

Germany sweeps Kolkata hearts

Brazil And Argentina Are Over-Hyped, Ruthless Germans Suit Our Style Better, Say 20-Somethings

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Kolkata: Sayantan Roy of Park Circus had just learnt to crawl, Motijheel's Oishee Ghosh was still in her Cereclac days and Behala's Rahul Bhupathi's name did not even feature on KMC's birth register when Germany last won the World Cup. The trio came together six months back for a Deutsch course at Max Mueller Bhavan but their bond grew stronger when 'Die Mannschaft' started their Cup campaign with a 4-0 rout against Portugal on June 16.

Their loyalty, however, will be put to test when the German win-machine takes on old favourites Argentina in the finals on Sunday night. Germany's ruthless yet methodical demolition of Brazil broke a million hearts in Kolkata but it



Goethe Institut geared up for the big finals with a match involving all the students on Saturday. A cake was cut to wish the team and the building was decked up in German colours

also won the Germans a new band of awed supporters.

Oishee now talks in terms of 'we' when she speaks of Müller and Klose and co. "We were heart-broken when we lost the final in 2002 (Brazil 2, Germany 0). We couldn't break the semi-final jinx in the last two editions. This time nothing will stop us. Such opportunity comes once in a generation," she said. Like Oishee, many youngsters in their late teens or early 20s have pledged their support to the European nation.

The German legion is making a dent in the traditional Argentina-Brazil fan base in Kolkata faster than expected. They feel teams like Brazil or Argentina are over-hyped. "These youngsters are neither in awe of Maradona nor do they believe in the style Brazil plays. The German style of football suits their thinking. They are fearless, clinical and ruthless," explained Pradyut Das, a long-time Argentina supporter.

Sayantan agrees. "Argentina is a one-

man wonder. They will falter if Messi fails to weave magic on the turf. Players like Ronaldo, Rivaldo and Carlos come once in a century. There's no point supporting a team for its past players. On the other hand, Germany has always come up with a new breed of players. They do not believe in individual brilliance. It's more about total football for them. It's said that German football is more about efficiency than beauty. But under Juergen Klinsmann in 2006, they showed they can play beautiful football as well," he justified.

The reason to support Müller and company is more "clinical" for a group of German supporters in Ranikuthi. "If you support the Germans, you are almost certain to reach at least the semi-



Though Brazil is out, another city favourite Argentina is in the finals. But German jerseys are also selling at Maidan market



ity, but the Germany fan base is the new force to reckon with," he quipped.

Not only city residents, even Germans residing here are upbeat as the German Juggernaut rolls on. Julia Zipp, a teacher who is in Kolkata for two years, doesn't miss her homeland any more. "So many German fans around me make me feel at home. My heart says Germany will win 2-1 and Schürle will score for us," gushed the Müller fan.

If hearts are beating fast for Germany, the brain is also in favour of Joachim Loew's boys. Explained star footballer Dipendu Biswas, "Pep Guardiola used the 4-3-3 format in Spain and it was an instant hit. He continued with it at Bayern Munich and that is being reflected in German football. Also, German manager Joachim Loew has hit the right combination by keeping experi-

enced and young players in the team. Add to it accurate passes and terrifying speed of the Germans. Goalkeeper Manuel Neuer and the team spirit are added advantages."

With Brazil out of the race, Argentina has emerged as the biggest force in this soccer-crazy city. La Albiceleste fan clubs are performing yajnas at every crossroads to bridge the distance between Messi's hands and the Cup. But yajnas or no yajnas, fan clubs or no fan clubs, the German followers have come a long way and carved a space for themselves in a city that has remained a Brazil-Argentina fortress for decades.



Without solar panel, no nod to big building plan

Times News Network

Kolkata: The state environment department has asked the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) to enforce 'green norms' at the time of sanctioning building plans of big housing projects.

According to rules, realtors need to take a no-objection certificate (NOC) from the West Bengal Pollution Control Board (WBPCB), a wing of the state environment department, if the total area of construction exceeds 20,000sqm. Based on this NOC, the KMC buildings department issues the 'sanctioned building plan'.

Setting up solar panels as an alternative source of energy is now one of the laid-down norms for realtors or plot owners for obtaining the NOC from WBPCB. Some other factors

The WBPCB is also taking up a project to install rooftop solar panels in 100 schools across different districts of the state

that need to be adopted to be eligible for obtaining the NOC include a comprehensive waste management policy and planting trees in the open keeping adequate provision and space for the disaster management unit in case of emergency.

However, of all these, the environment department has stressed on solar panels the most. Mayor Sovan Chatterjee said necessary instructions have been sent to the KMC buildings department for strictly following the green

norms, including setting up of solar panels on the rooftop of multi-storied buildings.

The WBPCB is now taking up a project to install rooftop solar panels in 100 schools across different districts of the state. The schools are yet to be selected.

"We will follow the government's instructions on the schools at which the solar panels will be installed," said WBPCB chairman Binay Kanti Dutta. The project cost has been pegged at around Rs3 crore.

The project is aimed not only at creating a pollution-free environment in schools, but also to generate awareness among students on the benefits of solar energy. The WBPCB authorities will look into the maintenance of the solar panels.

Pavements grabbed, hawkers now target Chowringhee parking lots

Times News Network

Kolkata: After pavements, powerful leaders of hawker unions have now set their sights on parking lots as the next takeover target.

Having grabbed pavements in the Chowringhee-New Market belt over the past four years and sold them to hawkers to mint crores, the leaders with powerful political backing are making a bid for parking lots in and around New Market.

In the past few months, a chunk of parking space on Bertram Street has been occupied by hawkers retailing bags. A similar foray is being made into Humayun Place, driving cars out of parking lots to make way for hawker stalls on the road.

Parking lot attendants live in mortal fear of being hounded by hawker gangs. Ajit Roy, one of seven attendants who man the parking lot at Bertram Street, is threatened, abused and even roughed up regularly. Till a year ago, he had to monitor the lot for 20 cars. Now, only 12 are left with eight having been devoured by hawkers.

"Pioneer Cooperative, the agency that has the contract to collect parking fee, assigned seven attendants to man the entire stretch that can accommodate 140 cars. But now, there is barely space to park 70-80 cars as the rest has been taken over by hawkers. The stretch with uninterrupted parking is between Humayun Place and Lindsay Street. Consequently, only three attendants have work through the day. There is fear of the likes of us being re-trenched. We used to protest earlier but don't dare say anything now for fear of being assaulted," said Roy.

Such is the terror that attendants are asked to vacate the parking space for hawkers after 4pm. "As it is, we hardly earn any money during the day. Though there is immense scope for business during Ramzan as shoppers arrive after breaking the fast in the evening, the entire parking lot is taken over by hawkers. Yet, the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) has assigned the lots for fee collec-



Sasabadda Sarkar



(Above) Can you spot the cars in the parking lot at Humayun Place? It's now a full-fledged hawkers' hub. (Left) This is a spot that hawkers are targeting now

Humayun Place, triggering a direct conflict with Kali Khatik's group. While they are extremely wary, it is the parking attendants who are living in perennial fear of being targeted by hawker gangs.

Soumyadeep Sil, a physician who has been coming to New Market for decades, says it is increasingly becoming tough to park the car. "It isn't as though parking lots aren't vacant. But they are occupied by hawkers. One cannot drive into them. If this situation continues, I will be forced to avoid New Market," he said.

Businessman Jyotindranath Bagchi said it had become impossible to drive to New Market without a chauffeur due to the parking problem. "The only time one can find space is in the morning and early afternoon. Thereafter, the hawkers take over. No one dares question them. The aggression is written all over them," he said.

Rajiv Singh, secretary of Joint Traders' Forum—an umbrella organization of traders from New Market, Shreeram Arcade, Firpo's Market and Chowringhee Market—says shop owners are exasperated with the situation and have moved the KMC and police, but to no avail. "We are losing business big time. Revenues are down nearly 40% against last year. But no one seems to care," he said.

Ministry request prompted MCI rethink

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MCI representative from West Bengal, Sudipta Roy said: "The CM's letter to the Union health minister helped sort out the imbroglio."

Sources in the council said the MCI reconsidered the case after it received a request from the Union health ministry. "We are an autonomous body. But the MCI doesn't usually turn down requests from the health ministry," an MCI official said.

The recruitment process (of teachers) has already started. We will meet the infrastructure requirements fast

Sushanta Banerjee | DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL EDUCATION

"We are really very happy that the MCI has cleared all the seats and this will give enough opportunity to the students who have cleared the Joint Entrance Examination and are aspiring for medical career," Director of Medical Education, Sushanta Banerjee said.

Asked whether the state government will be able to meet the MCI guidelines, Banerjee said, "There are two major things. First is the recruitment of teachers that will have to be completed within three months. Secondly, we will have to develop the infrastructure. The recruitment process has already started. We will meet the infrastructure requirements fast."

Docu film on riots denied city screening

Times News Network

Kolkata: A documentary on Muzaffarnagar riots was denied permission to be screened at Charukala Bhavan's Abanindra Sabhagriha adjoining the Nandan cultural complex on Saturday. On June 30, the Kolkata regional office of Censor Board had denied certification, following which the filmmaker decided to move the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal in Delhi.

Slated to be screened on Saturday afternoon, the theatre authorities withdrew permission to 'En Dino Muzaffarnagar' by Subhradeep Chakravorty on Friday evening. Too late to inform the invitees, the director then sought permission to at least allow a discussion on the subject, but this too was denied. Shocked by the arbitrary decision (the authorities did not cite a reason for cancelling the show), Chakravorty is yet to fathom why the Mamata Banerjee government would try to stifle a movie that exposes the BJP's links to the riots.

"My film goes against the BJP because it was involved in the riots and reaped political benefit, winning record seats in Uttar Pradesh. Amit Shah, the architect of all that happened, is now the BJP president. What I fail to understand is why politicians in West Bengal stopped the screening of the documentary. Does Trinamool not want any anti-BJP movie to be screened in Bengal?" a bewildered Chakravorty said. "I am yet to doubt the secular credentials of the current Bengal government and their resolve to fight communal forces. But this action sends the impression that the government is afraid of a documentary film exposing communal politics played out in Muzaffarnagar by communal parties," he said.

Repeated attempts to contact Trinamool MP and



Stills from 'En Dino Muzaffarnagar'

artist Jogen Chowdhury, president of Charukala Bhavan, proved futile. Officer in charge of Abanindra Sabhagriha, Saumen Khamurai, refused to disclose why the screening had been stopped. The one-line letter from him to Chakravorty simply read: "It is regretted that due to some unavoidable circumstances, Abanindra Sabhagriha cannot be booked finally for your programme." While the letter was dated July 11 (Friday), the cancelled programme was dated April 12, 2014 in-

stead of July 12, 2014.

An officer informally said the absence of Censor certificate may be the reason for the denial. But fellow documentary maker Soumitra Dastidar, whose film 'Musalmanner Katha' tracing the plight of Bengali Muslims had a similar fate at Nandan, said private screening of documentaries did not require Censor certification. "Documentary makers like Gopal Menon, I and many others do not go for Censor certification because we believe in activism," said Dastidar.

During the Left Front regime, filmmaker Josy Joseph's film 'One Day From A Hangman's Life' was yanked out of Nandan after the second day's screening in 2005 on the order of then CM Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee despite it being cleared by the Censor Board. "Documentaries generally take a stand and are critical. Criticism of the state should not be taken as a criticism of the party in power. A documentary should be screened even if it is inconvenient for the regime," he remarked.

That is what is puzzling Chakravorty the most. "My film 'En Dino Muzaffarnagar' is critical of BJP's role in the riots and has no reference to Trinamool. It looks critically at the Samajwadi Party and the administration playing the role of mute spectators and has extracts from a rally addressed by Narendra Modi among others. Families of both Hindu and Muslim victims as well as those against whom cases were filed have been featured," the director said.

The documentary was shot in Muzaffarnagar and adjoining district Shamli a week after the riots that left 59 dead and more than 50,000 homeless. The 2-hour-27-minute film shot between September 15, 2013 and April 8, 2014 probes a new phenomenon of rural riots as opposed to the more common urban ones.

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