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* **IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**

% *Date of Decision: 18.06.2026*

+ **LPA 422/2026, CM APPL. 37188/2026, CM APPL. 37189/2026 & CM APPL. 37190/2026**

ALL INDIA TENNIS ASSOCIATIONAppellant

Through: Mr. Avi Singh, Senior Advocate with Mr. Akshit Pradhan, Mr. Parth Goswami, Ms. Tanvi Anand and Mr. Divyansh Agrawal, Advocates.

Versus

SOMDEV KISHORE DEVVARMAN & ORS.Respondents

Through: Mr. Gautam Narayan, Senior Advocate with Ms. Asmita Singh, Ms. Trisha Chandran & Mr. Tushar Srivastava, Advocates for R-1 & 2. Ms. Nidhi Raman, CGSC with Ms. Akash Mishra & Mr. Jitendra Kumar Tripathi, GP.

AND

+ **LPA 447/2026, CM APPL. 38793/2026, CM APPL. 38794/2026, CM APPL. 38795/2026 & CM APPL. 38796/2026**

SOMDEV KISHORE DEVVARMANAppellant

Through: Mr. Gautam Narayan, Senior Advocate with Ms. Asmita Singh, Ms. Trisha Chandran & Mr. Tushar Srivastava, Advocates.

Versus

UNION OF INDIARespondent

Through: Mr. Avi Singh, Senior Advocate with Mr. Akshit Pradhan, Mr. Parth Goswami, Ms. Tanvi Anand & Mr. Divyansh Agrawal, Advs. for R-2. Ms. Nidhi Raman, CGSC with Ms. Akash Mishra, Advocate.

**CORAM:****HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE TEJAS KARIA****HON'BLE MS. JUSTICE MADHU JAIN****TEJAS KARIA, J. (Oral)**

1. The present Appeals arise from the common Judgment dated 27.04.2026 (“**Impugned Judgment**”) passed in W.P.(C) No. 13458/2024 (“**Writ Petition**”) and CONT.CAS(C) 1378/2025.

2. The Impugned Judgment has been assailed by the All India Tennis Association (“**AITA**”) in LPA 422/2026, insofar as it directs the appointment of Justice (Retd.) Ms. Gita Mittal, former Chief Justice of the Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court, as the Administrator of the AITA (“**Administrator**”), and further directs her to discharge various functions and vests several powers in her. The following reliefs are sought by the AITA in LPA 422/2026:

“Pass an order setting aside Paragraphs 43(iv) to 43(xvi) of the Impugned Orders dated 27.04.2026 passed by the Ld. Single Judge in Writ Petition (C) No. 13458 of 2024 titled Somdev Kishore Devvarman & Anr. v. Union of India and Others;”

3. The Impugned Judgment has also been assailed by Mr. Somdev Kishore Devvarman and Mr. Purav Mukul Raja in LPA 447/2026, insofar as it grants recognition to the Executive Committee elected pursuant to the election dated 28.09.2024 (“**AITA Election**”) and permits the said Executive Committee to function as the Interim Executive Committee for managing the day-to-day affairs of the AITA until fresh elections are conducted by the Administrator. The following reliefs are sought by Mr. Somdev Kishore Devvarman and Mr. Purav Mukul Raja in LPA 447/2026:



“Pass an order setting aside Paragraphs 21, 40, 43(i) to 43(iii) of the Impugned Judgment dated 27.04.2026 passed by the Ld. Single Judge in Writ Petition (C) No. 13458 of 2024 titled Somdev Kishore Devvarman & Anr. v. Union of India and Others;”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND:

4. In 2011, the Union of India (“UoI”) brought into force the National Sports Development Code of India, 2011 (“**Sports Code**”), for ensuring good governance of National Sports Federations (“NSF”).
5. The AITA Elections for appointment of the Executive Committee for the term 2024-2028 were scheduled to be held on 28.04.2024. Mr. Somdev Kishore Devvarman and Mr. Purav Mukul Raja filed the Writ Petition alleging flagrant violations of the Sports Code and the judgment of this Court in **Rahul Mehra v. Union of India**, W.P. (C) No. 195 of 2010, in the conduct of the AITA Elections, and sought intervention of this Court to ensure compliance with the Sports Code and the judgment of this Court in **Rahul Mehra** (supra) in relation to the conduct of the AITA Elections.
6. Vide order dated 24.09.2024 passed in the Writ Petition, it was directed that the results of the AITA Elections be kept in a sealed cover and that the same would remain subject to the outcome of the Writ Petition.
7. On 28.09.2024, the Annual General Meeting of the AITA was convened, at which the AITA Elections were held, and the results thereof were placed in a sealed cover before the learned Single Judge in compliance with the order dated 24.09.2024 passed in the Writ Petition. Since no fresh election result was declared, the existing Executive Committee of the AITA continued to carry out the operations of the AITA. On 13.10.2024, the AITA filed C.M. No. 60675 of 2024 in the Writ Petition seeking opening of the sealed cover and publication of the results of the AITA Elections.



8. Certain State Associations affiliated with the AITA filed C.M. No. 33324 of 2025 in the Writ Petition, seeking that the AITA Elections be permitted to proceed, that the newly elected body be permitted to function as the interim body, and that such body be directed to comply with the Sports Code and, accordingly, sought opening of the sealed cover and declaration of the results of the AITA Elections. On 27.06.2025, an Executive Committee meeting of the AITA was held, wherein it was, *inter alia*, resolved to appoint Mr. Sunder Iyer as the Interim Secretary of the AITA. It was further resolved that the AITA would comply with the law of the land, including the then forthcoming Sports Act.

9. The learned Single Judge, thereafter, passed the Impugned Judgment issuing various directions, including opening of the sealed cover and declaration of the results of the elections held on 28.09.2024, holding of fresh elections in consonance with the amended Bye-Laws of the AITA, constitution of an interim Executive Committee comprising the elected Executive Committee, and appointment of the Administrator of the AITA to carry out amendments to the Constitution of the AITA in terms of the National Sports Governance Act, 2025 (“**Sports Act**”) and the National Sports Governance (National Sports Bodies) Rules, 2026 (“**Sports Governance Rules**”) and to oversee the day-to-day affairs of the AITA as managed by the Interim Executive Committee.

SUBMISSIONS ON BEHALF OF THE AITA:

10. Mr. Avi Singh, learned Senior Counsel for the AITA made the following submissions:



- 10.1. The Impugned Judgment is assailed as having appointed the learned Administrator without adjudicating the core challenge in the Writ Petition, namely, the alleged non-compliance of the AITA Election with the Sports Code as interpreted in **Rahul Mehra** (supra). In the absence of any finding of illegality in the Constitution of the AITA or the AITA Elections, the learned Single Judge has created a parallel administrative structure and vested the learned Administrator with wide-ranging powers.
- 10.2. The Impugned Judgment records no finding of gross mismanagement or breakdown of internal mechanisms warranting substitution of the Executive Committee by the learned Administrator. In the absence of clear and cogent evidence of grave mismanagement, judicial interference in the affairs of an autonomous society registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 (“**Societies Registration Act**”) is impermissible.
- 10.3. The Sports Act and the Sports Governance Rules permit NSFs time until 30.06.2026, extendable up to 31.12.2026, to amend their Constitution / Bye-Laws. The appointment of the learned Administrator, on the assumption that the AITA would not comply with the said framework, is therefore premature.
- 10.4. The conferment of powers upon the learned Administrator to amend the Constitution / Bye-Laws, prepare the Electoral Roll / College, conduct elections, and supervise the affairs and finances of the AITA is stated to be illegal, *ultra vires*, and unsupported by any provision of the Sports Act or the Sports Governance Rules,



which contemplate only executive and regulatory oversight by the Central Government.

- 10.5. Paragraphs 43(v) to 43(xvi) of the Impugned Judgment are assailed as effectively replacing the democratically elected Executive Committee with the learned Administrator, including in respect of constitutional amendments, elections, bank accounts, financial commitments, and engagement of experts. These functions are reserved to the Executive Committee and General Body of the AITA.
- 10.6. The reliance on alleged factionalism is stated to be legally and factually untenable, since it pertained to the previous Executive Committee, which stood dissolved upon declaration of the AITA Election results and assumption of charge by the present Executive Committee.
- 10.7. The remuneration of ₹10,00,000/- per month payable to the learned Administrator, with liberty to engage experts and personnel at additional cost, is submitted to be excessive, arbitrary, and unaffordable for the AITA.
- 10.8. The appointment of administrators in NSFs is viewed by international sporting bodies as third-party interference and has, in several cases, led to suspension or derecognition. The Administrator-based regime may, therefore, jeopardise the AITA's standing and the participation of Indian players internationally, particularly in view of the Asian Games, 2026. Reliance is placed on the derecognition of the All India Football Federation (“**AIFF**”)



by FIFA following appointment of a court-appointed Committee of Administrators.

- 10.9. The Impugned Judgment transgresses the autonomy of a registered society. The AITA, being registered under the Societies Registration Act, is entitled under Sections 5, 6, and 8 thereof to frame and amend its Memorandum and Regulations, and such statutory and contractual rights cannot be vested in an external administrator in exercise of jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, 1950 (“**Constitution of India**”).
- 10.10. Reliance is placed on *AIFF v. Churchill Brothers Sports Club Pvt. Ltd. & Anr.*, LPA Nos. 321-322 of 2026, wherein this Court held that a registered society is autonomous and that, absent express legal authority, a Court exercising jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution of India cannot assume functions required to be performed by the society under its own Constitution, Bye-Laws, Rules, or Regulations.
- 10.11. Reliance is also placed on *Indian Olympic Association v. Union of India & Ors.*, SLP(C) No. 14533/2022, wherein the Supreme Court stayed the appointment of an administrator in the Indian Olympic Association on the ground that it could compromise institutional autonomy and invite coercive action by the International Olympic Committee.
- 10.12. The Writ Petition was confined to ensuring that the AITA Elections complied with the Sports Code and *Rahul Mehra* (supra). Once the sealed cover was opened, the present Executive



Committee recognised as an interim body, and steps taken towards compliance with the Sports Act, the continuance of an unfettered administrator regime amounts to an unwarranted restriction on the right of association under Article 19(1)(c) of the Constitution of India.

10.13. Lastly, the Impugned Judgment authorises open-ended interference in the Constitution, elections, finances, and day-to-day administration of the AITA without any finding of illegality, mismanagement, or institutional breakdown. Such an unanchored mandate is stated to be unsustainable and prejudicial to the reputation and functioning of the AITA as an NSF.

SUBMISSIONS ON BEHALF OF MR. SOMDEV KISHORE DEVVARMAN AND MR. PURAV MUKUL RAJA:

11. Mr. Gautam Narayan, learned Senior Counsel for Mr. Somdev Kishore Devvarman and Mr. Purav Mukul Raja made the following submissions:

11.1. The AITA has consistently acted in disregard of the erstwhile Sports Code, the directions of the Ministry, and the judgment in ***Rahul Mehra*** (supra). Its Constitution has not been amended since 2000 and must now be brought in conformity with the Sports Act and the Sports Governance Rules. Continued supervision by the learned Administrator is, therefore, necessary to ensure compliance.

11.2. The learned Single Judge rightly found serious mismanagement and factionalism within the AITA, impairing its decision-making



and defeating the object of an NSF. The appointment of the learned Administrator was, therefore, necessary for amending the Constitution / Bye-Laws and restoring lawful governance.

- 11.3. The appointment of the learned Administrator to oversee the affairs of the AITA, supervise amendments to its Constitution / Bye-Laws, and conduct fresh elections is constitutionally valid and in the interests of the AITA and its athletes.
- 11.4. The directions issued to the learned Administrator are necessary to secure compliance with the Sports Act and the Sports Governance Rules and to protect the interests of athletes. The Impugned Judgment erroneously treated the challenge to the AITA Bye-Laws under the Sports Code as academic after enactment of the Sports Act and the Sports Governance Rules.
- 11.5. The validity of the AITA Elections had to be tested against the law applicable on 28.09.2024, namely the Sports Code as interpreted in **Rahul Mehra** (supra). Had such compliance been examined, several candidates may have been disqualified on account of age, tenure, and cooling-off restrictions.
- 11.6. The Sports Act and the Sports Governance Rules, notified on 01.01.2026 and 12.01.2026 respectively, could not validate an election allegedly illegal when conducted. The material on record, it is submitted, showed that several elected members were liable to be disqualified for being over-age or for breaching tenure and cooling-off requirements.



- 11.7. Without adjudicating the validity of the AITA Elections, the Impugned Judgment wrongly declared the results and permitted the elected body to function as the Interim Executive Committee. The affairs of the AITA ought instead to have remained with the learned Administrator until amendment of the Bye-Laws and conduct of fresh elections, particularly as at least eight members of the Interim Executive Committee are alleged to be disqualified even under the Sports Act and the Sports Governance Rules.
- 11.8. Reliance is placed on *All India Football Federation v. Rahul Mehra*, SLP(C) Nos. 30748-30749 of 2017, wherein the Supreme Court held that sporting opportunities are a material community resource and sporting bodies are institutions of national life, which must function with accessibility, efficiency, and integrity. The Supreme Court also cautioned NSFs against creating conditions for derecognition by international bodies to resist court-appointed administrators.
- 11.9. Reliance is further placed on *Board of Control for Cricket in India v. Cricket Association of Bihar*, (2015) 3 SCC 351, to submit that sporting bodies, though not State under Article 12, are amenable to writ jurisdiction under Article 226 when they exercise pervasive control over a sport and discharge public functions. The AITA, as the governing body for tennis in India, is therefore subject to judicial scrutiny.
- 11.10. The learned Single Judge ought to have exercised jurisdiction under Article 226 to ensure lawful governance of the AITA and to



prevent persons allegedly disqualified on grounds of age, tenure, or cooling-off requirements from continuing in office. The Impugned Judgment ought to have determined the eligibility of each candidate who contested the election dated 28.09.2024.

11.11. In view of the above, it is submitted that paragraph Nos. 21, 40, and 43(i) to 43(iii) of the Impugned Judgment deserve to be set aside.

SUBMISSIONS ON BEHALF OF THE UOI

12. The learned Counsel for the UOI made the following submissions:

- 12.1. The Ministry received a letter dated 18.05.2026 from the International Tennis Federation (“ITF”), clarifying its position on the AITA and the Impugned Judgment. The ITF acknowledged that the AITA Executive Committee had been recognised on an interim basis and that the AITA Constitution / Bye-Laws were required to be amended in conformity with the Sports Act and the Sports Governance Rules by 30.06.2026, followed by an elected AGM within three months of such amendments. The ITF also noted the appointment of the learned Administrator and indicated that, should the learned Administrator continue beyond the timelines stipulated in the Impugned Judgment, it may consider action under its regulatory framework, including review of the AITA’s membership status.
- 12.2. By letter dated 17.06.2026, the Ministry directed all NSFs to comply with the Sports Act and the Sports Governance Rules, and to align their Constitutions / Bye-Laws, institutional



processes, and operations with the statutory framework within the stipulated timelines, including the deadline of 30.06.2026.

12.3. The UOI does not support appointment of the learned Administrator, as court-appointed administrators in NSFs are often viewed by international sporting bodies as third-party interference and have, in several instances, resulted in suspension or derecognition by the concerned world governing body.

12.4. The Ministry does not supervise amendments to the Constitution / Bye-Laws of NSFs. Under the Sports Act and the Sports Governance Rules, the UOI's role is limited to taking regulatory action, including derecognition, against non-compliant NSFs.

REJOINDER SUBMISSIONS ON BEHALF OF THE AITA:

13. Mr. Avi Singh, learned Senior Counsel for the AITA made the following rejoinder submissions:

13.1. The Constitution / Bye-Laws of the AITA, framed under the West Bengal Societies Act, 1961, constitute a private contractual framework governing its members and internal affairs. Neither the Sports Act nor the Sports Governance Rules contemplate disciplinary or administrative interference through court-appointed or government-appointed administrators. Such parallel structures would amount to impermissible interference with the internal functioning of a private society-based NSF.



- 13.2. No factionalism existed within the AITA. The Interim Executive Committee is functioning unanimously and remains committed to amending the Constitution / Bye-Laws and conducting fresh elections. There is, therefore, no continuing factual or equitable basis for continuance of the learned Administrator.
- 13.3. In *All India Football Federation* (supra), the Supreme Court directed amendment of the AIFF Constitution only as an interim measure pending notification of the Sports Act and recognised that further amendments would be required once the Sports Act came into force. The AIFF, thereafter, amended its Constitution on 23.05.2026 in compliance with the Sports Act, without fresh approval of the court-appointed administrator.
- 13.4. This Court, while exercising jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, cannot direct an AGM to vote in a particular manner. The direction in *All India Football Federation* (supra) was issued by the Supreme Court in exercise of its powers under Article 142, which are not available to this Court under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, 1950

REJOINDER SUBMISSIONS ON BEHALF OF MR. SOMDEV KISHORE DEVVARMAN AND MR. PURAV MUKUL RAJA:

14. Mr. Gautam Narayan, the learned Senior Counsel for Mr. Somdev Kishore Devvarman and Mr. Purav Mukul Raja made the following rejoinder submissions:



14.1. Section 4(2)(d) of the Sports Act provides that a person shall be ineligible to contest for election to, or seek nomination to, the Executive Committee unless such person complies with the applicable International Charters, Statutes, and bye-laws governing age and tenure requirements for the Executive Committee.

14.2. In *All India Football Federation* (supra), the Supreme Court did not exercise powers under Article 142 of the Constitution of India; rather, it exercised appellate jurisdiction while directing the AGM of the AIFF to vote in favour of the amendments proposed by the court-appointed administrator.

ANALYSIS AND DIRECTIONS:

15. The present Appeals raise substantial questions of law which require consideration. However, having regard to the letter dated 18.05.2026 addressed by the ITF to the Ministry clarifying its position with respect to the AITA and the Impugned Judgment, and indicating that the Constitution / Bye-Laws of the AITA must be amended in conformity with the Sports Act and the Sports Governance Rules before 30.06.2026, as also the letter dated 17.06.2026 issued by the Ministry to all NSFs directing compliance with the Sports Act and the Sports Governance Rules and alignment of their Constitutions / Bye-Laws, institutional processes, and operations with the statutory framework within the stipulated timelines, it is considered expedient and in the interest of justice that the amendments to the Constitution / Bye-Laws of the AITA be undertaken expeditiously.



16. We were informed that the learned Administrator has on 25.05.2026 has circulated draft of the suggested amendments to the Constitution / Bye-Laws to all stakeholders with a request to provide suggestions by 01.06.2026 in a column provided in the draft.

17. In view thereof, and without entering upon the merits of the rival contentions, this Court invited the learned Senior Counsel appearing for the parties to indicate whether an amicable and workable arrangement could be arrived at.

18. Learned Senior Counsel for the AITA, without prejudice to its rights and contentions and upon instructions, submitted that the AITA is agreeable to holding fresh elections for appointment of its Executive Committee after amendment of its Constitution / Bye-Laws in conformity with the Sports Act and the Sports Governance Rules, in the best interests of the AITA and its athletes. It was further submitted that the Interim Executive Committee shall provide comments / suggestions to the draft suggested amendments to the AITA Constitution / Bye-laws as circulated by the learned Administrator on 25.05.2026 and the same may be examined by the learned Administrator after giving opportunity of hearing to the interim Executive Committee.

19. Learned Senior Counsel for Mr. Somdev Kishore Devvarman and Mr. Purav Mukul Raja, without prejudice to their submissions and upon instructions, stated that they are also agreeable to exploring a resolution in the best interests of the AITA and its athletes, whereby once the Interim Executive Committee places their comments / objections before the learned Administrator, the same shall be considered and a reasoned order shall be passed by the learned Administrator after hearing the parties, which may be



placed before this Court to consider the decision of the learned Administrator.

20. Accordingly, having considered the proposal of both sides and with the consent of the Parties, without going into the merits of the present Appeals, the following Interim Directions are issued:

- i. The Interim Executive Committee of the AITA shall examine the draft amendments proposed by the learned Administrator to the Constitution / Bye-Laws of the AITA and submit its suggestions, comments, objections, modifications, amendments, additions or deletions by providing a brief reasons and justification of the same on or before 25.06.2026.
- ii. Upon receipt of such suggestions from the Interim Executive Committee of AITA, the learned Administrator shall examine the same and afford an opportunity of hearing to the Interim Executive Committee before finalising the proposed amendments to the Constitution / Bye-Laws of the AITA on or before 15.07.2026.
- iii. Thereafter, the learned Administrator shall prepare a consolidated draft of the proposed amendments to the Constitution / Bye-Laws of the AITA, wherein all suggestions / comments of the Interim Executive Committee shall be duly incorporated and if any suggestion / comment is not accepted, the learned Administrator shall identify the reason of disagreement and incorporate the same in the draft to be placed before the General Body of the AITA.
- iv. An Extraordinary General Meeting of the AITA shall be held on or before 31.07.2026 on the date to be determined by the learned



Administrator, at which the proposed amendments to the Constitution / Bye-Laws of the AITA, as finalised by the learned Administrator after considering the comments / suggestions / objections of the Interim Executive Committee, shall be placed for consideration. The members of the General Body shall deliberate upon and vote on the proposed amendments clause by clause, and the decision on each proposed amendment, together with reasons for its acceptance, rejection or modification, shall be duly recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

- v. Having regard to the urgency of the matter and the timelines prescribed under the Sports Act and the Sports Governance Rules, the requirement of the minimum notice period under the existing Constitution / Bye-Laws of the AITA is hereby dispensed with for convening the said Extraordinary General Meeting of the General Body of AITA.
- vi. It is clarified that the State Tennis Associations affiliated with the AITA shall be permitted to vote in the Extraordinary General Meeting and in the elections to the Executive Committee of the AITA, irrespective of whether they are compliant with the Sports Act and the Sports Governance Rules at the time of voting.
- vii. Upon completion of the amendment process, elections to the Executive Committee of the AITA shall be conducted in accordance with the amended Constitution / Bye-Laws, the Sports Act, and the Sports Governance Rules, on or before 30.09.2026.



- viii. The Executive Committee of the AITA constituted after amendment of the Constitution / Bye-Laws and the fresh election shall ensure that the State Associations affiliated with the AITA comply with the Sports Act, the Sports Governance Rules, and the applicable International Charters on or before 31.12.2026.
21. The Impugned Judgment shall stand modified to the aforesaid extent. All parties are directed to strictly comply with the directions issued herein and adhere to the timelines stipulated above.
22. Any action taken and/or resolution passed by the General Body approving, modifying, or rejecting the proposed amendments to the Constitution / Bye-Laws of the AITA shall remain subject to the final outcome of the present Appeals. This direction shall also allay the concern expressed on behalf of Mr. Somdev Kishore Devvarman and Mr. Purav Mukul Raja regarding the possibility of the General Body not adopting the draft proposed by the learned Administrator.
23. The present Appeals shall be listed as *part-heard* matters before this Bench on 14.08.2026 at 04:30 PM.

TEJAS KARIA, J
(VACATION JUDGE)

MADHU JAIN, J
(VACATION JUDGE)

JUNE 18, 2026/ 'AK'