



To be a cricketer, two things are very important for a girl in our country. One is family support and the other is discipline.

Former Bangladesh skipper  
**Salma Khatun**

The ICC Women's Cricket World Cup was held for the first time in England in 1973, two years before the men's showpiece event was first held.

Bangladesh will make their debut this year which will be the 12th edition overall.

Bangladesh go into the tournament sixth in ODI ranking, above West Indies and Pakistan. Australia sit on top of the chart.

Starting on March 4, the month-long tournament will feature 31 games played across six venues in New Zealand.

There are reserve days for semifinals and the final. The trophy will be shared only if the final is unable to be played even on the reserve day.

Due to Covid, teams will be allowed to field nine players and two substitutes -- even from within their management team -- who will not be allowed to bat or bowl.

Unlike the Men's World Cup final in 2019, where the winner was decided by a boundary count after the super over was also tied, unlimited Super Overs can be used here until a clear winner emerges.

# A golden chance to engender INSPIRATION

“We are trying to deliver our best here. Just want to motivate and encourage the young cricketers, who are eagerly waiting for us to do well here.”

Nigar had said in an interview with the International Cricket Council (ICC).

NABID YEASIN

When the Nigar Sultana-led Bangladesh women's cricket team march onto the University Oval in Dunedin to play South Africa in the wee hours of Saturday, a brand new chapter in the country's cricketing history will commence by marking the Tigresses' first-ever appearance in the ODI World Cup.

The 12th edition of the mega event, which already began with the hosts New Zealand taking on the West Indies currently in Mount Maunganui, has a mixed bag of various challenges on offer for the inexperienced Tigresses. More importantly, however, with it arrives the opportunity to make an impactful statement amid global exposure.

But results aside, for a crop of players who had to tackle the conservative mindset of the society and, in some cases, their families' restrictions in order to make it to this grand stage, it will be a glorious opportunity to inspire more girls to take up the sport in future. And that's what skipper Nigar intends to accomplish as well.

“We are trying to deliver our best here. Just want to motivate and encourage the young cricketers, who are eagerly waiting for us to do well here,” Nigar had said in an interview with the International Cricket Council (ICC).

However, for the only 42 ODI-old Bangladesh, the task will be no less daunting since apart from venturing into their maiden ODI World Cup, this will be their first tour to New Zealand -- a place their male compatriots encountered the harshest challenges over the years. In fact, this is the first time that Nigar and Co are set to face the vastly experienced Australia, England, New Zealand and the

## BANGLADESH WOMEN'S TEAM KEY STATS IN ODIs

211 for nine against Pakistan in 2019 is Bangladesh's highest team total.



60 all out against South Africa in 2012 is their lowest team total.

With 893 runs and 45 wickets, Rumana Ahmed is the highest run-getter and highest wicket-taker for Bangladesh.

75 by Salma Khatun and Rumana Ahmed both against India in 2013 is the highest individual score by a player.

Bangladesh players have scored 23 half centuries.

Rumana Ahmed's 15 catches is also the most number of catches by a player in the side.

Fargana Hoque scored seven half centuries, most by any one in the team.

West Indies.

And although Bangladesh enter the tournament ranked sixth -- above the likes of Pakistan and the Windies -- in the ICC ODI rankings, this bit of statistics should not be overly read into as their ratings had escalated due to a three-match ODI series win over a feeble Zimbabwe recently.

Nevertheless, the ranking boost aided the Tigresses to land into the mega event after the World Cup Qualifier was halted midway due to Covid upsurge last year.

But Bangladesh fans can afford to buckle up with excitement as the likes of Jahanara Alam, Salma Khatun and Rumana Ahmed are definitely no strangers when it comes to punching above their weights. Cases in point: their recent win over Pakistan in the World Cup Qualifier and their Women's Twenty20 Asia Cup triumph by beating India in 2018.

Looking back to 1999 when Bangladesh's men's cricket team stunned all in their inaugural World Cup, with wins over Scotland and cricketing powerhouse Pakistan, it had instilled a great amount of belief in the following generations of players.

Now, arguably, a similar opportunity lies in front of the Tigresses. Even a few acts of bravery from the 'Tigresses' ranks, like Sharmin Akhter's fighting 81-run knock against defending champions England in the warm-up, could help lift the spirit of the nation in the upcoming days.

## ‘A stepping stone for Bangladesh women’s cricket’

It took a long time for the Bangladesh women's national cricket team to qualify for the ICC ODI Women's World Cup. But now, the Tigresses, led by Nigar Sultana, are all set for their maiden World Cup appearance in New Zealand. Former Bangladesh



pacer Monjurul Islam, who is the only selector and also the team manager of the women's national team, is confident that the Tigresses can make their maiden World Cup memorable. The 42-year-old, who is currently in New Zealand with the team, spoke to *The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin* and shared his views on the team's preparation and their ambition in the mega event. The excerpts of the interview are below:

**The Daily Star (DS):** What does the maiden ODI World Cup appearance mean for the girls?

**Monjurul Islam (MI):** To be honest, World Cup is always special and the biggest stage for any player. The atmosphere here and the festive mood

have made things even more special for our girls as they are very excited to make an impact. This is our chance to make this opportunity count as we had to wait for a long time to qualify for the fifty-over World Cup. We did play the T20 World Cup previously but this is huge for us. I was part of Bangladesh's [Men's team] maiden ODI World Cup in 1999 and I can relate to the girls' feelings.

**DS:** How challenging will it be to cope with the New Zealand condition as none of them have ever played in that part of the world?

**MI:** Weather and condition here in New Zealand are always challenging. But luckily, we got ten days of preparation camp in Nelson before the World Cup and I think it really helped our girls to cope with the condition. Wind plays a big role in New Zealand and adapting to such conditions was really important for us.

**DS:** What is the strength of the Bangladesh team?

**MI:** Obviously, bowling is our strength as we have got a few experienced players in the side, including the likes of pacer Jahanara Alam and Salma Khatun, who is our main strength in the spin department. The likes of all-rounder Rumana Ahmed, Sharmin Akhter and skipper Nigar Sultana are also there to guide the side. I think it's important to hit the right areas for our bowlers to get the best out of the surface and condition. There have been a lot of talks about our batting but I think we have the ability to deliver with the bat as well.

**DS:** What's the target of your team in their maiden World Cup?

**MI:** All the teams are very good, especially England, Australia and India. But I think it's a great opportunity for our girls to showcase their talent. Being the selector and the team manager, I hope we can win at least a couple of big games. If we can take something positive from this World Cup, it will help us go further in the coming days. The ICC has already set a Future Tour Programs (FTP) for us and we will be playing a lot of games both home and away in the coming days. So I think this World Cup can be the stepping stone for Bangladesh women's cricket.



## WHAT THEY SAID

We know if we play a really exciting brand of cricket that we can get the whole country behind, that's going to leave a legacy.

— New Zealand skipper Sophie Devine hopes to use the home support.

You probably wouldn't want to play the hosts in the first game but it is what it is. I think for us, we have to go out there and play to the best of our abilities.

— West Indies captain Stafanie Taylor on facing the hosts in first game.

The impacts of the 2017 World Cup have obviously changed the way we play but, from now on really moving forward, this World Cup is completely different.

— Australia skipper Meg Lanning eager to avenge the disappointment of their 2017 campaign.

India-Pakistan is the most followed match around the

world, and we definitely want the girls to be inspired.

— Pakistan captain Bismah Maroof excited about their tournament opener against India on March 6.

I think if we get to the semi-final stage again, we're going to make sure we push through even if it's the last thing we do, so we're going to try our best to get to the final.

— South Africa captain Suné Luus

hopes to play the final.

I think the tournament we had in 2017 will give a lot of the players confidence that they can deal with the ebbs and flows of the tournament and know how to be successful in World Cups.

— England skipper Heather Knight hopeful of defending the title.

They [India players] all have been given good game time, and those series have

really helped them and me as a captain to find out where they fit in into the composition of the team.

— India captain Mithali Raj confident of her team's composition.

We've been working so hard for this and this is our first ever World Cup. I think if we could do well here, it will be a great moment in Bangladesh cricket.

— Bangladesh captain Nigar Sultana eager to make the nation proud.