

### **CABINET MEETS IN CROATIA JERSEYS**

Croatia's cabinet ministers held a session dressed in the red and white checkered jerseys on Thursday to celebrate the country's victory in a World Cup semifinal. Croatia beat England 2-1 in Moscow on Wednesday to reach the final for the first time and they will face France on Sunday.





আসল চিনিগুঁড়ার স্বাদ ও সুগন্ধ পেতে





World of Endless Dreams...







# WEWERE LIKE LIONS'

REUTERS, Moscow

Croatia played like lions to beat England and reach the World Cup final on Wednesday, striker Mario Mandzukic said after scoring the winning goal, while coach Zlatko Dalic described the performance as fantasy.

"This is a miracle. Only great teams can be as brave as we were and fight back from a goal down against teams like England," said Mandzukic, whose side face France in Sunday's final after their 2-1

extra-time win.

"We've played our hearts out throughout the tournament. I am happy with my performances so far but I am here for the team. We were like lions out there tonight and we will be the same in the final."

Dalic, who was appointed in October, days before their final group qualifying match against Ukraine, said there was more to come.

"We are deservedly in the final," he said. "What the lads played tonight is fantasy, they've made history. We haven't said our last word, there is still one more game to go. God willing, we will be world champions."

England captain Harry Kane said the defeat would hurt for a long time.

"It's tough, we're gutted," he said. "We worked so hard, the fans were amazing, it was a tough game, a 50-50 game, when we look back we will think there's stuff we could have done better.

"We worked as hard as we could ... it hurts, it hurts a lot and it will hurt for a long time. We have had a fantastic journey,

further than we thought," he added.

"We created some good chances when we were 1-0 up, maybe we dropped a little too deep but we didn't get enough pressure on the ball. There are a lot of ifs and buts, in these games it's small margins."

"It's hard to say (what went wrong). There's a lot we could have done better. They played well and made it difficult for

us... it's hard to put your finger of it." "It's been great to get to this stage but we have fallen a little bit short and it

## 'Our dream is so close

FIFA.COM

In a modern sporting miracle, Croatia, a nation of just four million people, will play in the FIFA World Cup Final. The fairytale continues for Zlatko Dalic's team, which has once again shown its indomitable character.

When the final whistle blew, the Croatians ran straight to their fans, jumping into the sea of red and white. One of the fans' heroes was Ivan Perisic, who scored the equalising goal in the second half, and struck the post a few minutes later. Mario Mandzukic scored the winning goal in the 109th minute, to seal the 2-1 victory.

"This is something indescribable," said Perisic in the aftermath. "It's a great honour for all the players and the supporters, and I don't think we're really aware of the scale of it just yet. Little Croatia through to the World Cup Final! No-one believed before the

World Cup that we could go this far, but we believed."

"Again there was drama, it couldn't have been otherwise. Three times now we've been a goal down and have come back, and that really says a lot about our team spirit. And that is a real feature of this generation of players. We have one more game left, and we have never been more motivated."

England lost much of their first-half momentum after the break. Croatia began to get on top, and the Three Lions were punished

**IVAN PERISIC** when Perisic's equaliser sent the match into extra time.

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"The first half was not good for us. We started a bit too casually, and England deserved to score. But from the second half onwards we played much better, and we showed our real standard," said Perisic.

Just weeks before the start of the World Cup, Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic identified a major problem with his team, their obsession with France 1998. Now, a new generation, inspired by captain Luka Modric, has created its own history.

"France stopped us in the semifinals in 1998. We will have some extra motivation because of that, for sure. But this is a totally different story. They are favourites, but we will do our best to surprise them. We have three days to prepare ourselves. We are all happy to be staying in Moscow that was our goal. Our dream is so close now."

স্বাস্থ্য সচেতন মানুষের প্রথম পছন্দ হোক

Children of Croatia players have fun on the pitch with a football after the World Cup semifinal against England at the Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow on Wednesday.

### Dalic's tactical masterclass

REUTERS, Moscow

Croatia ruthlessly exposed England's limitations in the second half of the World Cup semifinal on Wednesday as Zlatko Dalic's side fought back to secure a famous 2-1 extra-time victory.

While it is players who win matches there can be little doubt that a tactical switch from the canny Dalic transformed the game.

Pushing wide players Ante Rebic and Ivan Perisic into more advanced roles was not the most complex move but it was one that turned the match on its head. Gareth Southgate's England had

made it to the last four by playing a brand of progressive passing football and there was enough of that in the opening 45 minutes, after Kieran Trippier's fifth-minute goal, to keep them comfortably on top.

Croatia struggled from the outset. They gifted England a huge amount of space in midfield and allowed wingbacks Ashley Young and Trippier to push forward and provide options. More worryingly for Dalic, the

basic qualities of his side simply were not there. The passing was too often inaccurate, the defence struggled to



cope with the pace of Raheem Sterling and there was precious little support for Mario Mandzukic in attack.

hurts."

For a team who have been consistently well-organised and effective throughout this tournament, it was a strange state of affairs but crucially they were able to turn it around and England had no answer.

Rebic and Perisic were pushed higher and with Luka Modric and Ivan Rakitic clearly under instructions to feed them quickly, Trippier and Young suddenly had their hands full.

The early success of the wide-men in pushing back England's wing-backs,

also gave the opportunity to Croatia's full backs Sime Vrsaljko and Ivan Strinic to get forward more.

With Trippier and Young facing a double threat, England's midfield began to be stretched with Jordan Henderson taking on an unmanageable work-load and Jesse Lingard and Dele Alli more pre-occupied with helping out the defenders than asking questions of Croatia's back-line.

The momentum of the game had changed and when Perisic equalised for Croatia in the 68th minute it was no real surprise.

England had no answer -- neither

on the field as their passing game was replaced by hasty clearances and long balls forward nor on the bench as Southgate was unable to make the switches that might have changed the game.

When things clicked for Croatia they had the quality of Modric and Rakitic, who finally began to dictate the tempo and flow of the game as many had expected they would.

Croatia were looking like the team who beat Argentina 3-0, their tails were up and Mandzukics's opportunist finish secured a victory few could deny was deserved.





