



apex cricket body—one that only became more opaque with every dollar/rupee that it raked in.

Will the Court's order change things at all? While several matters are open to speculation, there are some certainties. The 70-year cap on the age of officials and the ceiling of nine years for an office-bearer come into play immediately. Those like Mumbai Cricket Association head Sharad Pawar are beyond the 70-year threshold, and people like Delhi District Cricket Association vice-president Chetan Chauhan and Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association chairman Jyotiraditya Scindia have completed nine years in office. They and 20 others will have to go and be replaced by the not-so-familiar new faces of a number of cricket associations. The Supreme Court has also accepted a crucial recommendation of the Lodha Committee, and laid down the eligibility criteria for office-bearers, unambiguously stating that ministers and bureaucrats will henceforth not be allowed to hold BCCI positions.

There remains a grey area here. Ministers and bureaucrats may have been cleansed from the system, but parliamentarians and legislators can still be part of the cricket ecosystem. In other words, powerful politicians can still control the state of affairs through either their minions or the respective families. The BCCI is all about power, and the power-hungry always find a way to wrest power or rule through pliable surrogates. In a country where rule by proxy is a feudal tradition and where many families have held sway over cricket associations for decades, this will remain an area for concern. On this count, course corrections may probably have to be carried out in the future.

Nevertheless, it is important to note what the bench comprising Chief Justice T S Thakur and Justice Ibrahim Kalifulla remarked, "Need of the hour observed the Committee was not of making cosmetic changes but those that are fundamental for laying proper foundations on which BCCI could function in a professional and transparent manner bringing cricket back to its pristine form and restoring the confidence of cricketers and lovers of the game alike." The Supreme Court has set the ball rolling; all it now needs to do is ensure that this

mechanism remains foolproof. Since the Court has asked the Lodha panel to oversee matters over the next six months during which the BCCI will have to clean its Augean stables, it is quite possible that the panel will come up with more guidelines, and that the Court will heed its subsequent recommendations too.

There is another aspect that could have been addressed—the role of businesspersons. While ministers and bureaucrats have had their wings clipped, businesspersons can still be in control. This is important because one of the main allegations against the BCCI was always this: that it was run not like a sports organisation, but like a business. Unfortunately, the corporate flaw will linger on.

By accepting the suggestion that a nominee of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India should be in the BCCI to clamp down on monetary irregularities, the court will probably be able to minimise the financial skulduggery of which the board was accused. On the other hand, by driving the ball into Parliament on whether the BCCI should come under the ambit of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, it has possibly left a loophole that remains unplugged. It would be interesting to see how Parliament reacts, for two reasons. First, the present government has been trying hard to dilute the RTI Act itself; and second, politicians are already among the biggest losers in the BCCI restructuring process.

Then again, cricket is not the only sport around, and it is not the only game whose fortunes are decided by politicians and bureaucrats. But if the Lodha panel's recommendations work, the template could be enlarged to or customised for other sports. But will politicians agree? After all, the National Sports Development Bill 2013, which was an inspiration for the Lodha Committee, has been hanging fire for three years now. It was a bill that promised to free sports from the clutches of politicians and bureaucrats, but has been largely ignored by the political alliance now in power at the centre.

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