

What's wrong with ICL?

After all, a country with a population of over a billion has hardly produced a few dozen cricketers of international standard, although cricket is like a religion in India. So who is likely to lose with the monopolistic attitude of BCCI? It will be cricket, cricketers, and the cricket viewers.

K. Z. ISLAM

I could not understand the ruthless and vicious attitudes of the BCCI towards the Indian Cricket League (ICL). Only when I read about Lalit Modi, the vice-president of BCCI, could I comprehend the matter.

As Cricinfo states Modi is: "Sharp, brash, ruthlessly ambitious, and admired and reviled in equal measure. Lalit Modi will be known as the man who changed the landscape of cricket. The Indian Premier League (IPL), the multi-million-dollar, football-style, franchise-based domestic league, which Modi conceived and executed with spectacular success, has hurtled cricket to the fast lane, forcing the traditionalists to follow suit even while squirming. The tournament, first held in 2008, consolidated India's position as cricket's

economic powerhouse, and consequently, its premier agenda-setter."

In his Mumbai office, surrounded by tall bookshelves and autographed cricket bats, Modi sits up from his slouch and begins yelling when asked about Subhas Chandra, owner of ICL. "All of a sudden, for the first time in India, a broadcaster is coming in not because he wants to develop the game," he says. "He wants to develop the content for his channels. Every sports broadcaster knows that to survive in this country, you need cricket content."

Modi responded last year by forbidding any team in the world with ICL contracted player from entering any BCCI tournament. Tony Greig, a former captain of England and ICL board member, says Modi's protests are about power. "He doesn't like the ICL because it's encroach-

ing on the BCCI's monopoly of cricket in India."

In a recent rating of most powerful sportsman and sports organisers worldwide by an US finance magazine Modi has been rated at No. 17.

Former England cricket captain Mike Atherton has called Modi "ruthless." And Lalit Modi responded by saying: "I am ruthless without doubt, otherwise we won't get [sic] where we were."

Nobody expects an elected body to be so monopolistic and confrontational normally. The aggressiveness and winner takes all attitudes come from Modi. Thirteen Bangladeshi cricketers who joined ICL have been banned from all national and domestic tournaments for 10 years. I will not bet on it, but I have a feeling that the president of BCB might have got a telephone call from Modi or

some side-kick with the suggestion to teach the Bangladeshi players a lesson so that other players will think not twice but one hundred times before volunteering for ICL.

After all, let us not forget that although the Twenty20 format has been played in England among the counties since 2003. In fact, they were the pioneers although it was not a commercial venture. But in India, the background of ICL is known to all.

It started when Subhas Chandra's Zee Telefilms bid for the telecast rights of the 2003 Cricket World Cup. Although the highest bid, it was not successful. In 2004 Subhas Chandra again bid for the telecast rights and ended up in an inconclusive court battle. He made another bid for the 2006 ICC Champions Trophy rights and once again lost. So its hardly surprising that he decided to go it alone. On April 3, 2007 with a kitty of Rs.100 crores he announced a break away cricket series to be called the Indian Cricket League.

Let us not forget that ICL was the pioneer but it was only on January 15 this year that it was announced that a consortium consisting of India's Sony television network and

Singapore-based World Sport Group secured the global broadcasting rights of the Indian Premier League of the BCCI.

Since in India all the state cricket boards are affiliated to BCCI, naturally they will have to strictly comply with the directives of BCCI (read Modi). The fact is, the different states in India hardly receive any assistance financial or technical from BCCI. This has restricted the growth and development of young cricketers in India.

After all, a country with a population of over a billion has hardly produced a few dozen cricketers of international standard, although cricket is like a religion in India. So who is likely to lose with the monopolistic attitude of BCCI? It will be cricket, cricketers, and the cricket viewers.

Several factors have played a role in formulation of ICL which may run parallel to the current official IPL of BCCI. There is a wide disparity between the facilities enjoyed by the national team and the regional ones.

This makes the regional players far from being of international standard and not fit to represent their country, preventing a huge country like India

from having players ready to replace when key national players retire or are injured. Also, the regional cricket boards depend on the BCCI for infrastructure and grass root development.

The BCCI being the richest cricket board has completely dominated ICC in the recent years, otherwise why the ICC should step to ban players in a tournament played in India raises questions. A meeting was held in Dubai earlier this month between the ICC President David Morgan and ICL owner Subhas Chandra to discuss about the ban on ICL.

"There is nothing wrong in that meeting. Mr. Morgan will give details of what was discussed at his meeting with Mr. Subhas Chandra at the ICC meeting," said BCCI President Shashank Manohar just hours after taking over from Sharad Pawar in Mumbai on September 27.

ICC President Morgan has a reputation of being a man of principles and ethics. It is just possible that Subhas Chandra may get a fair hearing. Haroon Lorgat, the recently appointed ICC CEO is a chartered accountant from whom one can

expect a "true and fair" treatment. But whether they will be able to carry the board of ICC with them remains to be seen.

In the recent years, the performance of Indian cricket team has been disappointing. The question of "why can't a nation with millions of cricket players produce even a reasonably competent national eleven" has been hotly debated across newspapers and news channels.

One of the answers which has gained wide acceptance is that the BCCI, the cricket control body of India, has failed miserably in its job and needs a major overhaul in its working and organisation. Millions of Indian fans who hero-worship their cricket team are finding BCCI, with its image already mired in scandal, favouritism, and political influence, an easy target to blame for this debacle.

Showing some realism towards ICL ban problem, the Sri Lanka Cricket Board has lifted the ban from five of its top players who joined ICL last year. The players have been allowed to participate in domestic cricket, representing their

clubs.

ICL has been subjected to all types of restrictions and prohibitions conceivable. No state is allowed to let their cricket grounds to be used by ICL. Presently, ICL has to be contained only to those grounds which are not under the discipline of BCCI.

The first ICL tournament with eight teams participating had to be played in two venues located in remote areas: the Tau Devi Lal Stadium, Panchkula near Chandigarh and the Lal Bahadur Stadium, Basheer Bagh, Hyderabad.

The first phase of Season-II of ICL, featuring nine teams to be staged over four venues, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Gurgaon, and Panchkula started on October 10. The restriction of venues is only depriving cricket match spectators all over India from watching the matches live.

Why ICL and IPL cannot co-exist is quite baffling? Zafar Sobhan has admirably summarised the case for ICL in his article in The Daily Star entitled "Rebel Warriors" published on September 19.

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Enlightened versus backward Bangladesh? Ethics and trade

If enlightened America comes out as a victor in November, there is a chance that in Bangladesh enlightened forces would do well in December. Alas, the backward forces may have to be the opposition and rebuild the homes presently in tatters in both the nations.

MOAZZEM HOSSAIN

It was my privilege to listen to writers from all over the world in the recently concluded Brisbane Writers' Festival in Australia. This is an annual gathering in Brisbane of both world famous and local writers, and is supported by the State Library of Queensland and the ABC local radio. It is a public funded meeting of writers, including authors of bestsellers, over a week.

One of the sessions, moderated by a radio personality of Brisbane, broadcast live on the ABC local radio, was addressed by a panel of three writers from the US and Canada. The subject was: "Is the US in decline?" The panelists touched on issues ranging from America's war on terror in Iraq and Afghanistan to climate change and its aftermath in South Asia. For obvious reasons, I was attracted to this panel because of my interest in South Asia.

One of the areas on which the panel was in agreement was the gradual decline in economic and liberal democracy in the US since the beginning of the Bush era. According to the panel, the great America has been divided into two: enlightened America and backward America. According to the panel, the backward America grabbed power through the 2000 presidential election by defeating the candidate of the enlightened America, Al Gore, by a narrow margin. George W. Bush, who was a candidate for the backward America, came out as the victor.

The panel defined backward and enlightened Americas on the basis of geographical and religious grounds. The coastal population and the secular voters were

regarded as enlightened, whereas the people in the mid-west and mid-America with non-secular strong religious beliefs were regarded as backward America. The panelists regarded George W. Bush, and more recently the Republican VP candidate, Sarah Palin, as the products of backward America.

In conclusion, the panel was of the view that although, in the post World War II era, the US had followed a multi-lateral and bi-partisan foreign policy which gave birth to institutions like the United Nations and related agencies, American foreign policy is presently being made unilaterally -- forcing its allies to join the non-stop confrontation with the so-called Islamist terrorists in the absence of any other formidable enemies after the end of the Cold War.

9/11 created the opportunity for the backward forces to indulge in increased spending on military hardware. This resulted in sustained increase in military spending, and domestic success in the economic and political fronts depended on victory in war theatres. The whole exercise was futile, and the American economy has been thrown into chaos. The Bush administration has opted to bail out collapsed financial institutions, pumping billions of dollars of taxpayer money without any success.

In view of the above, the case of Bangladesh immediately comes to mind. It was, accidentally or coincidentally, in a similar situation since 2001 under a so-called democratic regime. The Khaleda-Nizami regime can be regarded as the flag bearer of backward Bangladesh. Why?

Let us first define backward and enlightened Bangladesh

before addressing this question.

Backward Bangladesh: Unlike the US, backward Bangladesh is the product originating from the constituency which defied the constitution of this land after the bloody change in 1975. Originally, the constitution was based on four pillars: democracy, socialism, secularism, and Bengali nationalism.

Except nationalism (Bengali or Bangladeshi) all other pillars are in tatters under the backward constituency. Unlike the US, backward Bangladesh was urban-based and had support in almost all district towns in 2001. The backward Bangladesh resembles the backward America only in religious terms, with fundamentalist elements of the Islamist political parties in action.

Enlightened Bangladesh: The enlightened Bangladesh is still trying hard to keep the four pillars of the constitution alive, and certainly struggling in this respect since the victory of the BNP-Jamaat coalition in 2001 general election.

Having defined the two terms, it is now clear that the BNP-Jamaat coalition without hesitation can be regarded as backward Bangladesh, which was proved through the coalition's actions against the three pillars (democracy, socialism, and secularism) since 2001. On the other hand, the 14-party coalition led by AL can be seen as interested in keeping enlightened constituency in its side to be able to achieve the economic goals of the centre-left and the left to establish a socialist economy and a secular society.

Recently, the leader of the 4-party alliance, Khaleda Zia, called upon all the religious parties and the elements of the

political right and centre-right to join BNP-Jamaat coalition to fight the forthcoming general election. She chooses to continue alliance with the backward constituency, having religion as the major pillar and the guiding principle in politics.

The AL-led 14-party coalition, on the other hand, with the elements of political left and centre-left, still seems committed to establish a socialist agenda with the secular pillar in the forefront. Certainly, the alliance belongs to enlightened Bangladesh.

There are also some other political parties that are operating outside these two major sides, but had roots predominantly either in the BNP or the AL. It remains to be seen whether they are going to join enlightened or backward Bangladesh.

As mentioned earlier, with the support of the backward Bangladesh, the BNP-Jamaat ruled between 2001 and 2006. Needless to say, this resulted in taking the nation one step forward and two steps backward over this period. At the end, the nation once again had to taste the flavour of an unelected administration over the last 20 months.

It appears that, like 1996, the pre-election wind is presently blowing towards the enlightened Bangladesh. Who knows whether this will remain steady until December 18? Certainly, in this regard, there is a parallel with the 2008 election in the US. It is possible that there will be some positive reflections of the US election outcome to Bangladesh's.

If enlightened America comes out as a victor in November, there is a chance that in Bangladesh enlightened forces would do well in December. Alas, the backward forces may have to be the opposition and rebuild the homes presently in tatters in both the nations.

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Ethic will not come into being automatically. We had it at the time of our childhood. We lost it though the process of socialisation. We shall have to reclaim it. In fact it is already with us. It is existing deep within our being. We shall have to bring it out. Otherwise, we will be doing harm of other as well as of our own soul.

MD. FIROJ ALAM

THOUSANDS of babies in China are fighting against death. They have virtually been poisoned by toxic elements in milk -- the main baby food. We get news about adulterated food almost every day in the print and electronic media. I feel that this world is unsafe for human beings. Even innocent babies are being poisoned to death! We need to contemplate on why this is happening. What is wrong with human conscience?

In this article, I will discuss the basis of ethics. The laws have proved a failure. Despite having so many laws and law enforcing agencies, courts and judicial systems every day why so many crimes are taking place? This is why nowadays the word "ethics" has come forward. People are so cunning that they can easily escape from the laws and law enforcing agencies and commit crimes. So ethics is the last straw holding what the humanity wants to survive from sinking in the deep sea of inhumanity in this present world.

Ethics is self responsibility -- spirit of not doing harm for others. My intention here is to discuss a little about why we have become so unethical in this stage.

The physical body of a human being is nothing but a vehicle of which the mind or emotion is the driver. The body just follows that comes

to the mind. The body is even unable to differentiate between false and true, reality and imagination.

A baby comes into the world in body-mind state. It remains connected to the universe -- the total existence. The baby comes into the world as a pure being. As the days pass by, the baby's mind gets separated from the body.

The modern psychologist now says that human being has two parts: body and mind. In this article, I am using emotion as a synonym of mind from now. Emotion has its two aspects: fair emotion and unfair emotion. Fair emotion is just love and compassion. Primarily it is love and ultimately it reaches to the height of compassion. A true human being is just compassion. The well known compassionate figures in the world are Hazrat Mohammed (sm), Jesus, Mohavir, Nanak, Buddha, Socrates, etc. The list can be made longer but I think it is enough to understand the compassionate personalities.

On the other hand, the unfair parts of the emotion basically consist of three things: anger, greed, and fear. All negative feelings like jealousy, hatred, and anxiety basically are the branches and leaves of these three. In the world we come with fair emotion and gradually we import and accumulate the unfair emotion. The unfair part becomes bigger and bigger and the fair parts get smaller

and smaller, and gradually the fair emotions are knocked out by the unfair part of the emotion.

Now, let us see how do we take decisions in our daily life? All the decisions we take are based on either, anger or greed or fear. We cannot take a decision based on love. How can we do that? We have eliminated that part from our heart with the socialisation process.

On the other hand, the society has given a lot of nourishment for anger, greed and fear. Interesting thing is the fair and unfair emotion cannot stay together. It is like dark and light that cannot exist together.

The basis of the present world economy is greed. Greed is the main capital. The trade, economy and other essential things for survival has gone to the wrong hand. For this reason we find the world is at the verge of destruction.

In this stage I am quoting few verses from Kahlil Gibran that may show us how far we have gone from the ethics of trade:

To you the earth yields her fruit, and you shall not want if you but know how to fill your hands.

It is in exchanging the gifts of the earth that you shall find abundance and be satisfied.

Yet unless the exchange be in love and kindly justice, it will but lead some to greed and others to hunger.

When in the market place you toilers of the sea and

fields and vineyards meet the weavers and the potters and the gatherers of spices,

Invoke then the master spirit of the earth, to come into your midst and sanctify the scales and the reckoning that weighs value against value.

And suffer not the barren-handed to take part in your transactions, who would sell their words for your labour.

To such men you should say,

"Come with us to the field, or go with our brothers to the sea and cast your net;

For the land and the sea shall be bountiful to you even as to us.

And if there come the singers and the dancers and the flute players, buy of their gifts also.

For they too are gatherers of fruit and frankincense, and that which they bring, though fashioned of dreams, is raiment and food for your soul.

And before you leave the market place, see that no one has gone his way with empty hands.

For the master spirit of the earth shall not sleep peacefully upon the wind till the needs of the least of you are satisfied.

[On Buying and Selling, The Prophet, Kahlil Gibran,].

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Pulled from two directions

Turkey's president **Abdullah Gul** is one of his nation's most polarising figures. Western-oriented and pro-EU, his Justice and Development Party has roots in Islam and pushed to abolish the ban on headscarves in universities, provoking debate about the nature of liberalism in this secular nation. Turkey's leaders face a similar balancing act abroad, with instability over its eastern and southern borders -- and tentative allies in the West. Newsweek's **Rana Foroohar** talked with Gul about being in the middle of it all.

Foroohar: THE conflict in Russia and Georgia is obviously on everyone's mind. What role can Turkey play going forward, given the geopolitical dynamics?

Abdullah Gul: To our west we have the Balkans. To our east we have the Caucasus. Both of

these regions and their stability are important for us because if you have stability in the Caucasus, and added to that if you have trust and confidence, then you have the right climate for economic cooperation. And the Caucasus are key as far as energy resources and

the safe transportation of energy from the east to the west. That transportation goes through Turkey. That is why we are very active in trying to achieve an atmosphere of dialogue, so there is the right climate to resolve the problems. If there is instability in

the Caucasus, it would be sort of like a wall between the East and West; if you have stability in the region, it could be a gate. What do you think of the United States' relationship with Iran at the moment?

The problems between Iran and the United States are, of course, something that concerns us. We would like to see a normalization of the relations.

We would like to see the problems resolved. Nuclear issues are important for us as well: we don't want to see any weapons of mass destruction in our neighbourhood. And in this context I believe the package that has been presented by the six countries most recently is a

very good one, a very valuable one, and we have also contributed to the preparations and the discussions. I have spoken with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, I explained this to him, and I hope, we hope, that the problems will be resolved through dialogue.

What would Turkey like to see happen in Iraq?

The territorial integrity and political unity of Iraq is very important, and it should be important for the United States as well. There should not be any alternative to this idea, and things seem to be moving along in this direction and that's why we are pleased with it.

Given the economic climate, what reforms do you think are particularly important?

It is important to keep to fiscal discipline, and on energy issues further liberalization is important, and the continuation of the privatization program.

You have said in the past that you have no intention of trying to turn back the secularisation of Turkey. What would you say to people who are concerned about the abolition of the ban on the headscarf?

We are a people who have been working very hard to make sure Turkey becomes a part of the European Union, a member of the European Union. There is

no question that our direction is toward Europe. If we wanted to establish a system that is not secular, we would not have been doing all this because the two would be contradictory. The Turkish Constitution states that Turkey is a democratic secular social state respecting the rule of law, and there is widespread, very strong consensus on those basic characteristics of the Turkish republic, with the exception, perhaps, of some very few marginal groups. Can you talk about the divide within Turkey -- between the people who come out on either side of these issues?

I believe that this divide, as you call it, does not exist. It is

rather an exaggerated expression of what is going on. It is a discussion, and there are various families. If you look at one family, for example, there are people in that family who practice their beliefs more and others less. Or, if there are women in the family, some of whom cover their heads, some of whom don't. And you see the people on the streets, the girls, one covering her head and the other one not, holding hands and walking, talking on the streets. So there is no such rift as you describe it. It is just a political discussion.

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