEN 1

World Cup Qualifiers  
Portugal vs  
Luxembourg

Live from 12:45 am  
(Wednesday)

TEN 3

World Cup Qualifiers  
Sweden vs Greece  
Live from 12:45 am  
(Wednesday)

(Wednesday)

SONY SIX  
World Cup Qualifiers  
Denmark vs Austria  
Live from 12:45 am  
(Wednesday)



## 'SIGN OF A GREAT TEAM'

AFP, Milan



Kylian Mbappe fired France to Nations League glory on Sunday after netting the winner which completed a comeback from a goal down to beat Spain 2-1 in Milan.

Mbappe struck with 10 minutes remaining to win the title for world champions France after Karim Benzema had levelled just two minutes after Mikel Oyarzabal put Spain into a 64th-minute lead.

The win will ease some of the pain created by an early exit from Euro 2020 at the hands of Switzerland and highlighted just how powerful France are going forward.

"I really wanted to win a trophy with France, and now it's done," said Benzema, who returned to the France fold ahead of the Euro, to M6.

"We showed strength of character, because this team is very strong, never gives up and we have proven

it today.

"It is the sign of a great team not to panic, to be patient and to wait for the right opportunity."

Les Bleus came out on top of a match at the San Siro which came to life after Oyarzabal slid home the opener.

As well as the two goals from their superstar attackers, France had

A previously niggly contest suddenly got going in the 63rd minute when a sweeping French passing move started by Benjamin Pavard ended with Theo Hernandez smashing a first-time finish against the crossbar.

Just seconds later Spain took the lead through Oyarzabal, who swept home a precision left-foot finish

first chipping way over with Simon off his line in the 68th minute and then hitting a tame shot at the Athletic Bilbao goalkeeper after being set up by Benzema.

Deschamps heaped praise on Benzema after the once-exiled forward played a key role in France's triumph.

"Karim is a crucial player and he has proved over two matches that he has very obvious talent, it's there for all to see," Deschamps told reporters.

"He has improved in different areas, he's clinical, he plays his part in the build-up."

Spain coach Luis Enrique said he was happy with his side despite them coming up short.

"I know that we were able to win against European champions and play almost even with the world champions so for players and the team that is all good," Enrique told reporters.

"The important thing is that the team maintains its personality and will to win."



"We showed strength of character, because this team is very strong, never gives up and we have proven it today."

FRANCE FORWARD KARIM BENZEMA

other opportunities to score through Mbappe before a frantic finish in which Spain launched an assault on the French goal.

Didier Deschamps can thank Hugo Lloris the match didn't go into extra-time after the France captain pulled off a fine stoppage time save to deny Yeremi Pino a late leveller.

to the delight of the Spanish fans gathered behind that goal.

However no sooner had those supporters stopped celebrating than France were level through Benzema, who curled home an outstanding strike after being fed by Mbappe.

Mbappe then had two chances in quick succession to put France head,

## Tigers warm up against Sri Lanka today

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh are all set to get into the groove for the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup as the Tigers will be taking part in the first of the two official warm-up games against Sri Lanka at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium Nursery 2 ground, in Abu Dhabi today.

The match is set to begin at 8:00pm Bangladesh time.

T20I skipper Mahmudullah Riyad, who sat out Bangladesh's unofficial warm-up game against Oman A last Friday, will also be rested for today's game against Sri Lanka.

"Riyad is nursing a slight back pain.

the team in Abu Dhabi after completing his Indian Premier League stint for his side Rajasthan Royals.

Shakib Al Hasan, however, is yet to join the Tigers as the star all-rounder featured for Kolkata Knight Riders in their eliminator game against Royal Challengers Bangalore in Sharjah yesterday.

After the first official warm-up game against Sri Lanka, the Tigers will then face Ireland on October 14 at the same venue before beginning their T20 World Cup journey.

Earlier, Bangladesh registered a thumping 60-run win over Oman A team on Friday in an unofficial warm-up game where the Tigers had a good outing with both bat and ball.



And as we have back-to-back games in the World Cup, we are not taking any risks and will probably rest him against Sri Lanka tomorrow [Tuesday]. But there is nothing to be concerned about. As he is a seasoned player, hopefully he will recover with a bit of a rest and be prepared for the World Cup with a few practice sessions," said BCB selector Habibur Bashar, who is with the side in the UAE.

Earlier, Mahmudullah and his troops reached Abu Dhabi from Oman and had undergone their first training session at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium yesterday. Left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman joined

Tigers' head coach Russell Domingo to adapt to the conditions in the Middle East where the pitches are expected to be sporting. The Tigers' preparation for the mega event was heavily criticised as their last two home series against Australia and New Zealand were played in questionable, slow and low Mirpur pitches that provided little to no help to the batters.

## 'We have the ability to beat Nepal'

Midfielder Sohel Rana played in the last three SAFF Championships and experienced many pressure situations, including two must-win matches in 2013 and 2018. The 26-year-old talked to The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman, sharing his past experience and thoughts on Wednesday's do-or-die match against Nepal.

**The Daily Star (DS):** Is it possible to overcome the challenge from Nepal?

**Sohel Rana (SR):** The Maldives match is now past. We are looking forward to the Nepal match which is like a final for us. We, all players, are mentally strong enough to overcome the Nepal challenge and gearing up accordingly.

**DS:** Compared to the previous edition, how strong is the current squad of Nepal?

**SR:** Nepal are definitely a good side and are not easy to beat. But, we believe we can perform better against Nepal and we must play against them to win. They are also sharp in counter attack.

**DS:** Nepal need only a draw and Bangladesh a win. Who will be under pressure?

**SR:** I think both teams are under pressure to deliver because Nepal do not want to lose the game while we want to win it. Nepal are likely to play defensively while we will probably play an attacking game. So it is also going to be a mind game.

**DS:** Scoring goals have been a headache for Bangladesh. On whom the team bank to get goals?

**SR:** Coach Oscar Bruzon has been working in training on how to ensure goals and what will be the positions of the forwards. So, we are hopeful to get goals from anyone.

**DS:** Midfielders could not perform well against the Maldives. Can they bounce back against Nepal?

**SR:** I think the midfielders performed well against the Maldives for a while before the opponents took control over the midfield. Yes, our midfielders played well against Sri Lanka and India.

We are now focused on the Nepal match and everyone has realised the importance of the Nepal match. If we can carry out the game plan well, then we can hope to win against them as we all are really motivated to deliver.

**DS:** Will the big break before the Nepal match give

you any edge?

**SR:** Definitely, the rest will give us a big advantage because we were really tired after playing three matches in seven days. After a two-day rest and scheduled three days of practise, I think we can play against Nepal afresh.

**DS:** You missed the support of the expatriate fans against the Maldives. Do you think their support will play a good role behind your performance against Nepal?

**SR:** We are hoping that the spectators will turn up again like they did in the matches against Sri Lanka and India. I think they continue their support from the gallery and it helps us play good football as well as create pressure on Nepal players.



## Can Bangladesh overcome the odds?

ANISUR RAHMAN from Male



The fate of Bangladesh in the ongoing SAFF Championship was no longer in their hands after losing 2-0 to Maldives in their third and penultimate match of the group stage, but it all changed on Sunday night after India beat Nepal 1-0 to keep their and Bangladesh's hope of qualifying to the final.

Bangladesh and India find themselves in a must-win situation against Nepal and hosts Maldives, respectively, in their fourth and final match of the group stage to feature in the final on October 16 at Maldives National Stadium in Male. On the other hand, a draw is good enough for both Nepal and Maldives.

For Bangladesh, a do-or-die scenario is nothing new as they had found themselves in such a situation in eight out of the previous 12 editions of the tournament.

In those eight occasions, Bangladesh had succumbed to pressure five times, including the last edition of the tournament in Dhaka; while one of the three instances of success included their debut appearance in 1995 in which Bangladesh had beaten Nepal 2-0 to advance to the semifinals.

During the fourth edition of the tournament in Goa in 1999, the men in red and green thrashed Pakistan 4-0 to emerge as group

### SAFF CHAMPIONSHIP MALDIVES 2021 (POINTS TABLE)

TEAM	MATCHES	W	D	L	GD	PTS
MALDIVES	3	2	0	1	+2	6
NEPAL	3	2	0	1	+1	6
INDIA	3	1	2	0	+1	5
BANGLADESH	3	1	1	1	-1	4
SRI LANKA	4	0	1	3	-3	1



champions on goal difference in a three-team group.

The last time Bangladesh had crossed such a hurdle was in the 8th SAFF Championship in Dhaka in 2009, where they managed to beat Sri Lanka 2-1 to secure a spot in the semifinals.

Prior 2009, Bangladesh had failed twice in attempting to turn

around such a tight corner, needing outright victories in both cases. First, during 1997 in Nepal, where Bangladesh surrendered 0-3 against India, followed by a 0-1 defeat against hosts Sri Lanka during the

tournament's 7th edition in 2008.

Post-2009, however, Bangladesh have been miserable in the last four editions of the tournaments in which they were knocked out three times -- during 2011, 2013 and 2018 in India, Nepal and Dhaka, respectively -- in the face of pressure-cooker, must-win situations.

In the ninth edition in Delhi, the men in red and green went all out against Maldives in the last group match to play the semifinals but were eliminated instead, having suffered a horrible 1-3 loss to the Islanders.

In the very next edition held in Kathmandu, Bangladesh again found themselves needing no less than a win but despite taking a lead against Pakistan, they eventually lost 1-2.

The latest setback happened in Dhaka in 2018, where the hosts had a great start in the game's 12th edition with a back-to-back win over Bhutan and Pakistan, and needed just a draw against Nepal to play the final after a long wait of five tournaments. However, Nepal had other ideas and handed a convincing 2-0 defeat to Bangladesh, who were eliminated again, but on the virtue of goal difference this time around.

Now, it remains to be seen whether the men in red and green can overcome the challenge of Nepal to play the final of the regional football extravaganza after 16 long years.



(L) Neymar got into a heated exchange with Yerri Mina as Brazil dropped first points of their World Cup qualifying campaign in a goalless draw against Colombia in Barranquilla on Sunday. (R) Lautaro Martinez celebrates scoring Argentina's third goal with Rodrigo De Paul during their 3-0 win against Uruguay in Buenos Aires. De Paul scored the second goal after Lionel Messi had opened the scoring for the Albiceleste. Despite the win, Argentina are in second position on the table with 22 points from 10 matches, six behind leaders Brazil.

PHOTO: REUTERS