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Speech of Mr. Rahul Dravid in a Special Session on “Ethics and Integrity in Sports: Need for a Law and Role of CBI” during CBI’s International Conference on “Evolving Common Strategies to Combat Corruption and Crime” (XXth Conference of CBI & State Anti-Corruption Bureaux) from 11th to 13th November, 2013

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I am thankful for the invitation to share my thoughts today and am humbled to speak before this audience.

Even in matters of war, conquest and death -- the ultimate battles -- there are rules of fair engagement.

I would like to start by reading for you a passage from the Mahabharata.

As the Pandavas get ready for battle, *Bhisma* advises his nephew *Yudhishthira* on the rules of fighting a 'just war':

"One should not attack chariots with cavalry; chariot warriors should attack chariots. There should be no arrows smeared with poison, nor any barbed arrows. The king should not try to win land Unlawfully; having won an Unlawful conquest, what king would admit to it? The conquest that involved Lawlessness does not last, and it does not lead to heaven. It ruins the king and the land as well."

Today, we stand at a crossroads in the regulation of sports integrity. Sport, the modern day battle between nations, is at serious risk of losing its moral compass. As a result, the "spirit of sport" could potentially be irreversibly destabilised and debased.

The nature and scale of the challenge have revealed themselves to be such that it is impossible for sport's internal self-regulation structures to effectively handle, without external support and legislative backing.

To my mind, the question is no longer whether the law must intervene but it is how, to what extent and on what issues.

How and why did I start playing cricket? Very simply, I hero-worshipped my father and loved what he loved. As a little boy, my brother and I would play for hours and hours in the lanes outside our home. It felt wonderful to do something I loved. My progression was rapid at the junior levels. However, my journey required significant patience and hard work before I made it to the national team.

As I grew as a cricketer, so did my love and respect for my sport. It was instinctively clear to me that as a representative cricketer, I had responsibilities not only to myself and my team but also to what the sport stood for, to my fellow competitors, to everyone I represented -- not only the other cricketers who had not got the same opportunities as I had, but also every fan and follower of the game who invested time and emotion in my journey. No one told me this. It was fairly obvious.

Perhaps those were simpler times.

Today, a significant part of sports regulation and managerial time is spent on codes of conduct -- anti-corruption, anti-doping and anti-cheating. Despite best efforts, these do not appear to have had the desired results.

Today, unfair advantage and corruption seem to have invaded the core of professional sports of every hue. For a lover of sport, each transgression is like a kick in the gut.

As I see it, professional sport, like few other contemporary pursuits, involves the athlete as the celebrated and revered representative of our human species.

The elite professional athlete is testing boundaries on behalf of us all. How fast can we run, how high and long can we jump, how fast can we bowl, how hard can we hit. And, with all our limitations as humans, how best can we do a number of these in combination?

The quest for excellence, the optimal use of one's talents and the conversion of hard work into results are at the core of every athlete's quest. The best athletes understand the wider relevance of their journeys. It is about so much more than just themselves.

I recently read a speech by my good friend Abhinav Bindra, which he delivered to a group of young Indian athletes.

One passage stood out in particular, where Abhinav said:

"Some days seem to be charmed. Everything goes right. But you know in your head and your heart that this is just a lucky chance – you can neither predict nor control when it will happen again. So what good is a 'lucky' performance? Not much good. I wish someone had told me that more than getting the perfect score, what would give me satisfaction, what would give me a sense of achievement as an athlete, was when I knew that this score came from my effort – from something I had done – rather than because I was having a lucky day. It shocked me – shooting 600/600 and feeling lousy. I thought to myself: If even winning is not enough, then what is it I'm trying to do here? And I groped my way forward, to find another goal to focus on. Now what I wanted was: to win and feel good about winning."

Athletes like Abhinav will not even accept luck and chance as their legitimate allies. They want to earn what they have won with every drop of sweat, every minute of practice and every extra workout.

We cannot stand as silent spectators and allow a system to flourish in which we deny athletes like this their due.

I maintain that a majority of athletes worldwide play sport with pride and are fully mindful and respectful of its spirit. There is an unwritten code of respect among them in the midst of the most intense competition.

It is for these athletes and what they stand for that this battle must be fought and won.

That said, I am not unaware of the pressures and influences on the young athlete of today. Sport is more competitive than it has ever been, and there is intense pressure to perform and

succeed at every single opportunity. Insecurity is a prominent feature of any sporting career. When young athletes look down the path traveled by their seniors, there are more examples of perceived failure than success.

In this scenario, are there temptations to cut corners, use unfair means, make the quick buck?

Of course there are.

For those athletes that respect their sport and the essence of their journey, these are not real temptations to act upon, they are just passing curiosities.

I strongly believe that the whispers of these temptations can only be heard if, and only if, the deafening roar of one's conscience is deliberately muted.

While the subject matter of sports integrity is very vast in its scope, I would like to focus the attention of legislators and policy-makers in our midst to matters that I believe require immediate attention.

To my mind, there are four integrity issues in Indian sport that require legal intervention.

These are:

- age fraud;
- doping;
- deliberate under-performance; and
- player involvement in the betting industry.

I would like to start with age fraud, the impact of which has possibly been, thus far, under-appreciated.

For hundreds of young boys and girls in various sports, the first encounter with cheating often comes in the shape of deliberate mis-representation of age. This is most often an attempt to fraudulently fit into age-group teams and events. This fraud is often overseen, if not actively encouraged, by parents and coaches. Do whatever it takes, the end justifies the means, everyone else is doing it. These are the messages conveyed to impressionable young talents by the people they look up to the most at this stage. And so the seed is sown and the slippery slope begins. The issue is faced across a wide range of sporting disciplines in India and the scale is deeply concerning. This is where the first battle must be fought.

The issues of doping, deliberate under-performance and the player-bookie nexus need little elaboration. These challenges have plagued practically every sport worldwide. India is no exception.

These practices give rise to deep cynicism about every exceptional performance and encourage questions to be raised about every unexceptional performance.

The simple enjoyment of the glorious uncertainties of sport has perhaps been lost forever. These issues also raise concerns relating to athlete health and personal safety, the seriousness of which is, perhaps, receiving inadequate attention.

Failure to address these challenges not only risks a serious threat to the all-round confidence in sport as we know it, but will also enable the entrenchment of new norms in the subculture of sport -- norms that we will eventually have to fight even harder to change. Take the example of cycling, where no cyclist believed they stood a genuine chance unless they doped.

These battles have to be fought in the trenches and before it is too late.

It is one thing altering behaviours; it is a wholly different challenge dealing with a changed morality.

My position on these matters is very clear.

The challenge has shown itself to be of such a nature and scale that, despite best efforts, self-regulation structures within sports administration will, by their very nature, prove to be inadequate.

For example, no sporting body has the ability under the laws of the land to conduct surveillance on communications or conduct search and seizure of premises. The jurisdiction of a sports body is limited to only punishing insiders and to prohibiting their future participation in the sport. These deterrents are possibly inadequate in scope and do not account for and punish a number of other participants in the dragnet of corruption.

If we are to tackle the challenge head on, the urgent need is to break the nexus between organised crime and sports cheating, to incorporate advanced investigative and forensic techniques and to have genuine and meaningful punishments under the general law for everyone involved and complicit.

Therefore, I believe that it is now time for legal reform and the turn of national and state legislators and the criminal law administration to intervene definitively.

All four issues I have discussed must be dealt with without fear or favour and in the firmest possible terms.

Criminal offences must be defined to include all forms of sports cheating and jail time must be a genuine potential outcome where an offence is proved.

Investigations must be speedy and precise, independent and unbiased, making the various available temptations unattractive for potential offenders right down the chain of corruption.

Age-testing, participation in lie-detector tests, surveillance of communications, surprise dope sampling and other losses of privacy and liberty will unfortunately be inconveniences that every athlete -- even those who would never cheat -- will have to bear with as part of the bargain. It will be an unfortunate new reality for the majority of athletes who play their game honestly and with integrity.

But then sport is fighting no simple battle - it is never easy to overcome a challenge when it comes as much from within as without.

When I speak passionately about why sports integrity matters, the argument is often thrown back at me that the sports ethics of a nation are merely representative of the ethics of that nation and its people.

I cannot deny that issues and challenges similar to the ones I have discussed today are present in every sphere of public and private life.

But, is that a good enough reason to give up on sport? Certainly not! Sport gives us an opportunity to lead from the front.

This is a battle worth fighting and I hope that, together, we can be the change that we want to see.

Thank you.
