

The eradication of corruption in developing economies is a challenge. Opportunities illicitly to acquire power and economic status are derived from employment in government, judicial and political offices. The implementation of anti-corruption strategies, and promotion of transparency and accountability at state levels can be thwarted by beneficiaries of corruption, who are also tasked to govern. The tragedy of corruption is that, often, there are direct and indirect effects in countries where poverty is rife. India is an example of the challenges in combating corruption, with a rapidly developing economy, large population and high rates of poverty.

This Briefing Paper addresses corruption in India from the unique perspective of sport. Corruption in sport is not new, but as this paper demonstrates, for India, the exposure of illicit practices in cricket and other sports is illustrative of the challenges and shame that corruption can bring for a country which takes pride in its sporting prowess. The examples outlined in this paper indicate that a strong nexus exists between corrupt practices in government and sport. Pervasive corruption has led to negative international and domestic perceptions on the integrity of India's sporting bodies, teams and representatives. As this Briefing Paper notes, however, Indian activists are gaining increased community support for greater transparency, accountability and integrity in government and sport, albeit in small, but significant, steps.



Dr Ruth Delaforce

Editor

CEPS Research Fellow

Corruption in Sports in India

Dr Ashutosh Misra and Mr Abhishek Vikram

India has captured the world's imagination with its dazzling economic growth and rise in international affairs. Its global ascent is underpinned by a robust economy, growing at the rate of 9 percent and estimated to reach 10 percent during the next two years. However, this new found affluence has its flip side too, in the form of horizontal and vertical corruption that has besieged the country. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2010, India ranks a dismal 87 out of 188 countries, falling three notches since 2009. During the 1970s, a prominent social activist and crusader of democratic freedom, Jai Prakash Narain, had said that India's poor state of health was a consequence of corruption and a precipitous fall of moral standards in both politics and public life. Ever since, it has plummeted further, affecting all aspects of government functioning and public life, and sport is no exception.

Corruption is no stranger to India and its culmination in scale and magnitude during the 2010 Commonwealth Games subjected the government to global shame and scorn. The Indian government ended up spending 18-fold more than the \$400 million originally allocated in 2003 for the Games, an amount that supposedly could have funded three Olympic Games. It is deeply disturbing to find corruption of such magnitude in a country whose poverty line, according to World Bank figures (2005), is very low by international standards, and where 80 percent of the rural population lives below the median developing-country poverty line of \$2 a day. Several trillion dollars of unaccounted for money remains locked in Swiss banks which the Indian government is finding hard to retrieve. Post-Games, the first major action taken by the Government was to demand the resignation of two top officials, the Organising Committee Chairman, Suresh Kalmadi, and Secretary General, Lalit Bhanot. Both Kalmadi and Bhanot have since been arrested, and are being interrogated by the investigation agencies.

Today, corruption plagues all major Indian sports, including cricket, hockey, weightlifting, and athletics. The first major sporting scandal was reported during the 1990s, involving match-fixing by Indian cricketers through a Pro-teen bookie, Mukesh Gupta. This scandal led to the fall from grace of cricketers, namely, the then skipper Mohammad Azharuddin, Ajay Jadeja, Manoj Prabhakar, Nayan Mongia and Ajay Sharma. As the scandal unfolded, several international cricketers were also linked, including Hansie

Conje (South Africa), Arjuna Ranatunga (Sri Lanka), Arvinda de Silva (Sri Lanka), Brian Lara (West Indies), Martin Crowe (New Zealand), Dean Jones (Australia), Mark Waugh (Australia), Shane Warne (Australia), Salem Malik (Pakistan) and Alec Stewart (England). The decision by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to ban Azharuddin for life and Ajay Jadeja for 5 years sent a strong message to Indian cricketers, and match-fixing scandals have reduced drastically. It should be noted, however, that BCCI's own dubious record over the years has impeded its authority to be more forthright in checking corruption.

Now corruption has a new avatar, in the shape of a \$4 billion Indian Premier League (IPL), which has seen its former Commissioner, Lalit Modi, resign and flee to London over charges of gross financial irregularities. The 2010 IPL franchise bidding process also led to the resignation of Shashi Tharoor, Minister of State for External Affairs, whose friend and current wife, Sunanda Pushkar, was alleged to have received \$15 million in 'sweat equity' from one of the franchises.

In recent years, the BCCI has also been marred by financial irregularities and bitter turf wars between different lobby groups. Nonetheless, BCCI's mammoth financial clout has given it a dominating influence in the International Cricket Council (ICC) decision-making, much to the resentment of other international cricket boards. This influence is further augmented by the political weight that the BCCI holds nationally. It is currently headed by Sharad Pawar, a Minister and leading political heavy-weight in Indian politics, who is also President of the ICC.

In June 2010, appalled by the Commonwealth Games corruption scandal, former Indian Olympians launched the Group of Clean Sports India to raise public awareness and fight corruption in sports. In a short time-span, the group has enlarged its support base and campaigned hard to oppose politicians with no sports background from entering

and contesting for executive positions in sports bodies. Recently the group succeeded in persuading Pallam Raju, Minister of State for Defence, to withdraw from the race for President of the Equestrian Federation of India. But in a setback for the group, the President of Clean Sports India, Pargat Singh, a former hockey skipper, lost to the 83 year old veteran Congress politician, Vidya Stokes, in the election for President of the Indian Hockey Federation; this example illustrates the extent of political hold on sporting bodies in India. However, the success of former cricketers with high credentials and reputation, Anil Kumble and Javagal Srinath, in getting elected to the Karnataka State Cricket Association augurs well for Indian cricket, and hopefully will lead to similar credible appointments in hockey

In the meantime, the state of Indian hockey continues to be abysmal. Former world champions and Olympic gold medallist, India now struggles to even win Asian tournaments. Indian Hockey Federation (IHF) President, K.P.S. Gill, a former Indian police officer, has been officiating for many years. Gill's long-term appointment has divided the Federation, the hockey fraternity and players, and over time, has significantly affected the team's performance. The IHF is also involved in a fierce spat with the Women's Federation and Hockey India (HI) over the merger modalities. IHF's labelling of HI officials as 'highly corrupt' has caused a great deal of squabbling in the media. The 2010 Women's Hockey World Cup, held in New Delhi, was hit by a financial corruption scandal involving the Federation of International Hockey (FIH), Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and HI. Suresh Kalmadi, the IOA chief, was again said to be involved in financial corruption during arrangements for the World Cup. IHF, too, was suspended in 2008 by the IOA over an alleged bribery for selection scandal. In addition, sex scandals involving the coach of the women's hockey team, and favouritism and bribery for selection in the men's team, have tarnished the image of both the federations

and brought Indian hockey to an all time low.

In weightlifting, while India has produced world class lifters, the sport has also had its own share of scandals and controversies. In 2005, a bribe scandal surfaced over the selection of dope-tainted lifter, Shailja Pujari, in the Beijing Olympic squad. In July 2010, the Indian Weightlifting Federation had to suspend its coach, Ramesh Malhotra, over charges of sexually harassing junior lifters.

In July 2011, the Indian Sports Ministry sacked Yuri Ogrodnik, the Ukrainian coach of Indian Athletics, after six female 400 metre runners, a female shot-putter and a male long-jumper all returned positive results in doping tests, marking the rapidly growing trend of banned substance abuse among Indian athletes.

On the policy front, in 2011, the Indian Government has proposed a National Sports Bill to curb corruption and ensure that all sport federations comply with the Olympics Charter by subjecting their offices to annual audits. The Bill provides for a Sports Ombudsman to resolve disputes in sports, prevent age and sex fraud and doping, and to make all sports bodies comply with the Right to Information Act, 2005.

During the Commonwealth Games, the lack of suitable legislation for the organisation of mega sport events deeply affected India's objectives, in contrast to other international models, such as the Sydney Olympics 2000, Melbourne Commonwealth Games 2006, Glasgow Commonwealth Games 2014 and London Olympics 2014. These models enshrine appropriate legislations to regulate the functioning of organising committees and judicious dealing with key issues such as transport, ticketing, land acquisition, intellectual property, broadcasting and licensing rights.

While the government fails in the first instance to weed out systemic corruption, the prospect of clean sports appears

grim. The Indian government is currently at loggerheads with a civil society movement spearheaded by veteran social activist, Anna Hazare, over the passing of the Jan Lokpal Bill 2011 for the creation of a Lokpal (Ombudsman). The Bill is aimed at fighting corruption in government offices and the judicial machinery, and also covers various sports bodies. The Lokpal or Ombudsman will be empowered to act on complaints and to take suo moto actions, investigate matters, determine penalties and blacklist entities. The government is dragging its feet over the scope of the Lokpal bill. The draft, approved by Cabinet on 28 July 2011, rejected the provisions of

bringing the prime minister, members of parliament and judges of the higher judiciary under the bill's purview. Although the Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, one of the most honest politicians in the country, has been willing to come under the purview of the Lokpal, his Cabinet remained divided over the issue. Clearly, the Congress government is facing the wrath of the civil-society and as India braces itself for another round of mass demonstrations and hunger strikes under the lead of Anna Hazare, it is being anticipated that a strong Lokpal bill could be passed in the upcoming Parliament session beginning on the 22 November. Anna Hazare has issued an

ultimatum that should the bill fail to get the nod from the legislators, he will be forced to undertake another round of fasting which will certainly galvanise civic protests all over the country, yet again, paralysing public life and government functioning to a great extent. Should the bill receive the approval and be passed, it would go a long way in curbing corruption in India in every sphere, including sports.

References

Transparency International (2010) *Corruption Perceptions Index 2010* [http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010/results]

World Bank (2005) *Data, Countries and Economies: India* [<http://data.worldbank.org/country/india>]

About the Author

Dr. Ashutosh Misra is a Research Fellow at the ARC Centre of Excellence in Policing and Security and brings in the South Asian research, cultural and linguistic expertise to the Centre. Previously, Dr. Misra was Research Fellow (2002-2007) at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi where he focused on India, Pakistan, Jammu and Kashmir, terrorism and conflict resolution techniques. He has authored two books, *'India-Pakistan: Coming to Terms'* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and *'Pakistan: Engagement of the Extremes'* (New Delhi: IDSA and Shipra, 2008) and is contributing editor of the forthcoming book, *'Pakistan's Stability Paradox'*, with Routledge.

Mr Abhishek Vikram is a senior associate with a Delhi-based law firm.

This Briefing Paper was presented at a CEPS workshop on Combating Serious Crime and Corruption in Sport, held on 27 July 2011 at the Queensland Cricketers Club, Brisbane.

ARC Centre of Excellence in Policing and Security

M10_3.01
Mt Gravatt Campus
170 Kessels Road
NATHAN QLD 4122
Ph: 07 3735 6903
Fax: 07 3735 1033

www.ceps.edu.au



Australian Government
Australian Research Council



**Australian
National
University**



**THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND**
AUSTRALIA



**Charles Sturt
University**

Views expressed are personal to the author, and should not be attributed to CEPS or its industry partners.