

U-20 women set for Asian Cup debut

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are all set to mark their debut in the AFC Women's U-20 Asian Cup when they take on Thailand in Group A opener at the Thammasat Stadium in Bangkok today. The match will kick off at 7:00pm Bangladesh time.

Having already created history by reaching the finals of the U-20 Asian Cup, the women in red and green will now aim to make a further impact in Asia's premier youth women's competition. However, coach Peter Butler is focusing on positive performances rather than results in the three group stage matches.

Bangladesh have been drawn in a tough group alongside strong opponents China, Vietnam and Thailand. Despite the challenge, Butler's charges will be hoping to keep their knockout hopes alive by finishing among the two best third-placed teams across the three groups.

One of Bangladesh's key strengths lies in their experience. Several players – including Afeida Khandokar, Sopna Rani, Umehla Marma and Mile Akter – were part of the senior team in the recently concluded AFC Women's Asian Cup in Australia.

While the senior side faced tough outings against stronger teams such as China and North Korea, the youth team will look to put up a better fight against their age-level counterparts. The opening match against 2004 semifinalists Thailand could prove crucial in their bid to reach the knockout stage.

"What I did is take 10 to 12 of those Under-20 players to the senior Asian Cup because they've been in and around



Singapore forward Ikhsan Fandi skips past Bangladesh midfielder Hamza Choudhury during their AFC Asian Cup qualifying fixture at the National Stadium in Singapore yesterday. Bangladesh suffered a narrow 1-0 defeat, a result that meant the men in red and green finished their qualifying campaign with five points from six matches in Group C, registering one win, two draws, and two defeats.

PHOTO: BFF

SAFF U-20 C'SHIP Bangladesh ready for Nepal challenge

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are bracing for any challenge – even a penalty shootout – but remain confident of reaching the final, head coach Mark Cox said ahead of their SAFF U-20 Championship semifinal against Nepal in Maldives on Wednesday.

"Whoever we play, it will be a fight, but we will play our way and focus on ourselves," Cox said in a video interview shared by the Bangladesh Football Federation on Tuesday.

"Hopefully we'll win it within 90 minutes. There's no extra time and it goes straight to penalties. We're ready for any eventuality," he added.

Bangladesh began their campaign with a 2-0 win over Pakistan before holding India to a 1-1 draw, finishing second in the group to set up the semifinal clash against Nepal – a side they defeated on their way to lifting the title in 2024, the only time Bangladesh have won this age-group tournament.

Despite Ronan Declan's lively performances and goals, Bangladesh have looked somewhat inconsistent so far, and Cox has faced criticism over his team selection and playing style. However, the coach remained tight-lipped ahead of the crucial encounter.

"Of the 22 players we have here, I trust every single one as the best. We'll consider all options depending on how the game goes," Cox said.

The match will kick off at 4:45pm Bangladesh time, before India take on Bhutan in the second semifinal later in the day.

BANGLADESH'S FIXTURES

Match	Date	Venue
Bangladesh vs Thailand	April 1	Bangkok
Bangladesh vs China	April 4	Bangkok
Bangladesh vs Vietnam	April 7	Bangkok



the national team programme. We suffered a few defeats, but we gained some important learning outcomes," Butler said at a pre-match press conference in Bangkok on Tuesday.

The English coach stopped short of setting specific targets but expressed hope that his players would take valuable lessons from the tournament.

"We've arrived with a lot of young players gaining their first experience. They've done remarkably well to get here, and I hope this will be a wonderful learning opportunity for the girls," Butler said. "I believe the performances they gave at the senior tournament will stand us in good stead, and hopefully we can look forward to some positive displays irrespective of the results."

Thailand coach Nuengrutai Srathongvian is also confident of a strong start, banking on home advantage.

"We have had a lot of training camps, we have home ground advantage, and we have selected the best players. We are ready for the competition and at our best," said Srathongvian, who has been in charge for eight years.

Sombre sign off for goal-shy Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh concluded their 2027 AFC Asian Cup qualifying campaign on a sombre note yesterday, falling 1-0 to hosts Singapore at the National Stadium in Kallang.

Harhys Stewart delivered the decisive moment on the half-hour mark, guiding Singapore to a result that underlined their authority in Group C. The home side finished with 14 points and had already secured qualification before kick-off, but the win ensured they closed the campaign in control, repeating their 2-1 victory over Bangladesh in Dhaka last July.

Despite the defeat, Bangladesh ended third in the four-team group with five points, finishing ahead of neighbouring India but behind second-placed Hong Kong.

The campaign had begun with a sense of renewed ambition. The inclusion of Hamza Choudhury, alongside a growing pool of overseas-based players such as Shamit Shome, Fahamedul Islam and Zayyan Ahmed, had raised hopes of a push for qualification. While that objective ultimately slipped away, the campaign was not without its defining moment.

That came in the form of a long-awaited victory over India after 22 years – also their first win in Asian Cup qualifying in 27 years. The last time Bangladesh had tasted victory at this stage was in 1999, when they defeated Sri Lanka 3-1 in the 2000 Asian Cup Qualifiers. Since then, campaigns had been marked by

near-misses, narrow defeats and prolonged stagnation.

Head coach Javier Cabrera, whose contract expires in the latter half of April, had spoken of his desire to end the campaign on a high against opponents Bangladesh have never beaten, but a familiar lack of cutting

15th minute, while Sheikh Morsalin came close before the break, his effort blocked inside the area. Yet clear openings remained scarce.

After the restart, there was greater structure and intent. Bangladesh enjoyed improved possession and pushed higher up the pitch, particularly after the



We haven't been worse than any team. I think we have been better than many of our rivals in all the games, but we just finished with five points. That is the reality. There is no doubt that Singapore deserve to be in the Asian Cup, but there is also no doubt that Bangladesh were superior today.

JAVIER CABRERA
Bangladesh head coach

edge proved decisive. The visitors struggled to establish control in midfield in the opening half, their play marked by loose passing and a lack of composure in key moments.

The only goal arrived in the 30th minute, born of pressure and a lapse in concentration. Goalkeeper Mitul Marma did well to parry a powerful effort from Glenn Kweh, but the rebound fell invitingly for Stewart, who made no mistake with a composed, low finish.

Bangladesh had shown early promise, with Shome heading wide from a Saad Uddin delivery in the

introduction of Mirajul Islam. The closing stages offered glimpses of what might have been – Hamza narrowly missing the far post in the 75th minute, before Mirajul saw his flick from a Hamza curler strike the woodwork four minutes later.

But despite a late surge and sustained pressure in the Singapore half, with Cabrera making three more changes, the equaliser never came. Singapore held firm, managing the final moments with assurance to preserve their slender lead and bring Bangladesh's campaign to a subdued end.



World Cup final GOAL RUSH



A total of 71 goals have been scored during regulation time across the 22 World Cup finals held to date, with an additional nine goals coming in extra time. Notably, the 1950 edition did not feature an official final match in the traditional knockout format, though the decisive final group game saw three goals scored.

****Visit The Daily Star website to also read "16 yellows, 4 reds: The chaos of the iconic 'Battle of Nuremberg'".**



Germany forward Deniz Undav came off the bench to score an 88th-minute goal that secured a 2-1 victory over Ghana in a friendly on Monday, boosting his chances of making the World Cup squad. The VfB Stuttgart striker, who is second on the Bundesliga scorers' list with 18 goals, made the most of a second-half appearance in front of a home crowd, bagging the winner with a flick over the Ghana keeper. Soon after the game, Ghana head coach Otto Addo was sacked following a poor run of results -- his team were also thrashed 5-1 by Austria in a friendly last week.

PHOTO: DFB

বরপা শাখা স্থানান্তর

স্বাচ্ছন্দ্যময় ও আধুনিক ব্যাংকিং সেবার প্রতিশ্রুতি নিয়ে
রূপালী ব্যাংক পিএলসি'র বরপা শাখা, নারায়নগঞ্জ ০৯ এপ্রিল ২০২৬, বুধবার
 থেকে নতুন ঠিকানায় স্থানান্তরিত হয়ে ব্যাংকিং কার্যক্রম শুরু করছে।

~~পূর্বের ঠিকানা~~

হাজী ইয়াদ আলী শপিং কমপ্লেক্স
 (২য় তলা) হোল্ডিং নং- ১৪৪
 ঢাকা - সিলেট মহাসড়ক
 তারাব পৌরসভা
 রূপগঞ্জ, নারায়নগঞ্জ

➔

বর্তমান ঠিকানা

সাইদ টাওয়ার (২য় তলা)
 হোল্ডিং নং- ৬৩
 ঢাকা - সিলেট মহাসড়ক
 তারাব পৌরসভা, রূপগঞ্জ
 নারায়নগঞ্জ

সম্মানিত গ্রাহক, পৃষ্ঠপোষক ও শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের
 নতুন ঠিকানায় ব্যাংকিং সেবা গ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা হল

রূপালী ব্যাংক পিএলসি
 RUPALI BANK PLC

উত্তম সেবার নিশ্চয়তা

www.rupalibank.com.bd