

Bangladesh on 7th heaven

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh made a flying start to their AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers campaign with a 7-0 thrashing of Group C opponents Bahrain in Yangon on Sunday, proving yet again that they are a far better side than what their lowly FIFA ranking of 128 suggests.

Peter Butler's charges dominated proceedings right from the word go, controlling play with crisp passing and measured build-up football against a physically superior Bahrain side, who are 36 places above them in FIFA rankings.

The women in red and green scored five goals in the first half before taking the foot off the gas a bit after restart, yet adding two more while managing to keep a clean sheet.

Tohura Khatun bagged a brace while Shamsunnahar Jr, Ritu Porna Chakma, Kohati Kisku and Munki Akter scored one apiece. The other was an own goal.

The big win sets up the women in red and green nicely for their crucial second match against group's top ranked team, Myanmar (55), who handed an 8-0 defeat to Turkmenistan (141), the lowest ranked side, in the first match of the group earlier yesterday.

Only the top finishers will advance to the Women's Asian Cup, which will be held in Australia next year.

Bahrain are way ahead of us in rankings. But our target was to make use of the hard work we had been doing. Everyone gave their 100 percent.

Bangladesh forward
Tohura Khatun

melee following a low cross from Maria Manda to make it 3-0 in the 40th minute. Tohura, dubbed the Lionel Messi of Kalshindur, then scored a quickfire brace in the stoppage time of the first half – the first one with a powerful shot and the second one with a clever placing effort – as the Bahrain players looked amateurish in the face of Bangladesh's enterprising football.

Bangladesh, who had never previously scored a goal at this level and lost all five of their matches in two campaigns, went through a number of changes in the second half, perhaps to preserve tiring legs ahead of the Myanmar game.

Yet Shamsunnahar Jr saw two attempts saved by Bahrain keeper from one-on-one situations early in the half before Rawan Alali's own goal on the hour-mark made the scoreline 6-0.

Substitute Munki Akter wrapped up the victory in the 74th minute with a fine effort while at the other end, Rupna Chakma made two excellent saves – the only scoring chances for Bahrain – to come out with a clean sheet for Bangladesh.

With an awe-inspiring win against a much higher-ranked opponent to start the campaign, Butler's charges will be full of confidence for their potentially decisive next match against the hosts on July 2.

Butler, who has experimented quite a bit with his formation and style of play since taking charge in March last year, deployed a 3-5-2 system in this match, with Tohura and Shamsunnahar Jr operating as forwards.

Monika Chakma and Sapna Rani in the midfield that pulled the strings while Ritu Porna and Kohati operated diligently down the flanks, creating most of the chances.

Sapna, the young No. 7 from Thakurgaon, set up the first two goals with brilliant throughs, with Shamsunnahar Jr finishing the first move with a chip in the 10th minute before Ritu Porna doubled the scoreline with a bullet of a shot five minutes later.

The third goal took some time coming,

but once it came, the floodgates opened.

Kohati poked home from a goalmouth

What to WATCH

T Sports

Zimbabwe vs South Africa

1st Test, Day 3

Live from 2:00 pm

Sony Sports 2 and 5

Wimbledon

Live from 4:00 pm

DAZN website and app

Club World Cup

Inter vs Fluminense

Live from 1:00 am (Tuesday)



Maria Manda, Shamsunnahar Jr, Tohura Khatun, Monika Chakma, and Ritu Porna celebrate one of the goals during a scintillating 7-0 win against a higher-ranked Bahrain to open their 2026 AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers campaign in Yangon, Myanmar, yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

Chasing glory on the green

Alcaraz eyes three-peat, Sabalenka seeks redemption

WILDCARD WONDER

Xu draws her idol

Seventeen-year-old Mimi Xu adds a compelling subplot to the British narrative this year. The Welsh teenager, handed a wildcard, will make her Grand Slam debut by facing British No. 1 Emma Raducanu – the very player who inspired her love for the sport.

"I was 13, watching Emma win the US Open with the other girls at our tennis academy," recalled Xu, one of three British players aged 17 or under in the women's draw. "Now I get to play her at Wimbledon. It's surreal."

Ranked just outside the top 300, Xu arrives on the back of two top 100 wins this summer, having balanced her rise through the ranks with A-Level biology exams. She found out about her draw in the middle of a house move.



AGENCIES

The hallowed lawns of the All England Club are primed once more as Wimbledon 2025 kicks off today, with the world's best tennis players vying for the sport's most coveted crown.

Carlos Alcaraz returns to Centre Court with history in his sights. The 22-year-old Spaniard, winner of the past two editions, opens his campaign against 38-year-old Italian Fabio Fognini.

Fresh from conquering Jannik Sinner in a pulsating French Open final and riding an 18-match win streak, the reigning champion is vying to become just the fifth man in the Open Era to win three successive Wimbledon titles.

Standing in his way is Sinner himself, the current world number one and perhaps the most complete all-court player this season. Despite falling short in Paris, the 23-year-old Italian's powerful baseline game could be just as potent on grass.

Also looming is Novak Djokovic. At 38, the seven-time Wimbledon champion returns in pursuit of a record-equalling eighth title and an elusive 25th Grand Slam crown. Injury setbacks may have slowed his momentum, but the Serb remains a master of the big stage and cannot be written off.

On the women's side, world number one Aryna Sabalenka begins her quest



☛ The first Championships were held in 1877, with 22 players competing.

☛ Wimbledon is the only Grand Slam still played on grass, the original surface of the sport. This Wimbledon edition offers a record £53.5 million in total prize money. The singles champions will each

receive £3 million, with first-round losers guaranteed £66,000.

☛ 27,000 flowers are arranged annually to maintain the "tennis in an English garden" aesthetic.

☛ Strawberries and cream remain a Wimbledon staple -- over 190,000 portions are consumed each year.

against Canadian qualifier Carson Branstine. A two-time semi-finalist at Wimbledon, the Belarusian arrives determined to rewrite recent heartbreaks, including a turbulent French Open final

loss to Coco Gauff.

With defending champion Barbora Krejčíková struggling with injury and a wide open draw ahead, Sabalenka enters as the favourite.

SHORT CORNER

No Shakib in Rangpur Riders' GSL campaign due to 'circumstances'

Rangpur Riders were initially interested in drafting in all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan for their campaign in the upcoming Global Super League (GSL), slated to begin in Guyana on July 10. However, the franchise eventually decided against it after considering the existing circumstances. "It is not like that we did not want him in the squad, but we know the situation of the country at this moment," Rangpur team director Shanin Tanim told the media at the sponsor signing event in Dhaka yesterday.

BFF to stick to online ticketing for HK, India matches

Despite hassles in online ticket purchasing during this month's FIFA friendly against Bhutan and Asian Cup Qualifier against Singapore at the National Stadium in Dhaka, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is set to continue selling tickets online for next matches. "We believe the ticketing system we have employed is the right way to go," said Tajwar Awal, member of BFF's technical committee. Bangladesh next play Hong Kong (October 9) and India (November 18).

CR7 prefers rest to playing in CWC

Cristiano Ronaldo preferred to take a rest rather than play in the Club World Cup, the Portuguese international said on Saturday. Al Nassr announced on Thursday that Ronaldo had signed a two-year contract with the club. "I had some offers to play in the World Cup but I think it didn't make sense because I prefer to have a good rest, a good preparation," Ronaldo said in a video posted by Al-Nassr on X.

Read full stories on The Daily Star's website.



Chelsea forwards Pedro Neto (L) and Christopher Nkunku (R) celebrate after the Frenchman put The Blues ahead in extra-time during their FIFA Club World Cup last 16 clash against Benfica in Charlotte yesterday. Chelsea eventually won 4-1 to book a quarterfinal date with Brazil's Palmeiras who beat Botafogo 1-0 earlier. Reece James' clever freekick had put Chelsea 1-0 up four minutes from full-time just before the game was hit with nearly a two-hour storm delay. After resumption, a revitalised Benfica forced extra-time with Angel Di Maria's injury-time penalty. Nkunku, Neto and Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall then struck in extra-time to seal the win in a match that lasted for four hours and 39 minutes.

'Team culture key' in Tigers' quest for stability

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's white-ball cricket is at a crossroads. After a string of disappointing results -- including six consecutive losses in the 50-over format and recent T20I series defeats against the UAE and Pakistan -- the Tigers face mounting questions about their ability, team selection, and overall direction.

Amid this challenging phase, with a new ODI captain in Mehidy Hasan Miraz set to lead the side in the upcoming Sri Lanka series starting June 2, the pressure to rebuild and restore confidence is more immense than ever.

Nurul Hasan Sohan, currently sidelined from the national team and preparing to join the Rangpur Riders for the Global Super League in Guyana, emphasises the bigger picture.

"I won't have regrets if I don't get opportunities in the national team if the team plays well. I want Bangladesh cricket to recover from the current tough phase," Sohan said ahead of his departure.

Sohan had remained unpicked because there were too many wicket-keepers -- not an abysmal explanation in itself. But selectors also explained that they wanted Litton Das, the T20I skipper, to find form



through ODIs, which is why Sohan was left out.

Since the last ODI World Cup, Bangladesh have played 23 ODIs, losing 17 -- a downturn reflected in the fact that they slipped to their lowest position, 10th, in nearly two decades.

The question remains whether Bangladesh have seen through plans to regain the impetus required for white-ball cricket.

While there was no big controversy surrounding a big name being dropped, a few of the reasons provided by the national selection panel regarding why someone like Sohan or batting allrounder Mosaddek Hossain have remained

unpicked left room for clarity.

The latter has a case as a domestic performer -- considering the likes of Mohammad Naim or Anamul Haque Bijoy have made it to the ODI or Test formats.

Mosaddek, who was the player of the tournament in the last Dhaka Premier League, played in the 'A' side's series against their New Zealand counterparts. Chief selector Gazi Ashraf said something that sparked curiosity regarding Mosaddek's non-selection.

"As long as Mehidy Hasan Miraz is in the squad, Mosaddek simply doesn't have a place," he said, but also informed that Mosaddek was on their radar.

Dashing opener Soumya Sarkar missed the UAE series due to injury and was also left out of the Pakistan series for the same reason, despite training with the ODI team in Chattogram beforehand.

If performance played a role in Soumya's case, it was veiled as an intensity concern by the chief selector.

Cricketers outside the national setup can be required at any time and, if clarity is not found, the players face a degree of frustration. As Sohan puts it, "team culture is key," and it may well be the key to building up that morale in one of Bangladesh's hardest phases in white-ball cricket.