

Game, Set & Match Monthly

Gaming and Sports Law Newsletter (June 2025)

GAMING NEWS UPDATE

1. FOUR SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ARRESTED FOR PROMOTING ONLINE GAMBLING IN GUJARAT

Devbhumi Dwarka police have arrested four social media influencers under the Gujarat Prevention of Gambling Act for allegedly promoting illegal online gambling platforms on Instagram. The accused, all residents of Kalyanpur taluka, were paid ₹8,000–₹12,000 per promotional reel by gambling site agents and instructed to post and later delete these videos. Police seized evidence from their phones and noted that the influencers' activities potentially exposed users to cyberfraud. No formal contracts with the gambling platforms were found, and all promoted games were purely chance-based.

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2. KARNATAKA CONSIDERS NEW LAW TO REGULATE ONLINE BETTING

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has announced that the state government is considering introducing legislation to regulate online betting, following concerns over increasing youth participation, particularly in cricket-related betting. IT Minister Priyank Kharge and Law Minister H.K. Patil are reviewing legal options, with a decision expected soon. The Chief Minister also directed district officials to step up enforcement against both online and traditional gambling. Karnataka Police have registered 897 online betting cases since 2023. The move comes amid ongoing legal debates, with the state challenging a 2022 High Court decision that struck down a previous law banning online games for money.

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3. ASCI UPDATES WHITEPAPER BASIS ₹50 CRORE LEGAL NOTICE SENT BY MPL

Galactus Funware Technology, parent company of online gaming platform MPL, has issued a ₹50 crore legal notice to the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) demanding the withdrawal of its May 2025 whitepaper titled "Examining Opinion Trading in India." The notice alleges that ASCI's report is biased, relies on tampered and selectively edited screenshots of MPL's advertisements, and omits disclaimers, thereby misrepresenting the nature of opinion trading and misleading consumers. Galactus Funware also questioned ASCI's authority to comment on the legality

of opinion trading, noting ongoing court cases and Supreme Court stays. ASCI acknowledged receipt of the notice but denied any tampering. The company has warned of civil and criminal action if the whitepaper is not withdrawn promptly. Thereafter ASCI updated the whitepaper removing references to specific companies after MPL's ₹50 crore defamation notice. ASCI warns that, unlike in some countries where opinion trading is regulated as either a financial instrument or gambling, India lacks clear guidelines—leaving consumers exposed to significant risks and misleading advertising. The council calls for urgent regulatory clarity and stronger consumer protections in this sector.

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4. MADRAS HIGH COURT UPHOLDS TAMIL NADU'S ONLINE GAMING REGULATIONS

The Madras High Court in *Play Games 24x7 Pvt Ltd & Others v. State of Tamil Nadu* dismissed petitions by online real money gaming platforms challenging Tamil Nadu's regulations, including a night ban (midnight to 5 a.m.) and mandatory Aadhaar-based KYC. The court ruled these measures are reasonable restrictions aimed at protecting public health and welfare, holding that the right to privacy is not absolute and can be limited for public interest. The decision confirms the state's legislative authority to regulate online gaming and upholds key provisions of the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Online Gaming and Regulation of Online Games Act, 2022, and the 2025 regulations.

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5. ASHOK GEHLOT URGES STRICTER REGULATION OF ONLINE FANTASY GAMING AND GAMBLING

Former Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has called for stricter rules to regulate online fantasy gaming and gambling platforms, expressing concern over their rapid growth and the resulting financial distress among youth. Gehlot highlighted reports of young people falling into debt and, in some cases, resorting to suicide, urging the government to take action to protect the future of the youth from these risks.

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6. PLAYERZPOT SUSPENDS OPINION TRADING IN HARYANA AND TAMIL NADU AMID LEGAL SCRUTINY

Real-money gaming platform PlayerzPot has suspended its opinion trading operations in Haryana and Tamil Nadu following mounting legal challenges and regulatory scrutiny, with the company likely to halt services nationwide. This move comes as courts and regulators increasingly question the legitimacy of prediction-based platforms, which many argue resemble gambling rather than skill-based gaming. Similar exits by other platforms and recent warnings from SEBI underscore the sector's uncertain legal standing and the growing push for stricter oversight.

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7. TN ONLINE GAMING AUTHORITY ISSUES COMPLIANCE FAQs FOLLOWING HIGH COURT RULING

The Tamil Nadu Online Gaming Authority (TNOGA) has issued detailed FAQs under the 2025 Regulations, clarifying compliance requirements for real money gaming platforms and users. The main points are:

- **Mandatory Two-Factor KYC Verification:**
Players must complete Aadhaar-based KYC and OTP authentication before participating in any online real money game. This is not required for merely accessing or browsing a gaming platform, but is compulsory before actual gameplay involving monetary stakes.
- **Blank Hours (Prohibited Play Time):**
No online real money games can be played between 12:00 am and 5:00 am. These restrictions do not apply to practice games or games without any monetary deposit or expectation of prize. Platforms must file a declaration confirming compliance, and false declarations will attract penalties.
- **Age Restriction:**
Minors (under 18) are strictly prohibited from accessing or playing online real money games. Platforms must implement robust age verification measures as part of their KYC process.
- **Monetary Limits:**
Players must be allowed to set daily, weekly, and monthly monetary spending limits. Platforms are required to notify users with bold pop-up messages

whenever money is deposited, detailing the user's set limit and current spending.

- **Caution and Addiction Warnings:**
Pop-up caution messages must be displayed every 30 minutes after the first hour of continuous play, indicating the time spent. The login page must always display a warning about the addictive nature of online real money games.
- **Declaration and Penalty:**
Platforms must declare which games are subject to blank hour restrictions. Any false or misleading declaration will result in penal action by the Authority.

These clarifications aim to ensure responsible gaming, protect vulnerable users, and provide clear guidance to operators as the new regulatory regime is enforced in Tamil Nadu.

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8. FIRST FIR FILED UNDER HARYANA'S NEW GAMBLING LAW AGAINST FANTASY PLATFORM

The first FIR under the Haryana Prevention of Public Gambling Act, 2025 ("Act") has been registered against fantasy sports platform Sportasy, operated by Blossomfield Gamingzone Pvt. Ltd., for allegedly promoting illegal online gambling under the guise of skill-based fantasy games. The complaint, filed at Manesar Police Station on June 7, 2025, cites Section 7 of the new Act and Section 318(4) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, and accuses Sportasy of targeting a wide user base, including minors, with real-money games and insufficient safeguards. Opinion trading platform Probo is also under investigation in Haryana for similar alleged violations. This marks the first major enforcement action since the Act's commencement, signaling strict scrutiny of online gaming platforms in the state.

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9. TAMIL NADU CRACKS DOWN ON SURROGATE BETTING ADS IN TNPL

The Tamil Nadu Online Gaming Authority (TNOGA) has initiated action against surrogate advertisements and sponsorships by offshore betting platforms in the Tamil Nadu Premier League (TNPL). TNOGA flagged teams such as Trichy Grand Cholas (FOMO7), Chepauk Super Gillies (Melbat), Lyca Kovai Kings (1xBat), and Nellai Royal Kings

(Dafa News) for violating state law by associating with gambling-linked brands through surrogate ads. Such promotions are deemed “prima facie objectionable” under the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Online Gaming and Regulation of Online Games Act, with violations carrying penalties of up to one year in prison or a ₹5 lakh fine. TNOGA is also considering seeking central government intervention to block access to offending platforms under the IT Act. This move signals a tougher stance against the normalization of online gambling through sports sponsorships and aims to protect consumers from misleading and unlawful promotions.

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10. MADRAS HIGH COURT HALTS TNOGA’S ACTION ON TNPL SPONSORSHIP AMID ALLEGATIONS OF PROMOTING GAMBLING

The Madras High Court has stayed further action by the Tamil Nadu Online Gaming Authority (TNOGA) until July 16, 2025, on its directive requiring Tamil Nadu Premier League (TNPL) teams to remove certain sponsor logos from jerseys, for allegedly promoting online gambling. The interim relief was granted after multiple team franchises, including Metro Nation Television Pvt. Ltd., challenged TNOGA’s June 26 order targeting the MELBAT LIVE logo. The petitioners contended that MELBAT LIVE is a sports news platform with no direct or indirect association with gambling, and that the logo does not violate any advertising or content regulations. It was also highlighted that removing the sponsor at this advanced stage of the tournament would result in significant financial loss and operational disruption. Given that the league is at an advanced stage, Madras HC directed TNOGA to maintain status quo until the next hearing on July 16.

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11. SUPREME COURT REFUSES TO UNFREEZE PROBO’S ₹100 CRORE ACCOUNT, DIRECTING PROBO TO SEEK RELIEF FROM HIGH COURT

The Supreme Court has refused to entertain Probo Media Technologies’ plea to unfreeze a bank account holding over ₹100 crore, directing the company to instead approach the Punjab and Haryana High Court’s vacation bench for interim relief. The account was frozen following a March 2025 FIR filed by a Gurugram resident who alleged losing ₹20,000 on the Probo app, which allows users to wager on real-world events with binary outcomes. The FIR claims users were “lured and induced

into gambling and betting” under the pretext of opinion trading.

Probo, argued that freezing the entire account over a relatively small transaction was disproportionate and had effectively halted company operations. However, a bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and Augustine George Masih declined to intervene, noting that the High Court is already hearing the matter. The FIR cites Section 13 of the Public Gambling Act, 1867 and Section 318(4) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, and names three company directors. The High Court had earlier issued notice to the Haryana government on May 22, 2025, but denied interim relief. The next hearing is scheduled for July 15.

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12. ED CRACKS DOWN ON ONLINE BETTING RACKET, ARRESTS TWO AND FREEZES 766 MULE ACCOUNTS

The Directorate of Enforcement (ED), Kolkata Zonal Office, arrested two individuals under Section 19 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, in connection with a multi-state online betting and gambling racket. The arrests followed search operations across West Bengal, Delhi, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Assam. The case stems from an FIR filed by the Siliguri Police Commissionerate under the Indian Penal Code, 1860, and the West Bengal Gambling and Prize Competitions Act, 1957, where the accused were earlier marked as absconders. As part of the investigation, the ED froze 766 mule bank accounts and 17 debit and credit cards and seized several incriminating documents and digital devices.

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13. DELHI HIGH COURT ISSUES NOTICE TO GOOGLE ON WINZO’S PLEA AGAINST YOUTUBE CHANNEL TAKEDOWN

The Delhi High Court issued notice to Google LLC on a petition filed by WinZO Games, challenging the removal of their official YouTube channel “WinZOOfficial.” WinZO informed the Court that all its advertisements had been suspended from YouTube, resulting in significant financial losses.

According to the petitioners, the takedown was triggered by a June 16 email from the Google Ads policy team, which cited violations of YouTube’s policy on the sale of regulated goods, alleging the promotion of gambling and betting. WinZO, however, contended that its platform

hosts only games of skill, which are not classified as gambling under Indian law. The plea seeks to restrain Google from blocking access to the YouTube platform and to allow continued hosting of advertisements. The case is scheduled to be heard on July 3.

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14. ED QUESTIONS CELEBRITIES OVER ENDORSEMENTS OF ILLEGAL BETTING APPS

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has questioned cricketers Harbhajan Singh, Suresh Raina, Yuvraj Singh,

and actor Urvashi Rautela as part of its probe into celebrity endorsements for banned online betting platforms like 1xBet, which used surrogate brands such as “1xbat” to redirect users to illegal sites. The ED alleges these platforms, presented as skill-based games, actually used rigged algorithms and functioned as gambling operations, violating the IT Act, FEMA, PMLA, and government advisories. The agency is investigating whether these high-profile endorsements, which gave the platforms massive visibility, facilitated financial fraud and widespread consumer deception.

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SPORTS NEWS UPDATE

1. FIFA LIFTS TRANSFER BAN ON MOHUN BAGAN SUPER GIANT AHEAD OF ISL SEASON

FIFA has officially lifted the transfer ban on Indian football club Mohun Bagan Super Giant, allowing them to sign new players for the upcoming season. The ban, imposed on May 5, 2025, was due to the club’s failure to pay dues to Australian striker Jason Cummings’ former club, Central Coast Mariners. However, Mohun Bagan acted swiftly, resolving the issue in just over a month, significantly faster than Mumbai City FC, whose similar ban took nearly three months to be lifted.

The club submitted a 107-page response to FIFA and promptly addressed two follow-up queries, leading the governing body’s disciplinary committee to revoke the ban.

Additionally, Mohun Bagan is now cleared to participate in continental competitions. They were previously banned and fined by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) after withdrawing from a Champions League 2 match in Iran against Tractor SC, citing safety concerns amid regional political tensions involving Israel and Iran. The club’s refusal to travel to Tabriz led to sanctions under AFC competition rules, but they are now eligible to compete again.

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2. INTER KASHI WINS FIRST CAS APPEAL AGAINST AIFF; I-LEAGUE TITLE STILL UNDECIDED

Inter Kashi has won a key appeal at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) against the All India Football

Federation (AIFF), marking a major development in the ongoing controversy surrounding the 2024–25 I-League title. The dispute centres on a January 13, 2025 match between Inter Kashi and Namdhari FC, where Namdhari alleged that Inter Kashi had fielded an ineligible player. AIFF’s appeals committee had ruled in Namdhari’s favour, which ultimately placed Inter Kashi second in the standings with 39 points and awarded Churchill Brothers the championship with 40 points.

In response, Inter Kashi filed an appeal on April 24, 2025, at CAS, which has now ruled in the club’s favour. The CAS judgment, issued on June 17, 2025, set aside the AIFF appeals committee’s April 18, 2025 decision and reinstated the AIFF Disciplinary Committee’s earlier February 24, 2025 ruling, which had penalized Namdhari FC for fielding an ineligible player. This awarded a 3–0 win to Inter Kashi for the disputed match.

Despite this victory, the I-League title remains undecided. The CAS ruling now places Inter Kashi at 38 points and Churchill Brothers at 42. However, Inter Kashi has filed a second appeal at CAS, which could further alter the standings. If Inter Kashi succeeds in that appeal, they may reach 42 points, while Churchill Brothers could lose two points, potentially reshaping the final league outcome.

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3. WORLD AQUATICS BANS PARTICIPATION LINKED TO ENHANCED GAMES IN LANDMARK ANTI-DOPING MOVE

World Aquatics has become the first international sports federation to officially ban athletes, coaches, and officials from its competitions if they are involved in the

controversial Enhanced Games, a new sporting event that embraces the use of performance-enhancing drugs. This unprecedented move underscores the federation's commitment to clean sport and comes ahead of the inaugural Enhanced Games scheduled for May 21–24, 2026, in Las Vegas, featuring sprinting, weightlifting, and short-distance swimming.

The new World Aquatics bylaw disqualifies individuals who support, endorse, or participate in events that promote prohibited substances or methods from being eligible for any role, athlete, coach, official, medical staff, administrator, or government representative, within World Aquatics competitions or activities. Member federations have been encouraged to adopt similar national policies to ensure consistency.

This decision follows a high-profile claim by Enhanced Games organisers that Greek swimmer Kristian Gkolomeev surpassed the world record in a 50m freestyle trial under their supervision, clocking 20.89 seconds, 0.02 seconds faster than the long-standing world record.

In response to the ban, Enhanced Games president Dr. Aron D'Souza accused World Aquatics of protecting a monopoly rather than athletes. He defended the Enhanced Games as a science-driven, medically supervised alternative that empowers athletes through fair compensation and choice and promised legal backing against the ban. He further criticized traditional federations for their lack of financial support and transparency.

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has condemned the Enhanced Games as a "dangerous and irresponsible project", citing risks to athlete health and the erosion of fair competition principles.

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4. BOMBAY HIGH COURT UPHOLDS ₹538 CRORE ARBITRAL AWARD IN FAVOUR OF KOCHI TUSKERS AGAINST BCCI

The Bombay High Court has upheld arbitral awards totalling over INR 538 crore in favour of the defunct IPL franchise Kochi Tuskers Kerala, rejecting the BCCI's challenge under Section 34 of the Arbitration Act. The case stemmed from BCCI's termination of the franchise in 2011 for failing to furnish a 10% bank guarantee. Kochi Tuskers, operated by Kochi Cricket Private Limited (KCPL) and led by Rendezvous Sports World (RSW), blamed

delays on issues like stadium access, regulatory approvals, and reduced match allocation.

Despite the delays, BCCI had continued engaging with KCPL and accepting payments, which the arbitrator interpreted as a waiver of the bank guarantee requirement. In 2015, an arbitral tribunal awarded INR 384 crore to KCPL for loss of profits and INR 153 crore to RSW for wrongful encashment of the guarantee.

The BCCI argued the arbitrator exceeded jurisdiction and misapplied the law, but the Court held that its powers under Section 34 are limited and it cannot reassess the merits of the case. The judge ruled that the arbitrator's conclusion, finding BCCI's termination as a repudiatory breach of contract, was well-reasoned and did not merit interference. BCCI has six weeks to appeal the decision.

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5. ITALY GRANTS REFEREES SAME LEGAL PROTECTION AS POLICE TO COMBAT RISING ASSAULTS

Referees in Italy will now receive the same legal status and protection as police officers and public officials, as part of a new penal code amendment aimed at curbing growing violence against match officials. The change was announced by Sports Minister Andrea Abodi and forms part of a broader government decree.

The updated law introduces tougher penalties, including potential prison sentences, for acts such as hitting, pushing, or threatening referees. This protection applies across all sports and levels, following increased concerns over referee safety, particularly in Italian soccer. The decision follows pressure from the Italian Soccer Referees Association, and symbolic protests by referees, such as wearing black smudges on their cheeks during matches in December 2024. The tipping point came after a 19-year-old referee, Diego Alfonzetti, was physically assaulted at a youth match in Sicily. He was later honoured before the high-profile Lazio vs Roma derby in April.

The law aims to restore respect and safety for match officials and uphold the spirit of fair play across all sporting arenas in Italy.

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DSK Legal Knowledge Center

Contact Details for any queries: knowledge.management@dsklegal.com

Mumbai

1701, One World Centre,
Floor 17, Tower 2B,
841, Senapati Bapat Marg,
Mumbai - 400013.
Tel +91 22 6658 8000

Mumbai

C-16, Dhanraj Mahal,
3rd Floor,
Apollo Bunder, Colaba,
Mumbai - 400001.
Tel +91 22 6152 6000

Bengaluru

201, 2nd floor, Prestige Loka,
7/1 & 7/7, Brunton Road,
Craig Park Layout, Ashok Nagar,
Bengaluru - 560025.
Tel +91 80 6954 8770

New Delhi

Max House, Level 5,
Okhla Industrial Area, Phase 3,
New Delhi - 110020.
Tel +91 11 4661 6666

Pune

Ground Floor, 1 Modibaug,
Ganesh Khind Road, Shivajinagar,
Pune - 411016.
Tel +91 20 6684 7600

✉ contactus@dsklegal.com

in DSK Legal

🌐 www.dsklegal.com

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