

'Money danger to the game'

Brazilian football legend Pele warned Monday that soaring players' salaries and powerful agents who squeeze clubs for higher fees represent a "danger for the future" of the game. Speaking to reporters in Hong Kong, the three-time World Cup winner bemoaned the number of players pocketing big salaries only to "disappear" after a short career. "Players should never forget to play for the love of the game and team... players love whoever pays a little bit more, that's the danger for football," he said, mock-kissing a badge on his blazer to illustrate his point.



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PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

ROWING IN THE BAY? No, this is kind of a celebration that half the members of the Tigers are doing after their victory over the other half in a fielding session at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Tigers can't write

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday issued a directive asking all members of the national team and those associated with the team to refrain from writing columns in newspapers during the World Cup, the BCB media committee chairman Jalal Yunus told The Daily Star. The decision was taken because of the controversy stirred up by current players' reactions to former players' criticism of the team's capitulation for 58 against the West Indies in their World Cup encounter last Friday.

A letter was sent out to all the team members and support staff with the details of the moratorium and a reminder to observe protocol when speaking to the media.

According to sources close to the unfolding events, a ban was supposed to be imposed before the World Cup started, but it did not come to pass. Recent events seem to have forced the BCB's hand.

Shakib and his team are not legally bound to stop writing, but BCB as their employers can stop them. BCB CEO Manzur Ahmed said that the existing contracts do not have a clause to bar cricketers from writing, but new contracts will include such clauses.

Bangladesh's loss to the West Indies, a reversal that has severely dented their

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Port city ready & waiting

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



Even from a distance of more than 150km, it is evident that World Cup fervour has spread down the southeastern parts of the country. With the port city nowhere in the horizon and the capital long past, you would still feel the pulse of this all-conquering tournament across the vast countryside.

The scenes of young kids throwing around a taped-tennis ball are nothing new but there is one in every high school field or for that matter, any patch of green. Even the odd highway restaurant has taken up the flavour of the month. Previous World Cups in the

sub-continent have sparked massive interest in cricket and this edition is having the same effect on Bangladesh, regardless of its tag as a cricket-mad nation.

As you enter Chittagong (and some of you may be headed this way to witness the Bangladesh-England game this Friday), you will see a marked difference within the city limits. Freshly painted walls, road markers and the numerous billboards and lighting in the prominent parts of town will give you a feel of the tournament, though only two games are going to be played here.

CNG-run autorickshaws, buses and taxis have all been repainted while the CNGs have a small red mark on their green body, depicting the national flag.

The approach road to the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium as well as the premises itself have been redecorated and spruced up for the two big days.

The general mood of the cricket enthusiasts in Chittagong has been a happy one though the recent debacle, namely the West Indies game last week in Dhaka, has put some in trepidation.

"Of course we are happy but wouldn't it be much better if the team had been doing well?" Ashiq posed the question. "A lot of good things have happened in the city for these two World Cup matches but still, if the team does well, everything will look shinier."

But Chittagong's most prominent cricketer feels no qualms in dealing

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Tigers trying to forget

MOHAMMAD ISAM from Chittagong



With so much importance placed on a player's body language in cricket these days, it was quite natural to gauge the Tigers' mood after the disastrous nine-wicket defeat to the West Indies last Friday.

Yesterday, their second day of training in Chittagong ahead of next Friday's game against England, the national cricketers threw themselves into different drills and it was evident that there was high emphasis on bringing back smiles to the faces.

This is how most cricket teams usually respond after an unflattering performance, keeping the unity going through huddles, mini competitions and an extra effort to lighten up the general atmosphere. After a short game of touch rugby, it became clearer that the Tigers hierarchy has vowed to inject some much needed competitiveness and steel into the squad members, with fielding coach Julien Fountain busy organising relay races between two groups and other innovative manoeuvres.

There was also the funny episode of Rubel Hossain and Tamim Iqbal swapping their roles and the Tigers vice-captain throwing the challenge to the young paceman in the nets to pick up 15 runs off his innocuous off-spin. It ended bizarrely when Rubel left a Tamim wide after coming down the track, the umpire (Shakib) judging it to be stumped. But the whole exercise was entirely intended to shift the focus of the players on the job at hand (England) and not on what has happened (West Indies). Though it was quite obvious, Tamim confirmed the plan to the media.

"It was just something to take our mind off the last game. We have been trying from yesterday. We played soccer and a few things today,

so I am sure they are in a good frame of mind now and I'm looking forward to do something good on the 11th," said the left-handed batsman.

"The guys are enjoying training. They are trying to forget what's happened in the last game. They are looking forward to the England game and at this moment, the mood is really nice," he added, also informing that the Tigers will be out and about in Chittagong today, taking advantage of a rest day.

"We have an off-day tomorrow, I'm planning to take the boys somewhere for recreation. After that I am sure everything will be fine," said Tamim, who is known to lead the team's social affairs.

The Tigers have been slammed in all quarters for their diabolical batting display against the West Indies with some pointing out that the rut began when Tamim and his opening Imrul Kayes failed cheaply at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on March 4.

"It's nothing like that. We got couple of very good players in our team. I know one thing and that is to perform in every game, that's my goal. We need to give the team a solid start after which they can work on the foundation."

"I'm sure everyone is capable, that's why we are in the team. Someone like Mushfiq or Rokibul didn't have a good game but they are

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Tiny tots shower flower petals to welcome the England cricket team upon their arrival at the Shah Amanat International Airport in Chittagong yesterday. England take on Bangladesh in a crucial World Cup Group B match in the port city on Friday.


PHOTO: STAR



TODAY'S MATCH

Match	Time	Venue
Pakistan v New Zealand	3:00pm	Pallekele






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Pakistan - New Zealand

Pakistan is at the top of Group A with three wins while New Zealand are placed fourth in the group with two wins in three games. A win here would take New Zealand to the top of the table while a win for Pakistan will confirm their quarterfinal berth, with still two matches to go. New Zealand won both their games against the minnows Zimbabwe and Kenya but lost heavily to Australia. Going by the form that they are in, the game against Pakistan would be a tough nut to crack for the Kiwis. Pakistan are on a high after three consecutive wins but their batting could be a problem for them going into the New Zealand tie.

Nurul Huda Belal

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