The price of failure!

AFP, Paris

North Koreans risk being sent to the coal mines while Nigeria get slapped with a two-year ban from international football.

England's World Cup flops should count themselves lucky that their most pressing concern is trial by tabloid.

On their arrival home the North Korean squad was described as 'stony-faced', which could be a bad sign given what former national coach Moon Ki-Nam told reporters after the 7-0 group stage humiliation by Portugal.

What made it worse was that it was beamed live into the reclusive Communist state after they had performed respectably in a 2-1 defeat by five-time champions Brazil in their opening

match. "The players and coach are rewarded with huge houses when they win," said Moon, who fled the country in 2004.

"But they have to atone for losing by being sent to work in the coal mines."

There have been legendary tales down the years of the treatment meted out to football Americans exiting at the first hurdle. failures under unscrupulous regimes.

The late Uday Hussein, son of the former Iraqi dictator Saddam, had novel ways of punishing Iraqi players who did not come up to scratch.

Hussein's favourite punishment methods nament.

reportedly included flogging with an electric cable or being forced to take a bath in raw sew-

Nigeria flopped at the World Cup, finishing bottom of their group in South Africa with just one point from three matches. They lost to Argentina and Greece and drew with South

On Wednesday, Nigeria President Goodluck Jonathan banned the national team from international competition for two years following their dismal showing.

France's chaotic first-round exit prompted French Football Federation President Jean-Pierre Escalettes to step down.

Escalettes and coach Raymond Domenech have also been called to appear before a parliamentary commission.

Punishment and retribution come in many forms.

The most poignant was the fate that befell Colombia's Andres Escobar, whose own goal in the 1994 World Cup clash with the United States led to a surprise defeat and the fancied South

On his return home, Escobar was gunned down, the victim of a contract killing ordered by gangsters who blamed the defender for costing them huge betting losses on the tour-

Fans on the rise

REUTERS, Johannesburg

The overall attendance at the World Cup could be the highest since the tournament was held in the United States 16 years ago, organisers said on Thursday.

With eight of the 64 matches left to play, chief executive of the local organising committee Danny Jordaan said that more than 2.69 million fans had already attended matches in South Africa.

The World Cup in the U.S. attracted a record high of 3.59 million, followed by Germany in 2006 with 3.36 million. The total attendance in France in 1998 was 2.79 million and South Korea/Japan in 2002 was 2.71 million.

"Already 2.69 million fans have been in the stadiums and with the quarterfinals, the semifinals, the third-fourth place play-off and the final to come, we expect to go beyond three million fans in the stadiums.

"We are now playing in the biggest stadiums in Cape Town, Durban and Soccer City and those have huge capacities so we will see if we can get

over three million. "If we do, South Africa can have the highest attendance since the World Cup in the United States in 1994.

Fulham boss Roy Hodgson was named on

Thursday as the new manager of Liverpool, sign-

ing a three-year contract on Merseyside, the

and Switzerland manager has agreed terms with

the club on a three-year contract and becomes the

18th manager in our history," the club said in a

"The 62-year-old former Fulham, Inter Milan

AFP, Liverpool

ing at the club.

in the table.

Cup in May.

Premier League club said.

It added that Hodgson would

begin his management duties as

early as Thursday by overseeing

the first day of pre-season train-

Hodgson takes over from

Rafael Benitez, who quit Anfield

last month after a disappointing

season saw them finish seventh

football and I'm honoured to be

taking on the role of manager of

Britain's most successful football

players and the supporters and

getting down to work at (Liver-

pool's training ground) Melwood."

Manager of the year Hodgson joins Liverpool

after a successful spell at Fulham, guiding their

Premier League rivals to the final of the Europa

Hodgson was Liverpool's first choice despite a

host of other names being mentioned and media

reports said it cost Liverpool two million pounds

to win the release of the Englishman from his

Hodgson, named by his fellow league managers

"I look forward to meeting the

club," said Hodgson.

"This is the biggest job in club

Jordaan added that attendances at Fan Parks

had already topped three million because of the innovation of international Fan Parks around the

"In terms of the fans in the Fans Park we have already gone beyond three million because we have also introduced foreign Fan Parks for the first

"Look at what has happened in Mexico City, in Rio, in Berlin. The experience in the stadiums and in Fan Parks all over the world has been hugely successful."

He added that with eight matches to play, noone could predict the winner - and that the best was yet to come.

"The most exciting fact of this World Cup is the surprise element. What we have seen so far is that the players earmarked to be the huge stars, Wayne Rooney, Ronaldo, Kaka and so on, hardly scored a

"Other players have made a huge impact, it's a question of the surprise element of this World Cup.

"The biggest moment for our country is still to come, hosting the World Cup final in Soccer City with more than 80,000 fans, with millions of South Africans watching and millions around the world.

"That is the dream of Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu and it will be an incredible experience for all of us."

as manager of the year, had been linked with

England after their disappointing World Cup cam-

paign under Fabio Capello, but negotiations were

already at an advanced stage with the Merseysiders

the likes of captain Steven Gerrard and star striker

Fernando Torres that they can have a successful

His first task at his new club will be to persuade

who moved to close the deal with speed.

Martinez REUTERS, Milan

Juventus continued the club's rebuilding for the new Italian season on Thursday by completing big-money deals for Bari centre-back Leonardo Bonucci and Catania midfielder Jorge Martinez.

Juve snap up

Bonucci,

Hodgson new Reds boss Both players have signed a five-year contract, Juventus said in a statement.

Bonucci, part of Italy's illfated World Cup squad and a replacement at Juve for the departed Fabio Cannavaro, cost 15.5 million euros and Uruguayan Martinez a further 12 million.

Twice European Cup winners Juve suffered one of their worst Serie A seasons last term when they finished seventh.

New coach Luigi Del Neri favours a return to a 4-4-2 system after previous bosses Ciro Ferrara and Alberto Zaccheroni dabbled with other formations last season.

Juve, who also have a new president in Andrea Agnelli and sporting director in Beppe Marotta, are pinning their hopes on largely Italian talent with winger Simone Pepe and goalkeeper Marco Storari already arriving in this transfer window.

Cabin fever hounds stars and pray - that they will stay to

THIS IS NOT OVER THE LINE: Argentina's coach Diego Maradona saves the ball from going over the goal-line during a training session in Pretoria yesterday.

MAX Impression Moment

INTERNET

Lovely

Sex, safaris, siestas, golf, and for want of anything better -PlayStation.

The remaining eight teams at the football World Cup in South Africa are - when it comes to killing time, at least - already champions. Avoiding cabin fever is

imperative. The winner of the

coveted gold trophy could very

well be the team with the most effective diversions during the month-long tournament. No matter how thrilling the matches are, boredom constantly lurks afterwards. Daily routines of World Cup partici-

pants are nearly as monotonous as a stay in a sanatorium. "Breakfast, training, lunch, bed, dinner, bed", is how England's Wayne Rooney described his typical World Cup

In the South African winter, darkness falls as early as 5:30 p.m. Nights are mostly cool. And strict security keeps players from going out on the town spontaneously.

"Our coach (Gerardo at two in the afternoon, that's Martino) prepared us for being locked up for seven weeks,' remarked Paraguay striker NelsonValdez.

The German team have gone on two safaris already. Players' girlfriends and wives are ensconced in a Pretoria hotel. And each player received a World Cup entertainment packet containing a laptop

computer, PlayStation and digital camera. "On the whole, the team's

mood is very good," said German midfielder Sami Khedira in describing the cloistered existence of the German squad in their quarters at the Velmore Grande Hotel, near Pretoria.

For some teams, further diversion is provided in the form of home cinema, table tennis and quad bikes. The Greeks, according to

their striker Angelos Charisteas, relied on backgammon tournaments and card games. They folded in the group stage. Being cooped up together did not agree with France, runners-up in 2006. They were

riven with dissension and crashed out of the South African edition without having won a match. The fiasco has become an affair of state. Rooney, whose disappoint-

ing World Cup performance matched that of his team, may have been undone partly by boredom. "Sitting round... Lying in bed

quite boring," said Rooney, who at times looked uninterested even while on the pitch. Mercifully, Rooney did not have to suffer long. England's 4-

1 thrashing by Germany ensured they were eliminated in the Round of 16.

Five-times world champions Brazil have been in South Africa since May 27. They hope -

WORLD CUP

ONE

TWOS

SOUTH

2010

FIFA

WORLD CUP

the very end of the World Cup on July 11. Which is one reason why Kaka, Lucio and other players of the Selecao spend a lot of their free time praying.

They are no chaste saints however. Some of them, like forward Robinho, have found lodgings for their wives near the team's five- star Hotel Fairway, just outside Johannesburg.

Brazil coach Carlos Dunga said players could decide for themselves what they did in private. "Not everyone wants sex," he added.

Vicente del Bosque, Spain's skipper, has been giving his charges time off until 6 p.m. on days after matches. Some of the players have gone on safaris, strolled around the academic city of Potchefstroom or simply hung out at the campus of North-West University.

Argentina coach Diego Maradona, who captained his country's 1986 World Cup champions, always gives his players the second day after a match off. The hard-living Argentine hero knows perhaps better than anyone that footballers have a life off the pitch and also need it.

Figo hits out at Ronaldo too

PHOTO: REUTERS

MAX Skin Lightening

MAX Spot Reduction

MAX Sun Protection

INTERNET

Former Portugal international Luis Figo criticised Cristiano Ronaldo on Wednesday, after the Real Madrid star's reaction to his country's last-16 exit against Spain.

Ronaldo was accused of spitting in the direction of a cameraman as he walked off the pitch after the 1-0 defeat at the Green Point stadium and he then told reporters: "You should ask the coach" when questioned about why Portugal had crashed out of

the World Cup. Figo, who also wore the captain's armband for his country, said: "My notion of what a captain should do is maybe different to other people. But I think the captain, regardless of whether

has to defend the group. "In the most difficult moments, it is his job to stand up for the team."

the team wins or loses, always



The pair, along with Argentinian midfielder Javier Mascherano, are the three

future under his tenure.

big names who have all been linked with moves away this summer, although the uncertainty over who would be manager and the ongoing sale by coowners Tom Hicks and George Gillett have led to speculation there could be a mass exodus.

Hodgson has less than a month to get to know his players and prepare them for a Europa League third qualifying round first-legtie on July 29.

He is at least familiar with the prospect, having guided Fulham from that starting point all the way to the final this season, eventually losing to Atletico

ROY HODGSON Madrid. The former Switzerland manager then has to

> severely lacking strength in depth. However, with the club in debt to the tune of 350 million pounds, he will be severely retricted in

begin the task of strengthening a squad which is

terms of spending power. Even so his priority is to find a left-back, as Emiliano Insua is the only specialist in the firstteam squad, and much-needed support for Torres

in attack.

Cafu rates African sides

REUTERS, Johannesburg

contract at Craven Cottage.

An African nation could win the World Cup in the future if the game continues on the right path, Brazil's World Cup-winning captain Cafu said on

Despite five of Africa's six representatives at the World Cup failing to get past the first round including hosts South Arica, Cafu said that the

continent's football was improving. Cafu is the only man to have played in three World Cup finals, winning two of them. He cap-

tained Brazil to their 2002 triumph. Ghana, who play Uruguay in the quarterfinals on Friday at Soccer City, were the only African survivors from the group stage but now have the chance of surpassing the quarterfinal achievements of Cameroon in 1990 and Senegal in 2002 to become the first African team to reach the

semifinals. Cafu, 40, Brazil's most capped player, told a media briefing: "What we are seeing nowadays, is African teams who are more responsible, more committed, and more aware of what is needed of them and the responsibility behind representing

their continent. the majority of its players are playing for European teams and that is very good as they are

continent.

becoming role models for the youngsters on the "As far as winning a World Cup such as this, I

believe that first of all you need to have the right teams, the right determination and of achieving your objectives.

"If African teams can realise the importance of team spirit they will know that they can win a World Cup. "If we look at what Ghana has achieved so far,

we can be certain that one African team will eventually win a World Cup."

His views were backed by Danny Jordaan, the chief executive of the local organising committee, who said Africa must invest in youth programmes and development if it is to have any chance of winning the World Cup in the future. "The prospects are just amazing for us. We

have the possibility of an African team going beyond the frontiers never achieved by any African country, going beyond what was achieved in 1990 and again in 2002. "Roger Milla had his last dance in the

quarterfinal (in 1990 with Cameroon). Ghana is already there and we hope that we can see them in the semifinal and final of the World Cup." But, he stressed, investment in youth

programmes was vital for future success. "Cafu won the Under 17 World Cup, then the "African football has grown to the extent that Under 20 World Cup, then the Olympics, then the senior World Cup and that's what we have to aim at from an African point of view.

"If you did not do well in primary or secondary school, you are not going to be a star performer at university. It is not going to happen."

CHANGING FOCUS

FIFA's reluctance to use technology to avoid refereeing errors has been grist to the mill of newspaper cartoonists. South Africa's Business Day newspaper couldn't resist a dig at FIFA's priorities. The cartoon shows FIFA chief Sepp Blatter announcing that "FIFA is reconsidering reopening the debate on using video technology to review play and to aid refereeing decisions ... if we can overcome the logistical nightmare of turning four of the 1,680 cameras trained on the hordes of potential ambush marketers in the stands towards the soccer on the pitch!"

EUSEBIO GOES SPANISH

Eusebio believes compatriot Cristiano Ronaldo underperformed at the World Cup in South Africa after Portugal crashed out at the Round of 16 stage at the hands of Spain. "Ronaldo did not live up to expectations," Eusebio said

Thursday in Johannesburg. "It's unfortunate for Portugal that he did not do very well

in this tournament but I'm not going to condemn him for that. I have played the game and know when players are in good or bad

Eusebio said he believes the race for the award of Golden Boot given to the World Cup's top scorer is shaping up into a battle between Argentina's Gonzalo Higuain and David Villa of Spain.

Higuain and Villa currently top the tournament's goalscoring standings with four goals, along with Slovakia's RobertVittek.

"I believe the award will go to Higuain from Real Madrid or Villa but it is going to be a very close run race between these two," Eusebio said.

CLEAR-EYED OFFER

Austria did not make it to the World Cup but enterprising Austrian opticians want to ensure that their country's referees have sharper eyes than those of their colleagues officiating in South Africa. The United Optics chain is offering free eye tests to referees and linesmen until the World Cup final. "Following the momentous wrong calls in the Round of 16 match between Germany and England, eye tests for referees seem inevitable," the company said.

EUSEBIO

COFFEE ITALIANO

Dethroned world champions Italy have already gone home but a bit of Italian flair remains at the World Cup nonetheless. Italian ex-footballer Nicola Caricola is suppling all World Cup stadiums with genuine Italian coffee. After marrying a South African model, the one-time defender for Bari, Juventus and Genoa moved to Cape Town, where he is the sole importer of a wellknown brand of Italian coffee. Caricola expects to sell two million cups of his

SPANISH FANS PREFER LLORENTE

brew during the four weeks of the tournament.

Spanish football fans prefer Fernando Llorente to Fernando Torres as the centre-forward of the World Cup team, to judge by two online polls published on Thursday.

The two polls, taken by Madrid sports dailies AS and Marca, show very similar results.

The poll in AS shows 68 per cent of readers would prefer Llorente to Torres accompanying the in-form David Villa,

while in Marca 67.1 per cent voted for Llorente compared to 32.9 per cent who picked Torres.

because of the poor form of Torres and the lively displays of Llorente when called upon.

The two tall strikers gave contrasting displays in Spain's 1-0 round of 16 defeat of Portugal in Cape Town on Tuesday.

A debate has arisen in Spain

Torres started the match and worked hard, but looked out of form and unfit. Llorente came on for him after an hour and gave the Spanish attack more

German players Lukas Podolski and Mesut Ozil skipped training on Thursday

verve and vigour - and came close to scoring three times. PODOLSKI, OEZIL SKIP TRAINING

LLORENTE

as a precautionary measure to be fit in time for their World Cup quarterfinal clash against Argentina on Saturday. Podolski had broken off training on Wednesday, complaining about a

minor muscle problem while playmaker Ozil remained in the team hotel, feeling unwell. Neither are expected to miss the match in Cape Town.

Cacau, who has been nursing an abdominal muscle strain and missed their second round win over England last week, was also absent. Coach Joachim Loew had said on Wednesday that the 29-year-old striker was doubtful for the match.

Germany are flying to Cape Town later on Thursday.