

Cricket World Cup and a policy of exclusivity

The days of colonisation may be long gone but the spirit of dominating smaller nations has taken over the new masters of the sport



MIR AFTABUDDIN AHMED

SINCE the commencement of the tournament in 1975, the one-day international World Cup has traditionally been the flagship event of the International Cricket Council (ICC) whilst both the Test and T20 formats of the game have their own unique features. The ODI World Cup carries an intrinsic sense of competition amongst the participating teams unlike any other series or tournament played in the sport. Cricket fans are extremely passionate about the World Cup—and this time is no different. Nevertheless, with each passing global tournament, cricketing administrators have ironically remained persistent in preventing the integration of the world in the World Cup.

Amidst the backdrop of an all-English UEFA Champions League final and the smooth initiation of the 2019 Cricket World Cup, there was a palpable sense of excitement amongst sports fans in England. The World Cup has gotten off to a good start in its first two weeks. Before delving into the cons of the format of the tournament, let's get some things clear. The quality of cricket we will be seeing from the English team is expected to be top-notch, with 10 of the very best teams in the sport competing for the much-coveted prize. The league system, whereby each team faces every other team, also means that

this will be a much more hotly contested and challenging tournament compared to the last six World Cups. And lastly, the smaller boundaries across the venues and the increasingly batting-friendly conditions prevalent in the pitch, in contrast to the versatility seen in the bowling line-ups of the teams, will make the ICC Cricket World Cup 2019 an event which is sure to enthrall fans.

The problem of a 10-team World Cup is, however, not necessarily to do with the quality of cricket being displayed, but rather one that needs to be explored in terms of a deeper philosophical question regarding the sport itself. Once considered to be the vanguard of colonial socio-cultural interaction, cricket has seen post-colonial societies, such as those in the Indian subcontinent and the West Indies, outperform the original founders of the game in many avenues of the sport—whether it be in cricket commercialism and marketing, or the differences in fan bases. Today, cricket is surely not the "gentleman's game" it was once thought to be. At present, it has evolved into a sport via which rural communities engage in leisure and community-building, while providing the national teams of many countries, including Bangladesh, with some of their best talents. The dominance of India in the sport has become prevalent in both the financial and non-financial aspects of the game. But as comedian Hasan Minhaj describes in an episode of the Netflix show *Patriot Act* titled "Cricket Corruption", as the most powerful organisation in cricket, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has gone a bit too far.



India's tour of Australia during 2018-19.

PHOTO: AFP

Individuals such as Lalit Modi and N Srinivasan, both of whom served in senior positions in the BCCI, are directly to blame for the increasing moral corruption in cricket. Engulfed in scandals related to the Indian Premier League (IPL), these individuals paved the way for the criticism we now hear about cricket. For one, cricket, and especially T20 cricket, with all its glitz and glamour, has centralised the sport towards the Indian subcontinent—and by centralisation, one refers to the financial, technical and administrative monopolisation of the sport by the BCCI. In statistical terms, the BCCI

generates 75 percent of the revenue of the ICC and that in itself shows the increasing market power of the BCCI.

In hindsight, one may suggest that it is the right of the BCCI to earn the highest share of ICC revenue and assume political authority, given its contributions to the game of cricket. Yet the so-called "Big 3" model, as proposed by former BCCI President N Srinivasan, which refers to the powerful triumvirate of India, England and Australia, helps them control decision-making in the sport and only points towards an exclusive interest of these three big players. The cumulative result of this is

a 10-team World Cup where lower-ranked nations such as Ireland, Zimbabwe, Canada, Bermuda, etc., do not have the opportunity to participate due to their inability to generate high revenues. This entire model is aimed at institutionalising exclusivity in the game of cricket. And for a game aiming to widen its reach, such a scenario is counterproductive.

If we look at the history of cricket, some of the most exciting games in World Cup history have been, in a sense, the victories of minnows over well-established line-ups: Zimbabwe beat the mighty Australians in 1983; Kenya went on to the semi-finals of the 2003 World Cup without playing a single Test match; and we all know about the rise of Bangladesh since the 1999 World Cup match against Pakistan. Such instances made cricket exciting and, in a way, more inclusive. But the format of the 2019 World Cup is a continuation of an exclusivist policy of cricket authorities; it is part of the same policy which has kept cricket out of the Olympics and barred associate nations from rising to the higher echelons of the game.

Monetary motivations may make one believe that a 10-team World Cup is a good financial investment for the ICC. But if we think that money made cricket what it is today, then we know nothing at all. Cricket continues to be, unfortunately, a colonial game. The days of colonisation may be gone but the spirit of dominating smaller nations has taken over the new masters of the sport.

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WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR Confronting our complicity



RAMISA ROB

CHILDREN born to affluent backgrounds grow up with the warning to never touch sharp objects, especially to never go near a *boti*, and oftentimes in the same household, another child from a less affluent background straddles the same protruding blades, because that's their job. This disturbing illustration of class difference, however, is the least of the problems in this society where much worse is happening all around.

The string of recent incidents like the death of a 12-year-old domestic worker, Baishakhi, recovered from her employer's home hanging by the ceiling, and the plight of 11-year-old Lamia, found unconscious, bruised and tortured, have, to an extent, only become horror stories that move us, but ones we cannot associate with from the privileged side of the screen—and ones we forget, not long after we read them.

On June 12 every year, International Labour Organization (ILO) celebrates World Day Against Child Labour, and we revisit the tragedies of lives lost to hazardous forms of child labour, most often excluding the exploitation and dangers faced by child domestic workers. We read about the policies and report that activists still bear the same concern—that we remain far from addressing this perpetual problem. In a conference this same day last year, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Chairman Kazi Reazul Hoque stated, "It seems like we are moving in the opposite direction [in eliminating child labour] as hazardous child labour is rising," and predicted that its continuation would ensure that it doubles by 2025.

Child labour is an unsettling reality of our everyday lives in Bangladesh—most of us witness it in weddings, in Eid, in construction sites, in fields and factories, bus stops, and

often at our own homes. According to the National Child Labour Survey report, published in 2015, approximately 1.2 million children in Bangladesh are working in the worst forms of child labour. On the surface, child labour is an emblem of inhumanity, but we all know this issue is much more complex than just that—it is embedded in nationwide, systemic poverty. Underprivileged children arrive at our doorsteps, usually with or sent by their parents who cannot afford education or otherwise. This early ticket from poverty to domestic work was supposed to be countered by the National Education Policy enacted in 2010, which nationalised primary education, rendering it mandatory for the state to ensure free education and free lunch at schools for street and ultra-deprived children, and even stipends for female students until class 10.

Yet, a report by Unicef Bangladesh on child labour in the country estimated that more than one million children have never

been to school. The main reason behind this is not only that parents cannot afford to raise their children, but also that they need their children to earn a living to sustain their familial livelihoods. Saddled with misfortunes (for example, the death or illness of a parent), the only option left for many children is to enter the workforce, working long hours and tackling tedious, underpaid jobs. A similar pattern of burden leads poverty-stricken youth to domestic work. Even underprivileged children who attend school have to work part-time to support their families—the nine schoolboys who lost their lives at a brick kiln in Cumilla on January 25, 2019 is a fresh reminder that employers need to adopt safety procedures.

It is widely understood that the path to eradicating child labour in this poverty-stricken society is not streamlined, but we perceive the main problem with child labour to only be the inevitable fact that children have

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children between ages 4-14 years, that laws are not enforced, and that powerful employers are heedless of the law because they can easily get away with committing injustice. Is this the sort of society we want to live in?

And then there is violence and abuse towards child workers, normalised in every part of the society. According to a 2013 study conducted by Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum, a platform of children's rights organisations, child domestic workers work for unnaturally long hours, and a study on the situation of child domestic workers in Dhaka city in 2010 showed that almost 73 percent of child domestic workers were physically abused and 17 percent sexually abused. The Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy 2015 specifies that no child under 12 years of age can be hired as domestic workers, and cannot engage in "heavy work" until they are 18 years of age. In practice, such laws are not implemented, and this inefficiency is also widely accepted, essentially used as a convenient loophole to grossly mistreat children behind closed doors.


Only news headlines and statistics don't reflect the frequency with which child domestic workers are routinely abused, both physically and verbally, on a daily basis. "Maliks" (owners) presume authority to feed their own worst impulses and take out their anger on these children, only because they can. What is the justification for this behaviour? We hear many explanations such as "We provide a shelter and a roof to these kids, we don't deserve this behaviour; many others treat them much worse than us." It is shameful that every time we are confronted with this horrid reality, we resort to comparing ourselves to lower standards. But in order to address a problem, we have to first confront the role that *we* play in cultivating the insensitive and entitled attitudes towards children who are forced to work because of their unfortunate circumstances.

Ramisa Rob is currently pursuing her master's degree in NYU.



PHOTO: MD RAHAT KABIR

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY



June 12, 1964
Nelson Mandela is sentenced to life in prison in South Africa

Nelson Mandela receives a life sentence for committing 'sabotage' against South Africa's apartheid government, avoiding a possible death sentence.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS	25 Clothes, in slang	5 Bowling site
1 Launder	27 Ashtray fill	6 Bring up
5 LAX listings	29 Harvest goddess	7 Car lines
9 Leftovers at a barbecue	30 Maroon	8 Money
11 Bounded	32 Snappy replies	10 Fall, for one
13 Emporium	34 — nutshell	12 Snares
14 Sneaker wearer, at times	35 Blown away	17 "Oh, wow!"
15 Course employee	36 Shoe part	19 Elevator pioneer
16 Atlas section	38 Ringlets	22 Pot starter
18 In a manner of speaking	39 Component	24 Increases
20 Winter air quality	40 Sibilant summons	25 Donut-shaped
21 Squelch	41 Unpaid TV ads, for short	26 Bare one's soul
22 Gets on	DOWN	27 Particle
23 Diarist Anais	1 Some stingers	28 New York tribe
24 Hosp. workers	2 Texas team	30 Gain by force
	3 Meteors	31 Challenges
	4 That woman	33 Hogwarts messengers
		37 Card spot

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

C	H	A	I	C	H	A	P	S
H	E	L	L	O	L	I	C	I
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E	G	O	P	I	N	E	T	A
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J	O	B	R	I	C	E	W	E
A	S	S		S	U	B	P	A
P	A	C	E	C	A	R	R	U
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BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker

11-16

BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott

17-18