

MANAGING SPORTS: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON ADMINISTRATORS AND THE NATIONAL SPORTS CODE

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Human resources, Youth, Sports and related issues

When sports administrators make news, it is often not for the right reasons. These past few months, India's sports administrators have been in the news far too frequently. Rarely does a day end before one of them is pulled up by the court, another is forced to resign or yet another stakes claim to a post. In the latest instance, the sports official to hit the headlines has been [Anil Khanna, who resigned on Wednesday as the acting-president of the Indian Olympic Association \(IOA\)](#). He had assumed charge after Narinder Batra was forced to quit in July. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has made it clear that it would not recognise any acting/interim president of the IOA. The IOC is not pleased that the long-pending elections to the IOA have not been held and has even threatened India with serious consequences. The IOC could ban India if the elections are not held by December. Then, Indian athletes would not be able to represent the country in events, including the Olympic Games, and India would not be able to receive funds from the IOC. Only a month ago, the Gokulam Kerala football team found out what happens when such a ban is enforced. The players had to return from Uzbekistan, where they had gone to take part in the AFC Women's Club Championship. That was because the world football governing body FIFA had banned the All India Football Federation (AIFF).

The ban has since been lifted and the AIFF has conducted its elections. But there are other sports, such as hockey and table tennis, that continue to be run by the court-appointed committees of administrators. The main reason behind the messy state of affairs in India's sports administration at the moment is the reluctance of the officials, across sports bodies, to accept the National Sports Development Code of India, introduced by the central government in 2011. Its intention was noble. By putting a limit to the tenure and age of an administrator, it had the potential to stop sports federations from remaining as the personal fiefdoms of a few, many of them politicians. At a time when Indian sport is showing more promise than it ever did before — the Tokyo Olympics, the Birmingham Commonwealth Games, the Thomas Cup and the Chess Olympiad have shown that the country has more to offer than just cricket — the administration needs to get its act together. The incumbents should gracefully make way for new administrators with fresh ideas and also allow more former international sportspersons in key administrative posts.

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