**Holding cricket hostage**

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A lot has been written/stated over the sudden cancellation of the New Zealand cricket team’s tour to Pakistan, hours before the start of the first ODI at Rawalpindi. The strange element was, the threat was shared by them with Pakistani officials. Strangely, they opted to leave the country immediately without even waiting for a day or two, in order to get clarity over the issue. The tour could have been mutually shortened or the ODIs at Rawalpindi be cancelled and the T-20 be played at Lahore to make things happen.

For Pakistan, apart from huge financial losses, a lot more is at stake in the domain of bringing back international cricket. In no other cricket playing country has the sport been suspended for so long as it has been in Pakistan, despite the fact that there have been violent acts including in Sri Lanka and India. The country had to undergo a lot of pressure to restore not only international cricket but also other sports including indoor sports like squash and snooker. It progressed in leaps and bounds, bit by bit in the shape of arranging tours of the World Eleven, teams from smaller countries and then shifting PSL gradually from a few games to a full-fledged championship.

[Adnan Qazi has left audience spell bound in his next music video venture](https://nation.com.pk/26-Sep-2021/adnan-qazi-has-left-audience-spell-bound-in-his-next-music-video-venture)

It’s a new kind of warfare for cricket, though it has seen off some controversies in the past as well. Yet, subjugation to such a fake alert has given credence to such warfare. Cricket is neither a very old game nor a very popular one in the globe. Only 12 countries out of over 200 have the status of test playing cricketing nations. Though its origin dates back to the 17th century, it was only known in a few countries. In the sub-continent, it came to Indian shores from British traders and soldiers during colonial rule. The International Cricket Council (ICC) was founded on June 15, 1909, though the first laws of cricket were written in 1744 and subsequently amended in 1774, when innovations such as LBW, a third stump, middle stump and maximum bat width were added. Now the ICC is controlling cricket’s affairs as a legitimate body with set rules and regulations.

International cricket was not suspended during the three-decade-long war in Sri Lanka and Pakistan was on the forefront to help them when some of the western countries had refused to tour Sri Lanka. In the case of Bangladesh, international cricket was never suspended when their internal situation was not conducive. The ICC has to play a role whenever there is any disagreement or any deviation from approved tours by member countries. If they sit quietly or act on pitch and choose, it would seriously affect its legitimacy and transparency. Sports has to be free from politics and biases, otherwise it won’t flourish.

['Sharif's committed corruption in motorways construction'](https://nation.com.pk/26-Sep-2021/sharif-s-committed-corruption-in-motorways-construction-fawad-chaudhary)

There have been times in the history of cricket when it faced challenges and came out due to better statesmanship and interference. The “Big Six Cricket Dispute of 1912” is an example, though it was a confrontation between administration and the players in Australia. Those were the early years of ICC and it wasn’t that effective. Cricket suffered as six leading players of Australia refused to tour England. Another controversy based on apartheid policy of South Africa spoiled careers of many great cricketers in the 70s and 80s. South Africa had two national teams of cricket, based on colour. In 1970, the ICC played its part prudently and elected to ban South Africa from international matches. The world of cricket lost some brilliant cricketers like Barry Richards, Mike Proctor, Graeme Pollock, Clive Rice and Van der Bijl. Players like Alan Lamb and Robin Smith had to shift to England to play and Kepler Wessels to Australia.

The latest threat is from a relatively new form of cricket, T-20 and that too in the shape of various leagues. Many full member countries have started their own leagues involving cricketers from all over. But IPL has brought and is still bringing bad taste and division in the sport. Sports are not only healthy activities and a source of entertainment but also help to unite. India has placed a ban on cricketers from Pakistan since 2008, and many international cricketers tend to ditch their own national teams to play IPL. There are fixing scandals but the ICC is silent. Such policies are counter-productive to its mandate. Many renowned commentators and cricket analysts have been raising their concerns on these ills but player power and the slackness of the ICC coupled with the weakness of boards is ruining the spirit of cricket.

[Lightning strikes in Thar kill four women, minor boy](https://nation.com.pk/26-Sep-2021/lightning-strikes-in-thar-kill-four-women-minor-boy)

India had entered into a discriminatory race with the concept of the ‘Big Three’ some time back and is now exploiting affairs in the name of revenue to the ICC. There are known facts where boards had to bow to the undue power of players with the cancellation of tours or by sending B teams on national duty.

After the departure of New Zealand, England also announced cancellation of the tour to Pakistan on the same plea, without giving any credible evidence of a threat. It is feared that Australia might do the same. Pakistan has announced that it will take on NZ in ICC’s next meeting in October. Western countries and India would most likely not side with Pakistan on the issue, and the statement of PCB chairman Ramiz Raja to form an Asian bloc would further divide the cricketing world.