

A Finale Not Fitting Enough

In the battle of the giants it was the favourite that has won. But the win is surely at the cost of elegance. The 120-minute proceeding at the Rose Bowl Stadium in Pasadena, Los Angeles has forced one of the TV commentators to make an uncharitable comment on Brazil's fourth win of football's greatest honour. Not many will contest his observation when the commentator says that it was the crudest possible way of settling the fate of the match that also never lived up to the expectation of a classic showdown between two of the greatest football-playing nations.

Sure enough, it was a titanic battle without the titanic quality that makes such a finale of the world's greatest single sporting show so special. That it was a poor shadow of the 1970 classic encounter between these two teams cannot be disputed. For Brazil it is the fulfilment of a hope after 24 years' agonising wait. Italy had their share of joy in holding the Juleit Rimet Cup last time in 1982. With three previous wins both were looking forward to writing their names on the cup for the fourth time. Brazil, credited to have won the cup three times before any other nation could achieve the feat, have once again gone a step further ahead. But this time only by a whisker and with luck.

Even though the month-long football festival's finale has not taken the expected shape billion of people throughout the globe were prepared for by some of the high-calibre matches in the earlier rounds, the trophy has gone to the deserving team, no doubt about that. The only unbeaten team in the tournament, Brazil have displayed both the Latin flair and the European toughness in abundance. A well-balanced team, they would have been the unluckiest team had they been deprived of the title this time as well, like the few previous occasions when they were equally favourite.

As the most popular team also the Brazilian win is most satisfying. And through this win the great tradition of Latin football with its magical touch and crisp passes mixed with individual brilliance has once again proved worthy of the abiding interest people find in it. Set against the European power football, the Latin tradition was gradually looking more and more ineffective. But Argentina, Brazil and Colombia have shot the excellences a notch or two up through importing a few alien elements into the game. That might be responsible for the Sunday final falling short of the expected standard. After all, it is the victory that matters. True, in this case a little more luck could have exchanged the slots between the victor and the vanquished. It is luck alone that has made all the difference in the final count.

If the match has failed to live up to its billing, there is no reason to grumble. It has followed the pattern that life — at individual or collective level — follows with its disappointment, hopes, defeat and triumph. The great sporting extravaganza too, at times, can be cruelly dispassionate to the fans' emotional demands. Commercial interests and other less sporty calculations can surely contribute to take some of the gloss off the game itself but do make up otherwise by adding glamour in the form of advertisement, big money and media hype. This has to be accepted as a natural order of things. But on the field football will remain more or less the same crowd-puller. For people can easily identify themselves with the game.

It is because of such an appeal and influence of the game, that man like Albert Camus can announce that much of his moral lessons have been learnt from football. As the worthy winner and the worthy loser, Brazil and Italy only illustrate this point and we know the game is inseparable from our life. After a month's pure entertainment of the highest order, the World Cup bids adieu for another four years and hardly a football fan will be found in any corner of the globe who will not be missing the fun time.

Awe-inspiring

Far from a 'cosmic fizzle', that an over-cautious observatory chief had predicted, the enormity of the extra-terrestrial happening on Sunday has already proved true to a 'once-in-a-millennium occurrence' that was awaited with bated breath. More is to come. A slithered fragment of a comet from the dying mother comet Shoemaker-Levy has made an earth-size pockmark on planet Jupiter. With the expectations of twenty more breakaway comets, each bigger in size than the fragment that hit Jupiter, slamming into it by Thursday, the total magnitude of the astrophysical event sounds as awesome as it is unbelievable.

Luckily for us we are watching it happen and winking at it. We will do so till this week-end without — God forbid — falling victim to the catastrophic event. By some celestial justice one might say that it has occurred in Jupiter, the largest planet in the proximate galaxy, deserted and inhabitable at that, for all we know. Supposing the size of Jupiter were not large enough it would have, by the sheer impact of the 21 comets, gone the same way — doomed — as the Shoemaker-Levy which set it all off as a tangible proof of its self-destruction.

But one cannot be too smug about the occasionally falling meteorites as did one on Siberia of a luckily less-than-hazardous size. But even this would have been enough of a danger had it hit any pocket of human habitation. Another one is said to be on the cards.

The astrophysicists are constantly watching out for not only meteorites but also more dangerous phenomenon that could be germane to any possible deviations in the movement of celestial bodies and constellations.

When the whole lot of the huge fragments, each one of them more than a thousand miles in diameter, will have crashed on Jupiter these could go to change the atmosphere of the planet. The study of the effects of such a devastating impact on a planet will yield valuable knowledge for us just in case we fall prey to any celestial caprice, even if that be just a speck of what has been a mind-boggling crash on planet Jupiter.

It is only such an all-encompassing extra-terrestrial phenomenon that reminds man of the overriding force of nature and binds him in a common sense of awe.

JULY 1, 1994, was the memorable day for Chairman Yasser Arafat and his people. He returned from exile to his homeland — Palestinian homeland — after 27 years, just as Nelson Mandela returned home from prison exactly 27 years after. It was a very long period for both Arafat and Mandela but for Arafat the homeland picture was quite different as this period witnessed utter destruction of Palestinian homes by Israeli army. But even the destroyed home is the sweet home, it needs to be rebuilt. Nelson Mandela was somewhat lucky. He already freed his land and his people; Arafat has to continue his struggle probably for a couple of years more for the cherished Palestinian State.

After a delay of nearly two months following the signing of Cairo agreement that cleared the way of Arafat's visit, he returned to his homeland on Friday, July 1. Arafat triumphantly entered Gaza from Egypt after having crossed the border with his usual "V" for victory sign and he was raised aloft by the cheering Palestinians right at the entry point. He later addressed a crowd of about 70,000 Palestinians — fewer than expected — and promised to "build a new homeland". His speech had no angry rhetoric and indeed focused on "reconciliation with rivals". In Jerusalem, however, hundreds of rightist Israeli elements took to the streets to protest Arafat's return to Gaza. There were even death threats. Shimon Peres said on Arafat's arrival that "it was a very important day. It's the implementation of the Gaza-Jericho agreement." The new opinion poll, conducted for Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University near Tel Aviv, showed that most Israelis accepted PLO as a partner to peace.

On July 5, Arafat was ferried to the ancient West Bank city of Jericho by an Egyptian helicopter and escorted by an Israeli Air Force helicopter — probably to avoid driving through Israel where Israelis

Arafat's Return to His Homeland

were protesting his return. He addressed a meeting of thousands of Palestinians. The expected crowd was not there, the blame was on the Israeli authority; it did not allow all West Bank Palestinians to join Arafat. But reports also say that the delay in the installation of Palestinian National Authority (PNA) for the self-rule evaporated the earlier enthusiasm. Indeed, this delay in the allocation of authority and responsibility, resulting in a lack of accountability, created some doubts and hesitation in the minds of the donors too.

Arafat was first sworn in as the President of the self-rule authority — PNA — in the West Bank town of Jericho. He then swore in only 12 of 24 members of PNA. Faisal Hasseemi who was already named in the Council did not take oath as he wanted to "emphasize primacy of his role in Jerusalem". He hails from Jerusalem and has been seen as an important Palestinian leader there.

In Jericho speech, Arafat reiterated his pledge to expand the self-rule over entire West Bank with the ultimate aim of establishing the Palestine State with Jerusalem as its capital. A couple of weeks ago, while speaking at a mosque in S Africa, Arafat spoke of "Jihad" to liberate Jerusalem which angered Israeli leadership including Prime Minister Rabin and also brought immediate protests from some Israeli public. Arafat later clarified the use of the word "Jihad" which he correctly said, meant struggle and struggle to continue in a peaceful manner. One can declare "Jihad" against anything evil — may be even against his own evil actions and deeds like illegal and unjust sexual lust for ultimate rectification and correction. However, the word "Jihad" is seen by many in the western world and particularly by Israelis as something of armed actions. This emotion in Israel has since died down and peace process has continued.

Arafat's return to self-rule

area has created some confidence in Israeli leadership. Both Rabin and Peres welcomed his return. President Clinton also welcomed Arafat's return to Gaza-Jericho, which marked the beginning of self-rule by Palestinian authority, thereby meaning the implementation of the self-rule accord.

After less than a week's stay in the self-rule areas, Arafat went to Paris and received a UN peace prize (Felix Houphouet Boigny Peace Prize) which was awarded to him, Rabin and Peres. Extending his hands to Rabin for a handshake, Arafat said, "you are our neighbours" — undoubtedly a warm gesture towards Israel indicating "partnership" be-

the latest killings. Settlers' spokesman Aharon Domb said, "while Prime Minister was busy receiving peace prize, Jews were being murdered throughout Israel." Domb probably forgot how many Palestinians were killed by his own people including Goldstein who murdered over 30 praying Palestinians. Though Rabin appeared worried at the killing he, however, said, "New partnership cannot be marred by a few bullets here and there." This put more responsibilities on the Palestine police and security forces: police must track down the killers. Killers are killers whether they are Palestinians or Israelis.

Arafat's Paris meeting with

with Israelis. Under the present tense political situation in the occupied territories, violence remains a possibility but time will come when dust will settle down and Palestinians and Israelis will learn to live together. It is almost impossible to have total transfer of all settlers back to Israel proper. What is needed is a strong determination and cooperative action by Israeli and Palestinian police to keep the militants on both sides under control. East Jerusalem has been set by Palestinians as capital of "Palestinian State" and once this is worked out, Arafat and Rabin may have to have their work places not far off from each other and may even drop in at each other's work place for a cup of coffee. Such a scenario appears utopian at this point of time, but in international politics and state relations anything is possible.

Arafat's rule of self-rule areas from his temporary headquarters in Jericho will help create confidence among all. Arafat's "Jihad" — which he has reiterated to be a peaceful struggle, can be well pursued from within and with the support of his people. His presence in Jericho with the PNA will bring positive conciliatory political effects on the leadership and supporters of Hamas. Arafat has rightly kept some positions vacant in his cabinet to accommodate Hamas and other Palestinian factions. He needs to negotiate with them with extra patience — with much of carrots and less of sticks. Here, he needs proper understanding of Rabin. Arafat had to agree to the return of four Palestinian activists who came with him to Gaza on July 12. Israeli authorities say these four were in the Israeli black list. Arafat did well by not making it a major issue at the entry point. He later got the agreement of Rabin on return of all Palestinian leaders and activists who are members of Palestinian National Council which is scheduled to meet soon in the self area for con-

sidering, among others, cancellation and amendment of the PLO charter provision that calls for destruction of Israel. Apart from this, Arafat should also negotiate the Palestine prisoners cases. There must also be accommodation for the expelled Palestinians. May be many were not even involved in killing cases — black lists were prepared by Israel only on assumptions and information based on Israeli connections in the occupied territories. May be a general amnesty would have to be considered to clear up the past mess which was the result of wars and killings and century-old hatred. Such an accommodation from the Israeli side will help Arafat in ensuring, over a period, a violence free self-rule administration.

Arafat's promise to hold free and fair election with a view to establishing a democratic self-rule government is praiseworthy. Free and fair election and establishment of democratic Palestinian government will encourage the US to put enough pressure on Israel to vacate the occupation and go for final determination of the status of the territory. Arafat must set up a responsible and accountable administration. He cannot run it as a one man show. Once an accountable government is in place, the donors will also feel obliged to come forward with their committed funds. However, the donors should realise that Arafat has to build up his administration at a place which stands devastated. Therefore, proper understanding is necessary and aid conditionalities need be relaxed.

Arafat must have funds to create basic infrastructure and meet the minimum needs of the Palestinians in the self-rule areas. Else, instead of him the extremists will rule the place and peace — the ultimate objective of all the peace process will remain far from being achieved. Uphill tasks ahead — success of self-rule will strengthen confidence of those who support peace and weaken the evil designs of the peace opponents.

SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

Muslehuddin Ahmad

between two people, two nations.

Rabin hailed Gaza-Jericho phase as "completely successful" but said, "peace must be built slowly, step by step — you can not solve a conflict of 100 years in one month, two months or even six months." Arafat, however, sounded a note of urgency and said any delay might lead to disenchantment among Palestinians. He outlined the major tasks — strict, scrupulous and rapid implementation of the peace process. Arafat was right. Rapid implementation is the only way to show solid and tangible results on the ground which is necessary to satisfy the Palestinians. Indeed, the results of "handshakes" in Washington, Cairo and Paris must travel downwards and produce similar handshakes between Palestinians and Israelis everywhere.

Warm and congenial atmosphere in Paris was, however, marred by killing of two Israelis in the West Bank. Rabin was visibly worried about the Israeli public reaction at

Rabin was "positive and fruitful". They agreed to establish three committees to discuss: 1) Outstanding issues on transfer of power to Gaza-Jericho; 2) Prospect of expanding self-rule to the rest of West Bank; 3) Preparation for conference with Egypt and Jordan on the destiny of Palestine refugees in the diaspora.

The issue of settlers — about 110 thousand in entire Gaza and West Bank — needs to be looked into seriously and pragmatically. Though the general demand of Palestinians is resettlement of all settlers into Israel proper, this should not be the last word. There should be a general incentive scheme involving free land, house-building finance and other basic support from Israeli government, etc. to encourage settlers to go back to Israel proper and this should work well. In case, some settlers still decide to stay back, Palestinians should accept them as neighbours. This would ease Palestinians' situation in Jerusalem where they will have to live as neighbours

Focus on South East Asia

ASEAN Floats New Platform to Tackle Political and Security Issues

by Dr Ishtiaq Hossain

THE ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), whose formation was announced in Singapore nearly a year ago at the end of ASEAN's 26th Annual Ministerial Meeting (AMM), will come into effect towards the end of this month. The members of the ARF are the six ASEAN countries, the US, China, Russia, Japan, South Korea, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the European Union, Vietnam, Laos and Papua New Guinea.

This new platform for political and security talks expands ASEAN's dialogue process as a multi-layered structure. Attached to the AMM, the ARF will supplement the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC). With the PMC and the new forum linked to the annual foreign ministers' talks, ASEAN is now well-positioned to engage key countries in the Asia-Pacific to discuss the region's new security architecture following the end of the cold war.

Why is ASEAN taking up security issues now that the cold war has ended? Admittedly, because of the end of cold war,

tensions in the Asia-Pacific region have eased. But the end of the cold war has also created uncertainties. The United States, China, and Japan are adjusting their relationships in response to the new distribution of power. In addition, there are a number of outstanding territorial conflicts involving the regional states. These processes need to be managed to ensure the optimal conditions for economic growth in East Asian countries.

With these aims in mind, at the time of launching of ARF in Singapore last year, it was emphasised that ARF was aimed at building mutual confidence, preserve stability and ensure economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region by creating a network of constructive relationships. Seen in this light, the Bangkok conference will be an historic occasion because former adversaries are going to discuss sensitive security issues in a multilateral forum for the first time after the end of the cold war under ASEAN auspices.

ASEAN countries expect the inaugural meeting of ARF,

to be held in Bangkok, to be a success despite two differing views about how fast the fledgling 18-member forum should proceed on new security arrangements in the region. One view is of the opinion that the ARF should proceed slowly, with a step-by-step approach that has come to typify the ASEAN way of doing things. But some Asian members of the ARF are uncomfortable with the gradual approach and wanted to quicken the process. The ministers will have to decide what is the best pace for the ARF when they meet in Bangkok.

The formation of ARF underlines ASEAN's growing political clout and marks the beginning of its new efforts to engage the major powers in a dialogue on regional security. Key issues with which the ARF must grapple with in future include new security arrangements, confidence-building measures, the Korean crisis, rival territorial claims in the South China Sea and Cambo-

dia's future. Given the long history of conflict and rivalry in the region, ASEAN leaders are under no illusion that the Forum's success is guaranteed. Much depends on what the key member-states, notably the US, China, Russia and Japan, make of it.

The American officials view the forthcoming ARF meeting as a "trust-building measure" or a "multi-reinsurance measure" for ministers, attending that meeting. It should be mentioned here that no agenda has been set for the meeting. Because of time constraints it is unlikely that the ministers gathered in Bangkok for the ARF meeting would get into details. But they will be able to raise any issue of concern they want during the meeting.

At a time when the United States' Asia-Pacific policies are drawing criticism from leaders in the region for inconsistencies, Mr Thomas Hubbard, a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific

Affairs, has pledged that Washington will continue to emphasise its role in regional security. While the US no longer maintains a permanent military base in Southeast Asia, Washington may explore other ways of increasing regional cooperation in that area.

One avenue may be opening the annual US-Thailand military manoeuvres, called Cobra Gold, to other ASEAN members. For the first time, Singapore was an observer at the recently concluded Cobra Gold war-games in Thailand. Washington can conduct similar war-games elsewhere in Southeast Asia involving other countries in the region.

Another potential avenue to foster connections would be to replicate the US' small but permanent presence in Singapore to other countries — a "places, not bases" strategy, in Mr Hubbard's words. However, it must be stressed that there was no agreement, formal or informal, as yet regarding these suggestions.

The US is pressing its security presence at a time when

its foreign policy has taken a beating in Asia-Pacific. Since the APEC meeting hosted by the US in Seattle, some Asian leaders have criticised US diplomacy as consistently inconsistent. Such criticism has been acknowledged by some quarters in Washington. They also admit, however, the existence of friction, whether it's caning of an American in Singapore or human rights in China. The US continues to disagree with ASEAN's constructive engagement policy with Myanmar. ASEAN holds that change can best be effected through contacts between countries, as opposed to the Western policy of isolating Yangon.

It is hoped that the ARF will provide an effective forum for ironing out these and other disagreements among its member-states.

The author is a Bangladeshi scholar working in the Department of Political Science at the National University of Singapore (NUS). The views expressed are his own and do not represent those of NUS.

To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

It's time to free

Suu Kyi

Sir, On July 20, 1989, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was put under house arrest by SLORC, the military junta controlling Burma. On May 27, 1990, the Burmese people chose her to be their leader, voting for democracy and against the dictatorship. On December 10, 1991, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded her the Peace Prize, calling her 'one of the most extraordinary examples of civil courage in Asia'. July 20, 1994 will mark her completion of five years of imprisonment. According to SLORC's own law, she cannot be detained for more than five years. Before July 20, 1994, remind SLORC, remind UN, USA and various governments of the world: It's time to free Suu Kyi.

We, the entire Rohingya people of Arakan, reaffirm our all out support and solidarity with the beloved leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and our demand is her immediate release. It is clear to the world that she is determined to fight against the military rule till the restoration of democracy in Burma. Still, she is in favour of negotiating with General Khin Nyut. But, the General is not in favour of it.

The Burmese people believe that the USA is the cham-

pion of today's democracy and human rights and thus it would come forward to their rescue. More active role of UN, USA and the EC should be there for the people of Burma, they should intervene to free Suu Kyi and Burma at least for the sake of democracy, liberty and human rights.

Suu Kyi is not only of the age of the members of Bangladesh Parliament, she is a woman, a mother, like the honourable Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition of Bangladesh. We feel they should do something to free her and her people from the yoke of military dictatorship, and demand restoration of democracy and transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people of Burma.

Rohingya Elders, Arakan, Burma

BAI

Sir, It is understood that the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) has speeded up the process for creating a separate Division in the Ministry for looking after the management of the country's three Agriculture Colleges including Bangladesh Agricultural Institute (BAI), Dhaka. We sincerely hope that before implementing the decision per-

taining to bringing the Agri Colleges under the direct control of a Ministry's Division, the MOA will seek suggestions from the teachers and students of BAI and other Agri Colleges in the greater interest of the nation.

It may be mentioned here that on the genuine demand of the teachers and students of BAI and other Agri Colleges, the authority had earlier cancelled an order on forming an Agri Education Cell in the MOA. There was a commitment to sanction autonomy to BAI in the pattern of BITs but due to some situational factors the draft ordinance prepared by an expert committee constituted by the present democratic government could not finally get approval of the highest bodies. It is now expected that the MOA will invite suggestions from agricultural experts, educationists and also members of the public on the matter. We want the authority to turn the Bangladesh Agricultural Institute, country's oldest agricultural education organization, founded by Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Haq, into an ideal educational institution of international standard by solving all its problems.

M Zahidul Haque, General Secretary, BAI Teachers' Association

Need for more libraries

Sir, A feature article titled 'Paucity of Public Libraries and Bookshops' by A S M Nurunnabi and published in your esteemed daily on 9 July, 1994 drew my attention to an urgent need of the massive li-

brary movements to raise the standard of education and knowledge among the educated people in a developing country like ours. No one can deny the truth that a library is, in fact, a mine which starts keeping the written expressions of the great men and women, scholars, writers, philosophers and intellectuals in the form of books after the invention of the printing press in China.

It is a pity that we have only 66 public libraries under government management and 369 non-government public libraries which can never quench the thirst of the educated people in our country. In view of this existing situation, I earnestly request authorities concerned to make provisions for sufficient funds to enrich the existing libraries without much delay.

Library is a score card of the nation's literacy. People who have family libraries could be contacted through advertisements in the national dailies with an intensive programme of the establishment of book-banks in each district and Thana through governmental patronage.

To keep pace with time we can also try to popularise "moving libraries" (i.e. to say motor vans) in the residential areas of the cities and towns. A small beginning in this respect will have profound impact on the minds of the educated people living in Bangladesh. Only sincere will can achieve the impossible in a nation's life and can alter the fate of the people.

Prof Abul Ashraf Noor, Jalalpur, Pabna

OPINION

Stranded Pakistanis

We congratulate the governments of Bangladesh and India for reaching an understanding to start the second phase of repatriation of Chakma refugees from Tripura (India) to their homeland Bangladesh from 21st July 1994. We appeal to both the governments of Pakistan and Bangladesh to apply the same spirit, vigour and zeal to start the long overdue repatriation of stranded Pakistanis languishing in 66 dingy and squalid camps scattered all over Bangladesh for the last 22 years in sub-human condition. We refer to the joint declaration issued simultaneously from Islamabad and Dhaka at the end of the first official visit of Begum Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister of Bangladesh to Pakistan on 12th August 1992. Accordingly, a small batch comprising only 53 families, out of 3000 families as envisaged in joint declaration, repatriated on 10th January 1993.

Meanwhile, as reported by the press in Pakistan, 3000 housing flats have already been completed at Miah Channu (Punjab) to accommodate the stranded Pakistanis. Besides, the camps of Miahwali (Punjab) vacated by Afghan refugees could well be utilised to accommodate about 25,000 stranded Pakistanis and the idea has also been supported by renowned journalist and editor of international weekly *Takbeer*, Karachi.

Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee appeals to the government of Bangladesh to pressurise the government of Pakistan to accept its nationals stranded in

Bangladesh to fulfil the commitments made by successive governments in Pakistan. We regret that despite so many agreements right from 1973 to 1992 none was implemented in full and both the governments failed to apply political will to resolve this painful human problem.

Stranded Pakistanis are overtaxed with their miseries and now desperately contemplating to go for even self-immolation, long march across the international border and to offer for court arrest en masse if the content of joint declaration is not implemented immediately.

So far procurement of fund is concerned, H E Syed Amin Aqeel Attas, assistant secretary general of Makkah-based Rabita Al Alam Islami, had categorically said that they were fully equipped and prepared to provide the required fund. By this time 98 per cent work of group photography for issuing certified identity cards to stranded Pakistanis has been completed. This project has been implemented by Pakistan High Commission in Bangladesh with joint and active cooperation of Rabita Al Alam Islami and SPGRK. Time is running out fast, so we hope good sense will prevail upon both the authorities and there would be no delay in implementation of the joint declaration to save the suffering stranded Pakistanis from disasters.

M Nasim Khan, Chief Patron, SPGRK, Geneva Camp, Mohammadpur, Dhaka