



Members of the India hockey team celebrate joyously after defeating Malaysia 2-1 in the final to clinch the title of the Hero Asia Cup at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

# Manpreet hails team effort

SPORTS REPORTER

India captain Manpreet Singh believes they have established their supremacy in Asian hockey by regaining the Asian Cup title after 10 years due to a collective effort. The Indians, who previously won the title in 2003 and 2007, ended the campaign with six wins and a draw.

"We really feel so happy right now because we won it after 10 years," Manpreet said at the post-match press conference after beating Malaysia in 2-1 in the final.

"It's a great honour for me to be the captain of the national team. We played our best team and that's why we won because we believe hockey is a team game. We are a family and we have really enjoyed it," said the 25-year-old skipper, who dedicated the trophy to his team members and birthday boy Satbir Singh.

Although India handed Malaysia a 6-2 defeat in the Super 4s, they endured a tough time against the Malaysians last night. They had also conceded a 3-2 defeat to the Malaysians in the Hockey World League Semifinal in England in June, which is why India coach Sjoerd Marijne was a bit tense when Malaysia pulled one goal back in the fourth quarter.

"I was a little bit worried because a strange goal can happen in the last four or five minutes. I don't know how they [India] were going to react to that situation because I am new with this team. However, I am really happy that they changed the way we defended which was a really good decision," said the Dutchman.

Marijne also said his charges lost concentration after taking a 2-0 lead, but regrouped to survive some scares in the final quarter.

"I think the buildup into the game was really good. We went 2-0 up, but then the concentration levels went down, the energy levels went down and we gave them opportunities. Besides, we had a lot of opportunities to score the third goal. In the fourth quarter they [Malaysia] got only one chance and they made it," the Dutchman said.

Marijne's counterpart Stephen Van Huizen was disappointed not to win the title after making it to the final for the first time. The Malaysia coach is hopeful his side will play better in future with the lessons from this tournament.

"Disappointment is that we started very well but conceded one goal and then we changed the game. I think we had a chance to tie the match and take the match into shoot-outs. We were playing a final after a long time since the Asia Games final [in 2010]. Many players were playing the final for the first time, so they couldn't manage the situation on the big occasion," explained Van Huizen.

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Pre-tournament favourites India lifted the Hero Asia Cup title after 10 years with a 2-1 win over a spirited Malaysia side in a nail-biting final at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The Men in Blue came into this competition as the top-ranked side in Asia and lived up to their billing having remained unbeaten throughout the tournament. Malaysia, on the other hand, ended as the second-best team having entered the competition ranked second behind the eventual champions.

Ramandeep Singh and Latit Upadhyay gave India a 2-0 lead in the first half and despite Malaysia fighting back through Shahril Saabah's goal in the fourth quarter, the top-ranked side in the competition held on to the slender lead to clinch their third Asia Cup title and first since 2007.

Both teams came into the final less than 18 hours after having played their last Super 4s matches, hence some sloppy performances were expected due to fatigue, but both teams proved that notion wrong by playing attractive hockey which enthralled some 5,000 spectators.

Before the start of the tournament, India were considered the premier title contenders alongside three-time champions Pakistan and last edition's champions South Korea while Malaysia were regarded as dark horses due to their superb performances in the Hockey World League Semifinal round in England.

While the Malaysians squeezed into the

final after a last-gasp equaliser against South Korea on Saturday night, the Indians had romped their way into the final. Apart from the 1-1 draw against Korea in the Super 4s, the Indians were deadly in all the matches and they proved to be a class apart against Malaysia too.

Sjoerd Marijne's side imposed heavy pressure on the Malaysian defence from the outset and took a deserved lead in the third minute with a planned attack. Sunil Sowmapreet darted into the circle from the right flank to release a fierce push for Ramandeep Singh, who hit the board with his second attempt after the Malaysian goalkeeper had blocked the initial hit.

As the match progressed Malaysia looked better and won their first corner but failed to capitalise on it before two of their players failed to connect on a fierce hit from Mutalib Sukri in front of goal in the 20th minute.

India regained control of the game again and won two penalty corners which failed to find the target before Akashdeep Singh

was brilliantly denied by Malaysia goalkeeper Subramaniam Kumar in the 26th minute.

India, however, doubled the lead on the half-hour mark when Akashdeep played on Sumit on the left side and the winger unleashed a fierce hit for Latit, who pushed it into the back of the board.

India should have further increased the margin but Latit and Akashdeep squandered two chances before Malaysia staged a fightback through Shahril's strike in the 50th minute. The Malaysian goalkeeper also joined the attack in the dying moments but they could not break the Indian defence and had to be content with the runners-up trophy -- their best ever finish in this continental competition.

Meanwhile, Pakistan put their best performance in the tournament to clinch the third position with a 6-3 victory over South Korea in a place deciding match earlier in the day.

## Barca roll on

REUTERS, Barcelona



A controversial Gerard Deulofeu strike sent Barcelona on their way to a comfortable 2-0 victory over Malaga on Saturday as they stretched their lead at the top of La Liga.

In the second minute at the Nou Camp, the ball clearly ran out of play before Lucas Digne crossed for Deulofeu, who flicked it in with a superb backheel, leaving Malaga irate.

Barcelona struggled to break the visitors down as they searched for a second, which came in the 56th minute when captain Andres Iniesta fired a deflected strike home.

Luis Suarez missed a golden opportunity as the Catalans failed to score a third but still moved four points clear of second-placed Valencia, who beat Sevilla 4-0.

"For me it's legal. I believed it (stayed on), that's why I continued," Deulofeu said on Spanish television afterwards.

In the wake of protests in the city following the Spanish government's move to reduce the autonomy of Catalonia, the atmosphere was charged.

However things were much quieter on the pitch after Deulofeu's opener, with Barcelona struggling to break down Malaga and even Lionel Messi finding it tough until he fed Iniesta for the second.

Suarez should have increased the lead when Sergi Roberto played him in but fired wide with the goal gaping, continuing a personal run of poor form with only three goals this season in all competitions. Deulofeu backed his team mate to recover quickly.

"(His goal) will come, it's the same as Leo (Messi). They are players who get a lot of chances, in the next game they will score," said the former Everton winger.

Ernesto Valverde also defended Suarez, saying the Uruguayan is a crucial component in the side, whether he scores or not.

## National TT C'ships from tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

The 37th National Senior Table Tennis Championships get underway tomorrow at the Syed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Gymnasium, with 65 teams including 20 women's teams taking part in the six-day meet, informed organisers at a press conference at the BNS conference room yesterday.

Approximately 240 players including 60 female players will compete in seven events -- men's singles, men's doubles, men's team, women's singles, women's doubles, women's team and mixed events.

Sponsors South East Bank will provide Tk 8 lakh out of an estimated budget of Tk 9.6 lakh.

Approximately 38 district and divisional sports associations including Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Air Force, BKSP, Jagannath University, Kazi Nazrul Islam University College and Ansar & VDP will take part in the championships.



Officials of Omera LPG and BPL franchise Dhaka Dynamites pose for a photograph at a city hotel recently after the latter signed a sponsorship deal with the former.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



Striker Harry Kane (C) scored a brace as Tottenham Hotspur ravaged Liverpool 4-1 in their Premier League encounter at the Wembley yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Liverpool torn to shreds

AFP, London



Harry Kane scored twice for Tottenham Hotspur in a 4-1 victory over an abject Liverpool team on Sunday that left the Merseyside club's Premier League title hopes in tatters.

Kane struck early in each half, book-ending goals from Son Heung-Min and Dele Alli, with Mohamed Salah netting in reply in front of a record Premier League crowd of 80,827 at Wembley that included the great Diego Maradona.

Spurs move level on points with second-place Manchester United, five points below leaders Manchester City, while Liverpool's sorry defensive display left them a yawning 12 points off the pace in eighth place.

It was a second galling defeat against a supposed title rival for Liverpool, following their 5-0 capitulation at City in early September, and

they have now won just one of their last six league games.

They were unrecognisable from the team that crushed Maribor 7-0 in the Champions League on Tuesday, their travails summed up by a catastrophic defensive display from Dejan Lovren, who was taken off in the 31st minute.

Liverpool's defeat also saw them become only the sixth team to have conceded over 1,000 goals since the Premier League was launched in 1992.

With Liverpool out of the League Cup and their hopes of reaching the Champions League last 16 in the balance, it leaves manager Jurgen Klopp facing some uncomfortable questions two years into his Anfield tenure.

Kieran Trippier came into the Tottenham team and within four minutes he had an assist to his name. The former Burnley man's lofted pass was misjudged by Lovren and with Joel Matip slow to react, Kane stole in, hooked the ball inside the advancing Simon Mignolet and rolled it in.

Lovren's nightmare continued

eight minutes later as he woefully mistimed an attempt to head away a long throw from Spurs goalkeeper Hugo Lloris, allowing Kane to canter into the space behind him.

The England striker found Son with a brilliant cross from the right and the Spurs number seven used the inside of his left foot to plant a first-time shot past the exposed Mignolet.

It was almost 3-0 moments later as Son chested down Christian Eriksen's through ball and slammed a shot against the Liverpool bar.

Liverpool reduced the arrears in the 24th minute when Jordan Henderson's pass from deep released Salah to trundle a right-foot shot past Lloris and in off the left-hand post.

It was game over 11 minutes into the second period after yet more scenes of calamity in the Liverpool penalty area.

Mignolet flapped at Trippier's free-kick and although Roberto Firmino got back to block Jan Vertonghen's goal-bound shot, Kane reacted swiftly to crash the rebound home.

### QUICK SINGLES

The following are a few samples of stories that did not make the print edition. However, if they pique your interest, you can always read them online on The Daily Star website by simply scanning the QR codes listed below:

#### City have found killer instinct, says Guardiola

Pep Guardiola says Manchester City have found a more ruthless streak after they overcame stubborn Burnley 3-0 to earn a club record equalling 11th consecutive victory.

#### Relieved Conte doesn't fear Chelsea axe

Antonio Conte insists he does not fear the sack after Chelsea eased the mounting pressure on their manager with a gutsy 4-2 win over Watford.

### BSPA awards Shitul

SPORTS REPORTER

Farhad Ahmed Shitul has been adjudged the best Bangladeshi player of the Hero Asia Cup by the Bangladesh Sports Press Association (BSPA) following the defender's consistent performance throughout the tournament.

BSPA president Mustafa Mamun and Asia Hockey Federation CEO Tayyeb Ikram handed over the award to the left-back during an interval of the third-place deciding match between Pakistan and South Korea at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.