

Sports

France blames 'massive' ticket fraud for fiasco

Chaotic scenes mar Champions League final

PARIS: France on Monday blamed massive ticket fraud for the chaotic scenes that marred the Champions League final between Liverpool and Real Madrid that raised questions over the capacity of Paris to host the 2024 Olympics. The French government has faced a barrage of criticism from press and politicians in Britain over police handling of the match on Saturday, which saw thousands of Liverpool fans with tickets struggling to enter.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's spokesman told reporters in London many Liverpool fans were in the French capital "in good time". "We're hugely disappointed by how they were treated," the spokesman added. "Fans deserve to know what happened." But after a crisis meeting at the sports ministry, French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin defiantly insisted that ticket scams and the behavior of Liverpool fans was to blame.

"What has been confirmed is a massive, industrial-scale and organized fraud in fake tickets... this was the root cause of the delay to the match," Darmanin said, also charging that Liverpool fans had been less well-organized than their Spanish counterparts. Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera said French authorities were "extremely sorry" for the approximately 2,700 fans with tickets

that were unable to enter the Stade de France because of the crowd control problems and suggested they receive compensation.

The scenes tarnished the image of the French capital, raising questions about its ability to host major sporting events as it gears up for the 2024 Olympics, as well as the 2023 Rugby World Cup. Leading French daily Le Monde echoed the British complaints Monday, saying the French authorities were "in denial" about their shortcomings that had turned the event into a "fiasco".

'Absolutely shambolic'

Monday's meeting at the sports ministry involved European football's governing body UEFA, French football chiefs and the French police. Darmanin and Paris police chief Didier Lallement were both in attendance, along with the Sports Minister Oudea-Castera. Lallement has called for a formal investigation into the production of fake tickets, which he said had helped cause the problems. Darmanin defended the policing of the final, saying officers had "prevented deaths" that might have been caused by crowd crushes outside the stadium to the north of Paris.

He acknowledged that some officers had been

seen making "inappropriate" use of teargas, after images posted on social media showed even children being targeted at close range. But he said it was "rather low and disproportionate" to criticize the police, adding: "The decisions that were taken prevented deaths." The chaos inevitably brought back painful memories for Liverpool, a club haunted by the 1989 Hillsborough disaster which cost the lives of 97 people in a stadium crush.

Labour MP for Liverpool area Ian Byrne, who was present at the match, told Sky News that the fans had been treated "like animals". "It was horrific—there's no other words to describe it. It was absolutely horrific and as someone who was at Hillsborough in 1989, it brought so many terrible memories flooding back," he said. The mayor of Liverpool, Joanne Anderson, who was also at the scene, told the BBC that it was "absolutely shambolic but also the police behavior was also really brutal." Liverpool Football Club have requested a formal investigation.

'Not worried'

The match was delayed by 36 minutes, almost unprecedented for an occasion of this magnitude and a huge embarrassment for UEFA and the French

authorities. Oudea-Castera told RTL radio that Liverpool, in contrast to Real Madrid, had failed to properly organise the supporters who came to Paris. "Liverpool let its supporters on the loose, this is a major difference," she said.

The minister added that there had been 30,000 to 40,000 Liverpool fans with fake tickets or without tickets outside the Stade de France. Part of the problem was Liverpool's request for paper tickets for its fans, rather than electronic ones, both ministers said. But Oudea-Castera insisted France was capable of hosting major sporting events. "I am not worried, I am very committed that we learn absolutely all the lessons from what happened on Saturday evening to improve everything," she said.

Paris had been awarded the final three months ago after Saint Petersburg was stripped of the event because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The French interior ministry said 105 people had been detained, of whom 39 were placed under arrest and remanded in custody, meaning they could face charges. In another instance of football trouble in France, angry Saint-Etienne fans invaded the pitch after they were relegated from Ligue 1 on Sunday in their play-off against Auxerre, with French police using tear gas. — AFP

Police, fans clash as Saint-Etienne relegated

SAINT-ETIENNE: Saint-Etienne, one of France's biggest clubs, were relegated from Ligue 1 on Sunday after losing a penalty shoot-out in their play-off against Auxerre, who return to the top flight after 10 years away. Their defeat was greeted by a pitch invasion by angry Saint-Etienne fans and the intervention of French police who used tear gas to stem the trouble. Saint-Etienne, who finished third from bottom in Ligue 1, had already drawn the first leg of their play-off 1-1 with Ligue 2's Auxerre. Sunday's second leg at their Stade Geoffroy-Guichard also ended 1-1 with Saint-Etienne's Mahdi Camara cancelling out Hamza Sakhi's opener.

With the scores 2-2, the tie went into a penalty shoot-out which Auxerre edged 5-4 with goalkeeper Donovan Leon making a crucial save to deny Ryad Boudebou. As soon as Birama Toure converted the final penalty to win the tie, Saint-Etienne fans invaded the pitch and threw flares towards the official stand. The players of both teams took refuge in the changing rooms but Prime Video television footage from the tunnel showed players, stewards and staff coughing from tear gas used by the police on the pitch to disperse the invaders.

Saint-Etienne have already been sanctioned several times this season for the behavior of its supporters and this game was played with one stand closed following incidents during the match against Monaco at the end of April. The result marks the end of a nightmarish season for the 10-time French champions who are now facing serious financial difficulties as they return to Ligue 2 for the first time since gaining promotion in 2004. — AFP

eternal. And now, let's go for the 15th."

'Haven't slept much'

Perez also praised Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti, who this season has become the first coach to win four European Cups and the first to win all five major European leagues. "He symbolizes what Real Madrid is," said Perez. Dressed in black suits, white shirts and black ties, the Real Madrid players paraded the Champions League and La Liga trophies at each location, while also signing shirts, giving autographs and posing for photos with their adoring fans. On top of the bus, the players put on Real Madrid shirts that had the number 14 and 'champions' written on the back.

"I haven't slept much, I had too much adrenaline to be able to sleep," said Thibaut Courtois, Real Madrid's goalkeeper who was named man of the match in the final. "I still couldn't believe it, it's an incredible feeling. For me it's an honor to play for Real Madrid and I hope I can help the team win more." Thousands of fans gathered at Plaza Cibeles, the central square at the end of Gran Via, where the club traditionally celebrates its biggest successes around the statue of the goddess Cybele.

Marcelo led the celebrations and broke into tears as he was presented to the crowd inside the stadium. The Brazilian has been at Real Madrid since 2007 and leaves this summer after collecting his fifth Champions League trophy. "It is a wonderful moment in my life, I close a cycle here, at the best club in the world," Marcelo said in a speech to the fans. "Today is not a day of sadness, it is a day of joy because we have won again, the best competition in the world."

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez had

earlier told the team to turn their attention to winning a 15th European Cup next season. "Real Madrid has made history again and here is our 14th European Cup and 35th La Liga trophy," Perez said at the regional government headquarters. "This European Cup, won against a legendary club like Liverpool, will be remembered as one of the greatest in the history of the Champions League."

"This club's legend grows bigger and bigger. We have beaten four of the best teams in Europe by fighting and always believing until the end. "It has been a wonderful season and it has been achieved in one of the most beautiful and difficult times in our history. Five Champions Leagues in eight years is something very difficult for football fans to forget from all over the world. Madrid is

The players then took the bus to the Santiago Bernabeu, where they were presented to the fans one by one. Gareth Bale, who will leave this summer after a turbulent last few years at Real Madrid, was applauded and cheered by the supporters, with Bale applauding them in return. "Thank you for all the support," said Ancelotti in a short speech. "What a season, what a season. In this stadium, we've had a nice time, a really nice time. We are all Madridistas like you." — AFP



Kuwait athletes shine at Third Gulf Games

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Third Gulf Games Kuwait 2022 concludes today, as Gulf athletes competed for 16 days in various games - 16 for men and 7 for women. New games were introduced in this year's games - most notably Padel and eSport. The final day of the championship will see the finals in fencing, tennis and handball. Kuwait athletes are eyeing more gold medals they continue their lead in the Games. Kuwait fencers started strongly yesterday when they won the singles Sabre and Foil competitions despite the fierce competition. Ammar Al-Amri won the gold medal after defeating Saudi Ali Al-Bahrani 15-7 in the final match.

Meanwhile, Kuwait fencer Mohammad Al-Fadhl and Saudi Adel Al-Mutairi shared the bronze. Ali Abbas won gold. He defeated Qatar's Ali Ouwaiedha in the Foil final, while Kuwait's Yaqoub Al-Shatti and Ali Nassar won two bronze medals. Al-Amri said he trained hard for the gold and won all his matches in the tournament and promised to work harder.

Tennis

The tennis competitions will be concluded today with a match between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia - for the teams' gold medal. Kuwait enters the final match with 6 points through after they beat Bahrain, UAE and Qatar. Kuwait's tennis player Essa Qabazard (singles gold medalist) called for organizing an annual tennis championship which he said will have a

positive effect on Gulf players.

Fight for Handball Gold

Handball fans will be at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Halls Complex to see the closing of the Third Gulf Games with a decisive game between Qatar and Bahrain for the gold medal in the fifth and final round of the competition. This match will be preceded with a match between UAE and Saudi Arabia at 5:00 pm. In the fourth round, Kuwait defeated UAE 24-20 while Bahrain defeated Saudi Arabia 35-27.

Al-Mousawi wins gold

Kuwait Karate player Sayyed Mohammad Al-Mousawi won the gold medal of the Kata competition, while UAE's Marwan Abdallah won Silver. Qatar's Hisham Adham and Saudi Arabia's Misfir Al-Asmari won bronze.

Women basketball

Kuwait women basketball 3x3 team won the silver medal after losing to UAE 8-12 in the final match. Bahrain grabbed third after defeating Saudi Arabia 10-9. Assistant secretary at Kuwait Basketball association Ouwayed Al-Enezi said Kuwait women participation in the tournament is satisfactory.



A male Kuwaiti athlete in a white tracksuit is performing a high kick during a judo competition.

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Khaldiya	24848075	Dasmah	22532265
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Kaifan	24849807	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Maternity Hospital	24843100			Shamiya	24848913	Shaab	22518752
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700			Shuwaikh	24814507	Qibla	22459381
Chest Hospital	24849400			Abdullah Salem	22549134	Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Kaizen center	25716707	Nuzha	22526804	Mirqab	22456536
Adan Hospital	23940620	Rawda	22517733	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764	Sharq	22465401
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Adaliya	22517144	Qadsiya	22515088	Salmiya	25746401

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