SAFF Championship: India beat Pakistan 2–1 for record 10th title

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News

In the final of the 2026 South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Championship for men, played in Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh, on 17 November 2026, India beat Pakistan 2–1. It is India's record 10th SAFF Championship title and a third in a row, after 2021 and 2023. Alamgir Ghazi put Pakistan ahead in first-half stoppage time; Suhail Ahmad Bhat (60th minute) and Sandip Mandi (88th minute, header) scored for India. In the 59th minute Pakistan's Junaid Shah was shown a straight red card after a VAR review for a rash tackle on Brison Fernandes. India's second-string squad was coached by U-23 head coach Naushad Moosa (PTI). India beat Bhutan 2–1 in the semi-final on 14 November; this was Pakistan's first-ever SAFF final.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Event	SAFF Championship 2026 – men's football
Final	17 Nov 2026, Dhaka (Bangladesh)
Result	India 2–1 Pakistan
India's scorers	Suhail Ahmad Bhat (60'), Sandip Mandi (88')
Titles	India – 10 (record); 3rd in a row (2021, 2023, 2026)

Point	Details
Semi-final	India 2–1 Bhutan
First edition	1993, Lahore – 'SAARC Gold Cup'; India won
SAFF	Founded 1997; a regional body under the AFC

Background

- History: the SAFF Championship began in 1993 at Lahore, Pakistan, as the 'SAARC Gold Cup', and India won that first title. The South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) was founded in 1997 with six founding members – India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and the Maldives. India's men had won nine times before – 1993, 1997, 1999, 2005, 2009, 2011, 2015, 2021 and 2023; India has also won the women's SAFF title several times.
- Governance: SAFF members belong to the Asian Football Confederation (AFC, 1954), headquartered in Kuala Lumpur; the world body FIFA is headquartered in Zurich. In India the All India Football Federation (AIFF) runs the game. The VAR (Video Assistant Referee) system is used to review key decisions.
- Indian football: the Santosh Trophy, the national championship contested by State association teams (plus Railways and Services), has been held since 1941 and is named after the Maharaja of Santosh. India qualified for the 1950 FIFA World Cup (Brazil) but withdrew, and has never played in a World Cup finals tournament.

Tamil Nadu link: Chennai's 'Chennaiyin FC' has won the Indian Super League (ISL) twice – 2015 and 2017–18 – and 'Chennai City FC' won the I-League in 2018–19. Reports of this final do not mention any Tamil Nadu player.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

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What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Event: SAFF Championship 2026 – men's football; Final: 17 Nov 2026, Dhaka (Bangladesh); Result: India 2–1 Pakistan; India's scorers: Suhail Ahmad Bhat (60'), Sandip Mandi (88').

What is the background to this news?

History: the SAFF Championship began in 1993 at Lahore, Pakistan, as the 'SAARC Gold Cup', and India won that first title.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. SAFF member nations belong to which continental football confederation, headquartered in Kuala Lumpur?

A) CAF

B) AFC

C) OFC

D) UEFA

Answer: B – Explanation: Asian Football Confederation (AFC), founded 1954. The world body FIFA is headquartered in Zurich.

2. The first SAFF Championship, held in 1993 as the 'SAARC Gold Cup', was hosted by which country?

A) Bangladesh

B) India

C) Sri Lanka

D) Pakistan

Answer: D – Explanation: Pakistan (Lahore); India won that first title. SAFF itself was founded in 1997 with six members.

3. India's national football championship, the Santosh Trophy, is contested by –

A) State teams

B) School teams

C) Clubs only

D) University teams

Answer: A – Explanation: State association teams (plus Railways and Services) – since 1941; named after the Maharaja of Santosh.

4. Which Chennai-based club has won the Indian Super League (ISL) title twice?

A) Chennai City FC

B) Bengaluru FC

C) Chennaiyin FC

D) Keralam Blasters

Answer: C – Explanation: Chennaiyin FC (2015, 2017–18). Chennai City FC won the I-League in 2018–19 – a different league.

5. India qualified for the 1950 FIFA World Cup but withdrew. Which country hosted that tournament?

A) Uruguay

B) Italy

C) Switzerland

D) Brazil

Answer: D – Explanation: Brazil; Uruguay won the title. India has never played in a World Cup finals tournament.

Sources: News On AIR; DT Next; Onmanorama; The Week (PTI); AIFF. © Shanmugam IAS Academy.