

Local

Kuwaiti football coach takes Nepal to new heights

By Nawara Fattahova

Kuwaiti coach Abdullah Al-Shallahi, who is coaching Nepal's national football team, assisted the South Asian country in reaching the final qualifiers of the East Asian Football Championship (EAFF E-1) for the first time in its history. Shallahi spoke to Kuwait Times via telephone from Doha. Some excerpts:

Kuwait Times: When did you start coaching? Which was the first team you trained?

Abdullah Al-Shallahi: I took up coaching in 2012 by training the juniors

EAFF Cup, which has been the greatest achievement of my career.

KT: Why don't you train Kuwait's national team?

Shallahi: I haven't received any offers from the Kuwait Football Association. My contract with the Nepalese team is until November 2024. I think if I get an offer to coach a team in the local league, this would be a wrong decision due to the present situation of Kuwait sports.

KT: How did the Nepal national team reach you? And why did you agree to train them?

will bring more success to the Nepalese football team.

KT: Since how long have you been training them?

Shallahi: I started working with ANFA in April 2021. They demanded that my mission was for Nepal to qualify for the third round of the Asian Cup 2023 and the East Asian Football Championship, in addition to forming a new football team that consisted of young players. I'm glad that all these goals were achieved.

KT: Why did you agree to renew the contract with them?

Shallahi: After the contract expired in October, I received positive feedback from the Nepalese fans. I was very proud of this and satisfied with my achievements, which compelled me to sign the new contract and continue coaching them for the next three years. I realize that now the mission is more difficult as expectations will be high.

KT: Did you face any difficulties in communicating with them due to the language barrier?

Shallahi: English is a universal language and it was not that difficult to communicate with them. Football is a sport that just needs thinking and adapting to their culture, and this is what I focused on since my first day.

KT: Which national team or sports club do you wish to coach?

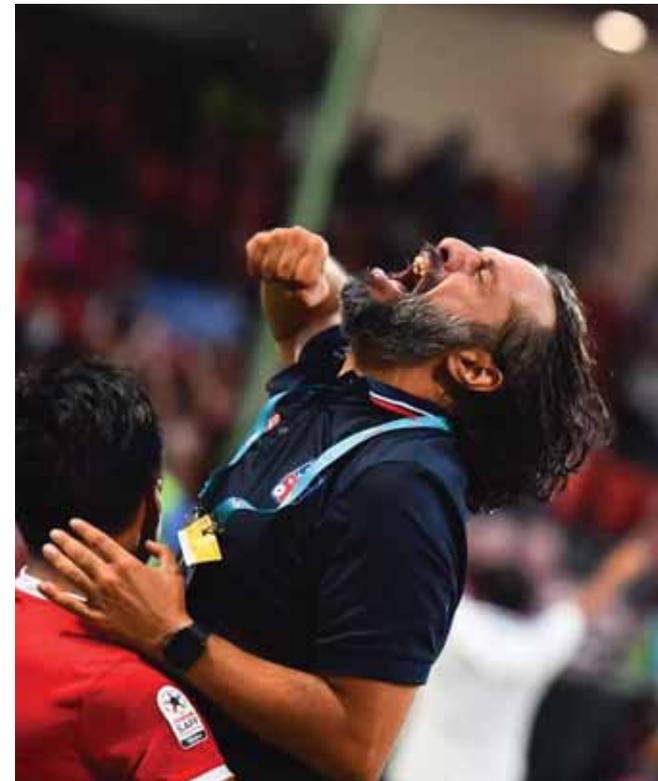
Shallahi: I wish to coach the Kuwait national team. I also wish to coach a national team or a club in the Gulf. But I believe that my work with Asian teams was the best decision for me and my coaching career.

KT: Do you believe Kuwait can go back to its golden era of the 1980s?

Shallahi: Yes, if we all work hard as a team and fly the flag of Kuwait higher for the future of the blue team (Kuwait national team).

KT: Do you expect that Nepal will qualify for the World Cup?

Shallahi: I think it's very difficult for the team to qualify for the 2026 World Cup, but my main goal now is to make sure they qualify for the 2023 or 2027 Asia Cups.



of Qadsiya, Kazma, Tadhamon and Shabab clubs. After that I moved to Saudi Arabia to coach various football clubs including Radwa and Qariah Olya clubs in the third division. My first experience with a national football team was coaching the junior team of Kyrgyzstan for the Asian Cup qualifiers in 2017. My next step was with Qatar's Al Shahaniya Sports Club to train the under-23 team. Later, I began coaching the national team of Nepal for the joint qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asia Cup, and finally for the

Shallahi: I have good relations with most of the Asian football federations, and the president of the All Nepal Football Association (ANFA) is one of them. We discussed once about developing the Nepal football team. The Qatari Football Association has a joint agreement as a third party in my contract to provide financial and moral support to me and the team by holding camps and other assistance. At the end of October, we signed a new tri-party contract for the next three years, as ANFA believes that our joint work