

BFF ELECTIONS 2016

Combined panel makes hefty promises

SPORTS REPORTER

The Kazi Salahuddin-led combined panel yesterday disclosed a 25-point manifesto for the upcoming Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) polls, with pledges to strengthen District Football Associations, to make the Sylhet Football Academy functional, revive the national, youth and club football championships and send 40 budding footballers abroad for long-term training.

Ruhul Amin Tarafder, chief coordinator of the panel's election cell and Chittagong Abahani's football committee chairman,

coaches at district level; distributing 100,000 footballs across the country each year; building up an international standard fitness centre for the national footballer and bringing national footballers under salary structure and insurance; appointing a foreign coaching staff; arranging four to five international friendly matches each year; taking initiatives to install astro-turfs at divisional headquarters gradually; holding the Bangabandhu Gold Cup, Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup, Franchise-based Bangladesh Super League; including district representatives in all BFF sub-committees; conduct coaches' and referees' training courses and sending them overseas for attaining better standard.

The manifesto, however, failed to address the much-talked-about 'Vision 2020 programme'; setting a clear target for the national team in four years following three consecutive failures in the SAFF Championship; and the announcement of bringing Bangladesh Premier League clubs into professional structure.

There were also no indications in the manifesto as to how those promises would be materialised by the cash-strapped football's governing body.

"As most of the fund provided by FIFA and AFC is spent for BFF staff and maintenance, we will be trying to convince the government to include football in the annual budget apart from our effort to collect fund from sponsors to achieve our goals," said BFF's senior vice-president Abdus Salam Murshedy, who has already been elected unopposed.

"We, all the 21 candidates, have agreed to the 25-point pledges before finalising it, and we are committed to implementing those if we are elected," said incumbent BFF vice-president Badal Roy, who is also the member secretary of the panel's election cell.



Abdus Salam Murshedy (C) addresses media during the combined panel's manifesto declaration at a hotel in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

read out a written statement at a city hotel yesterday after highlighting the activities of the incumbent BFF executive committee over the last eight years. The other candidates of the panel, except for Salahuddin, were present during the declaration.

Other notable pledges of the manifesto are: helping Dhaka clubs technically and financially to form age-level teams; helping DFAs to run football coaching centres; taking initiatives with assistance of government and private companies to set up football academies at district and Upazila level; tying up football academies with foreign academies; appointing BFF-paid



Chittagong Abahani's Koushik Barua (front) and Sheikh Jamal's Yeasin Ahmed engage in an aerial tussle during their KFC Independence Cup fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Chittagong Abahani through after draw against Sk Jamal

SPORTS REPORTER

KFC Independence Cup 2016

Chittagong Abahani moved into the semifinals of the KFC Independence Cup with a come-from-behind 1-1 draw with leaders Sheikh Jamal DC in their final group match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The stalemate saw Sheikh Jamal emerge as Group A champions with 13 points from five outings. They will now face either Abahani or Team BJMC in the semifinal while Chittagong Abahani -- with 10 points from five matches -- will face Group B champions Sheikh Russel KC.

Since Sheikh Jamal had already qualified for the last-four battle with a match to spare, the game was crucial for big-budget Chittagong Abahani, especially with Muktijoddha Sangsad nipping at their heels with an equal nine points. But now Chittagong Abahani can breathe a sigh of relief as they too have booked their semifinal seat.

Besides all this, the match was particularly interesting due to the off-field battle both sides are embroiled in over the control of five footballers. However, the animosity was not visible on-field.

Meanwhile, the fate of those five footballers is still to be decided in the court of the BFF's players' status committee.

Chittagong Abahani, who came into the match after a morale-shattering 0-5 drubbing at the hands of a youthful Mohammedan, were much-improved but their efforts were not enough to take them past Sheikh Jamal, who debuted Egyptian defender Eligilani Nagi in place of midfielder Landing Darboe.

The port-city outfit nearly snatched the lead in the 13th minute when Leonel Saint Preux darted into the box after a quick exchange with Shariful Islam. And with only Sheikh Jamal goalkeeper Mazharul Islam Himel left to beat, the Haitian hitman shot over the crossbar.

Landing's absence was felt as he is usually the playmaker to the lethal attacking pair of Wedson

Anselme and Emeka Darlington, hence Sheikh Jamal struggled to expose the Chittagong Abahani backline. Due to a bad tackle from goalkeeper Ashrafal Islam Rana in the 17th minute, Sheikh Jamal were awarded a penalty which Darlington tucked away.

After resumption, Chittagong Abahani pressed hard for the equaliser as Preux drove into the box, but his curled shot was tipped over the crossbar by Sheikh Jamal keeper Himel.

However, Himel was powerless to stop the a powerful header from Alison Udoka in the 73rd minute as Chittagong Abahani secured a semifinal berth in a top level domestic competition for the first time.

Bolt, Mirza make Time's 100 list

AFP, New York

Sports figures including Jamaican sprint star Usain Bolt and NBA Most Valuable Player Stephen Curry pepper Time magazine's 2016 '100 Most Influential People' list published Thursday.

US golfer Jordan Spieth, Britain's Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton, UFC great Ronda Rousey and American swimmer Katie Ledecky also made the list.

So did Indian tennis player Sania Mirza, ranked number one in the world in doubles who was praised as an inspiration to a generation of Indians in a tribute written by cricketer Sachin Tendulkar.

Ziggy Marley writes on Bolt, calling him a "unifying force" in Jamaica, while ballerina Misty Copeland writes in appreciation of Golden State Warriors star Curry. Other names with sporting links to make the list include Caitlyn Jenner -- the former Olympic decathlon champion turned transgender icon.

Hodgson opens door for Rashford

AFP, London

England manager Roy Hodgson has cautiously opened the door to a Euro 2016 call-up for 18-year-old Manchester United breakthrough star Marcus Rashford by describing it as "not inconceivable".

Rashford, who has only been capped at under-20 level, has made an astonishing start to life at Old Trafford since making his debut in February, scoring seven goals in 13 appearances.

Hodgson is well furnished in the striking department, with skipper Wayne Rooney, Harry Kane, Jamie Vardy, Daniel Sturridge, Danny Welbeck and Theo Walcott all in contention for a place in his squad for France.

But he said: "Is it inconceivable that he (Rashford) could go with England? No, it's not inconceivable.

"But it looks unlikely to me with the current players we've got and the competition for places in that area of the field."

Hodgson added: "I think it would be a very bold decision to put him in



by describing it as "not inconceivable".

and I think it would mean possibly leaving someone behind who at the moment, in my opinion, has more reason to be called up.

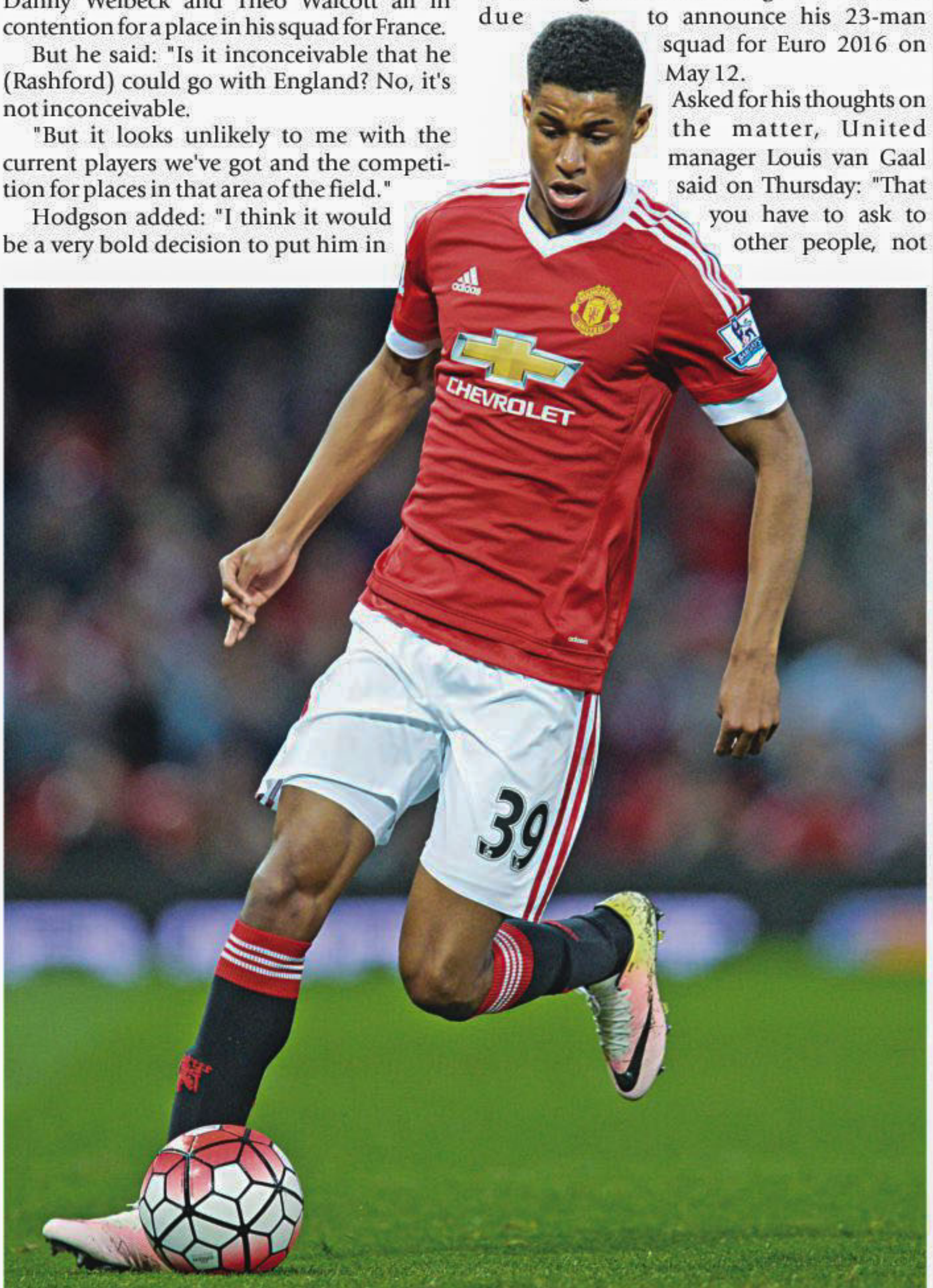
"But you never know. The fact is it would be foolish as well to say, 'No, no, he's not ready, he can't do it.' I am sure he could do it.

"I am sure if there was enough spaces available and if we were taking 30, we'd certainly, probably be considering him.

"But when it's 23 and we've already got a bit of a headache with the front players -- who can we take, who might we have to leave out -- to put another one in there who is 19 years of age, has four or five games, is asking a lot. But I have been impressed with him."

Hodgson, who was speaking to journalists during a media briefing in London, is due to announce his 23-man squad for Euro 2016 on May 12.

Asked for his thoughts on the matter, United manager Louis van Gaal said on Thursday: "That you have to ask to other people, not



Kane warns Leicester

AFP, London

Harry Kane has warned leaders Leicester that title-chasing Tottenham are happy to play catch up as the race for the Premier League crown enters the final furlong.

For the second weekend in a row, second placed Tottenham, who host West Bromwich Albion on Monday, kick off 24 hours after Leicester, with Claudio Ranieri's side at home to Swansea on Sunday.

But Kane insists the perceived burden of having to follow Leicester is actually a bonus because it gets his team's juices flowing.

That Kane and company have no problem dealing with the pressure of trying to overhaul Leicester was clear to see last Monday when they won 4-0 at Stoke to take advantage of the leaders' draw with West Ham the previous day.

Mauricio Pochettino's team are now five points behind Leicester with four matches remaining and England forward Kane is hoping this weekend's crucial fixtures follow a similar pattern.

"Watching all the football over the weekend and having to wait until Monday night to play, gets you ready, gets you firing," Kane said.



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Badree out of IPL

AFP, New Delhi

West Indian leg-spinner Samuel Badree has been ruled out of the rest of the Indian Premier League with an injury that he picked in the recent World Twenty20 final.

Badree, who played a major role in the Windies' triumph over England on April 3 by taking two wickets, was unable to play a single match for his IPL franchise, the Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Badree, 35, appeared to have hurt his shoulder and wrist while trying to take a diving catch at short third man in the 19th over of the England innings.

RCB have signed South African spinner Tabraiz Shamsi as Badree's replacement in the ninth edition of the cash-rich league.

FIXTURES	
(1400 GMT unless stated)	
Saturday	Aston Villa v Southampton, Bournemouth v Chelsea, Liverpool v Newcastle, Manchester City v Stoke (1145 GMT)
Sunday	Leicester v Swansea (1515 GMT) Sunderland v Arsenal (1305 GMT)
Monday	Tottenham v West Brom (1900 GMT)

Mumbai challenges HC decision

PTI, Mumbai

The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) has moved the Supreme Court challenging the High Court's order to move the Indian Premier League (IPL) matches out of the city due to drought in the state.

The matter will come up for hearing on April 25.

The Mumbai High Court had ordered moving all IPL matches from April 30 onward out of the Maharashtra, which affected the schedule of 13 matches in Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur initially before the BCCI's request to hold the May 1 game in Pune as scheduled was agreed upon by the HC.

'It's in Barca's hands'

AFP, Madrid

Having scored four and provided three assists as Barcelona roared back into form with an 8-0 thrashing of Deportivo la Coruna in midweek, Luis Suarez has refused to contemplate any other outcome than Barca retaining their La Liga title.

The Catalan giants lead Atletico Madrid solely thanks to their superior head-to-head record with Real Madrid just one point back in third with four games to go.

However, having taken just one point from their previous four league matches, Suarez believes Barca are fully back on course for a 24th La Liga title.

"We needed that victory. We came off the back of many games suffering and, as we are human, the defeats hurt," he said.

"It is in our hands and if we win all our games what the others do doesn't bother us. The normal thing would be that none of us slip up.

"We are the leaders and we are convinced we are going to win it. We aren't contemplating anything other than winning."



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Lionel Messi and Neymar were also on target against Deportivo as Barca's star front three responded in style to their critics as fatigue appeared to catch up with the South American trio in the past month after a hugely demanding season as Barca competed in six competitions.

And Suarez reserved special words of support for Neymar, whose performances and off-field attitude had been the target for particular criticism during Barca's slump.

"It hurts that people put the responsibility on him for the defeats. He is a boy with feelings and he's my friend," added the Uruguayan.

"We all try to support one another. He is showing by his attitude that he won't give up."

FIXTURES	
(all times GMT)	
Saturday	Rayo Vallecano v Real Madrid (1400), Atletico Madrid v Malaga (1615), Barcelona v Sporting Gijon (1830), Eibar v Deportivo la Coruna (2005)
Sunday	Levante v Athletic Bilbao (1000), Sevilla v Real Betis (1400), Getafe v Valencia (1615), Villarreal v Real Sociedad (1830)
Monday	Celta Vigo v Granada (1830)

Barca will be back to full strength for the visit of a Sporting Gijon side fighting to avoid relegation at the bottom of the table on Saturday with Gerard Pique to return from suspension in central defence.

However, Barca could be third by the time they kick-off with Real Madrid in action away at Rayo Vallecano and Atletico Madrid hosting Malaga earlier on Saturday ahead of their Champions League semi-finals in midweek.

Cristiano Ronaldo is a major doubt for Real's trip to Vallecas after limping off in stoppage time of their 3-0 win over Villarreal on Wednesday with a minor hamstring problem.

The three-time World Player of the Year has been an ever-present for Madrid in La Liga this season, but is unlikely to be risked just three days before Real travel to Manchester City for the first leg of their semi-final.

However, with Zinedine Zidane's men in sensational form having won their last eight La Liga games, midfielder Luka Modric believes they have the strength in depth to cope with Ronaldo's absence.

"We are Real Madrid and we have the squad to fight for the two titles," said the Croatian.