

# Proletarian Era

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## SPOT-FIXING IN CRICKET

### Nakedly bares invasion of sports by moribund corrupt capitalism

Just a few months back, a mega scam involving the Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket surfaced as testament to modern sport's impending submersion into the quagmire of corrupt capitalism. Close on the heels of that hotbed of financial irregularities, manipulations and corruption of every sort on a massive scale, another shocking revelation has rocked the sports world. This time it is a match-fixing scandal involving the Pakistan cricket team. The furore follows allegations that a bookie bribed two Pakistani players to bowl no balls during the recent Lord's Test against England which Pakistan lost. As per latest media report, one of the players has confessed that he did so at the instance of his team captain. Some more Pakistani players are also stated to be part of this criminal act. Gradually, it became clear that not just Pakistani players but many others from different cricket playing countries are inseparably linked with this betting ring. As the beans were spilled, more names started surfacing much to the discomfort of the various cricketing bodies including International Cricket Council headed by Sharad Pawar, the Indian minister of agriculture. As usual, some hectic parleys went on a certain truce arrived at, guilty Pakistani players made scapegoats and shutters downed on the entire episode. But, cricket-loving people round the world are aghast at this tragic transition of cricket from a gentleman's game to a safe harbour for crooks. They have not accepted such an abrupt drop of curtain on such important an issue having wider ramifications. Many

cricketing legends of yester years, umpires of repute, club officials and other important personalities have not only denounced this act as deliberate suppression of truth but have expressed serious concern as to what then is the future of cricket. Some of them like Clive Rice, former South African captain and Steve Waugh, renowned former captain of Australia, have been very vocal on this issue. They have every reason to do so because this latest expose reveals facts that will horrify millions of cricket fans around the world.

#### The current episode

'News of the World', an England-based tabloid which revealed the episode through a sting operation claims it has video evidence confirming involvement of seven players. Kingpin is one Mazhar Majeed, a Pakistan-based middleman. The sting operators in disguise of reporters approached Majeed for doctoring the results. Majeed took 150,000 pounds in cash and told the undercover reporters the exact over and ball in which Pakistani bowlers Mohammad Amir and Mohammad Asif would bowl three no balls. The middleman also claimed that Pakistan captain Salman Butt was in control of the match fixing and that wicketkeeper Kamran Akmal had also been involved in previous spot fixing incidents. "I'm going to give you three no-balls to prove to you firstly that this is what's happening. They have all been organized." The bowlers bowled no-balls exactly when Majeed said they would. The trick is known as spot-fixing. It is

slightly different from match-fixing gambling. Spot fixing involves manipulating the results of "brackets" in a match, where bets are offered on things like who will bowl a no-ball and when. So, it is very difficult to detect a deliberate no-ball particularly when a fast bowler is in operation. But a couple of no balls or a dropped catch or an intentional run out might prove crucial in changing the results as well, as it has been in the instant case. Yet, it might go unnoticed. Thus, while the game loses its sanctity, the bookies and their financiers amass fortunes and the players or even umpires and organizers who offer themselves to be pliable to these gamblers get a share of the booty.

Perhaps, the no-balls in question bowled by one of the accused young Pakistani bowlers were so unusual, at least a foot over the crease, that it raised suspicion and hence investigations went underway. Majeed was arrested by the British police. However, he is now released on bail and, curiously enough, not framed for any offence as any prosecution of his might open a Pandora's Box. During interrogation, he admitted that some players take in excess of 150,000 pounds to fix the Test match. In terms of results, depending on who are the contestants, the amount might even soar to 300,000 to 450,000 pounds, he added. Majeed also informed that he has contacts with bookies in India who decide the amount based on "authenticity" of the source. "I deal with an Indian party. They pay me for the information." In the current deal

### SUCI (C) on Allahabad High Court judgment

Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI(C) has issued the following statement on 30 September, 2010: It is sad to note that the Allahabad High Court, instead of deciding the main contentious issue of ownership of the disputed land, has passed a judgment which has sought to paint a mythological figure as a historical one – a verdict unprecedented in the history of modern jurisprudence. The judgment, moreover, has legalized and legitimized demolition of the historic monument Babri Masjid – an act comparable only with the barbaric demolition of the statue of Buddha in Afghanistan by the Taliban.

also, he was in touch with an Indian bookie and called him during the sting to ask what he would pay for fixing a match in the ongoing Pakistan series. Another dimension was added to the expose when Veena Malik, ex-girlfriend of Pakistan's fast bowler Mohammad Asif, revealed that all players and the PCB (Pakistan Cricket Board) officials, from top to bottom, are involved in the match-fixing mess. Asif, she said, had told her that he was offered \$40,000 by an Indian bookie to underperform in Australia but he had demanded \$200,000. Majeed also admitted that match fixing or spot fixing goes on in all forms of the game—Tests, One Day Internationals and T-20s. Match fixing assignments take him around the world and has already netted him millions. From just one game, Pakistan versus Australia at Sydney in 2010, he made \$1.3 million. He had opened Swiss bank accounts for players to launder his and their illicit

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## Betting mafias turning sports into gamblers' fiefdom

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profits. He runs a property company Bluesky Developments with a multi-million-pound portfolio and appears to have cemented his role as the players' confidant in the financially lucrative world of sponsorship deals and marketing opportunities since Pakistan's last tour of England in 2006. It has come to light that not only just Pakistan but the entire cricketing world is now in the grip of the gamblers who pull the strings from behind to manipulate the results. All this revelation stripped the covers off a million-pound betting racket involving not just the Pakistani players but the shadowy world of cricket betting syndicates and how they operate, rig the matches in their favour through various tricks and make "masses of money".

### New twist to betting in cricket reveals much more

Not that the arena of cricket was hitherto free from betting. After Australian tour earlier this year, former Pakistani coach Intikhab Alam and assistant coach Aaqib Javed (who is still with the team) had expressed suspicions about the star player Kamran Akmal's involvement with bookies after assessing his performance in the Sydney Test. In fact, a decade back the whole world was stunned to learn how Hansie Cronje, then captain of South African team and a renowned talent was trapped by the betting syndicate to manipulate results of the matches. He along with some of his fellow players was banished from cricket. Even Mohammad Azharuddin, the then captain of the Indian team who is now a Member of Parliament on the ticket of the ruling Congress party as well as Ajay Jadeja, another senior player, who were named as accomplices in the betting crime were given marching order from cricket. With that, the controllers of international cricket claimed that the ogre of malpractice within the game was over. But within a short time, Cronje died in a freak plane accident in 2002. The apprehension that is doing the rounds is that Cronje was murdered. The betting syndicate feared that he would one day tell the full truth, and then many more would be implicated. This apprehension gained further ground when Bob Woolmer, the Australian coach of Pakistan team was found

dead in a Jamaican hotel room, following his team's shocking defeat to Ireland, almost a novice in the game, in the 2007 World Cup. But revelations of secret bank accounts, shady contacts and habitual match-fixing are growing and betting syndicates have flourished since these two deaths. The betting mafias do not stop at anything and they do not spare whoever gets in their way. Match-fixing is so rife in international cricket these days that it is only a matter of time before a player, coach or an umpire paid with his life.

But the spot fixing has given a new twist to the whole thing. It may be added that gambling is legalized in many countries. Just like on-line trading (i.e. participating in the speculative sale or purchase of shares in the stock market through computer terminals), there is on line gambling in cricket and other sports as well. On line trading in sports particularly cricket, soccer and athletics in big international tournaments has become a roaring trade. Just as the various syndicates of speculators and price manipulators powered by huge financing from banks, financial institutions, black money operators and corporate houses control 'ups and downs' of the stock market through various tricks and techniques unknown or ever shielded from the common people, the same way the gambler syndicates manipulate sports results to their advantage. Betting is a part of that. But now even the established betting syndicates are caught unawares by the newly emerging 'fixers' whose modus operandi is yet more 'sophisticated' and 'secret'. Majeed revealed that he was the manager of ten Pakistani cricket players, for conspiracy to defraud bookmakers connected with legalized betting. Those who are familiar with stock market speculation are aware that, of late, there is a new system where gambling on share prices takes place on, what is known in technical term, 'real time' basis. Talking in simple terms, the speculation has now become more intense, sophisticated and of a much shorter duration which might not be noticed. On the same lines, betting has shifted from match-fixing which, the punters feel, might be spotted to spot-fixing which might not be that easy to spot as the manipulation takes place in,

on the aforesaid analogy, 'real time or progress of the match' basis.

There is more depth to this newly-devised secretly run casino. To the syndicates and betting concerns having legalized status, the fixers community is branded as illegal though both of them operate with the same motive of dislodging sports from the coveted stature of character building through healthy competition and turn it into a gambling den. If we consider the entire legal gambling market, it will cover only 30-40% of the total world sports gambling market. The rest is all illegal. The illegal sports gambling market of North America is run by the La Cosa Nostra, American organized crime. But most of the illegal betting market is in Asia. It is huge. It dwarfs the European and North American markets. The total size of the Asian gambling market is estimated around \$450 billion. This means that the power of the Asian gambling market is far, far, larger than the other gambling markets combined. The bets taken by illegal bookmakers in India and Pakistan are not accepted by online bookies in the rest of the world, because they fear that bettors will know more than them when they set the betting markets. It means that for criminals it is worth fixing games which before would not have been worth even listing on their gambling websites.

As is learnt, most of the bookies are located in India with strong international connection and widespread network. While the cricketers are being hauled up for being part of the whole process, the sordid underworld of bookmakers and criminals is not touched. Rather, a strong pleading is made in favour of legalizing the betting in countries like India where such has not been given official recognition. What are the Asian fixers doing? They too are not stupid and they are trying to do to European leagues what they so successfully did in their own leagues – corrupt them. Now the fixers are coming to Europe and forming alliances with local criminals. It is an ideal marriage. The Asian criminals get access to the teams and players; the European criminals get access to the lucrative Asian gambling market. The recent cricket spot fixing involving Pakistani players is a prominent case in point. The stake in betting

through fixing is so high that the notorious underworld is heavily funding such shady deals.

### Tentacles of betting mafias have extended to other sports worldwide

The betting syndicates have not spared football or soccer also. It has come to light that gambling fixers have successfully infiltrated the game, all the way to the top international matches. Right from mega events like the European Champions League, Olympic and World Cup tournaments, many of the country-based soccer league matches have been fixed by mobsters, professional gamblers, mafia hitmen, undercover cops, top-level international soccer players, referees, and officials. It is alleged that match fixing occurred in the 2006 World Cup. Nigerian football team was accused of that. In 2006-07, match-fixing scandal had rocked Italian football. In fact, pretty much all of African football is enmeshed in corruption and the exploitation of players. The range of European countries that have had fixing scandals in football in recent years is a vast one. The head of the English Football Association had resigned a few years back after being taped secretly by a woman-friend, speaking about how the Spanish football authorities were trying to bribe referees in the upcoming World Cup. A cabinet minister of Poland estimated that over 70% of the games had been fixed. The whiff of corruption loomed over the last Soccer World Cup in South Africa as well.

Possibly the best case that indicates the depth of corruption in Asian sport is the story of the South-East Asia Games of 2005. The South-East Asian Games are a kind of mini-Olympics of the region, with competitions in a range of athletics, team sports, etc. In November 2005, a few days before the tournament began in Bangkok, the Vietnamese sports executive in charge of the team held a press conference. At the conference, the Vietnamese journalists expressed concern that their team was not particularly strong and would not win a lot of medals. "Don't worry," said the sports executive, "It is all fixed." It created a widespread commotion. The Vietnamese government was in embarrassment.

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# Omnipotent money is calling shots in sport as well

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The Thai Prime Minister of the time wearily responded when asked if the SEA Games were corrupt and they should think about abolishing the games. At the end of the SEA Games in December 2005, two things happened. One, many Filipino journalists took great delight in pointing out that the medal tally of the games correlated exactly with the predictions of the Vietnamese sports executive. And two, eight Vietnamese soccer players were arrested for fixing matches with an international gambling ring.

## Murky face of Indian sports

Incidentally, while the game of cricket is under the scanner, Indian sport is under a cloud over unprecedented corruption in organization of the Commonwealth Games. As per latest information, more than Rs 77,000 crore have so far been spent on preparations for hosting the Games. But most of these funds have simply been squandered away by a nexus of corrupt sports officials-bourgeois politicians-bureaucrats-ministers with impunity. Many established rules and regulations have been flouted, documents forged, fake certificates routinely issued to pass substandard work and material, projects awarded bypassing bidding norms, goods purchased at even 300 and 400% of the market price and so forth. Because of such a carnival of corruption and nepotism, construction work has been of abysmally low quality as evident from the incidents of pedestrian bridge crashing down, chunks of false ceiling falling and leaks and damp walls and puddles on the ground. So atrocious has been organizing activities that snakes, stray dogs, insects and what not were found reigning supreme at the Games village. The parallels between the Games and the other sporting circus, IPL cricket, are uncanny. In the IPL, the sleaze showed up the frailties of corporate India which tried to run the event like a private owners' booming commercial venture. In the Games, it is the soft underbelly of the State which is being exposed. So long, one has seen mixing sand with cement. It is now an episode of mixing cement in sand.

But the Indian government right from the Prime Minister down to

lower level is unfazed. Rather, the argument floated is that holding of the Games is more important than probing into financial irregularities and other corruptions. It is clear that the Games are not benefitting sports but only opening up an avenue for the business tycoons, corporate houses and a host of shady operators basking under their protection for looting public money. This is how the rulers of India have showcased not 'fame' but 'shame' to the sport-loving world.

## Sport is a character building tool

Thus on the one hand, there is limitless corruption centering around sport while on the other hand, even the very kernel of sporting events is being robbed through inexplicable changes in the game formats, manipulation of the end results and even orchestration of various moves and tactics during progression of the matches at the behest of the punters and their mentors. We all know that just like any other social or cultural activity, sport also evolved in course of civilization to meet certain definite necessities of life. In order to lead a healthy life and continuously improve various skills to improve quality of life, sustaining both physical and mental nourishment was considered an imperative necessity. Sport evolved as a means to create that healthy mind in a healthy body. Through healthy competition, sportsmen supplemented each other in their endeavour to enhance skills to accomplish a definite goal within the precincts of certain laid down rules. Since skill has no finality in excellence and its improvement necessitates competition with others, the rivals in the field are mutually dependent on each other for their respective developments. Precisely for this, sport fostered a spirit of mutual cooperation and coordination, cordiality and friendship. This spirit of cooperation and amity helped collective development of all and hence benefitted society as a whole. This is how sport plays a role in stimulating human spirit and propelling society and human civilization forward. The concept of sportsmanship has been derived from this very vital role sport plays in social development. Sportsmanship is an attitude that strives for fair play, courtesy toward

teammates and opponents, ethical behaviour and integrity, and grace in victory or defeat. Fair play refers to all participants having an equitable chance to pursue victory and acting toward others in an honest, straightforward, and a firm and dignified manner even when others do not play fairly. Thus sport has come to be recognized as a time-tested device for bringing about social integration and sense of fraternity and hence complementary to education. Imbibing true sportsman spirit implies a sense of social obligation. So a true sportsman can under no pretext indulge in any activity that goes against social interest. Deviation from true sportsmanship not only sullies the sport but inflicts humiliation to the defaulting sportsman as well. That is why, it is said that sport is a great character building tool.

## Stripped of essence, sport tuned into crass money making event

But, now with so many petrifying incidents unfolding, sport stands defiled, degraded, stripped of its essence. The obvious question that would naturally arise in the minds of the sport-loving people seething within at the sight of sport being reduced to a crass money-making corruption-breeding event, bereft of any ethics whatsoever, is why such degeneration? Is it because of some dishonesty and crookedness of some individuals? Will their removal or banishment cleanse the system and bring back sport to its original glory?

To seek an answer, one must go into the socio-cultural root of the problem. Sport, we have shown above as is a social activity. During the rising years of capitalism as a progressive force, the sport and games had their loftiness; sporting events to a great extent preserved their dignity. But with days passing by as capitalism got consolidated, the role of money has increased so overwhelmingly that it has eclipsed every sphere of life, everything in society. After being immersed in an insoluble market crisis endemic of the system, moribund decadent capitalism in order to satiate its greed for profit maximization is on a predatory prowl of newer areas of investment to prolong its gasping existence, and the accompanying rot is spreading thick and fast. Every

element of the society starting from education, healthcare, social service, performing art to literature, has not been spared from the tentacles of the dominating role of money and vile consumerism. All these services are now manufactured and sold at a profit. Not an iota of social obligation, social necessity or mentality of selfless service is seen anywhere. Likewise, love, affection, tenderness, broadness of mind and other finer senses have all been overpowered by brute dominance of money. Narrow sectarian monetary consideration dictates mind in its choice of likes and dislikes today. Family bondage, marital relationship, parental care, brotherliness, respect for the aged—all have turned into money relations, determined and governed by money only. Human relation has now virtually become a give and take business. So omnipotent is money in moribund capitalism. Now it has targeted the arena of sport particularly those games which are more popular and hence promise "better" business prospect. With every day passing, the strong link between sport and big business, speculators and gamblers as well as the corrupt nexus basking under the tutelage of the ruling class is becoming glaringly manifest. The arena of sport has become a soft target of large scale financial crime. Most of the sport federations or sports bodies are run like mini-empires by corrupt bourgeois politicians, industrialists, business tycoons and their henchmen, with virtually no checks and balances. They hardly have concern about the game. What matters for them is slightest of opportunity to mint money. More than 160 years back, Karl Marx in his historic *Communist Manifesto*, the charter of salvation of human civilization from exploitation of man by man, had said that with the development of capitalism reaching its saturation the role of money will be omnipotent and omni-present; capitalist system will strip every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up with reverent awe of its halo and reduce relation to a mere money relation. He wrote: "The bourgeoisie, has ... left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment." ... It has resolved personal worth into

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Before independence people were promised by the leaders of the country that once freedom was achieved, prosperity would knock at the door of everyone. All basic rights and amenities like food, shelter, healthcare and education would be guaranteed. In reality, immediately after Independence under the impact of the then just concluded freedom struggle the Indian capitalist rulers were forced to make some attempts, in keeping with the commitments and assurances given to the people, to address some of those burning problems. In the field of health some measures were taken during the initial years. With allocation of 4.98% of the GDP in the first five-year plan, several public hospitals in the cities and towns, many primary and community health centres in the rural areas, a few famous health research institutes on the national plane came up to provide healthcare free of cost to the poor and middle class of the country. But as time went on the facilities in the healthcare of the toiling millions started being curtailed steadily. And after introduction of globalization since early nineties of the last century, the situation turned menacing. Most of the free healthcare provisions in the public hospitals and health centres were withdrawn with the government spending on health reduced to 0.9% of the GDP, as at present. An all-out attempt is now afoot to privatize the healthcare system of the land as a whole. The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) is its reflection.

#### What is NRHM ?

NRHM is a centrally sponsored project sustaining solely upon the strength of huge funds from the

## National Rural Health Mission : The Devil's Design

World Bank, Asian Development Bank and DFID, accompanied also by strictures and rigorous conditions to abide by with hefty interest to be paid from none other than public exchequer. The whole exercise betrays the imperialist design meant to drive its root into most of the third world countries.

Introduced in April 2005 for seven years under the deceptive slogan of "HEALTH INDIA", the NRHM has a clear object to subvert the existing public health system. Initially the Mission covered 18 states viz., 8 empowered action group states – (UP, Bihar, MP, Orissa, Jharkhand, Uttaranchal, Rajasthan & Chhattisgarh); 8 north-east states – (Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya & Mizoram); Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. By this five years of its running some other states have been tagged into, several of which have already entered into Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Central Government to introduce the Mission seeking to overhaul the existing system, the real face of which is what the state of Kerala has experienced. In Kerala under the trade mark 'AROGYA KERALA' (Health Kerala), the Mission has wrought havoc in its entire existing public health system.

The primary conditions of these schemes and funds, which are given simply on loans to be paid back with heavy interest, are to gradually transform the Public health system

of a country into a hunting ground of private capital, through well defined steps of globalization designed by the imperialist financial organizations like the World Bank and IMF.

With the vast masses of people groaning under poverty in India, whose purchasing power has reached its nadir, obviously because of capitalist exploitation, is it possible for them to pay for the services that are available in the privatized health sector ?

#### How NRHM functions?

Utilizing the offices of the ministries of health of both the central and state governments, in its so-called 'missionary' aim, the NRHM endeavours to create structures which would render the ministries superfluous. By craftily smuggling its agents as resource persons, NRHM effectively utilizes the machinery of health department to spread its lethal tentacles. These resource persons who are in the payroll of NRHM have no commitment whatsoever to protect the existing Health Care System. On the other hand, the Public Health Department is duty bound to implement all the dictates of the NRHM to ensure its smooth penetration. A Mission Steering Committee chaired by the Central Health Minister and an Empowered Programme Committee headed by the central health secretary has been set up both at the state and the district level. The massive funds are not channeled through government

treasuries, but are disbursed by the State Mission Director set up for the purpose. Precisely, the activities of NRHM are so designed as to ensure steady encroachment into and subversion of the existing Public Health system.

#### Structural dismantlement

The NRHM professes to bring about an 'architectural correction' to strengthen the primary health care. This is simply an alibi for demolition of the existing structure of the public healthcare system. Under the guise of establishing community ownership over Public Health systems through village Health Committee, Village Health Plan, Hospital Management Committee etc., it seeks to transfer the burden of maintaining the public health from the hands of governments on to the shoulders of the people themselves. As revealed in the *Mission Document*, its strategies are to "Train and enhance capacity of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to own, control and manage public health services." [3. GOALS a) Core Strategies]. Its fundamental aim is to create an alternative set-up whereby the Panchayati Raj Institutions will undertake the responsibility of running the Public Health care system divesting the State and Central governments of it. The governments have introduced these reforms or in other words, demolition of the existing system under the plea of decentralization raising the bogey that foundations of India's existing health system have been weakened beyond control. But it is completely a wrong assumption as evidenced in Kerala where, whatever have been achieved successfully in the public health care system for public benefit (for example, reduction in infant mortality, control on spread of contagious diseases, increase in life expectancy and such others which have earned world-wide acclaim) have been done on its own by striving through the existing system developed through years of budgetary planning by the State and Central governments. True, there are flaws even there. But instead of removing these flaws or rectifying them, the CPI(M)-led so-called left democratic front government getting enticed by the glitter of dollars has introduced the NRHM in the state through imperialist-capitalist dictated MoU thus demolishing the existing public health care system there.



Massive rally by the Orissa State Committee, SUCI(C), at Bhubaneswar on 24 September, demanding immediate government action to tackle severe drought in the state and outbreak of cholera epidemic etc.

## NRHM — blue print of privatization-commercialization

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In addition, replacing the existing institutional mechanisms, NRHM is bringing in an entirely new set of health institutions as follows: (1) Village Health & Sanitation Samiti (at village level consisting of Panchayat Representative/s, ANM/MPW, Anganavadi worker, Teacher, ASHA, community health volunteers); (2) Rogi Kalyan Samiti (or equivalent) for community management of public hospitals, (3) District Health Mission, under the leadership of Zila Parishad with District Health Head as convener and all relevant departments, NGOs, private professionals, etc., represented on it. The missions at the state and national levels will oversee the functioning of the district health mission. A Task Group is to examine new health financing mechanisms for Hospital Care. What benefit such dismemberment will bring to the system, will be evident from discussions to follow.

### The question of feasibility ignored

A close examination of the Mission document reveals that the aim of NRHM is to ensure a non-formal health care delivery system which is completely divorced from the centralized government role in crucial matters of budgeting including funding, planning and execution to a decentralized share of responsibility with the three tier panchayat system to provide public health service. The question is, is it possible for the Panchayats to be capable enough to own and manage a vast network as that of the Public Health care system which has developed over the long years? Will they ever be able to garner the much needed resources and expertise essential for the effective functioning and maintenance of such a system maintaining at least a semblance of uniformity and efficiency over the entire country? In fact, the panchayats will be able to deliver only a substandard, outmoded and unprofessional

service, a skeleton of the Public Health care particularly after the NRHM plan is over and funds stopped. Here lies the ulterior motive of the NRHM. Introduction of a system in rural India, decentralized and anarchic, without government support, would only be a device to pull and extort service charges from the poor, a distinct indication of healthcare delivery against money signifying privatization!

Secondly, not only a time-tested arrangement under the central and state governments' control and functioning would be destroyed but also by giving key role to the ruling political parties in handling and managing the whole affair, parties already infamous for embezzling public funds and for rampantly perpetrating nepotism, the new dispensation would precipitate anarchy and corruption in all respects. Absolute control of panchayats would remove all the obstacles before these political parties and their lackey

administrators to do and undo anything. Performance of duties, commitment to the people and accountability in handling of finances would be the worst victim thus multiplying deprivation of the people seeking healthcare, thanks to the NRHM.

Let us now examine some of the crafty methods by which NRHM strives to achieve its goal.

### ASHA

One of the most important components of the NRHM to carry out the health care activities in rural India is the Accredited Social Health Activist or ASHA. This is a highly focused and highlighted organization whose members between the ages of 30 and 40 are recruited by the panchayats. An ASHA is responsible to this panchayat alone. She is to replace old peripheral health worker and plays role as an intermediary between the society and the public health system. In fact, she is the

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## Save sport from metamorphosis into a device of dubious money operation

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exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom — Free Trade" (Communist Manifesto). How prophetically his prediction has come true in the present moribund capitalist system.

### Blend of sex with sport in globalization phase

Money has not only taken control of sport but also debased it to the hilt. In order to break the moral backbone of people particularly the youth, ruling capitalism is commoditizing lurid sex in various forms. It is not just pornography or blue films that sell sex today. Sex-perversion is now encapsulated in everything, from theatre, film, music, novel to advertisement. A new term, 'show business' has been coined to define entertainment in terms of artificially stimulated excitement, incitement of perverse proclivities and a kind of riotous amusement of imposed glamour and gaiety, a total "entertainment package" moulded in the murky blend of decadent imperialist culture that seeks to

stimulate crude passion through a mixed bag of rotten stuff meant to eat into the very vitals of human essence. Sport is also being blended with sex and converted into a dazzling display of an item number of modern show business. That is why, we find that in the mega football or cricket events, apart from various publicity stunts, scantily-clad cheer girls gyrate, gesticulate and dance to music all through the matches. Even the dress or costume of some players taking part in tennis, badminton or athletics is made sexually provocative in the name of modernism. Most of the ads that are telecast during coverage of sport are on the sex plank so that the audience is made to savour the ugly pleasure as part of the total amusement offered. Thus the focus is not on the sport but on the 'ancillaries' that pull crowds. All care is taken to make people accept the mutilated formats of sport as entertainment. And it is money which is calling the shots from behind. Huge money is pumped in to design a grandiose package of compiled vulgarity and then sold to extract maximum profit. So the twin purpose of both squeezing and

debauching common people is served at one stroke. And in most of the cases, the bourgeois governments of the respective countries are either part of or abettors to this crime and corruption. With the invasion of the sporting arena by gamblers, the process of degeneration of sport is now nearing completion.

### Rot must be stemmed

It is now obvious that with the latest shadow of spot-fixing cast over cricket, once being known as a gentlemen's game, people have now started to believe that none of the matches is above question and all results are prone to manipulation. Everything is being suspect. When a bowler will start his run-up at the wicket or a speeding forward will aim at opposition's goalpost, one would think that it is no demonstration of hard-earned skill but a manoeuvre already 'fixed' by those pulling the string from behind. So cricket itself is now, as the legend goes, "not cricket". Similarly, soccer in most cases is a 90 minutes long fixture of pre-determined result. Instead of being cheered, the players on the field

may be jeered at for every move they make. Why then will any sportsman worth the name take part in that? When fixing in its latest form is so rampant and common that as if someone can just take an ampoule of fixing and inject it with steroids, will any sane person take interest in sport or like to be associated with its governance?

So, the situation is extremely grave. So long capitalism is in vogue, it will continue this wrecking operation with acceleration. The task imperative is to thwart this menacing all-embracing attack of gasping capitalism on all walks of life sport included. Kernel of sport must be secured and preserved in fulfillment of a definite social need. It is, therefore, incumbent on all sport-loving right-thinking people round the world to muster all their strength to save sport from its metamorphosis into a device of dubious money operation of the hounds, sharks and vultures of the utterly corrupt capitalist order. The immediate task befalling them is to raise a powerful organized voice against the sinister attempt of the vested interest to turn sports into a punter's den.

# Exploitation and privatization, two faces of ASHA

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only link between the community and the health care system. She gets no salary other than a paltry honorarium of Rs.800 per month. Her remuneration would mainly generate from the services given to the people like enrolment of child for immunization, for facilitation of building a toilet for a home or for providing escort to a patient for going to referral hospital. For each respective service she would get scheduled remuneration. This implies her earning would depend on herself without any responsibility being taken by the government. As she provides service, so she gets her wherewithal, i.e., no work no pay – a tormenting service condition found in the contract system in the private business arena. But ASHA would draw up and execute the whole village health plan along with other village volunteers under panchayat. She is to respond to any call from villagers for any health related matter. Starting from imparting health awareness, mobilization of rural population under the health planning, nursing to distribution of medicines and what not, fall within the purview of her work. She will be supplied with a medicine kit carrying allopathic and AYUSH medicines for common ailment. (AYUSH is the acronym of Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy dispensing the traditional systems of treatment of Indian origin and abroad.) She would also diagnose and treat minor ailments and dispense drugs. She would even have to recognize serious illness. Ludicrously enough, for picking up such a wide range of health activities she would get only 23 days of training under those trainers who would be trained through distance education on contract basis. Also, for discharging so many duties she would not get any salary but a measly compensation as mentioned. This ASHA so pompously upheld as the cornerstone of the Mission programme is not even an official staff. She is just a volunteer who is deemed to offer wholesome health care prescription to the poor. For a poorly educated worker with such enormous responsibilities but with such little training and paltry remuneration is it possible to ensure good health of the rural people efficiently? Wut what happens in such case has actually happened

here too. Although huge number of such grass-roots workers, almost 90%, have been appointed in the health care system of the states which have come under the purview of the NRHM, although crores of rupees have been spent away already on this account, the performance is not at all satisfactory as the experience of the activists of the medical science movement goes. What is grim is that this profession has been made victim of corruption. The poor activists of this organization instead of providing services to the rural health centres have been lured to turn into agents of the nursing homes and private medical centres which offer lucrative remuneration vis-à-vis the NRHM's pathetic package. So instead of taking the patients to the NRHM conducted health centres, ASHAs are seen escorting the ill people to the nursing homes sprouted around. Thus in lieu of bringing about benefit to the rural people ASHA has turned a breeding ground of corruption perpetrated and steered by private capital.

## Public-private-partnership

Long after 60 years of independence, based upon a sudden 'realization' that without private sector participation, no effective health care system can be evolved, nor its goals can be materialized or attained, NRHM has introduced the private-public-partnership (PPP). In fact, it is a slogan and modus operandi being introduced in all service sectors, under the compulsion of globalization. As mentioned, it is a welcome to the private sector, with trimming or helping the government, i.e., the public health sector to deny its role. In NRHM, PPP would provide 75% of the service to the people in the health care system. The private health providers are allowed to represent alliance in the District Health Mission even. So the domination of the private owners in the health care system has been recognized as overwhelming. Obviously the pack of private health care providers, would have a free hand to extort people as much as possible for earning the highest profit. The document declares, the public sector should take the initiative in developing a guideline for private-public participation and identify areas of partnership, which are need based, thematic and

geographic. But the essence remains in sacrificing health care of people to the vile profiteering of the private health barons through this PPP.

## Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)

In addition, another important wing in this Mission to run the health care system would be the Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). With the government withdrawing from healthcare system, these NGOs which are almost similar to private sector in nature have been allowed to do a brisk business in the health sector. These NGOs would have their funds from the government's loan fund taken from the World Bank etc. Starting from disease control programmes, immunization and pulse polio programme, Janani Suraksha Yojana, capacity building activities, conduction and management of the ASHA to even monitoring and evaluation of health sector – in everything the NGOs would remain involved as pivotal with their networks in alliance with community organizations and panchayats. They are claimed to be contributing to the sustainability of innovations and people's participation in the NRHM. In fact, the government is overwhelmed about the success of these NGOs! The list is as follows: the people have fruitfully come forward to cooperate with the NRHM programmes through the effort of these non-governmental agencies like VHAI, Karuna Trust and such others working in the interior villages of Arunachal Pradesh where they are running PHC's (Primary Health Centres). Private Doctors are providing service to the patients in government hospitals and health centres by charging prescribed fees. NGOs are also involved in the training of ASHAs and community health workers as well as in capacity building activities of these workers and activists. Nearly 1825 NGO's have been accredited in Janani Suraksha Yojana Programme. Government claims, whatever achievements and progress have resulted in, in the health care system, have been possible only due to the participation of the NGOs. But what the government has covered up is the fact that the NGOs as almost a private health providers like the PPPs have provided their services not out of philanthropic

stance, free of cost. They are charging for each service to the rural poor under the banner of NRHM and earn profit. And in the process, they freely use all the infrastructures like laboratories, investigation centres, operation theatres, patient parties' waiting room, ambulances built up by the government with people's money or with the Mission's funds, which latter also comes upon people as the burden of loan.

## Health Insurance

With a show of shock and remorse, the governments observe that during the year 2004-05, the Indians spent with the private sector nearly one lakh crores of rupees as health care expenses. For this, the government wails, many families have become pauperized! Hence they are out to initiate a health insurance scheme, as dictated by the World Bank. And to give it effect, the responsibility has been bestowed upon none other than the private companies to offer their "innovative insurance products". This offer will be given to those people who have still some capacity to go in for treatment in which they are to spend 83% of their income. The poor especially the rural poor who cannot even dream of such insurance would be organized by the NGOs and similar other organizations through special insurance schemes to make them fall prey to this insurance scheme for which the central government would pay a part as subsidies, while the rest to be extorted from them. How? In a country where nearly 80% of the population particularly in the rural area, live below poverty line, how can it be attained? Is it by getting their household properties sold or by forcing them to take excruciating loan and rendered them to begging? Where would these poor people get it from even when they are unable to arrange for a square meal a day? Is it not a farce, or is it not a cruel joke?

In short, through this NRHM it has been an endeavour to mould an effective health insurance set up only to help penetrate the private insurance companies in place of a public healthcare system controlled, managed, and financed by the government. It is no denying the fact that even the existing rickety public or the government healthcare

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# AYUSH a discriminatory device dished out by NRHM

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system served to help mitigate the sufferings of the poor toiling millions, however little or scanty. A heinous surrender to the healthcare sharks to earn fabulous profit will only push people to further distress.

## NUHM

A new programme called NUHM or National Urban Health Mission has been mooted as a counterpart of NRHM meant for providing health care services to poor and marginalized people in the cities and towns. The central Health Ministry contends that NUHM will fill the gaps in NRHM. Taking a loan of Rs.9,159 crores from the World Bank, this Urban Mission would target 429 towns of which 100 towns would be covered initially during the mission period of five years. Just like the NRHM, NUHM, operating on private-public partnership and health insurance schemes, will be implemented by Corporations and Municipalities of the cities and towns. Like the ASHAs, USHAs or Urban Social Health Activists will be trained up, one for every two thousand population within the year 2012. The result of introduction of this NUHM would be obviously the same since the same modalities and conditions work here too as that of the NRHM.

In short the entire public health structure of our country will be swallowed by the two World Bank projects – NRHM and NUHM within 2012 foisting privatization with the same disastrous consequences.

## AYUSH

NRHM is bent on introducing Ayurved, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathic (AYUSH) systems of medical treatment. The Mission emphasizes that these ancient local traditional medical systems would be revitalized. It argues that AYUSH is a means whereby the low-income or no-income people would be provided with this traditional medical system which is a low cost health care cheaper than modern allopathic system. ASHA would apply the system not only at the village level sub-centres but at PHC, CHC levels as well, for treating common ailments. AYUSH practitioners and pharmacists would be provided with space at the Community Health Centres for treating and medicating the patients.

It is to be noted, Homoeopathic system of medicines developed scientifically under the leadership of Hanneman. But its continuous research and development has been seriously hindered because of capitalist class's unwillingness to have investment in this sphere on profit maximisation consideration. Bourgeois governments are also very apathetic towards this cause. As regards Ayurvedic and Unani, all these ancient traditional systems of medicines had been in vogue before the modern scientific allopathic medical system was discovered or developed. Then, people applied these traditional systems of medicines, based on their empirical experience, to treat and resist diseases. This gave some relief too. But with time their modernization in keeping with development of modern science was not properly taken up. In this circumstance though these traditional systems of medicines can continue side by side and be used as and when required, they can only play a supporting role, but never be reckoned as an alternative to the modern allopathic system of medicines. Besides, how is it that the NRHM pleads nakedly for discrimination, for the traditional systems to be provided to a particular section of people, the poor as the only alternative, and the allopathic system to the affluent who can afford? If and when the modern allopathic system of treatment has come in the process of continuous development of medical science and invention of medicines, everyone should get advantage of it and it should be available and affordable to all.

## Money to follow patients

The basic principle that guides NRHM in its functioning is that money must follow the patient. Basing on this principle NRHM standardizes the costs of all medical services it provides. No services will be provided by NRHM free of cost, but only on payment. Even when the reimbursements are made by the District Health Mission to the hospitals for services, that will also be on the principle of "money follows the patient." District health funds have to be accumulated by selling the services to be fixed by the Mission time to time based on the prevailing market rate, whether at outpatient-inpatient facilities, laboratories, or for surgical interventions.

In brief, by grace of this NRHM the government hospitals would soon turn into commercial centres where each service including that of a doctor would be provided only by paying the required fees or charges. This would particularly happen after the Mission period being over when the funds from the imperialist financing agencies will no longer be there even for making payment to the Mission's own staff. Survival of the Public Health system then would become a commercial venture, where clients without purchasing power would have no scope to receive any service.

## Stocking and Procurement policy

NRHM prescribes that stocking and procurement of medicines would follow the principles based on the strength of the funds available with the local bodies but not on the real needs of the people. What does this indicate? It simply means that the medicines required for recovery would not be provided to the poor patients from the health centres. They will have to buy medicines from the market only. This is what the free treatment to the poor as prescribed by the NRHM is! What else is it other than extortionist privatization?

## The reason behind MoU

This is the NRHM indeed! And for implementation of this NRHM a MoU has to be signed between the Central and State governments. But why this MoU between the same governments of the country? What is the real intent behind it? It is nothing but a trickery forcing the state governments to abide by the NRHM dictates of privatization of medical care in line with the globalization policy.

## Market forces to guide health care system

Privatization-commercialization of the healthcare system becomes evident when the World Bank emphasizes the market forces to be the driving power, even instructing the state not to interfere in the health sector. According to them, the solution of all the health problems lies in the market. "This market", according to the World Bank, "will take care of all things" including health sector with buyers (the patients) and sellers (private healthcare barons) left alone to handle the transaction. Only in

case of failure of the market, the government is entitled to intervene. Thereupon rests the NRHM doctrine "money must follow the patients" simply implying "give the money and take the healthcare". In result, patients will be fleeced by the service providers or the owners of the health centres, public or private, coupled with their criminal brokers. It means this market philosophy will take away the least chance of free treatment jeopardizing the survival of the poor.

## Decentralization

NRHM explicitly maintains that it is totally undesirable to plan and execute public health matters centrally. To it, health is an individual affair; there is no social function involved in it. The expenses for health are to be managed by the individual at individual's level. This means all the policies and decisions of functioning would be taken by the local governing bodies. From resource mobilization i.e. funds collection, its investment, to planning and execution of health care, all the responsibilities lie with these local bodies. No central fund, meant for the public health sector, would be allotted to these local bodies. The World Bank is opposed to provide the salary of Anganavadi teachers, ASHAs, nurses and doctors from central funds. These health activists would have to earn their remunerations from the patients. This is what decentralization stands like, the sleuth for paving the path of privatization smoothly.

In stead of advising government to pursue social responsibility, NRHM suggests that public health service would operate only on demand-supply basis looking for profit alone. And so, both the NRHM and NUHM have prescribed abolition of salary system in their schemes. Not only the para-medical staff but also the medical staff who are civil servants, will not be on regular payroll system or monthly salary system. They would be "paid on the basis of each service provided to the patients", as we have noted already. Doctors would provide their professional services on contractual basis. Notably, in rural government hospitals, medical students will serve as doctors, receiving their stipend as compensation for the service

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## Unleash mighty mass movement — Defeat NRHM

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rendered, and that too for the Mission period only. With such casual service and casual payment, can anybody expect anything better than a substandard health system? But that is what the NRHM stands for.

### Salary system as social security movement

In the process of development of civilization as the social security system emerged, so came into being the salary and wage systems after a prolonged struggle of the people. It is a time-tested system. The government is now doing away with it under the plea that assured of monthly basis salary system people do not work or provide service properly. This is wholly wrong and unjust too. When a person renders service to the society, it is the duty of the society to arrange for him/her a decent life. Against aberrations, government has to take responsibility of creating an environment through which they should be eradicated, and the people find a congenial atmosphere to discharge their duties properly and sincerely. Negligence to duty is a cultural question, is an ethical question – it has to be fought culturally and ethically. People have to be imbued by creating socio-cultural environment to wean away this evil. For this social and cultural movements have to be organized, democratic movements have to be developed. That is the only solution. But instead of doing this, people's fundamental right is being shattered! Such a cruel attack is

going to be inflicted upon the people in the name of providing proper health care to them! What is concealed is that it is the globalization that is intended to be clamped in order to fetch the fabulous profit to the private healthcare sharks and nothing else. This is actually the hidden and latent interest of the capitalist design carried through the NRHM.

### Thwart anti-people NRHM

This NRHM as the blueprint of privatization-commercialization of healthcare system of the country is going to rob the people of their fundamental right to healthcare totally. It is poised to throw off the people to hideous greed of the private healthcare barons. In fact, its working over the last five years after its introduction since 2005 bears testimony. Free public hospitals and centres, however the pompous show they might display, have been rendered almost defunct being instrumental to the interest of the private health providers earning runaway profit. Has there been any improvement in the scenarios of the erstwhile miserable health condition of the people? Even after nearly six and half decades of independence of the country all the communicable and epidemic diseases like leprosy, tuberculosis (TB), Kala azar, encephalitis, malaria, dengue, cholera which have been eradicated almost totally and permanently from the most parts of the world excepting only a few miserably poor countries in Africa and Asia are rampant in this country attacking the people quite often than not. At least one-third (or 15 millions) of

tuberculosis (TB) patients of the whole world are Indians. Here one person is contracting this corrosive disease in every second and one dies of it every minute. In 2006, the number of leprosy patients in this country was recorded as 560,000. They have been spreading menacingly. About 48.77% of rural children in the age group of 0-6 years are suffering from acute malnutrition. More than 69.5% children of the same age group are anaemic and underweight, one of the highest rates in the world and nearly double the rate of the sub-Saharan Africa. Over 5.6 million children die every year, more than half the world's total. While 55.3% females in general, 88% pregnant of them in the age group of 15-49 years are anaemic, the UNDP Human Development Report (1997) shows, most of the women in this country are malnourished. In maternal mortality this country is the second highest in the world. Only 42% of the child births are attended by the professionals, most of them take place at home sans any skilled person and equipment. These are all recorded cases, leaving hundreds of thousands unrecorded due to lack of infrastructure and callous attitude of the health care system. Has there been any improvement against all these ills and evils through this NRHM-conducted healthcare system? The answer is, as the experience goes, an

emphatic NO.

So NRHM has been introduced as an all-out attack on the health care of the people in general and the rural poor in particular. It is a horrendous onslaught of privatization on the public health care system completely abolishing the free service to the poor putting in a big question to their survival. It is a violent raid on their fundamental right to health. But shockingly enough, no political parties in government have raised any voice of protest against it. Rather whether in governmental seat or in opposition, they have extended their fullest support, vocally or mutely, to it. What is amazing and shameful is that the CPI(M)-CPI and their underlings which claim themselves to be "Marxist" or chant all-through with the slogan of leftism have not only supported but have introduced NRHM in the states ruled by them.

Given the situation and circumstance, all sections of the people of the country should come forward to thwart this out and out anti-people project, the NRHM, hatched at the behest of the imperialists-capitalists and force the government not only its total withdrawal but restoration of the facilities so far curtailed along with their expansion in the public healthcare system in the interest of the poor. This is the call of the hour.

### SUCI (C) Contesting Gujarat Municipal Election

SUCI(C) is contesting 9 seats in Surat Municipal Corporation election and one seat in Baroda Municipal Corporation election.



Over 20,000 peasants under the banner of AIKKMS marching to the West Bengal State Secretariat in Calcutta on 20 September in demands on the burning problems of their life

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