

ENRIQUE RETURNS AS SPAIN COACH

Luis Enrique will return as coach of Spain and replace Robert Moreno ahead of Euro 2020, the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) confirmed on Tuesday. Moreno took charge in June after Luis Enrique had resigned to take care of his daughter Xana, who died in August of bone cancer. "Today we can confirm Luis Enrique returns to his position of work," RFEF president Luis Rubiales said in a press conference at the national team's training base in Las Rozas. Rubiales said Luis Enrique has a contract until the 2022 World Cup in Qatar and that it will be up to him whether Moreno is offered a chance to resume his previous role as assistant coach. The pair were close friends and also worked together at Barcelona, Celta Vigo and Roma.

--Afp



Unlike how it has been in the recent past, the turnout at the Bangladesh Football Federation House on the penultimate day of the players' transfer window for the Bangladesh Premier League was a sight to behold. (Clockwise from L) Mohammedan SC's procession was a lively affair with bands belting out tunes for the fans to chant to while Police FC took a more regal approach and were escorted by horsemen. Meanwhile, fans of defending champions Bashundhara Kings donned the club jersey to lend support to their club.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Teams complete transfers amid huge fanfare

SPORTS REPORTER

The charm of the players' transfers for top-flight football in the domestic circuit had all but vanished following the introduction of a long transfer window for the Bangladesh Premier League in 2007. However, the old-fashion inter-club transfers' appeal returned on the penultimate day of the seven-week transfer window with four teams completing their official registration processes amid much fanfare.

In the recent past, the participating clubs completed their player registration formalities without the footballers physically being present on the occasion. This time around though, the current squads of title holders Bashundhara Kings, Mohammedan SC, Sheikh Russel KC and the newly promoted Bangladesh Police FC all turned up at the Bangladesh Football Federation headquarters in vibrant processions. There were horse-drawn carriages and marching bands while the various club officials and supporters donned their respective team jerseys.

With all four clubs present in a lively mood at the football federation premises, the excitement roused by the transfers in the past was almost palpable. To make matters more interesting, it turned out that the clubs had formed comparatively strong squads for next season, which is expected to get underway through the Federation Cup halfway through December.

BASHUNDHARA KINGS

Last season, defending champions Bashundhara

Kings suffered from defensive woes but this time around they reinforced their backline with the inclusion of national defenders Yeasin Khan, Tapu Barman, Bishwanath Gosh and the Finland-born Kazi Tariq Raihan alongside midfielders Biplu Ahmed, Rabiul Hasan and Atiqur Rahman Fahad. Bashundhara also retained the services of 11 other current national team players such as Mahbubur Rahman, Sushanta Tripura, Masuk Mia Jonny, Towhidul Alam Sabuz, Mohammad Ibrahim and goalkeeper Anisur Rahman. Their striker from last season, world cupper Daniel Colindres, was also retained. Bashundhara now have 10 current national team players overall in their squad.

"Our target is to defend the title of the prestigious league and fight for all tournament titles this season as we have formed a balanced and better side than last season. We also want to perform well in the AFC Cup to bring laurels for the country," said Bashundhara Kings president Imrul Hasan.

MOHAMMEDAN SC

There were no remarkable recruits for Mohammedan's youthful squad aside from goalkeeping national discard Mazharul Islam Himel. However, the presence of former Mohammedan players, draped in the team's black and white jersey of the 1960s, was significant, especially after the club's involvement in the recent casino scandal. The Black and Whites ended at ninth in the last edition and so will look for a top three finish this time.

"We have not only started afresh at home, but also began anew in the ground by forming

a youthful squad as we are moving forward to overcome the recent turmoil. We want to prove ourselves through performing well on the ground as our Australian coach Sean Lane roped in five-quality foreign footballers," said MSC director and football committee chairman Manjurul Alam Manju.

BANGLADESH POLICE FC

"Bangladesh Police have long been involved with football which is the country's traditional discipline. Hundreds of thousands of people are involved with football and we are happy to qualify for the BPL as BCL champions," said Bangladesh Police FC president and RAB DG Benazir Ahmed. "We are determined to display good football and entertain the spectators as well as contribute to football."

Manager and Police SAFF College rector Sheikh Maruf Hasan said that they have appointed a foreign coach and roped in foreign players in a bid to stay in top-flight football.

SHEIKH RUSSEL KC

Sheikh Russel, who finished third last season, retained the services of 11 players, including national goalkeeper Ashraful Islam Rana, in their 35-member squad, however, they had to release national defender Yeasin Khan, Bishwanath Gosh and Biplu Ahmed.

"Definitely, we will try to produce better results than last season but I think this season is going to be harder than the last and no one can ensure that they can win the title. We have a balanced side with a good reserve-bench," said coach Saiful Bari Titu.

Archers leave for Thailand tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER



21st Asian Archery Championship, which will be held in Bangkok from November 21 to 29.

Spearheaded by the country's best archer Ruman Sana, the team will feature eight recurve archers and seven compound archers.

Although Bangladesh will definitely look to leave a mark on the 27-nation meet, this event is being seen as a preparation platform for the Bangladesh team's South Asian Games assignment next month.

Bangladesh Archery Federation general secretary Kazi Rajibuddin Ahmed Chapol, during a press conference at the NSC conference room yesterday, said that they were targeting much better results than what they had achieved in previous editions of the regional multi-sport meet.

"The archers are undergoing the last stages of training now. We are not setting any target for the Asian Championship, which will be a preparation for the SA Games," Chapol told reporters.

The team will return from Thailand

on November 29 and will leave for the SA Games in Nepal on December 3 to compete in 10 events. One more archer, Suma Biswas of compound event, will join the SA Games team after skipping the Asian Championship due to exams, Chapol informed.

Asked whether they were looking for a gold-rush in the SA Games in the absence of regional superpowers India, who have been banned by the World Archery Federation, Chapol said they were not trying to put undue pressure on the archers.

"We are not really taking India's absence as a big deal. In fact we respect all the other nations as Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan have been training under foreign coaches for quite some time. So we don't want to attach a specific medals target on our archers and thereby jeopardise their chances by putting extra pressure," the organiser said.

The archery events of the SA Games will be held in Pokhara, Nepal from December 5 to 9 where, apart from the players and coaches, an eight-member Bangladesh team will also work as technical officials of the events.

The press conference was attended, among others, by archery team head coach Martin Frederick and sponsors City Group executive director Zafar Uddin Siddiqui.

Expectations amid shortcomings

SPORTS REPORTER



Officials of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) and other federations expressed their hope of playing in the final of their respective disciplines in the upcoming 13th South Asian Games during a seminar yesterday.

The seminar, titled 'SA Games: Bangladesh's expectations and reality', and organised by the Bangladesh Sports Press Association (BSPA), was held at the conference room of the National Sports Council (NSC).

Bangladesh, with a contingent of 591 members including both players and officials, will take part in 25 out of 27 disciplines in the biggest multi-sport festival of South Asia, to be held in Nepal from December 1 to 10.

Although Bangladesh won only four gold medals in the last edition in 2016, expectations are high this time, especially after it was learned that India, the sporting superpower of the region, may not take part in at least 10 disciplines.

BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag, while speaking as a guest, expressed hope that Bangladesh would at least play for the gold medal in the men's football event.

"We hope to play in the final. Our team will be comprised of 17 players from the national team and we will start preparations in two days," Shohag said, adding that India's likely absence will make it easy for Bangladesh to reach the final.

BCB selector Habibul Bashar, who has been given the charge of manager of the men's cricket team, said they were looking to win the gold.

"We were told by the board to form a team to win the gold medal. Our emerging team is currently

playing a tournament. We will start training soon and hope to win gold. Playing in a multi-sport games will be a different experience for us," Bashar said.

Apart from these two disciplines, hopes are high in events such as archery, shooting, kabaddi, etc. There were promises of gold and medals of other colours from officials of taekwondo, cycling, weightlifting, etc., even though officials of two of the most important disciplines of the games -- athletics and swimming -- were not present at the seminar.

More than expectations though, there was expressions of frustration and disappointment from the speakers as Bangladesh have been consistently falling behind other countries in most of the disciplines. The sorry picture was depicted by keynote speaker Badiuzzaman Milon, a senior reporter of Daily Prothom Alo, before the other speakers deliberated on salient points and recommendations of the paper.

Mahfuza Khatun Shila, a double gold-medallist swimmer from the last edition who will participate this time as the country's flag-bearer in opening ceremony, said more needs to be done to ensure the well-being of athletes' in their post-career lives.

Journalists stressed on the need for better training facilities and better nutrition and diet of athletes to ensure better results from them while the need to look into the expenditures of federations was also stressed upon.

The seminar was attended, among others, by NSC secretary Masud Karim, BOA vice-president Bashir Ahmed, BOA treasurer Kazi Rajibuddin Ahmed and Bangladesh SA Games' contingent's chef de mission Asaduzzaman Kohinoor.

SOUTH ASIAN GAMES

BFF reveals U-23 team

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation yesterday announced a 20-member squad for the upcoming South Asian Games featuring 16 national players in the under-23 team, which will compete against five other nations, aside from India, from December 1 to 10 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Senior team captain Jamal Hossain Bhuiyan, striker Nabib Newaj Jibon and defender Yeasin Khan were also included as senior players. The other 13 current national players are goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico, defenders Rahmat Mia, Bishwanath Gosh, Tutul Hossain Badsha, Riyadul Hasan and Yeasin Arafat, midfielders Biplu Ahmed, Rakib Hossain, Rabiul Hasan and Arifur Rahman and forwards Mahbubur Rahman Sufil, Saad Uddin and Mohammad Ibrahim.

Goalkeepers Pappu Hossain and Mahfuz Hasan Pritom and defender Sushanta Tripura and Mohammad Al Amin were also included for the first time in Jamie Day's squad.

All the players were requested to report to team manager Satyajit Das Rupu on Nov 21.



Superstar Lionel Messi scored a late penalty as Argentina drew 2-2 with Uruguay in an international friendly at the Bloomfield Stadium in Tel Aviv on Monday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Danes, Swiss secure spots

Afp, Paris



Denmark and Switzerland secured spots at Euro 2020 at the expense of the Republic of Ireland on Monday as Roberto Mancini's Italy completed a perfect qualifying campaign by scoring nine.

Ireland needed to beat Denmark in Dublin to clinch qualification for next year's 24-team European Championship finals, but Matt Doherty's late

header was only enough to earn Mick McCarthy's men a 1-1 draw at the Aviva Stadium.

A closely-fought contest swung the visitors' way when the unmarked Martin Braithwaite stuck out a boot to divert a Henrik Dalsgaard cross into the net on 73 minutes.

However, Ireland scored a late equaliser to draw 1-1 in Copenhagen as Wolverhampton Wanderers right-back Doherty headed in an Enda Stevens cross with five minutes left.

Switzerland secured top spot with a 6-1 away win against minnows Gibraltar as Cedric Itten scored twice. Skipper and Arsenal outcast Granit Xhaka netted their final goal.

Italy had already wrapped up qualification from Group J but they saved their best for last, making it 10 wins from 10 by hammering Armenia 9-1 in Palermo with seven different scorers.

Serie A top scorer Ciro Immobile and Nicolo Zaniolo both scored braces.