

Game, Set & Match Monthly

Gaming and Sports Law Newsletter (February 2026)

GAMING NEWS UPDATE

1. ENFORCEMENT DIRECTORATE ATTACHES ₹590 CRORE IN WINZO OVERSEAS INVESTMENT CASE, RAISING REGULATORY OVERSIGHT CONCERNS ACROSS REAL-MONEY GAMING SECTOR

In February 2026, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) provisionally attached assets valued at approximately ₹590 crore belonging to WinZO and its subsidiary as part of an ongoing probe into alleged violations of the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA) and related overseas investment norms.

The ED action stems from an investigation into the Company's overseas direct investments into wholly owned subsidiaries in the United States and Singapore, where the Company is alleged to have engaged in real-money gaming activities, including games such as bingo, ludo, snakes & ladders, solitaire, spades, and blackjack, under structures that lacked independent offices, staff, or bona fide operations abroad, with operational control and management conducted from India.

Authorities contend that such overseas investment structures and the retention of foreign income contravene FEMA provisions, particularly after the enactment of the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025, which effectively banned real-money gaming in India, and that the foreign entities engaged in non-bona-fide business activity inconsistent with Indian regulatory requirements.

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2. UK GOVERNMENT PROPOSES BAN ON SPORTS SPONSORSHIP BY UNLICENSED GAMBLING FIRMS

The UK government has proposed barring gambling firms without a domestic licence from sponsoring sports teams, including Premier League clubs, citing risks to consumers such as inadequate financial vulnerability checks, irresponsible advertising, and weak data protection that could lead to fraud or identity theft. A public consultation on the proposal is expected in spring 2026.

The move follows warnings from the Gambling Commission to clubs previously sponsored by unlicensed operator TGP Europe, whose British licence was surrendered after investigations found failures in partner checks and anti-money laundering compliance. Clubs affected included Bournemouth, Fulham, Newcastle, Wolves, and then-Championship Burnley, with letters noting potential liability if unlicensed operators were promoted. While clubs have agreed to remove gambling branding from front-of-shirt positions, sleeve sponsorships still allow logos from unlicensed operators. Ministers highlighted that such visibility could drive consumers toward unregulated sites, and regulators and the Betting and Gaming Council have called for stronger measures to ensure only properly licensed operators gain prominence in top-tier football.

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3. SUPREME COURT HALTS COERCIVE ACTION AGAINST FANMADE11 AND 9STACKS PENDING GAMESKRAFT VERDICT

The Supreme Court of India has stayed coercive enforcement actions such as tax recovery or enforcement measures against fantasy gaming platforms FanMade11 Fantasy Sports Pvt Ltd and 9stacks while a major related case involving Gameskraft Technologies remains pending before the Court. In a recent order, the Court directed that authorities should not initiate or continue coercive action on a substantial tax demand alleged against the fantasy gaming companies until the Supreme Court delivers judgment in the consolidated Gameskraft matter, which is one of the most significant legal battles for India's online gaming and fantasy sports sector.

The Gameskraft case, which has consolidated multiple petitions by online gaming platforms, centres on whether online gaming and fantasy sports constitute "games of skill" and how Goods and Services Tax (GST) apply, especially criticisms over retrospective tax demands on the full value of bets rather than just platform fees.

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SPORTS NEWS UPDATE

1. CAS DISMISSES UKRAINIAN ATHLETE'S APPEAL OVER HELMET EXPRESSION AT 2026 WINTER OLYMPICS

On 12 February 2026, the Ad-Hoc Division of the Court of Arbitration for Sport ("Court") constituted for the 2026 Winter Olympic Games dismissed an application filed by a Ukrainian skeleton athlete, Vladyslav Heraskevych, ("Petitioner") challenging the restrictions imposed on the use of a helmet displaying images of Ukrainian athletes who had died in the ongoing conflict. The restriction had been enforced pursuant to the athlete expression

framework under the Olympic Charter and related guidelines issued by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

The Petitioner contended that the prohibition was disproportionate and infringed his right to freedom of expression. The Court held that the IOC's neutrality principles, particularly those applicable on the field of play during official competition, were legitimate and proportionate to the objective of preserving political neutrality at the Olympic Games, while recognising that

alternative avenues for expression remained available outside the competition arena.

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2. UNION BUDGET 2026-27 PROVIDES MODEST INCREASE IN SPORTS ALLOCATIONS

In the Union Budget 2026-27 presented on February 02, 2026, the allocation to the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports was increased to ₹4,479.88 crore, marking a modest rise of around ₹685.58 crore compared with the original 2025-26 budget, despite a busy sporting calendar that included the Asian and Commonwealth Games. The Budget introduced a first-time grant of ₹500 crore for the sports goods manufacturing sector, and increased support for programmes such as the Khelo India initiative and the Sports Authority of India, while allocations for anti-doping bodies saw reductions. Analysts described the overall increase as moderate, noting that under-utilisation of previous budgetary allocations had contributed to the comparatively restrained rise this year.

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3. DELHI HIGH COURT UPHOLDS RECOGNITION OF INDIAN PICKLEBALL ASSOCIATION AS NATIONAL SPORTS FEDERATION

In its judgment delivered on February 10, 2026, the Delhi High Court (“**Court**”) upheld the Union Government’s decision recognising the Indian Pickleball Association (“**Respondent**”) as the National Sports Federation (**NSF**) for pickleball in India. The writ petition had been instituted by an aggrieved association All-India Pickleball Association (“**Petitioner**”) challenging the legality and

procedural propriety of the recognition granted by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. The Court held that the decision-making process did not suffer from arbitrariness or mala fides and bore a rational nexus to the objective of promoting and regulating the sport at the national level, thereby declining to interfere in exercise of its writ jurisdiction.

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4. BASKETBALL FEDERATION OF INDIA CHALLENGES ANTITRUST PROBE BEFORE DELHI HIGH COURT

The Basketball Federation of India (BFI) has approached the Delhi High Court to challenge a Competition Commission of India (CCI) order that directed a detailed antitrust investigation against it. The CCI began the probe after a complaint by Elite Pro Basketball Private Limited, which alleged that BFI abused its dominant position by denying market access to private leagues and restricting players, referees, and coaches from taking part in unaffiliated competitions, potentially violating Sections 3 and 4 of the Competition Act, 2002.

BFI argued that as the recognised national governing body for basketball, it performs regulatory and policy-making functions rather than commercial activities, and that competition law should not apply to such regulatory decisions. Senior Advocate Vaibhav Gaggar told the court that “a regulator cannot be regulated,” asserting that the CCI’s investigation oversteps its jurisdiction. The High Court has issued notice to the CCI and listed the next hearing for March 10, where BFI’s request to stay the probe will also be considered.

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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

New Delhi

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

Dubai

Bay Square,
Building 12, P 03, Dubai,
United Arab Emirates
T: +971 50 450 4026

Bengaluru

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

Pune

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

Abu Dhabi

3112, 31, Tamouh Tower,
ADGM, Abu Dhabi,
Al Reem Island, UAE
T: +971 50 450 4026

✉ contactus@dsklegal.com

in DSK Legal

🌐 www.dsklegal.com

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