

City sleeps at last

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score the all-important goal -- one that would never come. The second half of the World Cup final had just begun and all Dhaka, Bangladesh and indeed, the world, stood still.

Sleep seemed to have deserted the city, with the final being shown on big screens throughout the capital. The brightly illuminated windows of congested apartments and cheers emanating therein announced that people were mostly awake, even those due at work at 8 am.

Football fans in their hundreds converged upon the intersection to fill the air with cheers and shouts of disappointment at every opportunity and every chance missed.

It was not a sea of Albiceleste however, as the anti-Argentine camp was not made up of just German supporters; Brazil fans -- who perhaps number as much as Argentina fans in Dhaka -- lent their voice to those of their conquerors in the semifinal.

Rickshaws parked in the perimeter of the gathered football fanatics turned into impromptu galleries, with fans climbing

on for a better view of the screen.

"Argentina will win 3-1. Messi will definitely score," said another rickshaw-puller from his three-wheeler.

In a city life where entertainment is scarce and political violence and injustice are the talking points around tea stalls, the World Cup offers its inhabitants a much-needed occasion to celebrate and come together. Although opposing each other on anything and everything, even when it comes to recognising the announcer of the country's Independence War, PM Sheikh Hasina and BNP chief Khaleda Zia are known to have finally reached a consensus: they both support Brazil.

In Shekhertek, students, teachers, professionals and daily wage earners waited for the climax side by side. Among them were also garments workers who crafted the sportswear of world famous brands.

Minutes before extra time was over, a good portion of the crowd rose to their feet in joy as Germany scored. They however fell unusually silent as time raced away, perhaps as much

because of Argentine disappointment as for the realisation that the festival of unity that comes by once every four years was drawing to a close.

"Messi, Messi, Messi..." cheered a portion of the crowd, with unblinking eyes fixed on the screen, as Messi prepared to take a free kick at the very last. But magic was not to be his that day, and glory was to be Germany's.

"I had pledged not to support any team this time. Why did I change my decision?" said Urmee, a female fan at the Shekhertek intersection.

She sighed at every sight of Messi on the screen and asked her husband: "Don't you think Messi will at least be able to play the next world cup?"

As German fans the world over celebrated in glory hard won, the sun came up on Dhaka along with the muezzin's call to prayer. And the people who formed the tapestry of the Bangladeshi World Cup trudged back to their homes, for after a short sleep they would have to restart their normal lives, which for a month had blissfully been caught in a global tidal wave.

Messi remains Club King

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than the Maracana Stadium, the footballing Mecca of his country's greatest rival, to make it happen. The script was ready. The four-time FIFA player-of-the-year brought Argentina to the final almost single-handedly with some extraordinary football throughout a compelling month in Brazil. It was time for the final act. The Club King was in line to be crowned the World King. At 27, he was at the perfect age and at the peak of his powers to embrace ultimate glory. The goal-scoring machine was just one shot away.

But not all stories end the way they should. Only God knows why the final chapter of the Messi story has been written differently. The Argentina captain could not put his signature on the final chapter last night. He had the opportunity, only to see it slip away.

Argentina played their best game of the tournament even though midfield

playmaker Angel Di Maria had to sit out the match -- billed as Messi versus the Machine -- through injury. To the surprise of many, Argentina in fact went on to subdue what most thought would be superior opposition. They would have gone 1-0 up early in the first half had Gonzalo Higuain not muffed up a one-on-one chance produced by a rare defence blunder by Germany. In for Higuain during extra time, Palacio also spoiled an easy chance.

Before that Messi could not seize glory when the defining chance came early in the second half. Mobbed by defenders a foot taller than him, Messi ran down a through ball from Lucas Biglia for a possession that had goal written all over it. It was the kind of opportunity from which he is used to scoring without blinking for Barcelona. In a fluid motion, the fleet-footed forward has in the past sent so many such chances past goalkeepers

into the top corner or the near post. But it was not to be last night, the night he would have exchanged all glories gone before for that one slice of success. Messi dragged his shot across the goal and wide.

He had free-kick opportunities too, including the most tantalising from just outside the box with seconds left on the clock -- had he netted that, he would have been untouchable in the football pantheon, but when he sent it flying over the post the world was reminded that Messi too was human. That is what will haunt the best player in the world. His Golden Ball will remind him of how agonisingly close he was to lifting the Cup. He will be 31 when the next World Cup takes place in Russia, so he still has a chance for another go at the elusive Cup. But he has just lost his best chance in Brazil.

The Brazuca comes to a halt with the final result: the best team, not the best player, won the World Cup.

Netanyahu's terrorism

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of bombing Palestinian men, women and children to pieces, despite any and all condemnation of his behaviour.

Netanyahu only reinforces the long-held notion around the world of his country being a proper purveyor of state terrorism. Israel's leader has spoken of his resolve to break the backs of Hamas 'terrorists' who have been firing missiles into Israeli territory. The Hamas 'terrorists' have not killed Israelis. For his part, Netanyahu has had his military murder as many as 173 (the number keeps climbing) Palestinians in Gaza since Tuesday of last week. Israeli war planes have bombed civilian targets in Gaza as many as 1,300 times, destroying homes, laying streets and homes waste, burning up nature. A quarter of those the Israelis have killed have been children. Thousands of people injured in the air raids have ended up in hospitals in an already ailing Gaza.

Nothing of this affects Netanyahu and men like him. The Israeli government has warned that there will be no let-up in its ferocious attacks on Gaza until Hamas has been seen off or has retreated. Israel's prime minister has waved away US President Barack Obama's offer of an American role in a cessation of hostilities. He will not listen to reason, which raises the question of whether he can be stopped in this deadly campaign against Hamas.

Unfortunately, none of his supporters in the West appear ready and willing to make him see reason. Beyond a pointless mouthing of concern, nothing has happened. No perceptible move against Israel's state terror can be seen in the UN. Such silence or such looking away from the actions of a predatory state, which men like Netanyahu and his extreme rightwing followers have reduced Israel to, only encourages the man in his killing missions.

Is Netanyahu getting away with it? For an answer, you need to survey the miserable state the Middle East has turned into in recent times. The Egyptians will do nothing, beyond expressing regrets, about bringing the crisis to a halt. The Libya of Muammar Gaddafi does not exist any more. The people of Syria, consumed as they are by a war that is haemorrhaging the country, have little time to come to the aid of the Palestinians. Amongst Palestinians, there have been leaders who have happily been waging war between and among themselves.

Netanyahu is therefore bubbling with confidence. His friends will not come in the way of the murders he is committing. His detractors are legion but scattered. It stands to reason, therefore, that Israel's leader will have little cause to draw back from his deadly mission. Like one of his predecessors, Ariel Sharon, he is determined to neutralise the Palestinians. Sharon failed.

And there is precious little sign that Netanyahu will succeed where Sharon failed.

Israel's prime minister has clearly launched a war that is an eerie reminder of what Slobodan Milosevic and Ratko Mladic once did in Bosnia. If in places like Nigeria, the terrorist outfit Boko Haram is kidnapping people or killing them, in the Middle East today, Benjamin Netanyahu warns Palestinians to leave their homes because he needs to do some more bombing. And he does that in the manner of a man with an abundance of hubris and an inadequacy of shame.

Netanyahu is committing atrocities not different from the criminality extremist organisations have been causing elsewhere. He kills with impunity and with no thought to the consequences. It is what a warmonger does. It is what a war criminal does.

Had the world been without hypocrisy, Benjamin Netanyahu would be known as a war criminal. Even so, it ought to be the world's business to put him on a leash. Hitler was not stopped, Milosevic was not stopped, the Taliban were not stopped. Because they were not, fires raged around the globe and lives and countries were destroyed.

Netanyahu will destroy a whole world if the world remains indifferent to his criminal intent. There is the sinister in him. Letting him carry on will be a crying shame.

Thank you, Brazil

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line-up yet, a VIP gathering of the oligarchical powers.

At the end of which, after a tournament that was eight years and 11 billion dollars in the making, those four weeks in summer can now begin the familiar process of separating out in the memory into a concatenation of enduringly vivid moments.

The first week of Brazil 2014 came slathering out of the traps in a furious real-time montage of goals and attacking play. Group stages just aren't supposed to look like this, but here the players pressed and counter-attacked to the limits of their physical capacities from the start. Holland's 5-1 destruction of Spain will remain one of the great World Cup results. Germany thrashed a spooked and depleted Portugal in Salvador. France and Switzerland produced a breezy 5-2 romp, and overall by the end of the tournament's first weekend the opening 14 matches had produced 44 goals.

It couldn't last. It didn't. The first 14 matches of the next phase brought just 31 goals, boosted by the isolated absurdity of Brazil's annihilation in Belo Horizonte, as the best teams began to grind back down through the gears. By the end of the tournament the vogue for swift counter-attack had already begun to congeal into a wised-up retreat into deep-lying mutual counter-defence.

During Argentina's semifinal with the Netherlands, perhaps the most cautious match of the tournament, Alejandro Sabella's team at times

played a kind of 8-0-0-2, with Lionel Messi and Gonzalo Higuain stationed miles from their retreating defence, lingering in the distance like fielders at long-on and long-off. And yet it would be wrong to say possession football went out of fashion at Brazil 2014: quite the opposite in fact, as the two teams who made the most passes contested the final. Similarly tiki-taka didn't die -- passing and keeping the ball will never go out of fashion -- but instead failed to turn up in the first place as the reigning champions played not just like a tired team, but like a listless, even rather bored one.

Instead the dominant style at this World Cup was a kind of jogo colectivo, the familiar high-speed hustle and closing down of space that defines elite European club football. Helped by an excellent ball in the Brazuca -- no wobbly moments, no flailing frango-howlers here -- and refereeing that let the game flow to a fault at times, the general standard was high.

It was fairly clear what marked out the best teams at this World Cup. The more successful nations were those with coherent, productive domestic leagues, where the national association has a benevolent handle on how players are produced what the style and structure is going to be. Costa Rica, Holland, Germany, Belgium and Argentina benefited from players produced by a coherent domestic system, rather than the chaotic short-termism of England or, as it turns out, Brazil.

Indeed the only time the Premier

League seemed tangibly present at this World Cup was when Luis Suarez bit Giorgio Chiellini in Natal, the familiar engines of drama and sentiment revved up and the English joined in the party, like teenagers at the disco leaping up at the end of the night when the DJ finally relents and puts some heavy metal on.

And what about the hosts anyway? In the end Brazil 2014 was both a PR disaster and a triumph, a shared sporting nightmare and a shared success; a triumph of stadium building fatally undermined by the spectacle of inadequate roads, housing and basic infrastructure that surrounded many of these high-spec space capsules.

As for the host team there is a separate treatise to be written on that extraordinary semifinal meltdown, when Brazil's players didn't so much lay the ghost of Barbosa from 1950 as become entirely possessed by his vengeful spirit -- We Are All Barbosa! -- stumbling about the pitch like boggle-eyed zombies. And a sense this World Cup witnessed the long-anticipated death of "Brazil" itself, the packing away for good of that historic warm-spirited football of the imagination, long since concentered in beneath the layers of professionalism and physicality.

Through the successes of this gripping World Cup; a tournament that beneath its many layers of drama and obfuscation confirmed that for all the noisy excitements of club football there is a purity about the international game that remains its distinct and distinguishing feature.

SC clears way

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The HC had delivered the landmark verdict following a writ petition moved by Manzill Murshid on behalf of the Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh.

Seven commercial companies, including the above mentioned five companies, had filed separate appeals with SC against the HC verdict so that their jetties were not removed from the Shitalakkhya.

On May 3, 2010, the SC rejected the appeals and upheld the HC verdict.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Manzill Murshid said the government has to remove all illegal structures including jetties from the rivers excluding those set up by the government.

The four dying rivers will be restored and city dwellers will be protected from environmental pollution following the apex court order, he said.

The rivers will be dredged and not be encroached upon and grabbed if the SC directives are properly implemented, he said.

He informed that the government has so far knocked down most of the structures excluding some pillars in Balu and Turag and jetties on Shitalakkhya.

Manzill said there is no more legal scope to halt the implementation of the SC directive.

"If the government does not remove structures from the rivers after receiving the SC judgement, I will move a contempt of court petition against the authorities concerned," he said.

Syed Amirul Islam, a lawyer for Cimex Cement BD limited, told The Daily Star that all the structures from the rivers have to be removed now following the SC verdict.

A five-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC headed by Chief Justice Md Muzammel Hossain on July 3 held hearing on the review petitions and fixed July 14 (yesterday) for the verdict.

Bus tickets sold

FROM PAGE 16
Rahat, a private university student, bought a ticket of Shyamoli Paribahan from its Technical counter around 1:30pm.

He said he wanted to go home on July 24. But ticket sellers told him that there was no ticket of Rangpur-bound buses for July 24, 25 and 27 and so he had to get a ticket for July 23.

The sale of advance tickets of Shyamoli Paribahan began around 7:00am yesterday.

The Daily Star correspondent talked to more than a dozen ticket seekers there. All of them complained that they could not get tickets for the days they wanted to go home.

A long queue of over 100 people was seen at the SR Paribahan's counter in Gabtoli.

The ticket distribution process was found to be very slow. The door to the counter was partially closed. Five people were seen purchasing tickets in 20 minutes.

Passengers said the counter staff were slowly selling tickets so that they would have tickets to sell on the black market later.

Around 3:00pm, a staff of the counter announced that there was no ticket for July 24 and 27.

At Gabtoli counter of Hanif Paribahan, two people were asking for tickets of Dinajpur-bound buses for July 24.

The counter staff replied that tickets for July 24 and 25 had already been sold.

About extra charges, a passenger, Kabir Hossain, said he usually travelled from Dhaka to Dinajpur for Tk 600. But Hanif Paribahan yesterday charged him Tk 630 a ticket.

Shyamoli Paribahan Managing Director Romesh Chandra Ghosh said tickets for all other days of the month, except July 24 and 25, were available.

Mosharaf Hossain, an official of Hanif Paribahan, said tickets of most of the northern districts-bound buses for July 24 and 27 had been sold.

Now, passengers are buying tickets to travel on other days, he added.

Both Romesh and Mosharaf rejected the allegations of extra fare.

This year's fitra

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release of Islamic Foundation yesterday.

"Fitra has been fixed in accordance with market prices of commodities and it can be given either in cash or any other kind," added the release.

Islam made Fitra "Wazib" (mandatory) for Muslims. Last year, Fitra was fixed at Tk 66.

Sameem Mohammad Afzal, director general of Islamic Foundation, Islamic scholars and renowned religious leaders were present.

EU to increase

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The current cooperation between the EU and Bangladesh is based on a seven-year bilateral cooperation strategy called the Country Strategy Paper (CSP). Between 2007 and 2013, the EU allocated 403 million Euros to the country.

NEW BUDGET

India cuts allocation for Bangladesh by 40pc

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Indian government in its new budget has cut the grants and loans to Bangladesh by about 40 percent.

However, it has increased allocations for the South Asian neighbours Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

In the last budget, the allocation for Bangladesh was Rs 580 crore, but this year (2014-2015) the amount has been slashed to Rs 350 crore.

Contacted, a senior diplomat at the Indian High Commission in Dhaka ruled out any political implication of the lowered allocation. India last year had given Bangladesh \$150 million as grant and this year another \$50 million will be provided, he added.

According to a report of The Times of India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's engagement with Bhutan has helped the kingdom nation gaining grants and loans of Rs 6,000 crore this

year, up by nearly 50 percent from Rs 4,100 crore.

Bhutan has always been getting significant financial aid from India by way of grants, both under plan and non-plan expenditure heads.

The NDA government has significantly increased the financial package for Bhutan this year, particularly after Modi's visit to the neighbouring country soon after his swearing-in.

The other member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) have seen marginal hikes in grants from the Indian government.

Afghanistan, with whom India's engagement has increased in recent years, has been allocated Rs 676 crore this year against last year's Rs 525 crore.

Nepal has been allotted Rs 450 as against Rs 380 last year, while Sri Lanka got Rs 500 crore, which was Rs 410 crore in the last fiscal year.

Custodian of law

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Rabbi said, "They took my father to our bathroom and hit him with an iron rod. Blood was pouring down his nose."

He saw it through the half-open bathroom door.

"He [Sujan] asked for water, they did not give him," he said.

"They tied up my father with rope, and his mouth with a piece of cloth, and took him to the bus [police van]. They beat him up there again and also in the jail [police station]. Inside the bus, my father wanted to lean back but they would not let him."

Rabbi spontaneously told this to The Daily Star when this newspaper went to interview his mother at his grandparents' Mirpur home yesterday.

Injuries to Sujan's head, hands and other parts caused his death, said morgue sources, giving substantial grounds to Sujan's family's claim that he was tortured by police on Sunday.

The morgue sources said Sujan was beaten up severely.

Meanwhile, Sujan's family members and locals of Shah Ali of the city took to the streets yesterday protesting the "killing". They held a rally with the corpse in front of Mirpur Police Station and the DMP deputy commissioner's (Mirpur division) office.

National Human Rights Commission Chairman Mizanur Rahman also decried the recurrence of such custodial deaths.

Sujan's widow Momtaz Sultana Lucy yesterday claimed that police had forced her to sign a blank piece of paper Sunday morning.

Lucy told The Daily Star that in the wee hours of Sunday police raided their Sankar home and beat her and Sujan up. They then took the couple and Rabbi to Mirpur Police Station and kept Sujan in a separate room. She heard her husband screaming in pain from the other room.

In the morning, she was let go but not before signing the paper.

"The officer-in-charge of Mirpur Police Station threatened to implicate me in an arms case if I did not sign the paper," she said.

Around noon on Sunday, she was

told her husband was dead.

OC Salahuddin Khan of Mirpur Police Station could not be reached for comments.

SI Jahid, who had arrested the 35-year-old garment waste trader and allegedly tortured Sujan to death, was accused of being involved in another case of custodial torture.

He was closed not for the first time on Sunday night. On February 10, when he was working at Pallabi Police Station, he was closed for his alleged involvement in the custodial death of Istiaq Ahmed Johnny, 28, a resident of Talab camp in Mirpur-11.

Mohammad Jasimuddin, additional deputy commissioner (Mirpur division) of DMP, said they had received the allegations of torture from Sujan's family and had come to know about the SI's alleged involvement in the other custodial torture case.

The ADC is leading a three-member probe committee to investigate Sujan's death.

Lucy said, "SI Jahid is one of the people who took money from my husband."

Sujan's garment waste business was in Mirpur area and he had been paying Tk 5,000 to 25,000 a month to local thugs and police, she claimed.

"Over the last one year, Jahid had been demanding Tk 1 lakh a month from Sujan but the amount was too high for my husband. He was making delays over the matter."

"For this, Jahid harassed my husband several times. He even lodged a false arms case against my brother-in-law and put him in jail," she claimed.

This newspaper had not been able to reach Jahid for comments since Sunday.

The police filed two cases against Sujan on Sunday night.

The National Human Rights Commission chief expressed concern over custodial torture. Mizanur said incidents of such torture have seemingly been increasing in recent times.

He said the government had taken little action despite the commission's repeated pleas. "Every such incident should be thoroughly probed."

BCL men beat up journos

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Rafiqul Islam of Kaler Kantha, Mahmud Hasan, former DU correspondent of online daily Banglanews24.com and Jahid Hasan, former DU correspondent of thereporter.com. They took primary treatment at the DU medical centre.

Twelve BCL activists of the hall unit were expelled over the incident. All organisational activities of the unit had also been suspended.

The central BCL, a pro-Awami League student body, formed a three-member committee to probe the incident, said Siddiqui Nazmul Alam, BCL general secretary.

Reza, one of the victims, told The Daily Star that they went to play football about 8:30pm at the DU's Mall

Chattar where a group of BCL activists had been playing football.

When the journalists also wanted to play, the BCL men told them that they would leave soon and then left the ground in 10 minutes.

"Around 15-20 minutes later, the BCL activists suddenly swooped on us with machetes and iron rods," he said.

Inspector Habil Hossain of Shahbagh Police Station said the DU authorities handed over to them three students -- Abdul Hamid, Sharif and Bidyut of Surya Sen Hall.

However, no case was filed in this connection till filing of this report at 2:00am.

DU acting proctor Amzad Ali could not be reached over the phone for comments.

Taiwan's education minister quits over link to academic scandal

AFP, Taipei
Taiwan's education minister Chiang Wei-ling resigned yesterday after he was implicated in an academic scandal that sparked public outrage and a police investigation.

The controversy surfaced earlier this month when Chiang was linked to a scholar whose papers were retracted by a British publisher following allegations he used bogus identities to peer review his work.

Chiang appeared as a co-writer in five out of 60 articles that were withdrawn.

"After reflection overnight, in order to safeguard my own reputation... I've decided to resign as the education

minister," Chiang told reporters as prosecutors launched an investigation into the scandal.

The resignation deals another blow to the beleaguered Ma Ying-jeou administration, which has been beset by a series of protests earlier this year against a controversial services trade pact with China and a contentious nuclear power plant.

Chiang, a 56-year-old civil engineering expert, was the president of National Central University before he was appointed the education minister in February 2012.

His name appeared as a co-writer in five articles written by local academic Peter Chen in the last four years.