

Ronaldo, Brazil's legendary footballer who retired this week, was Wednesday appointed to help coordinate Brazil's hosting of the 2014 World Cup. Sao Paulo governor Geraldo Alckmin named the ex-player to his state committee coordinating the football tournament in a ceremony in a Sao Paulo stadium. He also awarded Ronaldo, 34, a medal in honour of his sporting achievements and legacy. "It's an honour to help the government of Sao Paulo to put on the best World Cup of all time," Ronaldo said.



- AFP

DHAKA FRIDAY FEBRUARY 18, 2011, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

A scene to behold

BISHWAJIT ROY and
MOHAMMAD ISAM

Cricket's uniting power in Bangladesh is tremendous and as a proof of how much the game, through its premier event, has touched the hearts of millions already was for all to see almost a few miles away from the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Yesterday was a defining moment for not just sports or cricket but for every single element that brings happiness to this nation. Nobody seemed lost, everyone knew what was going to happen and every single heart and mind had only one source of inspiration.

The World Cup opening ceremony, held amidst a fine breeze across the iconic venue, was abound with people with tickets, all 28,000-plus, and even scores without ticket in hand.

60-year-old Hakim from Mughda was one of those who stood in line and with a ticket in hand, he felt proud. "I have never seen something like this in my life. This is my luck. I don't know if I can see something like this but this is really special," he said.

Fahim from Narayanganj somehow managed a ticket and was way back in the queue but it was hardly written on his sunbeaten face. "I don't mind standing in line, I can wait as long as I have to," he said with a weary smile.

It was a similar sentiment for those inside the ground, much more for someone like Javed Islam Taposh, who has been involved with cricket all his adult life. The bearded BCB employee said he still can hardly comprehend what is happening. "My dad always tells me stories of the 1971 war but trust me, I will remember this day like he has, the world has come to Bangladesh," said Javed.

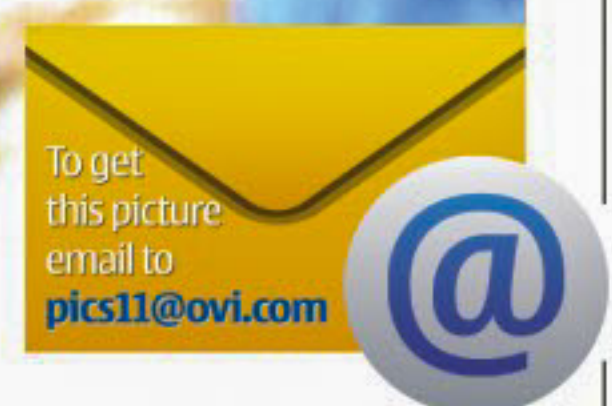
The play of laser lights and the national anthem gave everyone the goosebumps but even when the show began inside, the crowd did not go away, in a last minute hope of finding a dream ticket. "I am just going to try and find a ticket, if there is any," said a desperate Liton, probably making a fruitless attempt, but no one can blame him.

Everyone in this country wants to be here, and the lucky few should cherish it forever.



IN FANTASY LAND: A tiny tot watches the proceedings of the opening ceremony of the 2011 ICC Cricket World Cup with awe at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO:
SK ENAMUL HAQ



Enchantment at Bangabandhu

SAKEB SUBHAN



The Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS) has a special place in the hearts of Bangladeshis, as it is where Bangladesh took its first tentative steps in top flight cricket. It had faded a bit when cricket was transferred to the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in 2005, but all the passion came roaring back as the revamped venue hosted the opening ceremony of the ICC Cricket World Cup 2011.

For those who remembered going to the BNS to watch Bangladesh's matches, the scene at the end of the opening ceremony might have seemed quite unfamiliar. All the spectators left with a smile on their face, which was a rarity pre-2005 as Bangladesh were bested in most of their matches here.

The smiles were brought about by the rousing scenes at the stadium during the ceremony. It was a triumph of Bangladeshi culture, with rickshaws bringing in the fourteen captains and LED kites flying about. There was also an airborne cricket match that wowed all and sundry. Acrobats rappelled down the nearby Bangladesh Development Bank Limited (BDDL) Bhaban and played vertical cricket, suspended from ropes and illuminated by LED bats and a virtual ball. Bangladesh's proud history was presented beautifully with songs and scenes depicting the Language Movement of 1952

The luckiest rickshaw-pullers

ANISUR RAHMAN

Hundreds performed in the gala opening ceremony of the ICC Cricket World Cup 2011, but fourteen were simply exceptional for their roles in the show as they entered the field with 14 captains of participating nations on their rickshaws after the welcome song performed by singers Arnab, Mila, Balam, Elita, Hridoy Khan, Kona and Tipu.

Mukul Amin, a 40-year-old rickshaw-puller, led the rally carrying Stumpy, the mascot of the World Cup, with Ramani Ranfa completing the rally by carrying the captain of Bangladesh, Shakib Al Hasan.

It was the happiest moments in their lives as they never could have hoped to be a part of the World Cup's opening ceremony, much less carry the all-important captains of the participating nations, as by profession they are rickshaw-pullers.

Except Amir, none of the rickshaw-pullers could tell the captains' names when they were approached outside the arena just hours before the start of the inaugural ceremony of the cricket extravaganza.

Amir knew that they would carry India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and he was much excited and waiting for the moment. "I saw him on television but this time I am going to see him from up close and I can say it is going to be my happiest moment in life," said a 25-year-old rickshaw-puller from Madaripur.

Despite being unable to identify their possible passengers, the rest of the rickshaw-pullers were no less happy to be part of one of the greatest moments in the

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and the 1971 Liberation War.

Bir Protik Abdullah Hakim also enjoyed the programme, feeling honoured that he had been invited as a guest on such an auspicious occasion.

"It was a fantastic show," said an elderly gentleman on the way out of the stadium. "My favourite part was the Sri Lankan segment; it was beautifully choreographed."

A couple who were taking photographs of each other in front of the stadium, were visibly elated by the event. "It was definitely above expectations," the man said. "I loved how the show held upheld the patriotism of Bangladeshis."

The lady echoed his sentiments: "My favourite part was the flying cricket and also the projection of Bangabandhu's famous speech on BDDL Bhaban. That was a moment of pride."

Faruque, an employee of Nestle, said, "It was good, but if Mumtaz, Sabina Yasmin and Runa Laila had sung the songs in their total form instead of just small parts it would have been better. Also, the show was diminished by the lip syncing of these superstars. On the other hand, Brian Adam's live music was a definite highlight."

Naveed, Abid, Fahed three cousins who had come to watch the festivities from Shegun Bagicha were enthralled by the choreography, outstanding performance by Canadian rock star Brian Adams, fireworks and hailed it as an overall excellent event.

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The left-out nat'l award winners!

SPORTS REPORTER

Some twenty-five thousand spectators enjoyed the gale opening ceremony of the ICC Cricket World Cup 2011 from the galleries of Bangabandhu National Stadium but nearly 50 national sports awardees missed the chance to watch the ceremony from inside it yesterday.

Of the total tickets, approximately 10,000 tickets were sold for spectators through banks while rest of the tickets were distributed through Bangladesh Cricket Board and the National Sports Council.

As many as 175 athletes and organisers were honoured with the National Sports Award by NSC since the award was introduced in 1976 and among them, 146 are still alive but the NSC provided only 75 invitation cards by names, said prominent athlete and organiser Kamrunnahr Dana, adding that the national sports awardees were not in the initial invitees lists' of the BCB.

"We gave the prime of our life to sports but we are now neglected persons though the government officials with joint-secretary status have been invited to the opening ceremony," complained Dana yesterday.

"Personally I feel all national sports awardees should have been honoured but it might be so that there has been some limitation in terms of seating capacity," said BCB director and media chairman Jalal Yunus yesterday.

A small mishap

SPORTS REPORTER

A few of the fireworks launchers caught fire near the media centre during the opening ceremony yesterday.

The firemen nearby were alert enough to douse the fire and later, a volunteer confirmed it was a circuit gone bad.

It was one of the smaller errors in a generally dazzling and splendid display, marking the opening of the cricket World Cup.

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