

Sterling move confirmed

AFP, Bangkok

Liverpool boss Brendan Rodgers confirmed Monday his team plans to sell Raheem Sterling to a rival club as he played down reports of an acrimonious rift over the restless England forward.

Speaking in Bangkok where Liverpool have begun a pre-season overseas tour, the Northern Irish manager confirmed Sterling would leave, subject to passing medical tests.

He declined to confirm where the 20-year-old was going or how much for, but British media say Sterling will go to Manchester City in a deal worth over £49 million (\$76 million, 68 million euro).

"The club has agreed with another club a deal for him to be transferred. Subject to a medical that will go through," Rodgers said.

"Contrary to probably the last week or so in terms of what was written, Raheem and I have always remained very strong in our relationship and have been right up until we left. So there's no issue there," he added.

Sterling's refusal to commit to Liverpool has angered the club's supporters, who jeered him at an end-of-season awards dinner.

Rodgers's relationship with Sterling cooled considerably when the player turned down a lucrative new contract worth £100,000 per week in January this year.

Two months later, Sterling's relationship with the Liverpool hierarchy became even more strained when, in an interview with the BBC given without the club's approval, he confirmed he had rejected the Reds' latest contract offer.

'Don't write me off yet'

AFP, London

Roger Federer warned his rivals not to write him off yet after a Wimbledon final defeat that left the Swiss star without a major title for three years.

Federer's bid for a first Grand Slam crown since he last won Wimbledon in 2012 was shattered by Novak Djokovic as the world number one clinched a 7-6 (7/1), 6-7 (10/12), 6-4, 6-3 victory on Sunday.

Federer has won only one of the last 22 Grand Slam events and, with the world number two turning 34 before the US Open starts in August, there will be many who believe his 10th Wimbledon final will prove to be his last chance to add to his 17 Grand Slam titles.

But the 33-year-old insists his dominant run to the final, which included a sublime semifinal rout of former champion Andy Murray, and a strong first two sets against Djokovic showed there is still plenty of life in him yet.

"I lost against the world No. 1 at the moment. That's the kind of guy you probably can lose against. I'm not going to accept it and say it's normal. It's not," Federer said.

"But I've beaten him a few times. I'm one of the few guys that's gotten a chance."

Although he has won Wimbledon for the last two years, Djokovic has yet to inspire that kind of hero worship that Federer enjoyed in the final and the Swiss admitted he was touched by the crowd's support.

12TH SOUTH ASIAN GAMES BOA mulls reduction in disciplines

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) is mulling sending athletes in less number of disciplines in the upcoming 12th South Asian Games, to be held in Shillong and Guwahati from January 10 to 20, 2015, compared to the last edition which was held in Dhaka in 2010.

Hosts Bangladesh had participated in all the 23 disciplines last time around and recorded their best achievement so far, winning 18 gold, 23 silver and 56 bronze medals to finish third in the medal list behind India and Pakistan. However, due to the lack of activities of a number of federations, the BOA training and development committee members are planning to trim a number of disciplines from the contingent this time around.

Judo federation does not have any activities to speak of. Why would we send athletes in such a discipline? Ushu and Squash federations have not organised any national championship or any such events in recent past. These two disciplines may also be chalked off from the contingent. We will soon decide on how many disciplines Bangladesh will be taking part in this sporting extravaganza," said BOA's training and development committee chairman Ashiqur Rahman Miku.

The 12th edition is likely to feature 23 disciplines like the previous edition, which was decided during a meeting of the Olympic association representatives of all eight participating countries during a meeting in New Delhi recently.

The meeting also decided to hold the

event in January, against the wish of the Bangladeshi delegates, who wanted it to be held in March so that the athletes might get enough time to train.

"We wanted the games to be held in March, but the organisers stuck to their decision of hosting the event in January," said BOA's training and development committee chairman Ashiqur Rahman Miku.

"We could have got more time for preparation if the games were held in March. However, we are now planning to start preparation camps right after the Eid-ul-Fitr."

The BOA has already notified the federations asking them to get ready to start camp soon while the BOA secretary general, Syed Shehed Reza, is expected to meet government high-ups soon in an attempt to secure fund for the training camps.

Schneiderlin seals United deal

AFP, Manchester



France international midfielder Morgan Schneiderlin became Manchester United manager Louis van Gaal's fourth signing of the close season when he joined Manchester United from English Premier League rivals Southampton on Monday.

The 25-year-old -- who joined Southampton from French side Strasbourg for just 1.5million euros (£1.2million) in 2008 -- signed a four year contract with United.

Schneiderlin has long been linked with a move to Old Trafford and it had been reported United had a bid in the region of £20 million (\$31.2 million, 28 million euros) rejected up to two weeks ago.

Schneiderlin, who played for France at last year's World Cup finals after being a pivotal figure in the Saints establishing themselves as a competitive side in the Premier League, said while he had loved his time at Southampton it had been an easy decision for him to make once he heard United were interested.

"I am delighted to be a Manchester United player. Once I learned that United were interested in signing me, it was a very easy decision to make," said Schneiderlin, who was at one point linked with a move to Arsenal.



Fenerbahce's latest signing Dutch striker Robin van Persie (R) is greeted by fans upon his arrival at the Sabiha Gokcen Airport in Istanbul on Sunday. PHOTO: AFP

Hero's welcome for RVP

AFP, Istanbul

Dutch international striker Robin Van Persie was Sunday given a hero's welcome by fans as he arrived in Istanbul to join Turkish football giants Fenerbahce on an eagerly-awaited transfer from Manchester United.

Van Persie landed at Sabiha Gokcen airport the Asian side of Istanbul after flying in on a private jet and was given a typically raucous reception by hundreds of supporters clad in the yellow and navy blue colours of the club.

Accompanied by his wife Bouchra Elbali and their two children, he walked out of the airport into a cacophony of chanting from supporters, with the air thick with the smoke from flares lit by the fans.

Apparently unfazed by the scenes, he squeezed his way through the

crowds of fans and photographers to begin his new life in Turkey.

In a sign of his importance for the club, his entire arrival was covered live on the club's in house TV channel Fenerbahce TV, including even the landing of the plane and passport control.

"I have seen a lot over the years but I have never seen anything like this," Van Persie told the supporters.

"I hope that I'm going to make you happy... it's an honour."

Before leaving Manchester airport, Van Persie had posted pictures on social media of himself, already wearing a Fenerbahce scarf, and his family waving goodbye on the tarmac and also one of him at the controls of the plane.

Fenerbahce's chairman Aziz Yildirim had on Saturday announced the transfer of Van Persie was a done deal and, according to Turkish press reports, his formal signing ceremony is

expected on Monday.

Fenerbahce -- runners up to hated Istanbul rivals Galatasaray last season in the championship -- have gone on a spending spree in a bid to dominate the Super Lig and be a real contender in Europe.

Earlier this week, Fenerbahce signed Portuguese star Nani also from United for six million euros (£4.26m, \$6.7m) and in June bought Danish centre-back Simon Kjaer from French side Lille.

According to press reports, Van Persie's transfer fee will be 4.7 million euros (£3.4m, \$5.2m).

Van Persie, 31, made 105 appearances and scored 58 goals during his three years at Manchester United from August 2012.

But his last season was marred by an ankle ligament injury and speculation of tension between himself and Manchester United boss Louis van Gaal, who had guided Van Persie and his countrymen to third place in the

Perez wanted Casillas to stay

INTERNET

The Madrid supremo has hit back at those criticising him for his attitude toward the shot-stopper and has stressed he did not want him to leave.

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez has insisted that he did not push Iker Casillas out and wanted him to retire at the Santiago Bernabeu instead.

The 34-year-old goalkeeper announced his decision to leave for Porto at the weekend, signing a two-year deal with the Primeira Liga side.

Casillas' exit led to uproar among some Madrid fans, who feel the Spain international was driven away from his boyhood club by Perez, while the goalkeeper's parents also hit out at the club's president.

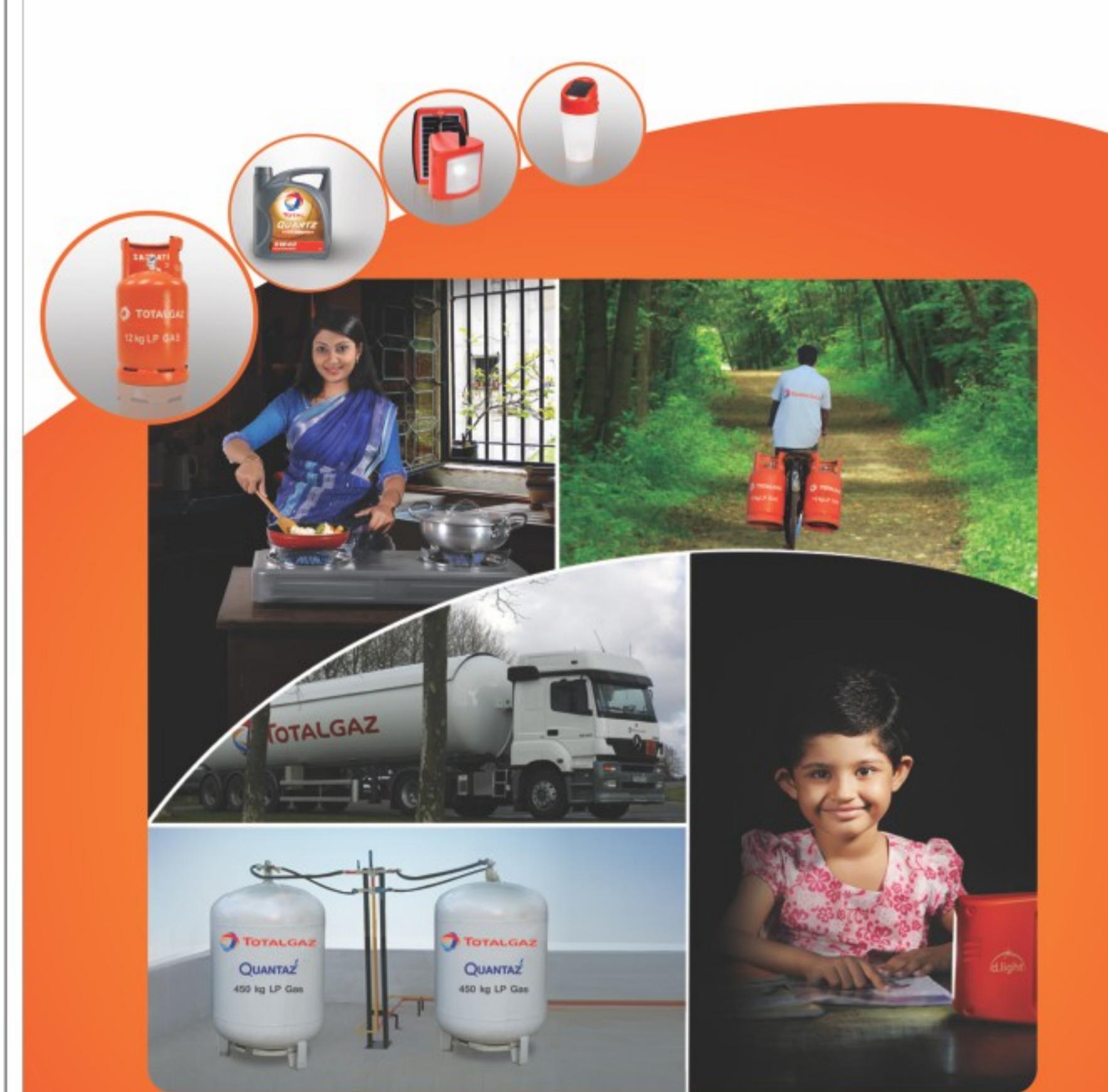
Nevertheless, Perez has stressed that he never wanted Casillas to leave and that it was the glovesman's own decision to depart.

"There has been a lot of pressure on him in the past two years. I have to accept his decision, but I wish he would have ended his career here," Perez said at a press conference.

"No one from Madrid asked Iker to leave the club. There was an offer from Porto and we took it into consideration."

"Iker arrived at this club at the age of nine and leaves having won everything. I am sure that for many years to come the Madrid fans will remember Iker as one of the most legendary players ever."

Our Best Wishes and Heartiest Felicitations to the Friendly People and the Government of the Republic of France on Their National Day



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Wimbledon champions Serena Williams (L) of USA and Novak Djokovic of Serbia pose with their respective trophies at the Champions Dinner in London on Sunday.

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Chelsea sign Begovic

AFP, London

Premier League champions Chelsea on Monday announced the signing of Bosnian international goalkeeper Asmir Begovic from Stoke City.

Begovic, 28, has agreed a four-year deal at Stamford Bridge, with Chelsea paying Stoke an undisclosed fee to make the goalkeeper their second major signing of the summer.

British press reports put the fee at £8 million (\$12.4m, 11.2m euros).

"I am very happy to be joining Chelsea FC. After speaking at length to the manager, I feel like I can develop here and be an important part of this team," Begovic told Chelsea's official website.

His arrival in west London follows the signing of Colombian striker Radamel Falcao on a season-long loan from Monaco, and the giant shot-stopper will give Thibaut Courtois competition for places between the posts after Petr Cech was sold to Arsenal.

Ronaldinho returns home

AFP, Paris

Brazilian former world player of the year Ronaldinho has returned home to sign for Rio de Janeiro club Fluminense.

A picture of the 35-year-old wearing the distinctive maroon and green striped shirt of 'Flu' was posted on the club's Twitter account over the weekend as he agreed to team up with fellow former Brazilian international Fred.

"Warriors! I feel at home! Thanks for the support! An honour to become a tricolour. We are together," Ronaldinho tweeted.

He had been a free agent since leaving Mexican side Queretaro in June after a disappointing year at the club.