DECISION ON THE OBJECTION CONCERNING THE DELHI SOCCER ASSOCIATION (AIFF EC ELECTION, 20.12.2026)

Ref No:

ORDER

(24.11.2026)

The Draft Electoral College for the election to the Executive Committee of All India Football Federation (AIFF) was published on the website on 15.11.2026 and a window of 7 days was provided for sending objections to the same till 3:00 PM on 21.11.2026. The undersigned has received the objection set out below concerning the Delhi Soccer Association ("**DSA**"), which is dealt with through this Order.

With regard to preparation of the Electoral College, the following provisions of the Constitution of AIFF ("**the Constitution**") along with its amendments and resolutions, the National Sports Governance (National Sports Bodies) Rules, 2026 ("**the NSBR**") and the National Sports Governance Act, 2025 ("**the Act**") are material:

NATIONAL SPORTS GOVERNANCE ACT, 2025

The only relevant provision in this regard is Section 4(2) of the Act. However, it is seen that Section 4(2) pertains to eligibility for contesting elections or seeking nominations. It does not apply to inclusion in electoral college. The opening line of Section 4(2) reads:

> "*(2) A person shall not be qualified to contest for election or seek nomination to, the Executive Committee, unless....*
>
> *...or to the Executive Committee after a mandatory cooling off period of one term*"

NATIONAL SPORTS GOVERNANCE (NATIONAL SPORTS BODIES) RULES, 2026

Rule 10(3) provides for who are the eligible voters are for the elections of EC and Rule 10(4) states that the Electoral College shall consist of only such members or their representatives that have voting rights as per Rule 10(3) and are not otherwise disqualified as per the provision of the Act or the NSBR. Relevant extract from Rule 10 reads as follows:

> ***10. Election to the Executive Committee. —***
>
> ...
>
> *(3) Members of the General Body of a National Sports Body other than the National Olympic Committee, as specified under sub-rule (1) of rule 7, shall be*

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eligible to vote for the election to its Executive Committee as specified below, namely:-

(a) every individual sportsperson of outstanding merit shall have one vote;

(b) every State level affiliate unit of the National Sports Body that is registered with the National Sports Board, shall have a maximum of two votes, to be exercised by separate individual representatives of such affiliate unit; and

(c) for any category of persons specified under clause (e) of sub-rule (1) of rule 7, one vote for each such person.

(4) The electoral roll for an election to the Executive Committee shall consist of only such members or their representatives in the General Body of the relevant National Sports Body that have voting rights as per subrule (2) or sub-rule (3), as the case may be, and are not otherwise disqualified under the provisions of the Act or these rules."

Further, Rule 10(5) provides that the draft electoral roll shall be prepared and released by the Electoral Officer, and its proviso states that

"*...Provided that the Electoral Officer's decision shall be final and binding in respect of the inclusion or non-inclusion, as the case may be, of any person on the electoral roll*".

Rule 10(6) requires the Electoral Officer to provide at least seven days from the release of the draft electoral roll to receive and respond to any objections regarding the composition of the final electoral roll.

Further, Rule 11 outlines the disqualifications from being a member of the General Body, of AIFF ("**GB**") or of any committee of AIFF, which disqualifications are also attracted for contesting for election to the Executive Committee or the Athletes Committee of AIFF. The same reads as follows:

11. Disqualifications. *— (1) A person shall be disqualified from being a member of the General Body, or of any committee of a National Sports Body, and shall not be eligible for contesting for election to the Executive Committee or the Athletes Committee, if such person is-*

(a) declared insolvent under applicable law; or

(b) subject to a conviction by a court of competent jurisdiction in India for an offence, followed by a sentence of imprisonment; or

(c) subject to a ban from holding any such position by an order of the Ethics Committee of such National Sports Body:

Provided that the disqualification in respect of -

(i) clause (a) shall be for the period of insolvency as applicable;



(ii) clause (b) shall be for a period of one full term of the Executive Committee after the completion of such sentence; and

(iii) clause (c) shall be for the duration of such ban.

(2) The bye-laws of a National Sports Body may provide that, in addition to the criteria specified under sub-rule (1), a person shall be disqualified from -

(a) being a member of the General Body or of any committee of such National Sports Body, or shall not be eligible for contesting elections to the Executive Committee or the Athletes Committee, if such person is a member of any other National Sports Body other than the National Olympic Committee; and

(b) being a member of the General Body or of any committee of such National Sports Body, where such person has not completed the cooling off period of one term after having held the position of President, Secretary General or Treasurer in any other National Sports Body."

CONSTITUTION OF AIFF

Entitlement to vote.

As per Article 13.3(a) of the Constitution, every Member Association which is a Full Member is entitled to 2 votes in the elections of the EC of AIFF. The procedure for admission as Full Member is outlined in Schedule I of the AIFF Constitution. Article 4.1 of Schedule III provides that each State Association, which is a Full Member, shall have up to 2 votes, to be cast by separate individuals eligible to represent such Full Member.

Intimation, scrutiny and objections.

Article 4.2 of Schedule III provides that each Full Member shall intimate the names of its 2 representatives / delegates for inclusion in the Electoral College to the Electoral Officer on its letter head duly signed by its President / Secretary, as per the timelines prescribed by the Electoral Officer, and that such representatives shall not be subject to any Disqualification Event. Any change in the name of the representatives / delegates after the last date, or any intimation received thereafter, is permitted only with the approval of the Electoral Officer. Under Article 4.3 of Schedule III, the Electoral Officer scrutinizes the names, prepares the Electoral College List in Form 1, and takes up and decides objections within 7 days.

Loss of voting right.

As per Articles 17, 18 and other such provisions of the Constitution, the voting right of a Full Member extinguishes if its membership is suspended or it is expelled by

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AIFF. Under Article 17.1, the authority to suspend a member vests in the General Body (including where the Member has been derecognised or suspended under the NSGA), and the procedure under Article 17.3 has to be followed. Under Article 17.2, the Executive Committee may also suspend a member with immediate effect, which suspension lasts until the following General Body meeting unless lifted earlier. Article 17.4 provides:

> *"17.4 A suspended Member shall lose its membership rights. Other Members shall not entertain sporting contact with a suspended Member."*

For expulsion, the detailed procedure under Article 18.2 has to be followed by AIFF. Article 17.6 also provides for loss of rights in the circumstances stated therein.

Disqualification of representatives.

Another bar for being a representative of a Full Member is laid down in Article 20.7, which in turn relies on the Disqualification Events defined in Article 1.17. This interpretation is supported when Article 20.7 is read with Article 1.11, the latter mandating that to be a candidate for elections of the EC of AIFF, the concerned individual must be a voting member of the General Body of AIFF. Of the Disqualification Events, the following are relevant to this objection:

> *"b) Attainment of the age of 70 (seventy) years; ...*
>
> *c) Conviction followed by a sentence of imprisonment; ...*
>
> *g) Being or becoming a minister or a government servant (unless such government servant has necessary approvals from the relevant government in order to not be considered disqualified);*
>
> *h) Completion of the maximum term of office of any particular office-bearer as specified in Article 26.3, without serving the specified cooling-off period of 4 (four) years where applicable; ..."*

Article 26.3 provides that the President, Vice-Presidents and Treasurer of AIFF may continuously hold their positions for up to 3 consecutive terms and shall be eligible for re-election to such posts after having served a mandatory cooling-off period.

Disputes between rival groups.

Article 51.6 provides:

> *"51.6 In addition to the above, any dispute arising on account of claims by 2 (two) different executive/managing committees or sets of individuals claiming to be the duly elected committee representing the Member Association in a State, or of two different groups claiming to constitute the official Member Association of a State,*

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such dispute shall be referred by the AIFF in the first instance for hearing and redressal by the NDRC. Till the time, the NDRC has not been constituted by AIFF, such disputes shall be referred to a sub-committee of the Executive Committee, which sub-committee shall not include any person from the State relating to which the dispute has arisen."

Articles 51.7 and 51.8 further empower the Executive Committee to derecognise or de-affiliate, and to appoint an ad hoc committee for a period not exceeding 6 months, while such a dispute is pending.

Twin test.

Thus, broadly, the twin test which needs to be applied is (i) whether a state association is a Full Member of AIFF or not, and (ii) whether the Full Member or its representatives are disqualified as per the Act, the NSBR, or the Constitution of AIFF. In applying this test, the following principles are kept in mind:

a. A Full Member's voting right is lost only on suspension or expulsion in accordance with Articles 17 and 18, or by an operative order of a competent court. The pendency of litigation, without such an order, does not by itself suspend or extinguish it. While a Member remains suspended, it does not have a voting right.

b. Disqualification Events attach to individuals. They do not take away the status or the votes of the Member Association.

c. The task of the Electoral Officer under Rule 10 and Article 4 of Schedule III is confined to preparing the roll and deciding objections to it. The Electoral Officer does not adjudicate the validity of elections of a Member Association, its internal governance, the validity of its suspension, or disputes between rival groups, which are for the competent forum or, under Article 51.6, for AIFF to refer to the NDRC. Likewise, whether the governing body of a Member Association has been elected or appointed in compliance with Article 15.7, and is to be recognised, is a matter of recognition by AIFF and not one for the Electoral Officer while preparing the roll.

d. Where a Full Member is entitled to vote, exclusion of both its representatives would leave a State or Union Territory without representation, which is contrary to the objective of preserving broad-based and democratic representation in the electoral process.

e. Every decision is subject to any order that may be passed by a competent court or forum.

f. Under Article 4.2 of Schedule III, read with Circular No. 1 (Ref. No. 2/EC/Election/2026/1) dated 06.11.2026, the names of representatives are to be



intimated on the letterhead of the Full Member signed by its President / Secretary by 6:00 PM on 13.11.2026. Where separate or conflicting nominations are received from the same Member Association, the names nominated by its President prevail. An intimation received after that time, or a change in the names, is permitted only with the approval of the Electoral Officer, which is exercised case by case so as to secure broad-based representation of the Full Members.

g. Every representative must be free of any Disqualification Event on the date of the election. The undersigned verifies this, including the age of each representative under Article 1.17(b), from the Government-issued photo identity documents furnished with the nomination.

Further, the draft Minutes of the Special General Body Meeting of AIFF held on 01.11.2026 ("**SGBM**"), which the undersigned is informed are yet to be approved, record that the House deliberated upon the challenges faced by certain Member Associations in completing their constitutional alignment and electoral processes within the stipulated timelines, recalling the general sense of the House in the SGM held on 23rd May 2026 in Kolkata that Member Associations facing genuine difficulties should not be penalised. The draft Minutes further record that Mr. Praful Patel, Mr. N.A. Haris and Mr. B.S. Mehra pointed out that, since the AIFF election process was underway and an independent Electoral Officer had been appointed for the AIFF Elections, any decision regarding eligibility for inclusion in the Electoral College rests strictly with the Electoral Officer. These draft Minutes are referred to only as recording the understanding of the House. The power of the undersigned to decide the inclusion or non-inclusion of any person in the Electoral College flows from Rule 10(5) of the NSBR and Article 4.3 of Schedule III, and not from those Minutes. A resolution or observation of a general meeting, whether approved or not, neither confers nor takes away the voting right of any Member, which can be lost only in the manner provided in Articles 17 and 18 of the Constitution.

DECISION

With regard to the inclusion of DSA and its representatives, the following objection was received by the undersigned:

a. Objection dt. 16.11.2026 from Mr. Susanta Deb, President, DSA:

- This objection challenges the inclusion of Mr. Bahadur Singh Mehra (Elector No. 19) and Mr. Anuj Gupta (Elector No. 20) at Sl. No. 10 of the Draft Electoral College dated 15.11.2026 as representatives of DSA. It is contended that these names were not intimated by DSA through its President in terms of Article 4.2 of Schedule III but by persons claiming office under the election held on 18.10.2026, whereas the question as to which body lawfully represents DSA is pending in ARBTN No. 125/2026 before the learned District Judge-12, Central District, Tis Hazari Courts,

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and in arbitral proceedings bearing DIAC/13337/10-26 and connected matters. The objector seeks (i) deletion of the names at Sl. No. 10, (ii) that DSA be placed in the category of Member Associations whose voting status is treated as sub judice, as has been done for the Haryana Football Association and the Tamil Nadu Football Association, (iii) a reference under Article 51.6 of the Constitution, and (iv) in the alternative, that DSA be permitted to intimate names through the Executive Committee elected on 30.08.2026.

- On receiving this objection, the undersigned asked AIFF for its comments on the objections, which were submitted by AIFF on 20.11.2026. The comments read as follows:

*"**1. Dispute on Representation of DSA is an Internal Matter Pending Before Competent Forums:** The objection itself states that the question as to which body lawfully represents DSA is pending adjudication in ARBTN No. 125/2026 before the learned District Judge-12, Central District, Tis Hazari Courts, in arbitral proceedings invoked by notice dated 30th October 2026, and in the arbitral proceedings bearing DIAC/13337/10-26 and connected matters. The dispute concerns claims of two groups to administer and represent DSA, which arises from the elections held on 30th August 2026 and 18th October 2026, and is an internal matter of DSA governed by its own constitution and bye-laws.*

In this regard, AIFF submits that no order of any court or tribunal has been placed on record directing AIFF to withhold, suspend or hold in abeyance DSA's voting rights, or to recognise or refuse the group headed by Mr. Susanta Deb. The objection states only that a direction against AIFF is sought in ARBTN No. 125/2026. The order dated 17th October 2026 of the learned Sole Arbitrator, which operates against Mr. Anuj Gupta and persons acting under him in relation to the suspension and expulsion of six member clubs and DSA's own election convened for 18th October 2026, itself records in paragraph 22 that nothing in it recognises either rival Executive Committee as the lawful management of DSA or validates or invalidates the elections of 30th August 2026 or 18th October 2026.

***2. Request for Parity With Other Member Associations Treated as Sub Judice:** The objection relies on the Draft Electoral College, which records that the voting rights status of the Haryana Football Association and the Tamil Nadu Football Association is to be decided by the Electoral Officer as they are sub judice before the respective courts, and seeks the same treatment for DSA. The pendency of a dispute between rival groups does not, by itself, change the status of a*

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Member Association in the Electoral College. The factual position in the cases of Haryana Football Association and the Tamil Nadu Football Association are different and should be treated independently.

3. Prayers for Deletion of Names, Reference Under Article 51.6 and Scrutiny by the Electoral Officer: *The objection prays that the names at Sl. No. 10 be deleted, that DSA be placed in the category of Member Associations whose voting status is sub judice, that a reference be made under Article 51.6 of the AIFF Constitution, and, alternatively, that DSA be permitted to intimate names through the Executive Committee elected on 30th August 2026. The elections held on 18.10.2026 was conducted in accordance with a constitution that was adopted, to be in compliance with the AIFF Constitution and the National Sports Governance Act, 2025. AIFF has received reports from the Electoral Officer appointed from the AIFF Election Panel and the AIFF appointed observer that this election was conducted in a free and fair manner, and also in accordance with the order of the Learned Arbitrator Sole Arbitrator in ARBTN No 125/2026.*

AIFF further notes that the individual eligibility and credentials of all delegates nominated to the Electoral College, and the authority of the person nominating them on behalf of each Member Association, are subject to strict scrutiny by the Hon'ble Electoral Officer in accordance with the National Sports Governance Act, 2025 and the AIFF Constitution."

- It is noted that admittedly, DSA is a Full Member of AIFF and hence, as per Article 13.3(a) of the Constitution and Article 4.1 of Schedule III, it is entitled to 2 votes. There is no order of any court or tribunal directing AIFF to withhold, suspend or hold in abeyance the voting rights of DSA, and the pendency of arbitral proceedings between rival groups does not, by itself, suspend or extinguish this entitlement.

- With regard to the request that DSA be treated in the same manner as HFA and TNFA, it is noted that AIFF has stated that HFA and TNFA stand suspended, and that their voting status falls to be decided on that basis, and not on the basis of the mere pendency of proceedings. As noted by AIFF, the factual position in their cases is different. No suspension of DSA has been placed on record. Accordingly, there is no occasion to place DSA in a separate category.

- In essence, the objector seeks a determination as to which of the two groups is the lawful management of DSA and, in the alternative, that the names be accepted from the Executive Committee elected on 30.08.2026. That issue is sub judice before the competent forums, namely the arbitral

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proceedings and ARBTN No. 125/2026, and it is not for the undersigned to adjudicate it. In the absence of any order of the competent forum, the undersigned can consider only the nomination sent by the office-bearers whose election AIFF recognises.

AIFF has also stated that no order of any court or tribunal has been placed on record recognising or refusing either group, and that the order dated 17.10.2026 of the learned Sole Arbitrator records in paragraph 22 that it neither recognises either rival Executive Committee as the lawful management of DSA nor validates or invalidates the elections of 30.08.2026 or 18.10.2026. AIFF has further stated that it has received reports from the Electoral Officer appointed from the AIFF Election Panel and the AIFF appointed observer that the election held on 18.10.2026 was conducted in a free and fair manner and in accordance with the order of the learned Sole Arbitrator. The names at Sl. No. 10 have been intimated on behalf of DSA by the Executive Committee elected on 18.10.2026, of which Shri Bahadur Singh Mehra is the President. The objector itself states that the names were not sent by it but by persons claiming office under that election. The objector has not pointed out how any disqualification under the Act, the NSBR, or the Constitution of AIFF has been attracted to Mr. Bahadur Singh Mehra or Mr. Anuj Gupta.

- The objector has also contended that the six member clubs protected by the order dated 17.10.2026 of the learned Sole Arbitrator were added to the electorate only on the night before the poll of 18.10.2026, after nominations, scrutiny and withdrawals had closed, and that some other Permanent Members were left out. Whether the election held on 18.10.2026 complied with that order is a matter for the learned Sole Arbitrator, before whom the proceedings are pending, and not for the undersigned. So long as no order of that forum or of any court sets aside the election or restrains the persons elected on 18.10.2026 from acting for DSA, the undersigned proceeds on the basis of the recognition of that election by AIFF.

- It is also noted that the objector has essentially sought exclusion of the two representatives without giving any alternative names that can be considered by the undersigned, and if the objection were decided in favour of the objector, there would be no representation in the elections from the NCT of Delhi. Such an outcome cannot be countenanced, as it would be contrary to the overarching objective of preserving broad-based and democratic representation in the electoral process, and mere exclusion would be detrimental to the sport of football in the NCT of Delhi.

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- Therefore, there is no reason to exclude the names of the two representatives of DSA from the Electoral College. This decision is subject to any order that may be passed in ARBTN No. 125/2026or by any other competent forum.
- Accordingly, this objection stands disposed off as **rejected**.

Electoral Officer
24/11/2026
All India Football Federation

Place: New Delhi

Date: 24.11.2026

Electoral Officer
All India Football Federation