

**THIRD
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Editor
BABUDDIN KHAN

THIRD CONCEPT aims at providing a platform where a meaningful exchange of ideas can take place among the people of the Third World. The attempt will be to communicate, debate and disseminate information, ideas and alternatives for the resolution of the common problems facing humankind. We welcome contributions from academics, journalists and even from those who may never have published anything before. The only requirement is a concern for and desire to understand and take the issue of our time. Contributions may be descriptive, analytical or theoretical. They may be in the form of original articles, reactions to previous contributions, or even a comment on a prevailing situation. All contributions, neatly typed in double space, may be addressed to:

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Designed by: Pt. Tejpal

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Morass of Sleaze

Sports and politics attract large horde of people because of money and power combination. Besides, sports and politics have historically been bonded like Siamese twins since before the great city states of ancient Greece engaged in inter-city athletic competitions when they weren't engaged in destructive wars against one another. Over the centuries this combination between politics and sports has become inseparable.

The mix of politics and sports has been a harbinger of harmonious relationship between two adversaries in international diplomacy. Such was the case four decades ago when sports led to improving Chinese-American relations. The United States table tennis team, which was in Tokyo for the world championships in May 1971, was invited to go to China for some friendly exhibition matches with Chinese players, who were rated as the world's best.

What became known as the act of "ping pong diplomacy" led to the meeting a year later in China between President Richard Nixon and Chairman Mao Zedong; and ever since that "ping pong diplomacy," these two powers have been talking, negotiating and doing business. There have been some instances where cricket diplomacy has paid good dividends in terms of improvement in relations between and Pakistan. Mix of sports and politics may be a good factor in international diplomacy but this combination seldom augurs well for a nation like India domestically. The reason both sports and politics attract so many junkies is that both activities are so often wildly unpredictable. Anything can happen in either, and, just often enough to keep us titillated, anything does. Both politics and sports are deeply mired in corruption.

The sleazy dealings of cricket bookies, the flow of hordes of black money, the spot-fixing involving some rotten-apple cricketers, the international links with crime syndicates, all as part of the Indian Premier League (IPL) extravaganza, have brought shame on a beautiful game that is an obsession for millions of cricket fans across the country. Obviously, there is the larger question — are the people condemned to suffer and be short-changed through scams in whichever field there is big money, be it through allocation of spectrum for mobile connectivity, doling out contracts for Commonwealth Games, giving out mining contracts or through spot-fixing and illegal betting in high-profile cricket jamborees like the IPL?

The IPL-5, in 2012, witnessed five cricketers, who were uncapped, being accused of spot-fixing and suspended. The writing was on the wall because the collusion between players and bookies emerged. Yet, since there was no big name among those suspended, the government and the BCCI fought shy of coming up with a stringent law to deter this evil. This apparently emboldened the perpetrators in the IPL-6. This truly reflects on the deplorable lack of accountability in our system and yet another example of governance-deficit in India today.

Sports bodies in the country need to be steered clear of those who continually undermine it. But nothing comes closer to a dream job than that of heading a sports body or federation in India. But heading a sports federation means you aren't held accountable for poor results or your actions. From time to time, one gets to go on foreign jaunts and the best part of the deal is that nobody questions the credentials. Besides, a seat in the Indian Parliament or a stint in any ministry is considered a good enough qualification to head a sports body. Most sporting bodies or institutions in India are headed by politicians and the incumbents treat their positions as manna from heaven. V.K. Malhotra, leader of opposition in Delhi assembly, probably never ever held a bow and arrow but is president of the Indian Archery Association. Vidya Stokes beat the Hockey India presidential elections the former Indian hockey Captain Pargat Singh — the man who knows more about hockey than Stokes. The less one may say about the evergreen Suresh Kalmadi the better.

A clear line of demarcation needs to be drawn between politics and sports domestically. A viable national sports policy, with integration of Cricket into that policy, with ample emphasis on a 'long-term vision' along with 'grassroots development' needs to be worked out. Concurrently, the new policy should encompass a strong mechanism of accountability of the funds utilized and performance of the sports persons. Sports should be administered by sports people.

— BK