

‘Keeping national interest, U-17 WC in mind while passing order’

Dhananjay.Mahapatra@timesgroup.com

New Delhi : The Supreme Court on Monday disbanded the committee of administrators (CoA), appointed on May 18 for the All India Football Federation, to facilitate the revocation of AIFF's suspension by FIFA. "Don't think what has happened and the manner in which it has happened after FIFA collaborated with CoA is lost on us. We are keeping the national interest and the U-17 World Cup in mind while passing this order," the bench said in anguish.

The CoA was headed by former SC judge AR Dave and comprised former chief election commissioner S Y Quraishi and former India captain Bhasakar Ganguly.

The bench postponed the August 28 elections by a week to elect a 23-member executive council, of which 17 will be elected by state/UT associations. The elected members would co-opt six eminent players, including two women, with voting rights to the EC.

The Union government shared the SC's sentiments. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said he had made it clear to the FIFA and Indian officials that the dignity of the SC had to be respected even if it could cost India the hosting rights of the World Cup.

However, Mehta said that in the larger interest of the nation and football players, the Centre is requesting the SC to modify its orders so as to facilitate revocation of the AIFF's suspension and hosting of the World Cup, which would give India's budding women footballers invaluable experience.

With the CoA out of the scene, the bench said that the day-to-day management of the AIFF shall be exclusively looked after by its own administration, led by the acting secretary general. "The mandate of the committee of administrators appointed by the order of this court stands terminated," it said.

"Time for completion of the elections, scheduled for August 28, shall stand extended by one week.

The returning officers shall rework the modalities for the filing of nominations from the stage which was reached on August 13 and ensure that the elections are completed on schedule," it ordered.

The executive council of AIFF shall consist of 23 persons — 17 members (inclusive of the president, a treasurer and one vice-president) will be elected by the electoral college consisting of 35 associations representing states/ UTs and six eminent players to be co-opted by the executive council with not more than one player from a state.