

## Saudia-sponsored 6th Embassy Football Fest begins in Dhaka

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Dhaka: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bangladesh is hosting the "Saudia-sponsored 6th Embassy Football Fest" at the Armed Police Battalion (APBn) Playground in Uttara, Dhaka, from January 23 to 24.

The two-day football tournament, regarded as an initiative of soft diplomacy, formally began on Friday morning, following its official inauguration by Dr. Md. Nazrul Islam, Secretary (East & West) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The opening ceremony was attended by ambassadors from Italy, the Philippines, and Pakistan; deputy high commissioners of the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and Palestine; Md. Ali Hossain Fakir, additional inspector general of APBn; Fahad Karim, vice president of the Bangladesh Football Federation; and Salman A. Alali, country manager of Saudia, the tournament's title sponsor. The dignitaries jointly

unveiled the tournament trophy.

This year, a total of 24 teams, divided into eight groups, have participated in the tournament, representing various embassies and international organizations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is playing as the host nation under the banner "Team Bangladesh."

Following the completion of group-stage matches on the first day, 16 teams advanced to the knockout round. On the final day, the round of 16, quarterfinals, semifinals, and the final match are scheduled to take place. The event will conclude with a closing and prize-giving ceremony at 4:00 pm. Foreign Adviser Md. Touhid Hossain is expected to attend the ceremony and hand over the prizes to the winners.

The 6th Embassy Football Fest is being organized by GamePlay Limited, a sports management company renowned for pioneering sports diplomacy in Bangladesh, with Saudia serving as the title sponsor of the tournament. The Saudi Arabian flag carrier is supporting the initiative as part of its commitment to international cultural engagement.

Other partners of the event include the Bangladesh Football Federation, Nagorik TV, LingJian, ALAP, Daily Sun, Chuti Group, Brothers Furniture, Aster Pharmacy, Unimart, Maggi, Fresh, Polar, Safari Trade International, and Gallery The Illusion.