

'They're a breath of fresh air'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh stormed to an emphatic 8-0 victory over Timor-Leste in their second match of the AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers in Laos yesterday to top Group H, thanks to a hattrick from Trishna Rani Sarkar.

Following a confident 3-1 win over hosts Laos in their opening game, expectations were high for an easy outing against Timor-Leste, especially after their 9-0 loss to South Korea. However, the opening quarter-hour posed a surprising challenge for Peter Butler's side.

The physically dominant and determined Timor-Leste side managed to unsettle Bangladesh early on, threatening to score twice -- first denied by a sharp save from Swarna Rani Mandal, and then by a goalline clearance from Joynob Bibi Rita.

"We were a little bit sloppy in the first 10 minutes," Butler admitted after the game. "But I told the girls not to chase goals -- to focus on creating chances, to be patient, and the goals would come. I'm delighted with their response. They're a breath of fresh air."

The breakthrough came in the 20th minute through Sinha Jahan Shikha, after which Bangladesh settled into their



Forward Trishna Rani Sarkar lines up a shot during Bangladesh's group fixture of the AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers against Timor-Leste at the New Laos National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

rhythm and took complete control of the match. Interestingly, the first three goals came from corners -- an area that clearly paid off.

"We got a bit lucky with Shanti Mardi's goal that went straight in, but you

make your own luck in football," Butler said. "Shikha was excellent today -- her performance stood out."

With confidence growing, Bangladesh's technical superiority soon overwhelmed Timor-Leste, as the goals

kept flowing and the players showcased precise passing, smart positioning, and well-rehearsed movements.

Apart from Trishna's treble and one each from Shikha and Shanti, goals also came from Mosammat Sagorika, Nabiran Khatun and Munki Akter.

Despite the dominant scoreline, Butler remains focused on the bigger challenge ahead -- a crucial tie against South Korea, who however labored to a 1-0 win against Laos in the second match of the day. That result meant Bangladesh edged South Korea to the top spot on more goals scored as both teams have a positive goal-difference of 10 after two matches each.

The Bangladesh coach, however, was wary of the challenge expected from the Koreans.

"We experimented a lot during the SAFF tournament, but this is a completely different level," Butler noted. "Korea are a polished outfit with great quality. On paper, we're not in their league. They've spent millions and millions in development."

"We've got everything to play for. We'll give our best shot," the Englishman said. Regardless of the result, we must learn lessons and continue doing things the right way."

TRANSFER CORNER

United land Sesko, Liverpool ready fresh Isak bid

AGENCIES

From Manchester United's latest attacking addition to PSG's defensive reinforcement, here's a look at the latest moves and rumours in the transfer market:

Man Utd seal £74m Sesko deal

Manchester United have agreed a £73.7 million package with RB Leipzig for Slovenia striker Benjamin Sesko. The deal includes a guaranteed £66.3 million, with the rest coming in performance-related add-ons.



Sesko, 22, is expected to complete his medical on Friday before signing at Old Trafford. Newcastle were also in the race, but United moved decisively for the forward, who has netted 39 goals in 87 appearances for Leipzig. Sesko is big, strong, quick, good in the air and a fine finisher. He was one of the fastest strikers in the Bundesliga with this speed clocking at 35.7km/h, and had the best aerial success rate amongst strikers.

Garnacho agrees personal terms with Chelsea

United could also raise funds through the departure of winger Alejandro Garnacho, who has agreed personal terms with Chelsea, reports Fabrizio Romano. The two clubs, however, remain apart on valuation. As a home-grown player, any transfer fee potentially up to the £60 million United wants would be recorded as pure profit from a profit and sustainability perspective, giving them room to pursue other targets. One of those could be Brighton's Cameroon midfielder Carlos Balem, who is on United's radar.

PSG bring in Zabarnyi and Chevalier

PSG have bolstered their defence by signing Ilya Zabarnyi from Bournemouth for £56.3 million plus add-ons. The 21-year-old Ukrainian centre-back has penned a five-year contract.

PSG also secured Lucas Chevalier from Lille for around £35m. The 23-year-old goalkeeper, recently nominated for the Yashin Trophy, played a pivotal role in Lille's Europa League qualification last season. Chevalier's arrival raises questions over Gianluigi Donnarumma's future, with reports suggesting PSG sporting director Luis Campos has promised the Frenchman significant game time for his ability with his feet would align more with Luis Enrique's style of play.

Slot hints at fresh Isak bid

Liverpool manager Arne Slot has not ruled out a renewed attempt to sign Newcastle striker Alexander Isak, even after having a £110 million bid rejected. Newcastle are believed to be holding out for around £150 million -- which would be a British transfer record.

The Reds have spent nearly £300 million under Slot, with Darwin Nunez expected to join Al Hilal in a £46 million move to help offset that expenditure.

Gender inequality in Bangladesh cricket laid bare, again



There is a difference between a cricketer and a woman cricketer, my friend.

Bangladesh captain Nigar Sultana Joty wrote in a post on her official Facebook page yesterday, pointing to the gender-based inequality that persists in the sport.



SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

In the past few months, the women's cricketers of Bangladesh have faced gross neglect from two of the leading cricketing entities in the country -- the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and the Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) -- in two different instances.

The BCB, the game's governing body in Bangladesh, failed to arrange any international series for the national women's team since they qualified for the ICC Women's World Cup in the qualifiers - in two different instances.

Because of this, Nigar and Co will travel to India next month for the mega event without any real match practice. The BCB's solution for it -- arranging a few practice matches for the women's team players against the men's U-15 side this month at the BKSP.

Meanwhile, CWAB recently held a few meetings ahead of its upcoming election on September 4, where many current and former men's national team cricketers were present, however, no women's cricketers were in attendance.

The neglect from the BCB must be disappointing for the women's cricketers, however, it could not have been a surprise as when it comes to ensuring equity in men's and women's cricket, the BCB lags severely behind the global curve.

Right now, India, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa give the same match fee for men's and women's cricketers while

other countries are working towards it. Meanwhile, a significant pay gap remains between the men's and women's teams in Bangladesh, and there is hardly any talks of reducing it.

However, the neglect from CWAB should sting worse for the women's cricketers, as unlike the BCB, this organisation, which has been operational since 2004, is run by the cricketers for the cricketers in Bangladesh.

Therefore, not getting invited for the meetings makes it apparent that for this organisation, or at least for the people running it, women's cricketers are an afterthought at best.

This blatant neglect was captured perfectly by the women's team captain Nigar Sultana Joty in a one-lined post on Facebook on Friday morning, which read, "There is a difference between a cricketer and a woman cricketer, my friend."

All-rounder Rumana Ahmed then followed it up with a much more detailed rant, where she questioned, "Recently, there has been much discussion about CWAB. While many male cricketers were seen involved, there was not a single female cricketer in sight. So, where do we stand?"

When contacted by The Daily Star, Rumana claimed that they were not even communicated to attend any CWAB meetings.

"We are still unclear about how CWAB works. They arranged a programme a few days ago but we were not invited. In fact, there were no discussions about us... It's about valuing women's cricketers. At this

stage of my career, I'm feeling a lack of it," said Rumana, who even claimed that she doesn't even know whether she can vote in the upcoming CWAB election.

According to CWAB convenor Salim Shahed, the BCB contracted cricketers can apply for permanent membership at the organisation by paying an annual fee and if the women's cricketers apply and pay their dues, they can vote in the next election. They could also pay a hefty one-time sum of Tk 1,00,000 to gain a life-time membership.

In the last women's contract, which expired on June 30 this year, 18 were under central contract and another 30 were under a national contract.

Meanwhile, men's cricketer Mohammad Mithun, who attended all those CWAB meetings, claimed the anger of his female counterparts was the result of miscommunication.

"We have an ad-hoc committee right now. For any meeting, they are responsible to invite players. The ad-hoc committee also hadn't invited us. We went there out of our own accord.

"I think there is a misunderstanding. As they weren't present there, they didn't know what was happening. So, I think it's an emotional outburst." Whether it is passed off as an emotional outburst, or be seen as a cry for equality, the issue must be addressed soon otherwise these women's cricketers who gave the country its first triumph at the Asia Cup in 2018, will continue to feel neglected and cornered.

BCB to hold board meeting today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is set to hold a board meeting today to discuss key agendas, including appointing a sports management and consultancy firm to organise the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

"We expect the board to approve the sports management company on August 9. Once that's done, we can seek board approval on the model for hosting the BPL," BPL Governing Council Chairman Mahbub Anam told The Daily Star.

Five firms have presented their proposals -- four are international, while one local company has partnered with a foreign firm. However, concerns are surfacing over whether some companies may gain an advantage due to prior links with the board.

The BCB has considered two models: one where the selected firm acts solely as a service provider, and another where the firm purchases and executes the league. Sources indicate board directors are divided on the issue, while the second option is financially more lucrative, there are concerns over issues such as betting arising from the deal, as top management firms are reportedly leaning toward the first option. BCB directors are scheduled to meet an hour before the official meeting to discuss internally.

Other agenda items include domestic cricket scheduling, financial matters, and a report from the Anti-Corruption Commission.



GIANT-SLAYER MBOKO CROWNED MONTREAL CHAMPION

Canadian teenager Victoria Mboko conquered four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka 2-6, 6-4, 6-1 on Thursday, capping a fairytale run at the WTA Canadian Open with her first WTA title. The 18-year-old wild card rallied after dropping the first set to complete her fourth victory over a Grand Slam champion in the tournament, having already defeated Sofia Kenin, Coco Gauff, and Elena Rybakina en route to the final. Mboko, who was ranked outside the top 300 to start the season and had climbed to 85th entering the week, is now projected to rise to 34th in the world.

PHOTO: AFP

sembcorp



Celebrating Singapore's National Day

Sembcorp North-West Power Company extends its heartfelt congratulations to the Government and people of Singapore on its 60th year of independence. In celebration of this significant milestone, we also honour the enduring partnership between Singapore and Bangladesh -- one built on mutual trust, shared values, and a common vision for sustainable development.

A joint venture between Sembcorp Utilities Pte Ltd, Singapore, and North-West Power Generation Company Ltd, Bangladesh, we take immense pride in our role as a key enabler of progress. Beyond contributing to Singapore's global leadership in innovation and sustainability, we are equally committed to powering Bangladesh's growth through the provision of reliable energy to drive economic development and transform lives.

Together, we celebrate not only Singapore's success, but the bright future we continue to build in Bangladesh as well. May Singapore continue to enjoy peace and prosperity, and may our collaborative efforts continue to fuel progress for generations to come.

From the team at Sembcorp North-West Power Company Ltd