

# Anti World Cup protests intensify

BRASILIA, Reuters



Police fired tear gas canisters to contain anti-World Cup demonstrators who tried to march to the Brasilia stadium where the soccer tournament's trophy was on public display on Tuesday.

The protest by more than 1,000 people snarled rush hour traffic in the Brazilian capital adjacent to the Mané Garrincha National Stadium, the most costly stadium built for the 32-nation sports event that begins in 16 days.

Adding to the tension, Indians in traditional tribal dress with bows drawn joined the protesters from the Homeless Worker's movement. The group says building stadiums to host the World Cup was too costly, caused real estate prices to soar and forced lower-income families out of their homes.

Brazil is rushing to finish stadiums and urban transport systems in time for the World Cup in a climate of growing civil disobedience by groups of Brazilians who seek to disrupt the event saying its cost was excessive for a developing nation.

The World Cup now serves as a backdrop to push for variety of causes, and bus drivers in Rio de Janeiro said on Tuesday they would start a 24-hour strike at midnight while professors marched down Sao Paulo's main thruway to demand a raise.

Local soccer fans lined up outside the Brasilia stadium to see the FIFA World Cup Trophy, which is touring the 12 cities hosting the games, but the protest march forced authorities to cancel the trophy display and close the stadium.

The Brasilia protest follows a peaceful march led by the same group in Sao Paulo last week. That protest of several thousand held up traffic in South America's business hub and spurred fears that more protests and even violence could disrupt the month-long World Cup when it starts on June 12.

A spokesman for the military police said Tuesday's protest started peacefully and that police were trying to contain the march with tear gas and walls of shield-bearing police. But if the demonstrators reached the stadium, they would have to intervene, the spokesman said.

Brasilia's stadium will cost 1.9 billion reais (\$849.26 million) when the surrounding landscaping is finished after the World Cup, city auditors said in a report published last week, almost three times the price tag first budgeted.

Though they have not previously joined anti-World Cup protests, Indians have routinely protested in Brasilia against efforts to change the rules around how Indian reservations boundaries are determined. They invaded Congress while it was in session on several occasions last year.



An indigenous man protests against the upcoming FIFA World Cup in Brasilia on Tuesday. Police in the Brazilian capital fired tear gas to break up a protest by Indian chiefs and groups opposed to the money being spent to host the World Cup.

PHOTO: AFP

# France display strong spirit

AFP, Paris



Olivier Giroud scored a double as France stepped up their World Cup preparations on Tuesday with a 4-0 victory over Norway at the Stade de France in the first of three pre-tournament friendlies.

Paul Pogba netted a first-half opener in Paris, while Giroud enhanced his reputation ahead of next month's finals in Brazil through a second-half brace that came either side of Loic Remy's first international goal since 2011.

France coach Didier Deschamps was satisfied with the performance and the progress the team was making.

"We are not yet ready, but there is a collective hunger and a real togetherness about them," said Deschamps, who captained France to their 1998 World Cup victory at the same ground.

"It is good what we did tonight. One mustn't lose sight of our ultimate target but our performance reflected the work we have already done."

Despite the absence of some key regulars, Deschamps fielded a strong side featuring seven probable starters for Les Bleus' World Cup opener against Honduras on June 15.

France made a promising start as Antoine Griezmann and Giroud both tested Norway goalkeeper Orjan Nyland with headers inside the opening few minutes.

Griezmann again came close to putting the hosts in front when he redirected Yohan Cabaye's bouncing effort just wide of the far post, but it wasn't long before France found the breakthrough.

Mathieu Valbuena clipped a cross into the box and Pogba was on hand to send a stooping header beyond a helpless Nyland to give Les Bleus a 15th-minute lead.

The Juventus midfielder came close to a second shortly after as he fired narrowly wide from distance before France goalkeeper Stephane Ruffier, winning just his second cap as a stand-in for Lloris, held a low fizzing strike from Norway's Alexander Tettey.

Saint-Etienne keeper Ruffier, whose international debut came in a 2-1 defeat against the same opposition four years ago, then stuck out his right hand to deny Tom Hogli.

However, the Norwegians, ranked joint-55th in the world, found themselves overmatched in the second half as Arsenal striker Giroud drilled in a second on 51 minutes before the hosts rammed home their superiority.

Remy, who had only just come on in place of Griezmann, ran onto Newcastle teammate Mathieu Debuchy's wonderful through ball and slotted home a third on 67 minutes.

Giroud then doubled his tally, again combining well with Valbuena, as he sent an excellent looping header into the far corner to cap a resounding win two minutes later.

# Cesar to stun doubters

AFP, Teresopolis



Brazil goalkeeper Julio Cesar insisted Tuesday he will silence any doubters who believe coach Luiz Felipe Scolari should consider looking beyond him as the World Cup hosts target a sixth triumph.

"I come in with my suitability in the position questioned, but happy and 100 percent ready," the 34-year-old said as he settled into Brazil's tournament headquarters at Granja Comary an hour outside the hubbub of Rio. The former Inter Milan shot-stopper

has been in the limelight with Scolari insisting throughout the build up to the competition that he will definitely be first choice between the sticks.

But Cesar in January had to resort to resurcting his club career in the unlikely surroundings of Toronto after months spent in the wilderness following relegation from the English Premier League with Queens Park Rangers.

A veteran of two previous World Cups Cesar has Scolari's unwavering public support as well as a winners medal from last year's Confederations Cup, where he was designated best keeper.

Four years ago, he was singled out for criticism as Brazil exited the World Cup in South Africa following a

quarter-final loss to the Netherlands, after being caught out for the Dutch opener.

Cesar insisted that he has put that behind him.

"I come in (to this year's Cup) better than in 2010, better focused, better prepared," he explained, suggesting that had Scolari not returned to the helm some 18 months ago his international career might have been over.

"After all that happened to me at Inter, at Queens Park Rangers, I never stopped plugging away. It was the confidence I felt from the coaching staff which ensured that I am here today.

"Had another coaching team been in charge of the Selecao I don't know if

# C'Ron most marketable footballer

AFP, Paris

Portugal star Cristiano Ronaldo is the world's most marketable footballer, according to a study released by an international sports market research company Wednesday.

Barcelona and Argentina forward Lionel Messi ranked second in the study conducted by Repucom, ahead of club teammate and surprise third-placed entry Gerard Pique of Spain.

The data measured the perceptions of over 6,500 people in 13 countries, including Britain, the United States, Brazil, China and India, which was reportedly claimed to represent the views of more than 1.5 billion people worldwide.

"Ronaldo is an endorser's dream. His value is as important to the teams he plays for as they are for the companies that endorse him," said Paul Smith, CEO of Repucom.

# Win or fail for Di Maria

GOAL.COM

Real Madrid winger Angel di Maria has stressed that anything other than winning the World Cup this summer will be considered a failure for Argentina.

The South Americans were last crowned world champions in 1986 when they beat West Germany 3-2 in the final and Di Maria is determined to give their fans a reason to cheer again.

"If we don't win the World Cup, it will be a failure," the Madrid star told Radio La Red. "This is the reality. The entire world will consider it to be a failure if we don't win the World Cup."

"It will be seven incredibly difficult games. We will have to give our all and do whatever it takes to realise our dream."



Italy's national football player Andrea Pirlo (L) receives a tap from Mario Balotelli as he eats a peach during a training session near Florence, Italy yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Balotelli claims he's the coolest

GOAL.COM



Mario Balotelli has cheekily claimed that he is the quickest, the coolest and the best player in Italy's squad for the World Cup.

The striker, 23, scored 18 goals for AC Milan this season in 41 appearances and is expected to be part of the starting XI when the Azzurri line up under Cesare Prandelli in Brazil.

"The quickest in the Italy squad? That's me," he said in a new self-interview to mark the launch of PUMA Tricks. "The best? Don't make me do this, you know who is the best!"

"The most technical? You know that one as well. The funniest? You already know that one too. The coolest? Come on, that one is really obvious! Balotelli also hopes that he can get his hands on the Golden Boot by scoring more goals than anyone else in Brazil this summer and he has a strong belief that Italy are even better than when he helped to fire them to the final of Euro 2012.

"When I win the Golden Boot, it will go in my wardrobe with the rest of my shoes!" he said.

"I struggled a bit at the beginning of Euro 2012, but then after that it went very well! I believe that Italy are a stronger team now than we were then. I don't know why."

"We are a strong team and try to play an important part in the same way that other big players do, like Pirlo, Buffon and three or four other key members of the team."

# Van der Vaart out of WC

THE HAGUE, Afp



Netherlands midfielder Rafael van der Vaart on Wednesday became the third Dutch player to be ruled out of the World Cup through injury.

Hamburg midfielder Van der Vaart, who has 109 international caps, hurt his right calf at the Netherlands' training camp in Portugal.

Following medical tests Dutch coach Louis van Gaal confirmed van der Vaart would miss the finals in Brazil, according to Dutch magazine Voetbal International's website.

Van der Vaart, 31, joins Roma midfielder Kevin Strootman (knee) and Paris Saint-Germain defender Gregory van der Wiel (tendinitis) on the sidelines with injuries.

The Hamburg midfielder had been set to possibly eclipse Frank de Boer's record number of appearances for an outfield player (112) in Brazil.

Van der Vaart featured at the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, when the Netherlands lost to Spain in the final. He also played in the 2006 finals.

His absence means there are now just seven members from the 2010 team left in Van Gaal's provisional squad.

Van der Vaart's exclusion likely means Wesley Sneijder will be included in the final 23-man squad despite Van Gaal having previously expressed doubts as to the condition of the Galatasaray playmaker.

# Oscar waits for newborn

AFP, Teresopolis

Brazil star Oscar said Wednesday he was being allowed leave from his country's World Cup preparations to attend the birth of his daughter, due in the coming days.

"I want to tell you I am still here, my daughter has not yet been born," the Chelsea midfielder said in posts to social media, rejecting speculation that he might be dropped from the squad after recent injury problems.

"I am waiting -- I have not left the squad. I am going to train today and, God willing, my daughter will be born soon," he said.

The Brazil squad were Wednesday starting training two days after meeting up at their Granja Comary complex in the hills outside Rio.

Oscar has been given permission to leave the camp to travel to Americana, in neighboring Sao Paulo state, to attend the birth.

# Draxler, Hoewedes in car crash

REUTERS, St Martin



German players have been left in a state of shock when two people were struck and injured by one of the cars at a sponsor's driving event, team manager Oliver Bierhoff said on Wednesday.

A 63-year-old German tourist and a local man hired as a course marshal were taken to hospital on Tuesday afternoon after being hit in the driving event staged by team sponsor Mercedes at Germany's pre-World Cup camp in Italy.

Germany internationals Julian Draxler and Benedikt Hoewedes were passengers in the vehicles driven by German Touring Car driver Pascal Wehrlein, who hit the two men, and F1 driver Nico Rosberg.

"It was a big shock for the team, although just two players were involved," Bierhoff told the press.

"Julian Draxler and Hoewedes were the two who experienced it and were extremely affected by it. Four more were waiting to take part in the event when they heard of the accident."

The tourist suffered more severe injuries than the local man, who had attempted to remove him from the course and sustained only minor injuries, but no further details of their condition were made available.

"Julian and Benedikt had the need to discuss it afterwards," Bierhoff added. "We immediately made our sports psychologist available, who talked with both the drivers and the players."

Bierhoff said he and the drivers had visited the injured men in hospital.



PHOTO: REUTERS

A GoalControl watch reads "goal" as a football rolls fully behind the goal line during a demonstration in the western German city of Aachen May 28, 2014. German firm GoalControl has been appointed by FIFA as the official provider for the goal-line technology (GLT) at the upcoming 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil. GoalControl uses 14 high-speed cameras around the pitch as part of its GoalControl-4D system, which are fixed in elevated positions around each goalmouth. The ball's position is continuously captured in three dimensions - X, Y and Z coordinates. All the cameras are linked to a computer processing system, which filters out players, the referee and any other objects. Only the ball remains, with its position precise to a few millimetres in the coordinate system of the pitch, according to the GoalControl website. The watch will be worn by referees and will display the word "goal" together with a vibration alert within one second, if the ball has fully crossed the goal line.