



Cricket Governance

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1 Introduction

- Given the might of Indian economy and country's young demographics, India is a preferred venue for major sporting events; the most popular of them is Cricket. Sporting performance is often associated with national pride, the systemic issues, like corruption, nepotism, spot fixing, etc. have dented it severely in the recent past. As a result, the debate has been raging in favour of or against government intervention to put things in place.
- Cricket in India, at the national level, is governed by Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), which is an autonomous agency. At the state level, there are State Cricket Associations.

2 Current Status & Need for State Intervention

- In accordance with international convention government influence in Cricket governance is limited. BCCI is completely responsible for Cricket governance in India, which is directly affiliated to the International Cricket Council (ICC). BCCI is a registered society under Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- BCCI receives some indirect subsidies from the government, in the form of tax benefits, security at sporting events free of cost, land for stadiums, etc. As a pre-condition for receiving direct financial aid, a body is supposed to have a government appointed observer who oversees its internal processes such as utilization of funds, team selections, etc. BCCI have had eminent politicians or retired bureaucrats elected as their office bearers with the anticipation of utilizing their political clout in various matters.
- Since sporting activities have traditionally been recreational in nature, the obvious question to ask is—why should the State be involved? One constant theme in the evolution of sports over the past century is that it has become a means of national pride. Be it the US during the cold war era or China in contemporary times—countries have used sporting excellence as a signal of their overall might soft power and self amelioration.
- India is a country of one billion aspiring people trying to prove our supremacy to the world, and sport is increasingly being seen as a medium to express it. Given such widespread public involvement and association of national pride with sports, the State cannot remain oblivious to it. As an entity dedicated to public welfare, the State has a definite interest in the promotion and governance of sports.

3 Controversies in Cricket Governance

The Cricket governance in India is plagued by many issues and controversies. Some of these are:

- unlimited discretionary powers vested in the board, and cricket associations,
- lack of accountability,
- non-transparent decision making,
- revenue management irregularities,
- illegal betting and match fixing,
- the zonal bickering among associations, etc.

Some of the recent ones are discussed below in some detail:

1. There is no doubting the fact that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is the richest cricket body in the world today. However, nearly all sports experts agree that the functioning of the BCCI is shrouded in mystery. There is lack of transparency in the functioning of the BCCI and more often than not, the richest cricket organization is engaged in political squabbles with least concern for the welfare of the game, the players and the passionate fans. There are close links between cricket and politics, with

several of India's senior ministers holding top positions in the BCCI for the past few decades. This has given rise to many controversies in recent past, like alleged scandals in DDCA, foreign minister allegedly having relations with a fugitive cricket administrator, etc.

2. The new version of cricket in India, call IPL, was allegedly involved in recent cases of match fixing, betting, involving players, renowned industrialists, bookies, etc. India now produces around 80% of total global cricket revenue. That power was extended by the rise of the IPL, which has also inflated player salaries, producing difficulties for other national cricket authorities.
3. Authorities arrested three players and eleven bookkeepers for alleged spot-fixing in IPL. This corruption scandal is a powerful reflection of the larger failings afflicting India today: rampant cronyism, poor governance, and the absence of accountability. To understand the root causes of India's current corruption crisis, one need not look any further than the controversy now surrounding Indian cricket.
4. The BCCI was recently in news over a major corruption issue involving its own president, whose cement company owns one of the teams in the lucrative IPL. His son-in-law was the team's operations manager and became directly involved in a serious betting scandal involving organised crime figures. This forced the Supreme Court to appoint a committee to look into the governance of the Cricket in India and make recommendations.
5. There are issues of unequal representations of state associations in BCCI.

4 Lodha Panel Recommendations and their Impact

- The Lodha committee appointed by the Supreme Court has recommended a complete overhaul of Indian cricket, from the very top down to the grassroots level and affecting every stakeholder. Its report covers every aspect of the game with special focus on the BCCI's administrative and governance structures and the issue of transparency.
- The most important set of recommendations aims at transforming the entire power structure in the board. It has changed the BCCI's electorate to one association per state - some states have three - and removed the vote from associations without territorial definitions (e.g., Railways and Services).

Some of the major recommendations by the panel

1. BCCI to have a CEO accountable to nine-member apex council, of which five should be elected, two should be representatives of players' association, and one woman. Players' association will include all those who have played first-class cricket.
2. Only one association of each state will have representation in BCCI with voting right. Also, a person cannot be member of BCCI and state association simultaneously.
3. Fixed term of BCCI members and ban on politicians and bureaucrats from holding office.
4. Senior selection committee to be made up of former international Test cricketers.
5. BCCI to be brought under the purview of RTI; constitution of an ombudsman, ethics officer, and electoral officer.
6. BCCI and IPL to have separate governing bodies.
7. Betting to be legalized for all except the players, team, match officials, and cricket administrators. This would generate revenue, on the one hand, while on the other, it would help regulate betting.
8. Restrict total tenure of office-bearers in any capacity to two terms, not exceeding six years. Tenure of president will not be longer than three years.
9. Protection of players' interests by registering agents under prescribed norms of BCCI and players' association.
10. BCCI to share details of rules and regulations, norms, meetings, expenditures, balance sheets, reports and orders of authorities on its website.
11. An independent auditor to verify how the full members have expended the grants given to them by the BCCI.

12. There will now be five elected office-bearers - president, secretary, one vice-president instead of the current five, treasurer and joint secretary - and they will serve a maximum of three terms of nine years each across positions. Also, they will not be able to serve two consecutive terms - each must be broken by a "cooling-off" period. And the president's powers have also been curbed: he no longer has an additional vote at meetings, nor does he have a say in team selection.
13. Further clipping the current set-up's wings, Justice Lodha's report has replaced the Working Committee, the BCCI's highest decision-making body, with a nine-member Apex Council, which will include representatives from the players' community - including one woman. There will also be a nominee of the Comptroller and Auditor General, presumably to keep an eye on how the board's vast resources are being utilized.
14. There's also a big push for transparency, with the recommended appointment of three independent officials - an ombudsman, an ethics officer and an election officer - to look into the three contentious areas within the BCCI: conflict of interest, dispute resolution and election processes. It also set high eligibility criteria for each, to ensure their independence.

Given the scope of these changes, the question arises whether the proposals would be binding upon the BCCI. The highest court of the land has appointed the committee.

Recommendations if implemented will have the following positives:

1. Will create space for professional management and to prevent any one individual from dominating the board.
2. Separating cricket functions from administrative functions and IPL from BCCI will bring in efficiency and professionalism.
3. Players association and Selection committee with senior players will bring in cricketers' perspective and bring balance between administrators and players.
4. Having a woman on the Apex Council will be first step in correcting glaring gender disparity in BCCI.
5. Provisions of RTI, Ethics officer etc will breed transparent and ethical administration.
6. Will reduce politicization, patronage and bureaucratization while increasing accountability of officials.
7. Will give equal representation to all states and will be helpful in promoting cricket in smaller, hilly and north-eastern states.
8. Government has failed to control betting; hence legalizing it will be better option to generate revenue.

As the game has fallen into disrepute, only extraordinary steps will bring it back from this chasm. Apart from recommendation of legalizing betting almost all suggestions are non-contentious and their implementation will definitely help in arresting the decline of cricket as well as its image in India.

5 Way Forward

1. Overhauling the structure and management of the BCCI, imposing harsher penalties on complicit cricketers, and enacting sports-specific anti-corruption legislation represent useful starting points. Although these remedies focus on the current Cricket governance controversy, they constitute effective guideposts in addressing India's larger corruption problem by encouraging oversight, accountability, transparency, and better governance. By implementing these steps, Indian cricket can provide a model of how to curb corruption rather than being a source of it.
2. The state associations, the first point of contact for young cricketers and fans, be made to adhere to the highest levels of governance. Stories like those coming out of Delhi, in DDCA controversy, do huge harm to Indian cricket. It would be tempting to say that associations should be handed over to former cricketers. It is a popular myth that if one knows how to hit or bowl a cricket ball, he will also know how to handle balance sheets, cricket fans and building contractors. Indeed, associations have been managed by cricketers before and the outcome has ranged from excellent to poor. Luckily, good men are not hard

to find if you look for them. Therefore, the Cricket administrators are such who have capability and will to improve cricket.

3. To enforce accountability, Parliament may pass a law making BCCI a public body, accountable to the Parliament, on the lines of PSUs, through special parliamentary committees. The sports development Bill is an excellent way to regulate BCCI
4. Amidst this atmosphere, the recommendations of the committee headed by Justice Lodha have ushered in a new ray of hope about the reforms in cricket governance in India. The reforms proposed by the Lodha committee recommended sweeping changes in Indian cricket administration from the grass root level to that in the top echelons of power. It is high time that these recommendations are implemented to restore the glory of this great sport.

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