

years of domestic operation by that period. Mr Gopinath, however, did not elaborate further on the issue.

at the possibility of setting up a watch assembly unit in India, and it is not clear whether that plan is still on track.

Southeast Asia, Australia, India and the Middle East. It forayed into North America in February 2007. It owns four brands — Giordano, Giordano Ladies, Giordano Junior and Bluestar.

with creating this premium casual wear segment in the country," says a Technopak consultant.

three years. According to industry sources, Maruti engineers have already started working on the Kizashi to take it from the concept stage to the production platform and customise the luxury sedan for rugged Indian conditions.



**Shailendra Singh**  
Jt Managing Director  
Percept

**The sport either needs money or heroes that will make India shine in the global arena**

# Football Will Become As Big As Cricket In India

## Indian football in pathetic state

**C**RICKET has been ingrained in the psyche of the masses. When there are debates on 'icon or personality' of the year, you will invariably find a cricketer in the list of nominations. So, are we saying that there are no successful iconic sports persons from other fields? No. But heroes and mass appeal matters!

People may say that BCCI has done nothing of note in terms of administration, in spite of being the richest board in cricket world. But to be fair, BCCI has definitely made some inroads in the development of the game — domestic structure has been revamped, better coaches, physios, umpiring training programs, training academies at the domestic and national level, upgrading stadium facilities, etc. The launch of IPL also promises to unearth more talents at the domestic level.

In comparison, the AIFF has not generated enough money. There is infighting among the players and administrators and the game is unable to pull in the crowds barring a few states like Kerala or West Bengal, where the sport is popular. Lack of sponsors affect the infrastructure in terms of poor facilities at grounds, poor travel arrangements and even basic sports wear, leave alone training and development facilities.

Successful performances become the toast of a nation. It started in cricket 1983 when India won the ODI World Cup, which Dhoni's

team later managed to recapture to an extent with the T-20 World cup win in 2007. Kapil Dev and M S Dhoni have become cult figures already because of their achievements. Vishwanathan Anand's performance in chess in 2007 was as noteworthy a feat as India's T-20 World Cup victory. But the media coverage and hype for the cricket win was there for all to see. And since the masses love it, sponsors are ready to back the game to capture more eyeballs which in turn leads to a very rich cricket board. Cricketers become rich super-heroes and brands overnight and the masses start idol worshipping them.

On the contrary, India's performances in football make pathetic reading. The standard of Indian football (compared globally) is poor — the national team struggled to qualify for both the World Cup and the Asian Cup and is ranked way past 100 in the FIFA ratings. There have been no clear performances for the Indian National Team of note and while individuals like Vijayan and Bhutia have done themselves proud, there has been a clear lack of team focus by the administrators for too long. The sport either needs money or a few heroes that will make India shine in the international arena. What India needs is heroes and icons to lead. Unfortunately, the game of football has not thrown up demigods for the Indian public to idolise, and until that doesn't happen, football can never become bigger than cricket.

### CROSS SWORD

**GOAL POST**  
No one doubts cricket's hold over masses. But equally, an over-cluttered business environment around cricket is pushing brands and audiences alike towards football, the world's biggest spectator sport. Can football ever challenge cricket's hegemony in India?

## Soccer seeing winds of change

*Your backing football? Have you lost it?  
Football v Cricket? Where is the debate, Navroze?*

**S**OME of the responses encountered while trying to get people to talk about football, in India. But there are some people like Sunil Bharti Mittal who have a different point of view. While announcing the Bharti-AIFF Academy and pledging Rs 100 crore into grassroot development of the game, he said he was looking at a "football revolution", and to India playing in the 2018 World Cup. Pipe-dream? Or the vision of a man who ten years ago dreamt of putting a mobile phone into every Indian household! In the last 12 months, Liverpool and Arsenal sent their coaching squads to India for the very first time. And kids thronged the camps, many being sent back disappointed due to the 'number limitations'.

The launch of the i-league has seen Oslan's (also sponsors of the oldest football tournament, the Durand Cup) supporting New Delhi Heroes, the Piramal group picking up Pune FC, BPL owning Bangalore FC and the Zee Group pocketing the Mumbai FC and also bringing in Rs 200 crore for a telecast right of Indian football? Something unheard of a few years ago. Something that will be seen as a "wise and clever investment" when the stakes skyrocket in the years to come. AIFF may not be getting pre-

placement slots at the top B-schools, but the winds of change can be felt in the corridors of Football House. Satyajit Sadanand, a graduate from IIM-Lucknow, joined the AIFF. Starting a rush of resumes that are currently being considered for bringing in more such managerial talent.

The Under 17 team was the joint Group leader along with Iraq, topping the 1st stage of the FIFA U 17 World Cup. East Bengal's Under 15 team went the distance and qualified to play in the globally prestigious Nike-Manchester United Premier Cup 2007 with teams from Man-U, Everton, Sao Paolo FC, FC Barcelona, A S Roma, amongst many others. Can Football be as big as cricket? With a wishlist taken care of, where grassy stadia, city-belonging clubs, player security, Nike taking care of player kitting and comfort with international quality clothing, and Indian Football's poster boy Sunil Chetri, making heads turn, and the turnstile too, it seems moment of truth for Indian football is not too far away. Wishing we all are. As they say advertising reflects society and trends, and trends are reflected in advertising, the latest Airtel TV commercial features two kids playing football. Why not cricket? Knute Rockne said: "I've seen prayers work best when you have big players" I still love my cricket. And I do pray for football. The ball has started rolling.



**Navroze Dhondy**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Creatigies Communications

**Cos pledging fund and IIM grads are joining AIFF to set the ball rolling**