



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

BANGLADESH make it 4 in 4

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Bangladesh kept their impressive winning run intact in the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship with an emphatic 3-0 win over Bhutan in their fourth match at the Bashundhara Kings practice ground yesterday.

Forward Trishna Rani Sarkar struck a brace before substitute Swapna Rani added another to make it four in four for Bangladesh, who lead the four-team table with 12 points, three more than closest rivals Nepal, who beat Sri Lanka 7-0 in the day's first match.

English coach Peter Butler once again pinned his faith on the fresh faces, resting the senior players as he had done in a 4-1 win over the same opponents in the previous match.

His charges once again did not disappoint, keeping the lion's share of the ball possession from the beginning.

Having squandered an open-net opportunity in the 14th minute, Trishna made amends in the 33rd minute by sending the ball over goalkeeper Pema Yangzom's head and into the net, capitalising on a through-pass from Swapna, who was swapped in for the injured Bonna Khatun on the half-hour mark.

After resumption, Butler sent three fresh pairs of legs – defender Joynob Bibi Rita, midfielder Munki Akhter and forward Umehla Marma – to press for more goals but the home side wasted many chances, much like in the previous matches.

Trishna doubled the lead in the 65th minute with a low drive, capitalising on a fumble from Bhutanese defender Sounam Yangchen while Swapna made it 3-0 with a dipping 35-yarder in the 74th minute.

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The Bangladesh squad arrived in the country on Thursday following their 2-1 T20I series triumph against Sri Lanka on Wednesday. The Tigers, however, have little time to adjust to home conditions, with Pakistan already having arrived in Dhaka on Wednesday to play a three-match T20I series.

The Litton Das-led squad put in two fine performances to seize back the series after losing the first T20I timidly against the Lankans. Bangladesh will have an optional session on Friday, followed by a regular session on Saturday. Meanwhile, Pakistan will start their regular sessions from Friday ahead of the first match on July 20 in Mirpur.

Bangladesh can take quite a few positives from the Lankan T20Is, which followed disappointments in the Test and T20I series in Sri Lanka. But a month playing in away conditions may also have seen a few batters get into a certain rhythm – something even home practice surfaces cannot usually offer, especially during this time of year with frequent rain.

Moreover, adding to the challenge would be the fact that Bangladesh have last played at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, the venue for all three Pakistan T20Is, nine months ago. Their last game in Mirpur was a seven-wicket defeat to South Africa in October 2024.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) cricket operations chairman Nazmul Abedeen Fahim conveyed a certain concern regarding how the wickets would turn out for the Pakistan series

BANGLADESH SQUAD FOR PAK T20Is

Litton Das (Captain), Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Parvez Hossain Emon, Mohammad Naim Sheikh, Tawhid Hridoy, Jaker Ali Anik, Shamim Hossain Patwari, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Rishad Hossain, Shak Mahed Hasan, Nasum Ahmed, Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Mohammad Saifuddin.

on Wednesday.

Litton also spoke about the series following Wednesday's triumph, and his concerns were similar.

"I don't know how the Mirpur wicket is going to behave for the Pakistan series. I think it's raining in Dhaka every day, so the wicket can be difficult for batting in such conditions. Batters may fail there, but we won't be too disappointed. We will keep trying to give our 100 percent," Litton said at the press conference on Wednesday in Colombo.

"It won't be easy taking on Pakistan in Mirpur. They have variety in their bowling attack. They also play a lot of BPL [Bangladesh Premier League], so they know our conditions quite well. I know that we can win matches against them if we play smart cricket," he added.

Low bounce wickets do not pose as much of a problem to a team from the subcontinent as they do to teams from outside the region. But ahead of major events to come, Bangladesh batters need to hone their confidence to the point where they can finally click as a unit in high-stakes competitions. Wickets at home may not be the best answer for sharpening those abilities.

Bangladesh named an unchanged squad from the Sri Lanka tour for the Pakistan series yesterday. While consistency is now desired in terms of squad makeup, it remains to be seen how much the performances in this series can be evaluated for future purposes, particularly with upcoming assignments such as the Asia Cup in India.

Adjusting to Mirpur surface the concern now

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Young Tigers seal big win

SPORTS REPORTER

A dominating all-round performance by Bangladesh U-19 men's team saw them clinch a massive 130-run win over hosts South Africa in the opening game of their three-match one-day series at Willowmoore Park in Benoni yesterday.

Riding on fifties from Zawad Abrar (70 off 61 balls), Rizan Hossan (63 off 55 balls), and Md Abdullah (63 off 76 balls), the young Tigers posted a decent total of 285 for six in their stipulated 50 overs after being sent into bat first.

For South Africa, left-arm pacer JJ Basson took 4-47 while Vihan Pretorius and Bandile Mbatha claimed one wicket each. Bangladesh could have posted a bigger total as they reached 228-4 in the 41st over, but the hosts fought back strongly in the death overs to restrict Bangladesh below the 300-run mark.

Bangladesh pacer Iqbal Hossain Emon then struck in the second over as he removed opener Jorich Van Schalkwyk for nought, and the hosts never got momentum in the chase, losing wickets at regular intervals.

The only South Africa batter who posed a resistance was their skipper and opener, Muhammed Bulbulia, scoring 72 off 79 balls. He was the last batter to depart as South Africa were bundled out for 155 runs in 32.1 overs. Bangladesh's Emon and Shadhin Islam took three wickets each. The second and third matches of the series will be held at the same venue on July 19 and 22, respectively.

Indonesia to face Saudi Arabia in WC qualifying

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Patrick Kuivert's Indonesia were on Thursday handed a tough draw for the final round of Asian qualifying as they try to reach the World Cup finals for the first time since 1938.

Coached by former Barcelona star and Dutch great Kuivert, Indonesia will play hosts Saudi Arabia and Iraq in Group B of the fourth round of Asian qualifying for the 2026 finals.

Indonesia will face a difficult task against Saudi Arabia, who have home advantage and will be heavily favoured to top Group B.

Qatar will host Group A and face the United Arab Emirates and Oman after the six-team draw took place at the Asian Football Confederation's headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

Matches in both groups will be played in a single round-robin format in October in Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

The two group winners will join the six Asian nations already qualified for next year's global showpiece in Mexico, the United States and Canada.

The two second-placed teams will meet in November, with the winner over two legs entering an intercontinental playoff for the final spot at the 48-team World Cup.

Deadline nears but no clear path yet for BCB polls

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

On July 14, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Aminul Islam Bulbul expressed optimism of holding the upcoming election on time during the opening ceremony of the 39th National Badminton Championship in Dhaka.

This was the first time Aminul openly talked about the election since becoming president on May 30, replacing his former national teammate Faruque Ahmed.

Youth and sports advisor Asif Mahmud had expressed similar sentiment on June 27, when he stated that they are working on the process of amending the BCB constitution and affirmed that for the time being there is no reason to delay the BCB elections, scheduled to be held by October.

From an administrative point of view, the BCB has been in a flux for the last year or so, with three presidents being in charge from July last year and July this year.

This instability has raised questions about how well the board is being run at the moment and the best hope at fixing this issue is getting a new elected body in charge through fresh polls.

Although BCB's current committee is set to expire in less than three months, there have been no significant developments regarding the election.

Many current BCB directors, officials and aspiring councillors and candidates of the upcoming election are in dark about the election, still waiting to know exactly when the polls will be held and will it be held under the current constitution or an amended one.

What's on BCB constitution

According to the BCB's constitution

article 15.1, the term of the executive committee shall be four years from the date of its first meeting. As the previous BCB election took place on October 6, 2021, and the first board meeting was held on the very next day, as per the constitution, the current committee has to conduct the election by October 7.

Meanwhile, 30 days prior to the election, the BCB's chief executive officer, under the direction of the president, must notify the concerned parties for the nomination of councillors to form the next general assembly in accordance with sections 9.1, 9.2, and 9.3 of the constitution.

According to section 19 and chapter 5, the election commission formed by the executive committee will formulate all election rules, announce the schedule, finalise the voter list, and complete all formalities required to conduct the election.

Although there have been speculations over BCB forming an ad-hoc committee for the election, there is no scope to do so as per the current BCB constitution.

What ICC says

According to article 2.4 of ICC's Memorandum of Association, each member nation must ensure its statutes provide a process for free and democratic elections and appointments from amongst its members or nominees from outside its members, for its executive body.

The office-holders have to be determined



through a free and democratic elections in accordance with the process set out in its statutes and the body has to function autonomously and without any government interference.

What's really going on

The Daily Star approached several current councillors and aspiring candidates recently to learn about their plans regarding the upcoming election. Most expressed confusion over BCB's stance on the polls and some even feared a delay.

Debabrata Paul, a councillor from Jahangirnagar University, expects the BCB would begin its election-related activities by the end of August or the start of September but feared the polls might just be an "eyewash".

Observing their current

activities, I fear that they will hold a one-sided election and it will be nothing but a complete eyewash," said Debabrata, who recently sent a letter to the BCB president demanding constitution reform, a corruption-free BCB and good governance.

Rafiqul Islam Babu, a prominent local club organiser, claimed that the BCB can defer the election only if an unavoidable issue comes to the fore.

"If the election is deferred due to the political situation in the country or for under some extraordinary circumstances, the ICC may or may not accept it," said Rafiqul, who claimed that the organisers like him are preparing for the polls.

Sirajuddin Mohammad Alamgir, another prominent local organiser and councillor from Chattogram University, urged amending the

BCB constitution before holding the election.

"I think if you hold the election without amending the constitution, the election will not carry any value. Few faces may get replaced and the political inclinations will probably change, but there will be no change in cricket," Alamgir said.

Faruque, the previous BCB president, had formed a constitution reform committee led by BCB director Nazmul Abedeen Fahim but BCB halted its proceedings in the face of protests from Dhaka clubs after few of the envisaged reforms got leaked in the media.

BCB had announced this decision after their 17th board of directors meeting on January 25, and according to a BCB director, the constitution reform committee has remained inactive ever since, which contradicts what youth and sports adviser Asif had told the media a few weeks ago.

The BCB director, seeking anonymity, said, "As per my knowledge, Fahim bhai is fully concentrating on cricket operations now. He is no longer working on that matter."

Most surprisingly, the current directors, who are supposed to play an active role in holding the election, are also in the dark regarding the election date but majority of them are preparing to run in the polls.

"We only know that the election will take place by October. But we aren't seeing any activities regarding it. We don't feel at ease to talk about it too much as it may bring unwelcome consequences," said another BCB director, who also aspires to run for the election again.

When asked about the BCB polls, the National Sports Council (NSC) secretary Aminul Islam insisted that it will be held as per the board's constitution – another vague statement about an election which still seems far from materializing.

