

BCCI REVAMP: ON LODHA PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

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Two years after accepting the Justice R.M. Lodha Committee's recommendations, the [Supreme Court has now extended some concessions](#) to those aggrieved by the rigorous rules, which aimed to revamp cricket administration in the country. The reasoning given in the order of a three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra suggests that it is a pragmatic modification rather than a significant climbdown. Justice Lodha, a former Chief Justice of India, however, feels that the court has now knocked out the foundation of his recommendations. The most significant change concerns the cooling-off period prescribed for office-bearers before they are allowed to contest for a subsequent term. Against the panel's view that every office-bearer of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, in the national board or in a State association, should have a three-year break after a three-year term, the court has now allowed two three-year terms — that is, a tenure of six years — before the mandatory break kicks in. The logic behind a cooling-off period is that office-bearers should not be given lengthy tenures that enable them to establish personal fiefdoms. The argument against it is that the experience and knowledge that an office-bearer gains over three years should not be frittered away, and a second term could help consolidate such learnings. The Bench has accepted the logic behind this and chosen to defer the cooling-off period until she completes two terms. Given that there is a nine-year aggregate limit as well as an age limit of 70 for any office-bearer, this change may not amount to any significant dilution of the core principle that there should be no perpetuation of power centres.

The Lodha panel had also favoured the 'one State, one vote' norm. This meant that an association representing a State alone should be recognised as a voting member of the BCCI, while associations representing a region within a State or entities that do not represent a territory should not have the same vote or status. This norm has been overruled. Gujarat and Maharashtra will have three votes each, as the associations of Baroda and Saurashtra in Gujarat, and Mumbai and Vidarbha in Maharashtra will have separate votes. In this, too, the court has accepted the reasoning that associations that had contributed significantly to Indian cricket need not be stripped of their full membership. It is now up to the administrators of the future to dispel Justice Lodha's apprehensions that this may lead to manipulation of votes. Whether the changes adopted by the court while finalising a new constitution for the BCCI differ in significant ways from what was proposed by the Lodha committee will be a matter of debate. However, judicial intervention has been immensely helpful in making cricket administration more efficient and professional, and addressing the credibility deficit of recent times.

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