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THE ANCHOR

THE UNDER-16 TEAM HAS CHARTED ITS PATH TO GLORY WITH LITTLE HELP FROM OTHERS

City soccer team off to Children's Olympics

Arunima Rajan. BANGALORE

In spite of numerous hurdles, an under-16 soccer team from the city is putting its best foot forward for the upcoming 44th International Children's Games in Manama, the capital of Kingdom of Bahrain.

The International Children's Games take place under the auspices of the International Olympic Committee, and are held in a different city each year, taking the form of Children's Olympics.

It is for the second time that the Bangalore Schools Sports Foundation (BSSF) team will represent the city in the international competition, conducted by the Olympic committee. The team will fly soon to Bahrain to participate in the international event to be held from June 28 to July 3.

"This time, we want to win. The foreign teams constantly change their tactics and keep changing their formations. Hardly anyone gets a chance to go for an international competition," says Aahan Sachdev, a student of National Academy for Learning.

The BSSF was established in 2007 by two former athletes Elvis Joseph and Lionel Johnas. The members of soccer team are from various schools including Mallya



KID POWER: The under-16 team is set to fly to Bahrain for the International Children Games

Aditi International School, Ebenezer International School, National Academy for Learning, Indus International School, Vidyaniketan Public School, National Public School, Bangalore International School, St Joseph's Boys High School and Jain Heritage School.

"Playing against bigger soccer nation is a big exposure. This year, the team is really up to the mark. We

are training really hard. When you aim big, you set your benchmarks and move forward," says Elvis Joseph, managing trustee of BSSF.

The team currently practices in the Holy Ghost Church grounds in Frazer Town. "We are not able to afford practising in private grounds. Corporates pay big money for conducting events in these spaces. These are some of the challenges that we face," says the former athlete.

The team members are meeting the expenses of the trip. "We approached many people for sponsorship. But the moment, you mention it's for children, they backed out from helping us," says Elvis.

Rigorous training has become part of the daily routine of team members. They put in 10 hours weekly for the competition.

"We want to perform better this time. We used to get tired within the first 10 minutes of the game last year," said Arjun Malhotra, a grade 9 student of Mallya Aditi International School.

As the concept of sponsoring talented players from countries is catching up, coaches are also hoping that a few of their talented students will get noticed.

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