

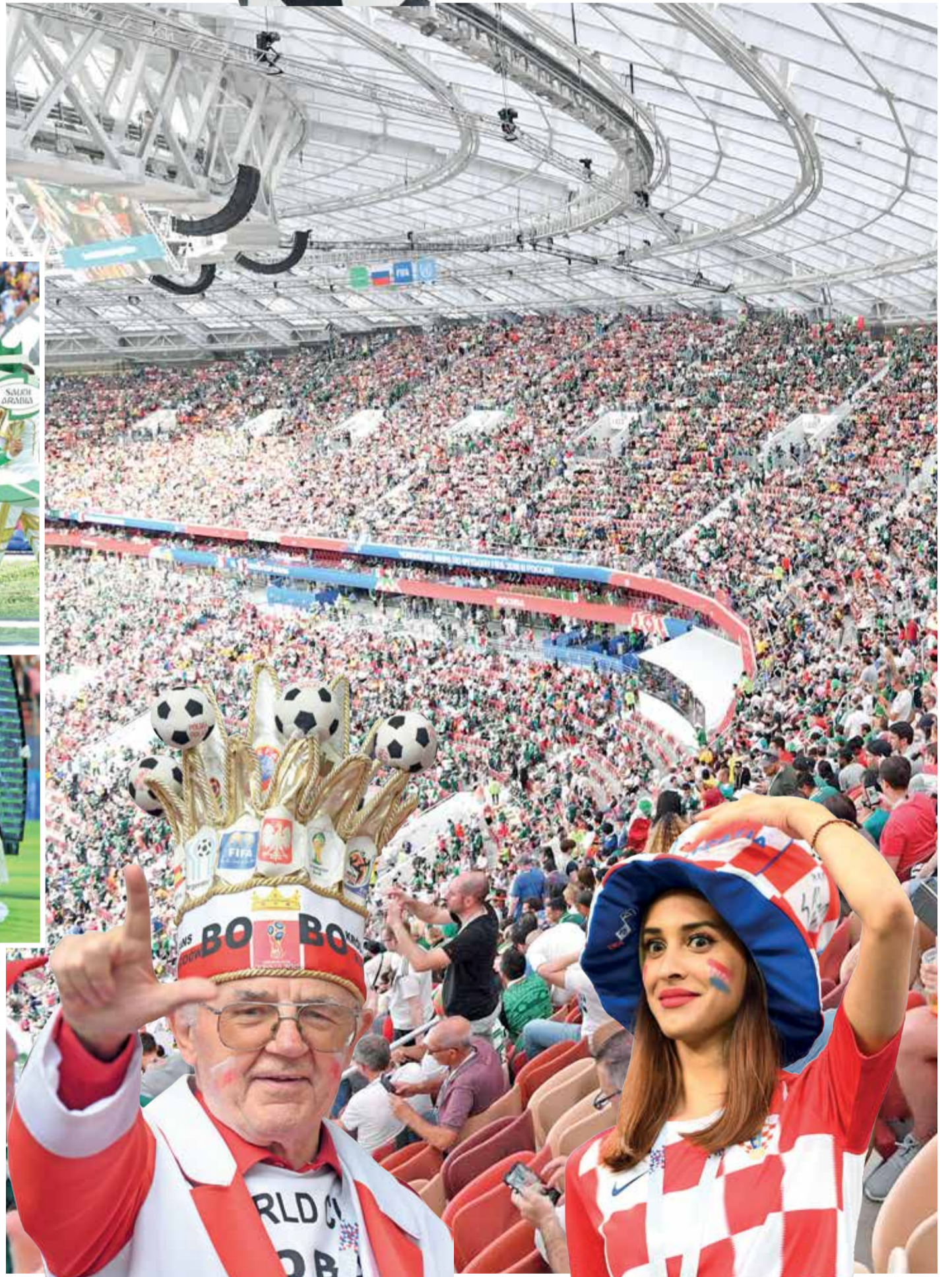


# Festival of goals

Robbie Williams enthralls fans as tournament kicks off with bang

Fans from all over the world witnessed a glitzy and glamorous affair at the opening event of the much awaited FIFA World Cup 2018. The grand opening ceremony of FIFA World Cup kicked off today in Russia at Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium. The ceremony began just 30 minutes before the opening game between Russia and Saudi Arabia.

British pop star Robbie Williams enthralled the crowd with his famous song 'Let me entertain you' and 'Angels'. Along with Williams, celebrated Russian soprano Aida Garifullina later joined him on stage.



Performers during the opening ceremony

## Fans test their skills at lapotball

Without a moment of hesitation, Colombia fan Hector Varela changed his branded sports shoes for village-style handmade boots to try his luck and skills at Mordovian soccer in Mordovian capital of Saransk.

The local version of soccer is dubbed 'lapotball'. 'Lapot' in Russian refers to the traditional shoes made of vine which Mordovians used to wear in olden days.

While the inner part of the plant is used to produce the 'bast' shoes, the bark serves as a base to make a soccer ball which is heavier than the usual one. Fans with no experience in the tricky, one-man game have to practice and need to be patient in order to score.



A Poland fan gestures

A Croatia's fan looks on as she waits in the grandstand

## Russians revel in influx of visitors South

Russians in World Cup host cities – some of them remote or industrial towns where tourists rarely tread – are bending over backwards to help visiting soccer fans, dispelling some preconceptions and spreading an upbeat atmosphere throughout the tournament.

From helping fans navigate public transport to translating Cyrillic restaurant menus, Russians appear to be revelling in the short-lived influx of fans despite previous fears that racism or xenophobia could tar the 2018 World Cup.

Tens of thousands have flocked to the World Cup and become visitors so far, with Argentinean characters