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* **IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**
+ **W.P.(C) 3528/2022, CM APPLs. 10391/2022 & 18673/2026**

Date of Decision: 27.04.2026

IN THE MATTER OF:

ODISHA TAEKWONDO ASSOCIATION AND OTHERS

.....Petitioners

Through: Mr. J.P. Sengh, Sr. Advocate with
Mr. Saqib, Advocate.

versus

UNION OF INDIA AND ORS.

.....Respondents

Through: Ms. Shiva Lakshmi (Senior Panel
Counsel) along with Mr Pravar
Dennison, Advocates for R1.
Mr. Vikash Singh & Mr. Ujjwal
Chaudhary, Advocates for R2.
Mr. Sanjeev Mahajan with Ms.
Simran Rao, Advocates for R3.
Mr. Avi Singh, Sr. Advocate with Mr.
Parth Goswami and Mr. Ranjeet
Pawar, Advocates for R4.

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE PURUSHAINDRA KUMAR KAURAV

JUDGEMENT

PURUSHAINDRA KUMAR KAURAV, J. (ORAL)

1. This petition has been filed for the following reliefs:

*“(a) issue writ, order and/or direction in the nature of mandamus
thereby directing the IOA i.e. Respondent No.2 to immediately*



remove the Respondent no.3; Mr. Namdev Sampat Shirgaonkar from the post of Chairman, Ad-hoc Committee of TFI and President of India Taekwondo and to appoint an independent person in his place to comply with the mandate of IOA General Assembly dated 22.012.2018 and 30.12.2019; and

(b) issue writ, order and/or direction in the nature of mandamus thereby directing Respondent No.2 – IOA to permanently debar Mr. Namdev Sampat Shirgaonkar from participating in any sporting activities relating to Taekwondo Sports which are held under the aegis of IOA in any manner; and

(c) issue appropriate writ, order and/or direction thereby directing independent inquiry/financial audit of accounts of Respondent No.4 – India Taekwondo.”

Facts.

2. The petitioners claim to be the organisations duly recognised as State-level associations for the sport of Taekwondo by their respective State Governments and State Olympic Associations. They are aggrieved by the prevailing state of affairs in the administration of Taekwondo at the national level. More specifically, they are aggrieved by the continued involvement of Respondent No. 3, one Mr. Namdev Shirgaonker, in the administration of Taekwondo in India. Respondent No. 3 is currently serving as the President of Respondent No. 4, India Taekwondo (hereinafter, “**IT**”), an organisation which claims to be the National Sports Federation (hereinafter, “**NSF**”) for Taekwondo.

3. Initially, Respondent No. 1/ Union of India (hereinafter, “**Union**”) had recognized the Taekwondo Federation of India (hereinafter, “**TFI**”) as the NSF for Taekwondo. However, the Union had, derecognized TFI as the NSF in 2015 due to non-compliance with the National Sports Development Code, 2011 (hereinafter, “**Sports Code**”).

4. In the year 2018, considering that there did not exist any recognised NSF for taekwondo at the time, the Union seems to have taken a decision for



constitution of an *Ad-hoc* Committee to conduct selection trials for Asian Games, 2018 and directed respondent no. 2-Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to constitute the same *vide* communication dated 12.06.2018.

5. Subsequently, the General Body of IOA, in its meeting dated 22.12.2018, seems to have resolved to register a new organisation for administration of taekwondo at the national level. It was also decided that till such new body is registered, a five-member *Ad-hoc* Committee (hereinafter, “**Committee**”) would be constituted to form the new organisation and to prepare its electoral college in consultation with the concerned State Olympic Associations. The Committee comprised of respondent no. 3-Mr. Namdev Shirgaonkar as its Chairman, and one Mr. S.M. Bali, one Mr. Digvijay Singh, and a nominee of World Taekwondo as members.

6. Subsequently, the Committee incorporated IT in 2019, and the members of the Committee assumed charge as the office bearers of IT. Accordingly, on 30.12.2019, the IOA, in its General Body Meeting, granted affiliation to IT as a member, *albeit* without voting rights. A perusal of the minutes of the said meeting indicates that the members of the Committee were to facilitate elections to IT and thereafter, exit therefrom.

7. However, soon after the formation of IT, objections were raised against its functioning in violations of directions/ compliances mandated by the IOA and World Taekwondo. In 2021, the Telangana State Taekwondo Association filed W.P. (C) 12878/2021 before this Court, seeking, inter alia, directions to the IOA to decide the complaint filed by it against Mr. Namdev Shirgaonkar. The petition was disposed of *vide* order dated 07.01.2022, with directions to the IOA to decide the said complaint. The operative part of the



said order is extracted below:

“4. In the light of the aforesaid stand taken by the parties, the writ petition is disposed of by directing the respondent nos. 2 & 3 to decide the petitioner’s pending complaint dated 05.06.2021 within a period of four weeks by passing a reasoned and speaking order by duly following the principles of natural justice.”

8. In compliance of the order dated 07.01.2022, the Ethics Commission of the IOA decided the complaint filed against Respondent No. 3 herein, and rendered the following findings *vide* minutes of meeting dated 22.02.2022:

“47. In the above backdrop and the history as shown to us by the Complainant, the Commission is the view that Mr. Namdev is guilty and violated the Ethics Rules of the IOA and the following sanctions be recommended to the IOA General Assembly to be put on the Respondent Mr. Namdev Shirgaonkar in the next AGM/SGM of the IOA:

- 1. Mr. Namdev Shirgaonkar be suspended from all sporting activities related to the India Taekwondo.*
- 2. Mr. Namdev Shirgaonkar be removed from all positions/nominations given to him by the IOA related to taekwondo.*
- 3. Mr. Namdev Shirgaonkar be removed from all India Taekwondo Activities whether as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee or in any other capacity subsequent to him appointment as the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee.”*

9. Meanwhile, the Union, *vide* communication dated 08.05.2025, recognised IT as the NSF for Taekwondo till the conclusion of the Asian Games, 2026 and Para Asian Games, 2026. However, the said decision was challenged before this Court by the TFI in W.P.(C) 7029/2025, claiming that it had already been conferred the NSF status by the Union in 2023. The Court, *vide* judgement dated 18.11.2025, set aside the NSF status of IT, and passed the following directions for the Union:

“47. In the circumstances, the impugned order dated 08.05.2025 is set aside.

48. The Union of India is directed to reconsider the matter as regards recognition of a suitable body to act as the NSF for the sport of Taekwondo in the country, after affording an opportunity of hearing



all the stakeholders including the petitioner and the respondent no.3 and thereafter take an appropriate decision by issuing a reasoned order, in consonance with the Sports Code and good governance practices. Let the same be done expeditiously.

49. Till the aforesaid exercise is completed, for all the above reasons, and in line with the orders dated 24.12.2024 and 13.01.2025 passed in W.P.(C) 17973/2024, the petitioner shall continue to act as the NSF in respect of the sport of Taekwondo in India.”

10. Aggrieved thereby, IT and the Union preferred L.P.A. 776/2025 and L.P.A. 5/2026, respectively. The Division Bench, *vide* a common order dated 06.01.2026, modified the decision of the Single Judge to the extent that neither TFI nor TI would retain the NSF status until a final decision on that issue by the Union.

11. Pursuant to the directions of this Court, the Union *vide* order dated 27.02.2026 has found that neither TFI nor IT fully meet the requirements for grant of NSF recognition and has rejected applications of both organisations. The Union has observed that there were various disputes with respect to the Society-registration certificate of TFI and that it was not affiliated to World Taekwondo. Further, it is observed that although IT is affiliated to World Taekwondo, its constitution did not fulfil the requirements under the Sports Code.

Submissions.

12. Mr. Avi Singh, learned senior counsel on behalf IT, submits that the petition has been rendered infructuous in view of subsequent developments. He submits that elections to IT have been conducted in the year 2023, and are valid for a term of four years, i.e., up to 2027. He further submits that the sole reason behind the Union’s refusal to grant the NSF status to IT was the purported non-compliance with the provisions of the Sports Code. He submits that IT has now issued communication dated 05.03.2026 to the



Union, seeking clarification as to the specific deficiencies in its constitution, along with an undertaking to rectify the same.

13. He further points out that IT enjoys affiliation to both World Taekwondo and Asia Taekwondo, and has been conducting national-level tournaments and trials for international events. According to him, there does not exist any emergent circumstance warranting the appointment of an administrator, and any such appointment, if made, would complicate the governance structure and cause problems to the athletes.

14. It is also contended by Mr. Singh that the petitioners have no *locus* to institute the present petition as they are not members of IT; they are members of only a faction of the TFI. Therefore, according to him, the petition ought to be dismissed.

15. Mr. Sanjeev Mahajan, learned counsel for Respondent No. 3, adopts the submissions advanced on behalf of IT. He submits that much water has flown under the bridge since the filing of this petition, and that no cause subsists against his client. He stresses on the fact that the recommendations of the Ethics Committee have not been accepted by the IOA.

16. Mr. J.P. Sengh, learned senior counsel appearing for the petitioners, strongly opposes the submissions made on behalf of IT and Respondent No. 3. He submits that the affairs with respect to Taekwondo at the national level are being administered by Respondent No. 3, who is not democratically elected and has serious allegations against him. Mr. J.P. Sengh also points out that he had been debarred in the past, and therefore, the Court must consider appointing an administrator. Additionally, he contends that the petitioners are various State-level taekwondo associations, and in the absence of there being proper administration of the sport, their rights are



being adversely affected.

17. Mr. Shiva Lakshmi, learned counsel for the Union, submits that owing to the non-recognition of both the organizations, IT and TFI, as the NSF for taekwondo in India, there exists a vacuum in the governance structure of the sport at the national level.

18. She submits that insofar as the selection of athletes and the submission of their entries in international tournaments are concerned, as per the Notification dated 05.04.2022 issued by the Union, the Sports Authority of India (hereinafter “SAI”) will be responsible for the same in case of absence of a duly-recognized NSF for taekwondo. Therefore, even in the present case, the responsibility would lie with SAI.

Findings.

19. At the outset, it is clarified that the Court is neither concerned with the question as to which organisation is to be granted the status of the NSF, nor with any of the factional disputes that seem to persist within the TFI. The Court is cognizant of the implications attached with the grant of recognition of an organization as the NSF. In *Rahul Mehra v. Union of India*,¹ a Division Bench of this Court made the following observations about the consequences that arise with the grant of such status:

“7. Various judgments have held that compliance with the Sports Code is a must. It is the sine qua non for grant of recognition as a NSF and for access to the corollary benefits that flow from such status. The benefits are in various forms: tax benefits, travel concessions, accommodation and hospitality accorded to players and officials of NSFs, use of government-owned stadia and sports facilities, etc. All this expense is made from public funds. The beneficiary of such funds and facilities must qualify in-law, to access it. Unless a NSF/sports entity/registered society/Association strictly adheres to and fully complies with the Sports Code and the court orders, It would disentitle itself from any such

¹ 2022:DHC:3066-DB.



benefit. There can be no let-up or latitude in this regard, as relaxation would be arbitrary, illegal and lend to dilution of the Sports Code. No NSF or Sports Entity should be seen to be receiving benefits which are unjust. Fairness and legitimacy need to imbue all governmental affairs. Therefore, it is prudent, indeed imperative that no further exemptions be granted to or lenience be shown to noncompliant NSFs. There comes a stage in the affairs of governance when the recalcitrant have to be called-out and there has to be cessation of their unlawfully enjoying government largesse, a privilege for which they do not qualify. Nor can they be allowed with their faulty NSF status to generate revenues from other sources. Twelve years is a long time to enable sports bodies to conform to the Sports Code. The time to stop is now.”

20. In the instant petition, the Court, thus, confines itself to the issue of (i.) the involvement of Respondent No. 3 in the administration of taekwondo, and (ii.) the issue of the apparent vacuum in the governance of taekwondo in India, and the problems ensuing to the athletes as a result of such vacuum.

21. The Court is mindful of the allegations levelled against Respondent No. 3 by the petitioners, and the fact that although the complaint against him was decided by the Ethics Commission, *vide* report dated 08.02.2022, the same has not been taken to its logical conclusion by the IOA. Such inaction on part of the IOA is at the root of the petitioners’ grievance.

22. The record indicates that Respondent No. 3 has been serving as the President of IT, an organisation which, as per its own case, is staking claim to be the NSF for taekwondo and also represents the country before World Taekwondo. He has been continuing at the post of President despite the categorical finding of the Ethics Commission that he is guilty of violating the Ethics Rules of the IOA and, consequently, the recommendation for his removal from all positions relating to taekwondo. The findings of the Ethics Commission were arrived at after due inquiry, however, the same have been



rendered nugatory by the inaction of the IOA.

23. It is to be noted that this position exists despite the specific directions passed by this Court in *Telangana State Taekwondo Association v. UOI &Ors.*², whereby, the IOA was directed to decide the complaint against Respondent No. 3. The process of deciding such complaint could not have ceased merely with the determination of the guilt of Respondent No. 3. The same ought to have been taken to its logical conclusion by the IOA in order to give full and proper effect to the Court's directions.

24. The Court takes note of the fact that Respondent No. 3 has continued to serve as the President of IT for over seven years, in clear violation of the conditions imposed by the IOA *vide* minutes of meeting dated 30.12.2019. A perusal of the said minutes would indicate that the IOA had granted provisional affiliation to IT on the condition that the persons involved in the formation of IT would not become part of the body later. With respect to this, Respondent No. 3 had assured the IOA that all such requirements would be complied with within six months of the provisional approval. However, in direct violation of the said condition, Respondent No. 3 placed himself at the top of the hierarchy of IT.

25. The Ethics Commission of the IOA had delivered its findings as to the guilt of Respondent No. 3 as early as 2022. However, the IOA has failed to take any action whatsoever upon the furnishing the findings of the Ethic Commission. The Court, therefore, finds that the IOA, by staying silent amidst allegations of mismanagement in the administration of taekwondo, as acted against the interests of the athletes, coaches, and other stakeholders.

26. The Court also takes note of the submission put forth by the IT that it

²Order dated 07.01.2022 in W.P. (C) 12878/2021.



is making arrangements for conducting trials of the taekwondo team to represent the country at international events. However, the record indicates that *vide* notification dated 05.04.2022, the SAI was directed to carry out such trials. Such parallel selection processes cannot be allowed to be carried out, as the same would adversely impact the participating athletes.

27. The vacuum created in the absence of a duly recognized governing body at the national level to manage and regulate the affairs related to taekwondo, is detrimental to the athletes and other stakeholders. Moreover, the State Associations also necessarily ought to have an NSF to represent them. At present, the state of affairs at the national-level for taekwondo does not paint a rosy picture. Such mismanagement is bound to adversely impact the interests of the athletes, which the NSFs are meant to protect. In *Narinder Batra v. UOI*,³ this Court made the following observations about the primary obligation of the NSFs towards the players:

“...Today sports is no more something that can be dealt with in a meeting over a five star meal. It requires technical knowledge of both the game, the equipment and the training. Every aspect from the aerodynamics in equipment, even of the clothes worn by an athlete to shoes of a hockey/football/basket player; hair cut of the swimmer to weight and material of the equipment used is governed by scientific details and principles. In times of expertise, sports management experts are as important to a good sports programme just as experienced competent players or ex-players in decision and policy making areas who would ensure that the sports persons got the same, if not better residential/hotel and other facilities as the office bearers at national and international competition venues; who understood how important good treatment is for the self esteem and confidence of the teams and sports persons, especially when their opponents get the best; where real expenditure is incurred on and energy is devoted to sports persons rather than on maintenance of the office bearers or squabbles over elections. Only then could it be said that the sporting credentials or the tenure of the controlling board is immaterial for the

³ILR (2009) 4 Del 280.



interest of the sport....”

28. Insofar as the claims of democratic elections having been conducted for the executive body of IT, is concerned, it is seen that no material has been placed on record in support of the same. No submissions have been made specifying details, such as the exact date of the election, the conducting authority, or as to which authority has recognized the validity of such elections.

29. Keeping in mind all the facts and circumstances, and the interests of all the concerned stakeholders, the Court passes the following directions:

- i. Till the time recognition as NSF for taekwondo is granted to any suitable organisation, the Union shall constitute an *Ad-hoc* Committee, within fifteen days from the date of receipt of this order, to carry out the functions and duties of the NSF.
- ii. The Union, while deciding any representation on behalf of IT for recognition as the NSF, must have due regard to whether compliance with the requirements under the Sports Code has been made, and also the report of the Ethics Commission submitted pursuant to the decision of this Court in *Telangana State Taekwondo Association*.

30. With these directions, the petition, along with pending applications, is hereby disposed of.

PURUSHAINDR KUMAR KAURAV, J

APRIL 27, 2026

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