

**IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
CIVIL APPELLATE JURISDICTION**

SPECIAL LEAVE PETITION NO(S). 30748-30749 OF 2017

ALL INDIA FOOTBALL FEDERATION

...Petitioner(s)

VERSUS

RAHUL MEHRA AND ORS.

...Respondent(s)

O R D E R

1. To fill the legislative gap, this Court has monitored the management, sanction and conduct of national level football tournaments and leagues by the All India Football Federation ('AIFF'). In the process, assistance of a distinguished retired judge of this Court was taken to examine a draft constitution for AIFF, prepared after involving every stakeholder. Finally, after hearing all the parties, including the amici curiae on the final draft of the proposed constitution of AIFF we reserved the case for judgment. While reserving, we directed AIFF not to enter into any binding contracts till the judgment is pronounced.

2. In the meantime, the learned amici curiae mentioned the matter and we relisted these petition(s) for hearing. The reason for relisting the case is to take note of the enactment of the National Sports Governance Act 2025 by the Parliament and to address certain uncertainties about the upcoming seasons of various football leagues, including the top-tiered Indian Super League. We were apprised that because of the embargo, AIFF and its commercial contractual partner, the Football Sports Development Agreement ('FSDL') could not decide the terms on which the Indian Super League (ISL) could be conducted and therefore the ISL and many other leagues appear to have been virtually suspended.

3. The commercial contract between the AIFF and FSDL dated 09.12.2010 referred to as the Master Right Agreement, is scheduled to expire in December 2025. On the other hand, AIFF's executive committee, which took charge at the end of 2022, pursuant to the elections which were held after this Court's intervention, has its tenure till 2026, if fresh elections are not held earlier. Due to these uncertainties, it appears that AIFF and FSDL have not taken a final decision about the course of action to be adopted for conducting the sporting events. In the above-referred context, by our order dated 22.08.2025, we had directed AIFF and

FSDL to discuss and come up with a workable arrangement for the smooth functioning of the league(s).

4. On 28.08.2025, when we relisted the case, Mr. Ranjit Kumar, learned senior counsel for AIFF and Mr. Neeraj Kishan Kaul, for FSDL, submitted that a meeting between AIFF and FSDL has resulted in a consensual resolution for conduct of the Indian football season 2025-26. A short note of the proposed resolution handed over to us articulates the arrangement as under;

1. "On 22 August 2025, this Hon'ble Court was pleased to direct the All India Football Federation ("AIFF"), and Football Sports Development Limited ("FSDL"), to confer and place before this Court a consensual resolution regarding the conduct of the Indian football season 2025-26. Pursuant thereto, a meeting was convened on 25 August 2025 at Bangalore. The meeting was attended by the senior office bearers of the AIFF and representatives of FSDL.
2. The aforesaid meeting was held in a spirit of cooperation and with a shared commitment to ensure that the administration and governance of Indian football is carried out in a manner consistent with the highest standards of transparency, good faith, and in the best interests of the sport and its stakeholders, including clubs, players, and fans. Accordingly, in keeping with the observations of this Hon'ble Court and the requirements as expressed by the clubs, the objective for the meeting was to address the immediate concerns relating to the 2025-26 football season, while also arriving at a long-term solution for the football eco-system in India.
3. After extensive discussions, the following resolutions were unanimously agreed and jointly recorded:
 - a. Commencement of Season through Super Cup:
4. To ensure the timely commencement of the football calendar and to maintain competitive continuity, it has been agreed that the 2025-26 season may begin with the Super Cup or another domestic competition directly under AIFF's control, after an adequate pre-season period. The Super Cup, being a domestic tournament open to clubs across multiple tiers

ensures that the players and clubs remain competitively engaged pending the commencement of the league season.

b. Transparent Process for Grant of Commercial Rights:

5. The AIFF has agreed that:
 - i. It will conduct an open, competitive and transparent tender (or equivalent process) for selection of a commercial partner to conduct the ISL in line with global best practices. Such process will be conducted in conformity with the National Sports Development Code 2011, the National Sports Governance Act 2025, the AIFF Constitution, and applicable FIFA/Asian Football Confederation (“AFC”) regulations.
 - ii. The process may be managed by an independent professional firm of repute, such as one of the “Big Four” or an entity of equivalent standing; and
 - iii. The process will be concluded by 15 October 2025, thereby providing certainty to clubs, broadcasters, sponsors, and other stakeholders.
6. Subject to the consent of the AFC, the new league season can thereafter commence by December 2025.
7. FSDL, for its part, has agreed to:
 - i. Waive its contractual Right of First Negotiation and Right to Match under the Master Rights Agreement dated 08 December 2010 (“MRA”); and
 - ii. Issue a No Objection Certificate to AIFF for the conduct of an open, competitive and transparent tender (or equivalent process). FSDL confirms that it shall not object to the exercise of rights in relation to the ISL by any new rights holder (if any) during the subsistence of the MRA.
 - iii. FSDL has confirmed that it has duly discharged the July-September quarterly rights fee of INR 12.5 crores under the MRA on 18 August 2025. FSDL also agreed to advance the final tranche of the rights fee of INR 12.5 crores (October-December 2025), if required by AIFF.
8. Both parties respectfully submit that this collaborative framework represents a significant step forward in the evolution of Indian football as it ensures that no disruption is caused to the footballing ecosystem, that all stakeholders are given clarity, and that the governance of the sport proceeds in conformity with national and international norms. It is further submitted that the consensual nature of this proposal is itself demonstrative of the shared commitment of AIFF and FSDL to act in unison and in good faith, in the larger public interest and for the promotion of the beautiful game in India”.

5. Having gone through the proposal and after hearing all the stakeholders, we are of the view that the proposal takes into account the current situation and provisions for a plan of action. There is also a general agreement at the bar that the above proposal is compelling and necessary to ensure timely commencement of the football calendar and to maintain competitive continuity.

6. In view of the above, we direct AIFF to take such measures as may be necessary for timely commencement of football calendar and to maintain competitive continuity for the 2025-2026 season with respect to Super Cup and other competitions under its control.

7. The AIFF shall also issue necessary tenders inviting bids for open, competitive and transparent process for selection of its commercial partner to conduct Indian Super League. For this purpose, we have requested and upon his agreement, appoint Justice L. Nageswara Rao, former Judge of this Court to ensure that the selection process enures in identifying a competent, reputed and an efficient firm as a commercial partner to conduct ISL, in line with global best practices. Justice L. Nageswara Rao

may also appoint one or two professionals to assist him in this regard.

8. Mr. Ranjit Kumar, for AIFF and Mr. Neeraj Kishan Kaul, for FSDL have assured us that their clients will make every effort to ensure that every effort will be made for timely commencement of football calendar and to maintain competitive continuity. We have also recorded the agreement of FSDL as indicated at point no. 7 of the note extracted hereinabove in paragraph 4 of this order. We have no hesitation in recording that their collaborative effort is a significant step in the evolution of Indian football. This shared commitment will go a long way in institutionalising domestic, national and international events.

9. On the National Sports Governance Act, 2025, the learned amici curiae have submitted that the draft constitution substantially in consonance with the provisions of the Act, which is yet to be notified. They have also brought to our notice certain additional features in the Act. We also heard Mr. Rahul Mehra, appearing in person and Ms. Menaka Guruswamy and Mr. Raghenth Basant, senior counsels who have expressed certain

concerns about autonomy. We will consider their submissions before finalising our decision on the draft constitution.

10. Order accordingly.

.....J.
[PAMIDIGHANTAM SRI NARASIMHA]

.....J.
[JOYMALYA BAGCHI]

**NEW DELHI;
SEPTEMBER 01, 2025.**

S U P R E M E C O U R T O F I N D I A
RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Petition(s) for Special Leave to Appeal (C) No(s). 14533/2022

[Arising out of impugned final judgment and order dated 16-08-2022 in WP(C) No. 195/2010 passed by the High Court of Delhi at New Delhi]

INDIAN OLYMPIC ASSOCIATION

Petitioner(s)

VERSUS

UNION OF INDIA & ORS.

Respondent(s)

[ONLY SLP(C) NO. 30748-30749/2017 IS LISTED UNDER THIS
ITEM.].....

WITH

SLP(C) No. 30748-30749/2017 (XIV)

IA No. 132863/2020 - APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION FROM FILING TYPED DOCUMENTS

IA No. 82919/2024 - APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION

IA No. 136529/2020 - APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION

IA No. 132356/2020 - APPLICATION FOR VACATION OF INTERIM ORDER

IA No. 144648/2023 - APPROPRIATE ORDERS/DIRECTIONS

IA No. 120057/2020 - APPROPRIATE ORDERS/DIRECTIONS

IA No. 52821/2022 - APPROPRIATE ORDERS/DIRECTIONS

IA No. 69871/2024 - APPROPRIATE ORDERS/DIRECTIONS

IA No. 112325/2022 - APPROPRIATE ORDERS/DIRECTIONS

IA No. 25119/2020 - CLARIFICATION/DIRECTION

IA No. 60213/2024 - CLARIFICATION/DIRECTION

IA No. 185065/2023 - CLARIFICATION/DIRECTION

IA No. 71978/2024 - DOCUMENT TAKEN ON RECORD

IA No. 91992/2021 - EARLY HEARING APPLICATION

IA No. 132355/2020 - EARLY HEARING APPLICATION

IA No. 118219/2017 - EXEMPTION FROM FILING C/C OF THE IMPUGNED JUDGMENT

IA No. 131744/2020 - INTERVENTION APPLICATION

IA No. 98733/2022 - INTERVENTION APPLICATION

IA No. 98631/2022 - INTERVENTION APPLICATION

IA No. 171051/2022 - INTERVENTION APPLICATION

IA No. 137936/2022 - INTERVENTION APPLICATION

IA No. 144644/2023 - INTERVENTION/IMPLEADMENT

IA No. 257196/2023 - INTERVENTION/IMPLEADMENT

IA No. 120713/2017 - MODIFICATION OF COURT ORDER

IA No. 111940/2022 - MODIFICATION OF COURT ORDER

IA No. 192976/2022 - PERMISSION TO FILE ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS/FACTS/ANNEXURES

IA No. 118222/2017 - PERMISSION TO FILE ADDITIONAL

DOCUMENTS/FACTS/ANNEXURES

IA No. 108628/2022 - PERMISSION TO FILE ADDITIONAL

DOCUMENTS/FACTS/ANNEXURES

IA No. 169823/2024 - PERMISSION TO FILE APPLICATION FOR DIRECTION

IA No. 256526/2023 - PERMISSION TO FILE APPLICATION FOR DIRECTION

Date : 01-09-2025 This petition was called on for hearing today.

**CORAM : HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE PAMIDIGHANTAM SRI NARASIMHA
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE JOYMALYA BAGCHI**

**For Petitioner(s) :Mr. Nagarkatti Kartik Uday, AOR
Ms. Awantika Manohar, AOR**

**Mr. Ranjit Kumar, Sr. Adv.
Mr. Siddhesh Shirish Kotwal, AOR
Ms. Manya Hasija, Adv.
Ms. Ana Upadhyay, Adv.
Mr. T.illayarasu, Adv.
Ms. Vaidehi Kolhe, Adv.
Mr. Saurabh Guha, Adv.
Ms. Rasika Jalan, Adv.
Mr. Mani Aneja, Adv.
Mr. Akash Dikshit, Adv.
Mr. Advait Sharma, Adv.**

**For Respondent(s) :Mr. Tushar Mehta, Solicitor General
Mr. K.m.nataraj, A.S.G.
Mr. Apoorv Kurup, Adv.
Mr. Kanu Agrawal, Adv.
Ms. Swarupama Chaturvedi, Adv.
Mr. Mayank Pandey, Adv.
Mr. Vatsal Joshi, Adv.
Mr. Shantnu Sharma, Adv.
Mr. Rajat Nair, Adv.
Mr. Kartikeya Asthana, Adv.
Mr. Arkaj Kumar, Adv.
Mr. Ishaan Sharma, Adv.
Mr. Padmesh Mishra, Adv.
Dr. N. Visakamurthy, AOR**

**Mr. Rahul Mehra, Respondent-in-person
Mr. Chaitanya Gosain, Adv.
Mr. Hanif Chimthanawala, Adv.**

**Caveator-in-person, AOR
Mr. Amrish Kumar, AOR
Mr. Nar Hari Singh, AOR
Ms. Radhika Gupta , AOR**

**Ms. Devina Sehgal, AOR
Mr. Kumar Vaibhaw, Adv.**

Mr. Samar Vijay Singh, AOR
Ms. Sabarni Som, Adv.
Mr. Aman Dev Sharma, Adv.
Mr. Gaj Singh, Adv.
Mr. Pushkar Sharma, Adv.

Mr. Vishnu Sharma, AOR
Mrs. Anupama Sharma, Adv.
Ms. Parinita Sehrawat, Adv.
Ms. Meghna Mishra, Adv.
Mr. Amar Jyoti Sharma, Adv.
Mr. Kartikeya Chaudhary, Adv.
Ms. Chandrika Prakash, Adv.

Ms. Radhika Gupta , AOR
Mr. Kaushik Poddar, AOR

Ms. Hetu Arora Sethi, AOR
Mr. Shivam Singh, Adv.
Mr. Anirudh Bhat, Adv.
Mr. Nirmal Prasad, Adv.
Mr. Yoshit Jain, Adv.
Mr. Shubham Janghu, Adv.

Mr. Divyanshu Rai , AOR

Mr. Gautam Das, AOR
Mr. Abanikanta Sahu, Adv.
Mr. R.k.padhi, Adv.
Ms. Smita Samantaray, Adv.
Mr. Santosh Bebartta, Adv.
Mr. Rohit Oberoi, Adv.

Mr. Raghenth Basant, Sr. Adv.
Ms. Kaushitaki Sharma, Adv.
Mr. Kshitij Maheshwari, Adv.
Ms. Purnima Krishna, AOR

Mr. Anuj Tyagi, AOR
Ms. Akshita Agarwal, Adv.
Ms. Shreelekha Vyas, Adv.

Mr. Neeraj Kishan Kaul, Sr. Adv.
Mr. Ritin Rai, Sr. Adv.
Mr. Sanjeev K. Kapoor, Adv.
Mr. Sahil Narang, Adv.
Mr. Dhritiman Roy, Adv.
Mr. Vidush Sinha, Adv.
Mr. Ayushman Kacker, Adv.
M/S. Khaitan & Co., AOR

Dr. Menaka Guruswamy, Sr. Adv.
Mr. Prateek K Chadha, AOR
Mr. Utkarsh Pratap, Adv.
Mr. Sreekar Aechuri, Adv.
Mr. Aniket Chauhaan, Adv.
Ms. Shaswati Parhi, Adv.
Ms. Arunima Das, Adv.
Ms. Bhumika Yadav, Adv.
Ms. Kashish Jain, Adv.

Mr. Prashant Bhushan, Adv.
Mr. Kotla Harshavardhan, Adv.
Mr. Rishabh Warriar, Adv.
Mr. Raghav Kohli, Adv.
Mr. N. Sai Vinod, AOR
Mr. Anmol Gupta, Adv.

Mr. Sravan Kumar Karanam, AOR
Mr. Akshay Mann, Adv.
Mr. Kumar Abhishek, Adv.
Mr. Santosh Kumar Yadav, Adv.

Mr. Shuvodeep Roy, AOR
Mr. Debesh Panda, AOR
Mr. Nagarkatti Kartik Uday, AOR
Mr. Pai Amit, AOR

Mr. Neeraj Kumar Verma, AOR

Mr. Satya Kam Sharma , AOR

Mr. Sumeer Sodhi, AOR
Ms. Sandali Sharma, Adv.

UPON hearing the counsel the Court made the following
O R D E R

These Special Leave Petitions are listed in view of the direction of the Hon'ble Court for passing certain directions. The relevant paragraphs nos. 6 to 10 of the Signed Order read as under:

"6. In view of the above, we direct AIFF to take such measures as may be necessary for timely commencement of football calendar and to maintain competitive continuity for the 2025-2026 season with respect to Super Cup and other competitions under its control.

7. The AIFF shall also issue necessary tenders inviting bids for open, competitive and

transparent process for selection of its commercial partner to conduct Indian Super League. For this purpose, we have requested and upon his agreement, appoint Justice L. Nageswara Rao, former Judge of this Court to ensure that the selection process enures in identifying a competent, reputed and an efficient firm as a commercial partner to conduct ISL, in line with global best practices. Justice L. Nageswara Rao may also appoint one or two professionals to assist him in this regard.

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10. Order accordingly."

(KAPIL TANDON)
COURT MASTER (SH)

(NIDHI WASON)
COURT MASTER (NSH)

(The detailed Signed Order is placed on the file)