

# Women’s Asia Cup begins today

- This will be the ninth edition of the Women’s Asia Cup. The first four editions were played in the 50-over format, while the next four were T20 tournaments. The ongoing edition will also be played in the 20-over format.
- India won seven out of the eight editions of the tournament so far. Bangladesh won the title in the only edition in which India failed to secure it. The women in red and green beat India in a last-ball thriller in the final of the 2018 edition in Malaysia.
- Sri Lanka is set to host the tournament for a third time. They played hosts in 2004 and 2008. All 15 matches of this edition, including the two semis and the final, will be held in one venue – Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium in Dambulla.
- No team has featured more times in Women’s Asia than India and Sri Lanka, appearing in all eight previous editions. Meanwhile, the UAE is set to feature in only their second Asia Cup.
- No batter has scored more runs than India’s Mithali Raj in the 20-over editions of the tournament (402 runs in 10 matches). With the ball, Pakistan’s Nida Dar leads with 26 scalps in 18 matches. Bangladesh’s Rumana Ahmed is close to Dar with 23 wickets in 16 matches.



**SPORTS REPORTER**

Seven-time winners India will once again be the favourites to lift the Women’s Asia Cup as the tournament’s ninth edition gets underway today, with a marquee fixture between India and Pakistan following the tournament opener in Dambulla, Sri Lanka.

India, the most dominant side in the tournament’s history, won seven out of the eight previous editions, only losing out to Bangladesh in the 2018 final in Malaysia.

This edition will be played in the 20-over format, for a fifth time in the tournament’s history. The defending champions India come into the tournament on the back of a series cleansweep against Bangladesh in a

five-match T20I series followed by a 1-1 draw against South Africa in the same format.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh will be looking to take inspiration from their triumphant campaign in 2018 as the Tigresses have not had the confidence of positive results in the build-up to the tournament.

The Nigar Sultana Joty-led side suffered back-to-back series defeats against Australia and India at home and their last win in this format came in December 2023 when they beat South Africa by 13 runs in Benoni.

Since that victory, Bangladesh lost nine consecutive T20Is and will have to produce their best once again to qualify for a top four spot.

Joty’s troops failed to progress

beyond the group stage in the last edition of the tournament in 2022 when Bangladesh hosted the event which is why the skipper has made progression to the final four her initial target.

Bangladesh, who were pitted in Group B along with Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Thailand, will begin their campaign against the hosts on Saturday.

BANGLADESH FIXTURES			
Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka	July 20, 07:30 pm	Bangladesh vs Malaysia	July 24, 02:30 pm
Bangladesh vs Thailand	July 22, 07:30 pm	*All timings are as per Bangladesh time.	
<b>GROUP A</b> India, Pakistan, UAE, Nepal		<b>GROUP B</b> Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand	

WOMEN’S ASIA CUP: ROLL OF HONOUR	
2004 India (ODI)	
2005-06 India (ODI)	
2006 India (ODI)	
2008 India (ODI)	
2012 India (T20I)	
2016 India (T20I)	
2018 Bangladesh (T20I)	
2022 India (T20I)	



England’s Ollie Pope raises his bat after hitting his sixth Test century, putting the hosts in a commanding position -- 259-4 at tea -- in the second Test against the West Indies at the Trent Bridge yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Sabina and Co to play Bhutan on July 24, 27

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Bangladesh women’s football team are set to depart for Bhutan on July 22 to play two FIFA friendlies against the hosts.

Coach Peter Butler announced a 22 member squad for the matches on July 24 and 27. While experienced players like Tahura Khatun, Surma Jannat, Shaheda Akter Ripa, and Shamsunnahar Ripa were excluded, new players like Halima Akhter, Bonna Akhter, Mst Sagorika, and Mst Sultana made the cut.

Captain Sabina Khutun emphasised that these matches will be beneficial for the SAFF Championship.

Coach Butler believes this will be a good opportunity for the new players.

### SHORT CORNER

#### Shoriful cuts LPL stint short due to sickness

Bangladesh pacer Shoriful Islam returned home from Sri Lanka on Thursday due to illness and won’t be taking part in the knockout phase of the ongoing Lanka Premier League (LPL). “I’ve been sick for a few days. That’s why I decided to return home,” Shoriful told The Daily Star over the phone after returning to Bangladesh.

#### FIFA says opening probe into Argentina players’ racist chants

FIFA said on Wednesday it was opening an investigation into racist chants by Argentina players after they won the Copa America. “FIFA is aware of a video circulating on social media and the incident is being looked into,” a spokesperson for world football’s governing body said.

#### Gibraltar fury at Spain team’s ‘offensive’ Euro victory chants

During Spain’s celebrations, which saw the Madrid turned into a sea of red and yellow, several players grabbed the microphone to sing, with captain Alvaro Morata belting out “Gibraltar es español” -- “Gibraltar is Spanish” -- in a chant also picked up by Rodri, who plays for English club Manchester City.

\*Read full stories on The Daily Star website

## This will be my last term: Kazi Salahuddin

Kazi Salahuddin, who has been at the helm of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) for 16 years, is planning to contest for a fifth consecutive term as president in the next BFF elections, set to take place on October 26. The 70-year-old footballer-turned-organiser spoke with *The Daily Star’s Anisur Rahman* about his thoughts on running for president once again. Here are the excerpts:

**The Daily Star (DS):** Are you going to contest in the next BFF elections for the president’s post?

**Kazi Salahuddin (KS):** I think so.

**DS:** You have been at the helm for four successive terms. Why are you thinking of contesting again?

**KS:** This will be my last election. I want to finish the work on the vision I had for the national team, then someone else will take over.

**DS:** You underwent an open-heart surgery last year and there are concerns whether your health will allow you to continue as BFF president for another term...

**KS:** I was also concerned about my health, but that’s not the real obstacle right now. Actually, the problem is that my family don’t want me to continue in BFF. But I think my job here is not yet done, no matter who says what. Everyone has no choice but to accept that the national team has been playing well and the league [Bangladesh Premier League] has

been taking place regularly. No one can deny that whether they like me or not. Our women’s team is the best in the sub-continent. I think one more term should be enough, then someone else can take over.

**DS:** You had told the media before the previous election that it would be your last term...

**KS:** But this time it really will be my last term, considering my health, family and everything.

**DS:** The national football team has been playing well in the recent past but are still languishing in the bottom half in the world rankings. How do you see it?

**KS:** If you play 10 matches against similarly ranked sides, you will win more games and your ranking will gradually improve. But we usually play against teams which are ranked 30 to 50 places higher than us. Money is another factor. I need Tk 70 lakh to play one international match. We can’t manage the money every time, so, we play fewer matches. Once India used to be close to us in the rankings but they are now a higher-ranked side because they play many international

matches.

**DS:** What did you do to strengthen the financial condition of the BFF in your four terms?

**KS:** When I first came in power, I used to bring Tk 7 to 8 crore from sponsors for every tournament. But different groups went against me during my second and third terms and the media too was not friendly towards me. There were many rumours including corruption which were not true. This had a bad impact on the BFF’s image, thus I lost interest and felt embarrassed to approach the sponsors and kept myself away from the private sponsors.

**DS:** But FIFA suspended BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag, CFO Abu Hasan, general manager Minzanur Rahman on financial grounds. What do you have to say about that?

**KS:** No one read the FIFA report thoroughly, they just read the part that said that financial reasons were behind the suspensions. That has made the situation really difficult for us. The report stated none of the goods were purchased at a higher cost and they were bought



## Sagor chosen as Bangladesh’s flagbearer

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Archer Sagor Islam will proudly carry the Bangladesh flag during the march past at the 33rd Olympic Games, set to be held in the French capital from July 26 to August 11.

A 13-member contingent from Bangladesh will participate in the world’s largest sports event. Among the five athletes, only archer Sagor qualified for the Olympics directly, making him the third Bangladeshi to do so after golfer Siddiqui Rahman and archer Ruman Sana.

Naturally, the spotlight is on the 18-year-old archer, who will kick off his campaign with the ranking round on July 25.

“I want to thank the Bangladesh Olympic Association [BOA] for giving me the opportunity to carry the national flag, which is a great honor for me,” said Sagor at the official press conference at the BOA yesterday.

“I have been training at Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master Stadium in Tongi, where the competition stage has been designed to replicate that of the Paris Olympics. The environment, complete with background noise, has been simulated to give me the feel of competing in Paris,” Sagor added.

“I will be giving my best rather than focusing on advancing to the quarterfinals or winning medals. I believe that if I can control myself, I can achieve something better.”

In addition to Sagor, sprinter Imranur Rahman, shooter Robiul Islam, and swimmers Samiul Islam Rafi and Sonia Khatun will be making their Olympic debut.

“It is a matter of great pride for us to participate in the Olympics with a direct entry from archery, and we hope Sagor Islam will perform well,” said chef de mission Entekhabul Hamid Apu.

“The shooter has also prepared well, but there is always a significant difference in preparation between athletes who qualify directly and those who enter with a wild card.”

Since the 1986 edition, Bangladesh has participated in every Olympic event with a small contingent. However, their results have often



failed to impress despite being the ninth most populated country, leading to negative reviews from the global media.

“Bangladesh needs a six-to-eight-year long-term plan if we want to achieve good results in the Olympics. The BOA cannot do it alone. We also need support from the Bangladesh Youth and Sports Ministry, and the sports minister is considering prioritizing disciplines with good prospects. We aim to set targets for the 2028 Olympic Games,” Mamun stated.

BOA Secretary General Syed Shahed Reza was also present at the event.

## Paris Olympics to set sail with unique ceremony

➤ The ceremony is due to start at 11:30 pm on July 26 (Bangladesh time) and last about four hours, reaching a climax when the sun sets on the Seine.

➤ The show will be attended by over 100 heads of state and government, and over 300,000 spectators will watch from the river’s banks. Organizers said there will be some 80 giant screens along the way.

➤ The Paris 2024 committee stated there would be about 10,500 athletes, and some 222,000 people will receive free invites, while 104,000 will have to buy tickets.

➤ Approximately 45,000 police officers will be dispatched to ensure the ceremony’s security, including special intervention forces. Snipers will be deployed on top of buildings along the route, and an anti-drone system will be in place.

REUTERS, Paris

Paris will begin its Olympics extravaganza with an unprecedented opening ceremony on the river Seine on July 26th.

Unlike previous Olympics, the Paris 2024 opening ceremony will not take place in a stadium.

Instead, dozens of boats will carry thousands of athletes and performers on a 6km route along the Seine, where Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo swam on Wednesday to convince doubters that its waters will be clean enough to hold Olympic swimming events.

Departing from the Austerlitz

Bridge, the parade will sail by Notre-Dame de Paris cathedral and arrive near the Eiffel Tower, after passing under bridges and gateways, including the Pont des Arts and Pont Neuf, and near many of the French capital’s landmarks.

Organizers have said they will take advantage of the historic monuments, the riverbanks, the sky, and the water, stating that “there won’t be a single riverbank or bridge that won’t be filled with music, dance, or performance.”

The show will have twelve parts, some of which will play on clichés about France. Athletes and artists will take part in the parade together.

