

Concerted effort to contest posts other than president's

SPORTS REPORTER

After the sudden departure of aspiring presidential candidate Tarafder Mohammad Ruhul Amin from the election scene and Badal Roy's attempt to withdraw from the election, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) polls appeared to be shaping up to be a one-sided affair like in 2012, but it now seems there will be two-way traffic after all.

Organisers from district football associations and some Dhaka clubs have reorganised under the banner of Integrated Panel on Tuesday to bring some excitement to the BFF elections, but they decided not to contest against incumbent president Kazi Salahuddin, who is leading another group named Combined Panel. They will instead contest the 20 other posts.

The Integrated Panel did not explain why they were not contesting the president's post, which has three candidates -- Salahuddin, Shafiqul Islam Manik and Badal, who attempted to pull out due to pressure from "some quarters".

Sheikh Mohammad Aslam, a candidate for senior vice president from the Integrated Panel, is disheartened by what he called external pressures.

"I'm really ashamed that country's influential persons threatened candidates like Badal Roy and others. If pressure comes through such important places centring just a small election, then where do we go? Those influential persons should focus on their own work



which is more important than the BFF polls. FIFA also does not permit such interference and can also ban us, so we are really worried," said former national striker Aslam.

The Integrated Panel officially started their campaign yesterday from Sylhet where they will meet the leaders of four district football associations and the divisional football association before heading to Chattogram for another meeting with four districts, university and educational board. They will also meet the leaders of some districts and educational board in Noakhali. The Integrated panel also plans to meet with leaders of Rajshahi and Rangpur division on September 21 and 22 before having another meeting with district leaders from Khulna, Barishal, Mymensingh and Dhaka divisions on September 20.

"Following the sudden departure of the secretary general of Bangladesh District and Divisional Football Association (BDDFA), Tarafder Ruhul Amin, many of us were broken down mentally. They [district leaders] were also

disappointed and discouraged. That's why we needed some time to make the district leaders understand and bring them back into the elections," said BDDFA deputy secretary general Shahinul Islam Bhuiyan on way to Sylhet yesterday.

"The organisers at the grassroots were never given the opportunity to serve football but they are the main cogs in the wheel. So, we are not weaker than anyone. We have chosen qualified organisers to compete in the BFF elections in a bid to change the leadership in football. We believe we can win a majority of the posts," said Bhuiyan.

There were also strong whispers that both Tarafder and Roy left the scene following "pressure from some quarters" and many also believe the Integrated Panel may face the same fate in the October 3 polls.

"We are hoping that we won't face any pressure because we are not competing for the presidential post. Besides, those who are going to compete in the elections are

qualified in their respective fields and they will be able to change the fate of the country's football if they get a chance to serve," said Bhuiyan.

Another BDDFA leader, who preferred not to be named, said they are ready to face the challenge as they have experience of such situations.

"After the disclosure of the final candidature of the BFF elections, general people from all over the country have already voiced their opinion against the existing committee on Facebook and we certainly did not tell them to do so. So, we believe we are ready to face any challenges in any circumstance," said the organiser.

"We know pressure may come from different quarters and our well-wishers have advised us to be careful. In the last elections, I was asked to avail all facilities from the hotel after allotting me a room two days before the elections and advised to stay inside the room. If this type of situation returns in upcoming polls, then we won't have nothing to do and it is reality."



Salahuddin brushes off 'professional' Facebook campaign

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Kazi Salahuddin said that his popularity prompted others to criticise him, while maintaining that social media campaigns were being conducted 'professionally'.

"It means I am popular when I am the subject of discussion. I don't use Facebook, so I don't know about it but my office informs me. One interesting thing I have seen is that there were one thousand dislikes under a post about 'Kazi Salahuddin Ahmed'. But you know my name is Kazi Salahuddin. When I saw it, I thought one thousand people couldn't make a mistake. So, I can understand that a platform has been made for this publicity. It is not a big deal to make a platform through Facebook, so I can't give importance to it because it has been done professionally," Salahuddin replied when asked about the criticism on Facebook.

The BFF primo has been subject to the wrath of the country's football fans after deciding to run for president of the BFF four a fourth consecutive term.

A post made by the BFF on Facebook about the polls, slated for October 3, drew 26 thousand comments, most against Kazi Salahuddin. Facebook campaigners also flocked in front of the National Press Club a few days ago to demand Salahuddin and his committee's resignation.

Salahuddin said he had no intent to take any action despite the negative publicity and that he would not resign.

"I have come here to serve football. They and [SA] Sultan [former BFF president] are asking me to resign but there is no scope to do it because the elections are 15 days later. You come here by winning the elections. If you ask the president of a country to resign, there is no logic. Yes, you will ask me to resign, when I am not holding the elections," said the three-time BFF president, who also heavily criticised former footballers.

"I watched some news on TV about people talking about my fourth-term. They, who did not watch football in the past 10 years and some four to five people from the street, are raising questions. You show me whether those who watched football in the past 10 years are saying this? One thing is very clear: five to six footballers, who retired from football for 20 to 25 years, are saying the same things time and again on different channels. But, you never take any interviews of current players. Those five players always contest in the BFF elections and get 12, 10 and 20 votes," said Salahuddin.

'Barca' can't afford Depay

AFP, The Hague

Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas said on Tuesday that his Barcelona counterpart Josep Maria Bartomeu told him the Catalan giants could not afford Memphis Depay after reports in Dutch media a deal was almost complete.

De Telegraaf reported earlier on Tuesday that Netherlands forward Depay was set to join compatriots Frenkie de Jong and Ronald Koeman at Barca this week in a transfer worth 25 million euros.

Responding on Twitter, Aulas said: "The president of Barcelona told me on Sunday that Barca are really suffering from the Covid crisis and were not able to make an offer."

Koeman has been on the hunt for a striker after telling Uruguayan Luis Suarez he wasn't in his plans for the coming season.

Depay played an important role in Lyon's progress to the Champions League semi-final and scored a hat-trick in their opening Ligue 1 win of the season over Dijon.

However, he had announced that he did not wish to extend his Lyon contract, which expires next summer, and has never hidden his desire to play "for a bigger club".

The 26-year-old started on the bench for Lyon's Ligue 1 match against Montpellier on Tuesday night.



YAAMIN'S DREAM COMES TRUE

Sheikh Yaamin Sinan had made the news after photographers captured beautiful images of him playing cricket with his mother at Paltan Maidan last Friday. Yaamin's energy drew the attention of his hero Mushfiqur Rahim and the child got to meet his childhood hero. Mushfiqur himself went to the Banani field yesterday to meet up with the youngster and presented him with his No. 15 shirt along with an autographed memorabilia bat and gloves.

PHOTO: MAASRANGA TV

SLC 'easing up' on BCB's terms

SPORTS REPORTER

Sri Lanka Cricket [SLC] is going through a busy time to set a revised tour plan to host Bangladesh for the three-Test series under the ICC Test Championship.

After Bangladesh Cricket Board President Nazmul Hassan called the SLC's health protocols 'historically unique', SLC got involved in a series of meetings with concerned authorities in the government.

An SLC team led by president Shammil Silva met with the country's head of national operation centre for prevention of Covid-19 outbreak (NOCPCO) Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva, chief of defence staff and commander of the army at the army HQ on Tuesday.

One of the SLC members, during the meeting, listed a copy of the blueprint protocol that has now been laid in connection with the Bangladesh tour beginning on September 27.

Even though SLC is expected to



Head coach Russell Domingo was apparently making some serious points to explosive batsman Liton Das during a nets session in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROOZ AHMED

go through further discussions with health authorities, it has already laid plans that would meet most of BCB's terms. According to sources, SLC is considering to move away

from their stance of mandatory 14-day quarantine period towards a week-long isolation period for Bangladesh.

According to the new plan, the

visitors are expected to have a new bio-secure bubble that would allow Bangladeshi cricketers to practise within the first week of their arrival, but confirming isolation. After the first week, the visitors would be allowed to get into full-fledged training which includes a two-day warm-up game against Sri Lanka A. Meanwhile, SLC is also considering a request to add more members to the contingent travelling to the island. The Tigers are likely to be allowed to have between 35 and 41 members even though SLC had initially instructed to keep the number within thirty including support staff.

The hosts are planning to arrange the camp for Bangladesh in Hambantota, but the BCB, according to sources, is willing to have the conditioning camp in Galle or Dambula as the distance from hotel to the field in Hambantota is almost 45 kilometres.

Kandy is expected to host the first two Tests while the third Test is likely to be played in Colombo.

All quiet in Dortmund, Leipzig as Bayern aim for ninth straight

AFP, Berlin

European champions Bayern Munich begin the hunt for a ninth-straight Bundesliga title on Friday, but while their rivals ponder how to break their iron grip on the German league, the Bavarian giants have pressing issues to resolve on the eve of the new season.

Bayern host Schalke at the Allianz Arena to kick-off the Bundesliga season just 26 days after lifting the Champions League trophy in Lisbon to complete the treble.

They stand to play 57 games in a condensed 2020/21 fixture list, but on Friday, Bayern will be able to play in front of a small number of fans for the first time since March.

However, they have already lost three of the Champions League-winning squad's loans for Ivan Perisic, Philippe Coutinho and Alvaro Odriozola expired.

"We have to make up for it," head coach Hansi Flick admitted with Bayern facing Sevilla in the UEFA Super Cup and Borussia Dortmund for the German Super Cup in the coming fortnight.

Flick's star-studded squad finished last season on an all-conquering 21-game winning run,



After an all-conquering season, Bundesliga champions Bayern Munich still look the team to beat in Germany as they start their campaign for a ninth straight title against Schalke on Friday.

PHOTO: BAYERN MUNICH

including the 8-2 thrashing of Spanish giants Barcelona in the Champions League's semifinals.

"The current team of Hansi Flick is perhaps the best Bayern team ever," Hans-Joachim Watzke, chief executive of arch rivals Borussia Dortmund, declared last month.

"They no longer beat their

opponents -- they destroy them."

Bayern's last loss was at the hands of Moenchengladbach in December.

Watzke refuses to make any statements about Dortmund denying the Bavarians a ninth-straight Bundesliga title in 2020/21.

The messages are similar from the camp of Champions League

semifinalists RB Leipzig, who finished third in the Bundesliga behind Bayern and runners-up Dortmund.

"What Bayern did in Lisbon was impressive," admitted Leipzig's German defender Marcel Halstenberg. "We are working to become even better and to reach their level."

Bayern's impressive run is down to the irresistible form of stars like Thomas Mueller and Robert Lewandowski.

Mueller managed a league-record 21 assists, making a mockery of Joachim Loew's decision to end his Germany career in March 2019. Lewandowski netted 55 goals in 47 games last season, leaving him as the top-scorer in both the Bundesliga, where he hit 34 goals, and the Champions League, where he scored 15 times in 10 games.

However, to preserve the harmony in the dressing room, Flick and the club's bosses must quickly resolve the future of defender David Alaba and midfielder Thiago Alcantara. Both are stalling over signing contract extensions.

"I don't know who is going to leave us and who is going to arrive again. It's not the best way to prepare," Flick has admitted.

SHORT CORNER

PAOK dump Benfica out of Champions League race

Two-time European champions Benfica were dumped out of the Champions League in the qualifiers on Tuesday following a 2-1 defeat at PAOK Thessaloniki.

The Portuguese giants, who won the old European Cup twice in the 1960s, were knocked out by goals from Dimitrios Giannoulis and Andrija Zivkovic.

Benfica finished second in the Portuguese top division but had a tough draw at PAOK, who finished second in the Greek Super League.

They will not have a chance to overcome the defeat because the third qualifying round is being contested with single-leg ties.

-- AFP



and complained of back trouble.

The Colombian, 23, saw his title defence effectively extinguished on Sunday, the first major mountain stage, when he slipped to more than eight minutes off the pace.

"This is obviously not how I wanted my Tour de France to end, but I agree that it is the right decision for me in the circumstances," Bernal said in a team statement.

"We have taken this decision with Egan's best interests at heart," said Ineos team principal Dave Brailsford.

"Egan is a true champion who loves to race, but he is also a young rider, with many Tours ahead of him and at this point, on balance, we feel it is wiser for him to stop racing." -- AFP

Defending champion withdraws from Tour de France

Last year's winner Egan Bernal has withdrawn from the Tour de France, his Ineos team said on Wednesday, after the young Colombian fell out of contention