

# Cricket brings us together

## The joy and heartbreak of the World Cup



**A**S the Cricket World Cup heads to its final, it's beginning to pack enough drama to put the most maudlin daytime soap to shame.

Sporting events may be all about winning and losing, but what's so compelling about it is always the human drama involved—the highs and lows, the near-misses and the attendant heartbreak, the rush of adrenaline following a plucky victory snatched out of near defeat.

Of course, the exit of the Tigers was painful—particularly their unfortunate loss to Pakistan in the final game. Overall, however, the Tigers gave an excellent account of themselves. Shakib Al Hasan leads anybody's list of top players, and it's wonderful to see Mustafizur Rahman get some of his fizz back.

The upside of the exit of the Tigers is that it gave me the space to look beyond and take stock of—and enjoy—the tournament as a whole in a more relaxed frame of mind. All told, it's been a great tournament.

I've followed only the first semi-final at Old Trafford in Manchester, and this packed all the excitement of a high-flying rollercoaster.

The much-fancied Indians had to pack it in after a remarkable victory by the Kiwis in a real nail-biter, especially in the second-half with India chasing a modest total of 240. Small targets often make for really tense matches for the simple reason that a wicket or a spurt of runs can dramatically alter the

complexion of the match.

The Kiwis removed the Indian big guns early on, and pretty soon India had lost five wickets. A spectacular rearguard action of the swashbuckling Ravindra Jadeja and wily veteran MS Dhoni almost pulled off a miracle. Almost. Whoever imagined Martin Gupthill, who, until now, had a very forgettable World Cup, would rise to the occasion when his team needed it the most? With one unbelievable, sharp throw he hit the stumps with Dhoni only inches away. The crestfallen veteran took the long walk back, his team's confident dream of lifting the trophy now in tatters.

Kiwis seem to have a talent for nail-biters. Who can forget the tense drama of the final over of their match against the West Indies? West Indies all-rounder Carlos Brathwaite, an unlikely centurion, almost pulled it off. His attempted six would have been enough to pull West Indies over the finish line, but he was caught inches from the boundary. You would have to have a heart of stone to not feel for him as he knelt down in despair. What makes cricket so beautiful and unique is what happened next: New Zealand players came and comforted him. Can you imagine anything like that in football?

To be sure, all cricket teams are not created equal. The super-star teams have a swagger in their walk—England, Australia and India. Then there are the teams who are a shadow of their glorious past selves—South Africa, Sri Lanka and the hapless West Indies. The mercurial Pakistanis are hard to pin down. On their day they can beat anybody—they beat mighty England convincingly. Yet they surrendered in an ignominious defeat after they collapsed for 105 against unfancied West Indies. You just never know which Pakistan



Pakistan's Imam-ul-Haq leaves the field after hitting his own wicket against the World Cup match with Bangladesh at Lord's, London, July 5, 2019. Bangladesh lost by a big margin of 94 runs.

PHOTO: REUTERS

is going to show up on a given day; this gives new meaning to the term two-nation theory.

I would put Bangladesh in the middle—not quite as solid as the teams at the very top, but definitely a cut above the has-beens. I think former Indian captain Sourav Ganguly's observation was quite astute. He said Bangladesh is not a good team, but a

dangerous team.

Then there is Afghanistan, the plucky newcomers, still finding their feet. They still have ways to go, but they served notice to the world after they gave Sri Lanka, and in particular the mighty Indians, a real fright.

It is the glorious uncertainty of cricket that's so much of its charm. On its day, even

an unfancied team can humble a mighty team if it plays out of its skin. One-time greats South Africa had a terrible World Cup, but they finished on a high note by beating Australia, who were a serious contender for the trophy. Likewise, Sri Lanka is a far cry from its old self, but it did beat England, another trophy contender.

The dominance of the subcontinent was evident among the spectators—every time India played, the stadium turned into a sea of blue. Bangladesh and Pakistan fans also showed up in astonishing numbers. The huge crowds—noisy, rambunctious, good-natured, full of joy—added a vitality and, at tense moments, an electric frisson that was an utter joy. This is in stark contrast with Test matches mostly played in near-empty stadiums these days, a depressing sight.

There are winners and losers after each game, but the real value of the World Cup tournament is in the sense of community and warmth it engenders among the millions and millions of international fans all around the world. The cricket website Cricinfo, where I often follow matches, has followers commenting from literally all over the world—Germany, Australia, Canada, the US, the subcontinent, you name it. It's fair to say we are all winners, and so is cricket.

In our passion for the teams we support, we tend to forget that it's not just about winning. I still remember, over half a century ago, how moved I was when I read the credo of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics: "The important thing in the Olympics is not to win but to take part, just as in life the important thing is not the triumph but the struggle."

Ashfaque Swapan is a contributing editor for *Sillconeer*, a monthly periodical for South Asians in the United States.

# Breaking the backbone of a nation

## Corporal punishment is still prevalent in schools despite complete ban



**C**HILDHOOD recollections eventually start resembling the bright, vivid pages of a favourite storybook. We turn those pages someday, reminiscing about the golden times in which schools played such a notable part. These

houses of knowledge quench our curious minds through the help of teachers, who most of us visualise as nothing less than a guardian angel in these stories.

But sometimes, these patrons of knowledge take the shape of vile creatures that use physical abuse as a tool to "teach manners". Corporal punishment in schools not only leaves wounds and scars, but also a deep-rooted negative effect on the psyche of children, sometimes for the rest of their lives.

Physical punishment in our social context is not limited to a light disciplinary spanking. The situation is grave as students have not only ended up in hospitals but have lost their lives in some extreme cases. Last year, an 11-year-old madrasa boy, Tauhidul Islam, was severely lashed with a stick that cost him his life because of the injuries that he sustained. This year, there was almost a recap of that, when a 12-year-old madrasa student, Nejamul Haque, had to be sent to the hospital after being mercilessly caned by his instructor. And all of this for a simple deed of mischief that could have been dismissed after a reprimand. While he battled his injuries, the teacher remained at large, and while we keep condemning such acts, these incidents keep occurring. It is grimly ironic that these men sometimes resort to such violence in the name of preaching a religion that actually advocates peace and harmony.

This practice is endemic not only in madrasas but is commonplace in schools of different mediums as well. The situation persists despite the fact that a High Court directive had already been issued in 2011 which ruled that corporal punishment breaches the constitutional rights of children. But it has been easy to



SOURCE: THEFRONTIERPOST.COM

circumvent this directive primarily because, without enforcement, it is disregarded and, furthermore, cultural norms allow such crimes to go on. Such frequent occurrences are a testament of the dismissive attitude of the concerned authorities towards their duties.

Public condemnation faced by these perpetrators remains in the news for a while but is soon forgotten just like every other trending issue in the country. It is almost as if this nation collectively suffers from short-term memory loss, which is why this court directive banning physical punishment was like a breath of fresh air in the face of such brutality. But as usual, due to the lack of enforcement and proper follow-up, it is rarely paid heed to.

A few days ago, around 50 students from Ideal High School in Bogra became the subject of mass humiliation when they were beaten and had their hair chopped off by two of their teachers to discipline them.

According to a large-scale meta-analysis published by the American Psychological Association, there is a strong correlation between corporal punishment and child psychology. Corporal punishment can give rise to negative traits such as aggressive and anti-social behaviour, mental health problems and weak moral internalisation. The only positive upshot of it is immediate compliance which too is a result of fear. This does not actually cause children to be chastened but they just find ways to be secretive the next time they get into the said shenanigans. This means two things. First, corporal punishment can actually lead to more hostile behaviour among children. Second, the receiver of such punishment will eventually normalise these acts and may grow up to become abusers themselves.

"I was hit more severely when I was in school but I turned out just fine"—this kind of an attitude is still prevalent in our society. This reflects the "sparing the rod spoils the

child" kind of mindset that we harbour where physical punishment is still perceived as an effective tool to discipline a child. But what ideal construct are we comparing this against? We may think we turned out fine, but the way violence against children has become normalised in the country goes to show the lies we tell ourselves.

A report published in the *BMJ Open*, a peer-reviewed open access medical journal, last year showed that countries with a complete ban on corporal punishment had less incidents of violence among young people—substantiated by statistics that "there was 31 percent less physical fighting in young men and 42 percent less physical fighting in young women." The biggest irony is right here because we already have a ruling in place that condemns the use of physical punishment. And yet 67 percent of the parents surveyed support physical punishment, according to a census conducted by Bangladesh Legal Aid and

Services Trust (BLAST) in association with Save the Children in 2017. Teachers and parents alike uphold it as a technique that works. But just because some norms have become the standard does not mean they are healthy. Why should we still feel the need to humiliate or physically hurt a child to discipline them? Why should we resort to aggression in order to make them well-mannered?

This situation cannot but be looked upon with a certain degree of distaste, as even the law is failing to make some teachers question their actions, let alone instil in them a sense of empathy. This mentality has been cultivated due to age-old practices, ignorance and indifference on both the guardians' and school authorities' part. They not only endorse the occasional "educational slap", but go on to unleash their full wrath through cold-blooded beatings or creative methods of torture. Two years ago, a primary school teacher was accused of forcing her students to drink sewer water in order to teach them a lesson—a lesson taken too far all in the name of instilling manners and correcting behaviour.

This sorry state of affairs will not improve unless the ban on corporal punishment is firmly enforced in all urban and rural schools. Awareness campaigns should be conducted to disseminate information about both the repercussions of such maltreatment and the ban itself. As confirmed by the survey carried out by BLAST, 64 percent of the parents are unaware of the HC ruling—illustrating the information asymmetry. Their vigilance thus to prevent such occurrences should be of utmost priority. Academic institutions must adopt a zero-tolerance policy against corporal punishment, immediately terminate teachers who are culpable of abusing children, and cooperate with guardians to bring justice to these children. Teachers' role is said to be to help build the backbone of a nation, but those who end up breaking the bones of students instead, all to maintain classroom decorum, deserve no respect and have no place in educational institutions.

Iqra L Qamari is a student of economics at North South University and is an intern at *The Daily Star*.

**QUOTABLE Quote**

**CHE GUEVARA**  
(1928–1967)

Argentine Marxist revolutionary, physician, author, activist, guerrilla leader, diplomat and a major figure of the Cuban Revolution.

*The revolution is not an apple that falls when it is ripe. You have to make it fall.*

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

<b>ACROSS</b>	32 Simile center	9 Wintry weather
1 Tolerate	33 Quick bite	11 Dance fad of 1996
6 Upper limits	34 Portugal's place	15 That girl
10 Nigeria neighbor	36 Zilch	17 City of Australia
11 Fashion workder	37 Sound	20 S. Dak. neighbor
12 Bath bars	38 After a while	21 Feeling down
13 Without others	39 Mirror sight	24 Capitol worker
14 Holds title to	40 Be penitent	25 Poseidon prop
15 Uncommon	41 Calendar units	27 Can. neighbor
16 Floor cover	42 Harbor cities	28 Some tiores
17 "Caught you!"	<b>DOWN</b>	29 Furious
18 Fishing aid	1 Soak up	30 Bush's successor
19 Kitchen appliances	2 Grendel's slayer	31 Hold, at sea
22 On the house	3 Risky way to act	35 Equips
23 Sunrise site	4 Dance moves	36 Alliance since 1949
26 Goofs	5 USN rank	38 Pet perch
29 High hit	6 Soda choice	
	7 Bedeck	
	8 Pound parts	

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**BEETLE BAILEY** by Mort Walker

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS**

C	L	A	N	G	S	H	A	P	E
R	I	G	O	R	A	A	R	O	N
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**BABY BLUES** by Kirkman & Scott