

# Leo one goal away from Diego

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Diego Maradona and Lionel Messi are great Argentine footballers with very different personalities but "Leo" became "Diego" for a brief moment when he scored in the World Cup group game against Bosnia.

The normally introverted Messi celebrated the goal, his first at a World Cup for eight years, with a primeval scream reminiscent of the raw passion that made Maradona such an idol at home.

While Maradona used to draw attention to himself as a player and in his private life, Messi is a shy character who shines on the pitch and prefers to maintain a low profile in his personal life and keep media appearances to a minimum.

Maradona still revels in the glory of leading Argentina to their second World Cup victory almost 30 years ago, while Messi dreams of inspiring them to a third on Sunday. If he does, he will become one of the all-time great players alongside his ex-coach and former Brazil forward Pele.

Messi always tried to avoid comparisons with Maradona, although that was going to be an impossible task.

"I don't want to win the World Cup with Argentina so people say that I'm better than Pele or Maradona. I just want to achieve that with my fellow players on the national team. Some Barca players won the World Cup and I want to know how it feels," Messi said in a recent interview with ESPN.

Messi's career, and his life, could not be more different to those of Maradona who grew up in a poor slum in Buenos Aires.

He caught the public eye for the first time when he was 10 years old and told a TV show: "I've got two dreams. First playing in a World Cup, and then winning the World Cup."

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## The world is a party place

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

From Buenos Aires to the Brandenburg Gate, millions of people were getting ready to watch Sunday's World Cup final between Germany and Argentina in Brazil.

In Rio de Janeiro, which is hosting the final, the party was already in full swing, with soccer fans flocking to Copacabana Beach and flooding the city's bars and restaurants ahead of the 1900 GMT kickoff.

A massive security operation was in force outside the famous Maracana Stadium -- where 10 heads of state were attending the match along with nearly 75,000 fans.

Although the host nation are not playing in the final, Brazil has transformed the event into one massive carnival, with celebrations taking place across the entire country, from the favelas to the Amazon.

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Argentina superstar Lionel Messi (C) came that much close to scoring against Germany in the gripping World Cup final at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday. The match was locked at nil-nil during the regulation 90 minutes.

PHOTO: REUTERS



## BASIC BANK PROBE BB looks to ACC action

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The central bank is relying on the Anti-Corruption Commission to sue Sheikh Abdul Hye Bacchu, chairman of the recently dissolved BASIC Bank board, for huge financial irregularities in the state-run bank.

"The last time the ACC took reports on BASIC Bank was in the middle of last year. We now have more detailed reports, which we are willing to give to the commission for further investigation," SM Moniruzzaman, executive director of Bangladesh Bank, told a press briefing yesterday.

"An in-depth investigation [by the ACC] can find out the main culprit," he said, adding that only documentary evidence and witnesses can help catch the wrongdoers.

Replying to a query, he said the memorandum of understanding between the BB and the BASIC Bank could not stop the ACC from probing the corruption.

The central bank organised the briefing at its office at very short notice. It said the bank wanted to inform the media about the outcome of the meeting between BB Governor Atiur Rahman and the newly appointed chairman of BASIC Bank, Alauddin A Majid.

The governor asked the new chairman to bring back discipline in the bank and take action against the corrupt officials, who were close aides to former chairman Bacchu and former managing director Kazi Faqurul Islam.

Asked about possible action against

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## Israel launches ground assault

Naval commandos raid Gaza beach; death toll 166



Palestinians travel to a shelter at a UN school after evacuating their homes near the border in Gaza City yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

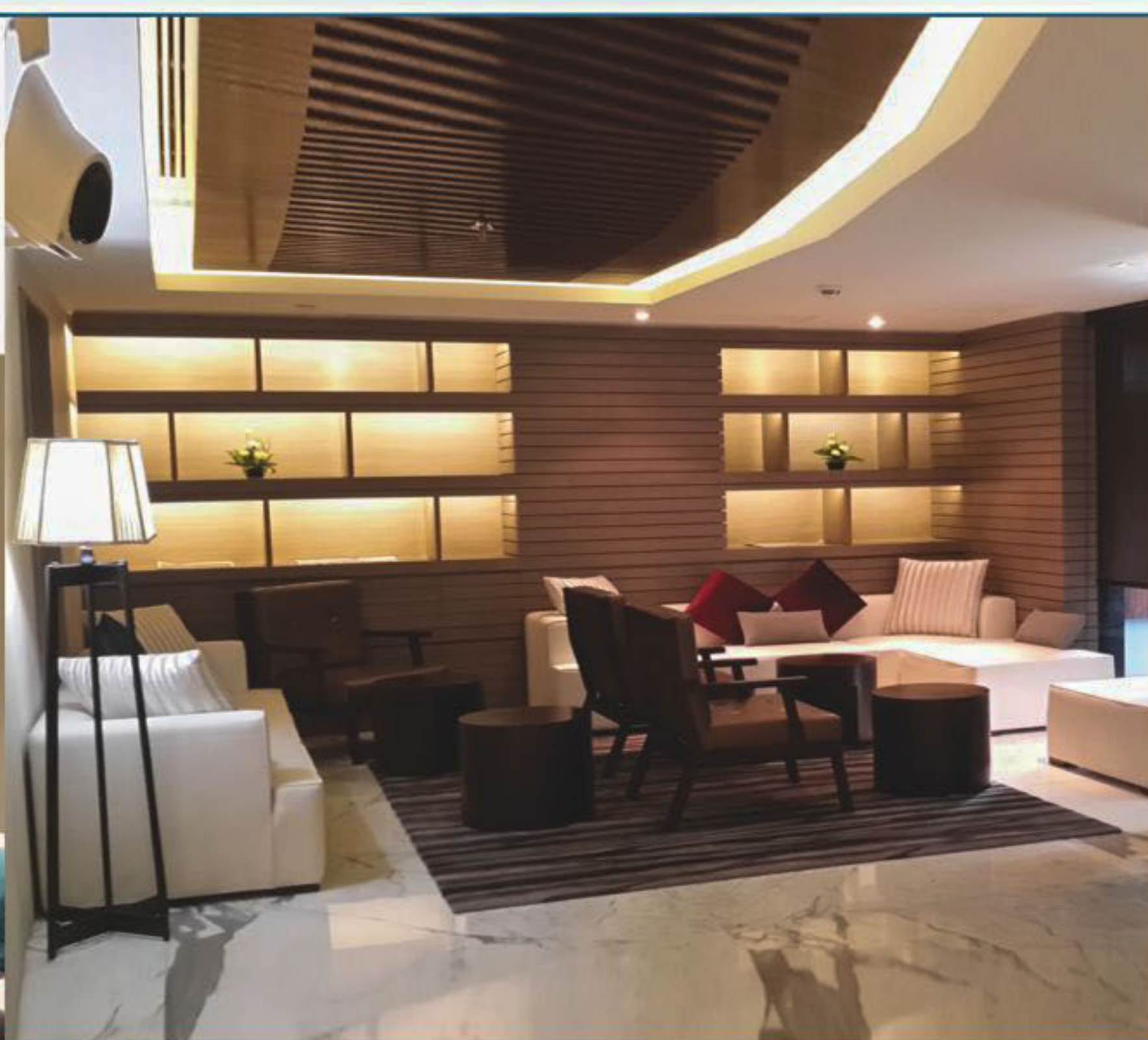
Israeli naval commandos have launched an early morning raid on a beach in the north of Gaza City, as the coastal enclave suffered the bloodiest day yet of the six-day Israeli assault, with 54 Palestinians reported killed.

The raid came amid continuing speculation that Israel would launch a ground offensive in Gaza, a move likely to sharply increase the number of civilian casualties. So far, 166 people have been killed including 30 children, according to Gaza's health ministry.

In the worst single incident of the conflict so far, 22 people were killed and 45 injured when two large Israeli bombs slammed into a house in the Tuffah neighbourhood of Gaza City where the city's chief of police, Tayseer Batsh, was sheltering.

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