

‘Targeting 5 Olympic medals, if not moved’

IAS Officer Ashok Khemka Is Well Known For Battling Corruption And Being Transferred

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Ashok Khemka, who is best known for cancelling the controversial land deal of the company Sky Light Hospitality Private Limited which is linked to Robert Vadra — Sonia Gandhi's son-in-law — in Gurgaon, is currently on his 50th assignment. He is the principal secretary of sports in the Haryana government. The 1991-batch IAS officer gave his “personal views” to TOI on the sidelines of the National Youth Conference at Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India in Gandhinagar.

What's your mission in your new assignment?

I am focusing my efforts on 2020 (Olympics). Unless I am transferred, I am targeting five medals in the Olympics for the state.

What do you make of the acquittals in 2G spectrum case?

We must look at the case holistically. Do not look at the figures of presumptive loss because by definition they are presumptions. The actual loss can never be ascertained. Even if there was no loss, the question is of procedural fairness. So, the first thing they (the telecom ministry) did was to employ the first-come-first-served procedure and called it executive prerogative.

I don't buy that theory. The first-come-first-served procedure is normally used for unexplored resources. Spectrum was a resource which was explored already. Second, if the resource was not put to use, it should have been surrendered to

the government. Instead, there were sales at fat premiums.

Do you think corruption has reduced under the current government?

I have not measured corruption either in the previous government or in this one. It is for the politicians to answer that question.

Do you think action has been taken against those involved in the controversial land deals in Gurgaon including that of Sky Light Hospitality?

No, till now I haven't seen any action in that case. Four years have passed, where is the action? The Justice Dhingra commission was constituted and challenged by former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda who is represented by Kapil Sibal.

In their challenge, they said that the constitution of the commission was flawed. The commission has already submitted the report. In normal circumstances, there is the doctrine of utility that says when a commission has submitted a report, it should be published. Public money has been spent on the commission. The commission submitted its report on October 31, 2016, and the petition was filed in the first week of November.

What's your view on the government's action in relation to Lalit Modi, Vijay Mallya, and Nirav Modi?

The strength of governmental action lies in bringing criminals to book. So whether they have fled to America or Europe, the strength of governmental action lies in ensuring their deportation and bringing them to trial.

In your career, where does pressure come from — netas or corporates?

I never held a post where corporates could even think of exerting pressure on me or transferring me. Corporate interest lies in ensuring that their people are suitably posted where required. They are able to manage these appointments.



Ashok Khemka