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the tem and was consigned to sports isolation for quite some time. That was because he got tempted by lucrative offers made by the South African government. Whatever it was that period of S.A. sports was a dark period for all sportsmen and women.

Was Sri Lanka warned by the ICC? I think there were some rumblings about such a move. Don't be surprised if some minister or such powerful individual decides to challenge whoever is in charge of international sports activities and declare the country's intention to go it alone. Only outcome would be cricket isolation which can spill over to other areas as and when necessary. Not only will our cricketers and sports persons lose the valuable opportunities available to the rest of the world, they also are bound to be frustrated individuals who fail to contribute their share towards national life and progress.

In respect of cricket in particular, there had been a number of allegations of corruption made by some individuals both within and without the cricketing field. The former cricket captain and cricket administrator Arjuna Ranatunga has been in the forefront in these accusations. He has even, recently, come out with the same accusation and pointed out the need to clean up the mess. Whoever made the accusation there is enough and more reason to take meaningful action in order to clean the mess not only in cricket, but in connection with all Sri Lankan sports.

This need has come up again and again, after practically every international tournament in the recent past. This shows that much has to be done in bringing the country's sports administration in particular and the development of national talent for the best results to be assured.

The area of sports activity requiring such special treatment has been wide and varied. Starting with the selection of sportsmen and women, their training, facilities offered, opportunities for foreign training, the selection of officials to accompany sports men and women, handling of sports persons on and off the field, counselling them, selection of coaches and assistants, are some areas calling for attention by the authorities. On the top of all that there is the constant accusation of political interference at every stage of the performance.

Former Sri Lankan cricket captain Ranjan Madugalla is currently one of the senior cricket referees performing under the ICC. There are more of them including Roshan Mahanama and Kumar Dharmasena functioning either as cricket Umpires or referees. My feeling is that all of them qualified for these positions on their own initiative with no government involvement or assistance. At the same time Sri Lankan government is incurring heavy expenses on foreign coaches and trainers in its quest for high quality cricketers and sports people in other areas. It is a requirement that any country interested in

developing its sports has to undertake, but the relevant question is how much of local talent remain untapped in this exercise? In the same breath one can put a further question to those responsible as to the attention being paid for such a need and opportunity already available within the country?

There are opportunities and facilities offered by developed countries with world class sports men and women, like Australia. Instead of importing their coaches and trainers, what if Sri Lankan men and women of high quality



are sent for training under them? One obvious advantage would be that the country gets a set of sports experts who have mastered not only their particular sport, but are fully conversant with the cultural inhibitions affecting each individual sports person. This perhaps is one aspect that has usually been ignored by everyone interested in developing sports in the land. Recently the President on his visit to the North of the country, was welcomed by the most outstanding sports woman produced by the North, Tharjini Sivalingam. At that meeting the President called upon those in the North and East to encourage their boys and girls to emulate the likes of Muittiah Maridaran and Edirweerasingham, the renowned athlete, and join the rest of the land's sports people. This truly was a timely call by the leader of the nation.

Now it is up to those responsible make a serious effort for its development on a national scale with the support and cooperation of all citizens. That is where the line of demarcation must be drawn clearly and judiciously. It has to be an unambiguous division of duties and responsibilities with no room for unnecessary involvement or interference by politicians or business interests. It would be necessary for government agencies to exercise some control over the activities and administration of sports bodies and organizations. That control and supervision ought to be confined to specific areas that need strict supervision, and that too must be on established practices and procedures to ensure the smooth running of each sport and proper functioning of the administration. For that the government should make provisions for the exercise of such control and supervision without infringing on the rights of the persons given the job.

Can we see that type of propriety and sanity in Sri Lankan sports in the near future?

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