

Case No. 1(EO) of 2026.

Sub: Complaint regarding Violation of Rule 67 of the CAB Rules by Surajit Lahiri, Member of the Apex Council, The Cricket Association of Bengal.

Present:

For Complainant:

1. Mr. Sandip Kumar De, Senior Advocate.
2. Mr. Yashovardhan Kochar, Advocate.
3. Mr. Kaustav Banerjee, Advocate.

For Mr. Surajit Lahiri:

1. Mr. Surajit Lahiri appearing in person.

For CAB

1. Mr. Samrat Sen, Senior Advocate.

Order No. 1 Dated 13th June, 2026.

The Complainant being a person interested in the game of Cricket, filed this complaint praying for removal of Mr. Surajit Lahiri from the post of Councillor / Member of the Apex Council as Mr. Lahiri, while acting as a Councillor after being admittedly elected in the 94th Annual General Meeting of the CAB held on 22nd September, 2025, also remains at the whelm of affairs of a franchise team viz. Novus Purulia Royals Team participating in the Bengal T20 League, 2026.

It is alleged that Mr. Lahiri as a Member of the Apex Council, participated in all the Apex Council meetings relating to Bengal T20 League and simultaneously acted as a representative of Novus Purulia Royals in the process of selection of players of Novus Purulia Royals and thus there was “conflict of interest” in terms of Rule 67 of the Cricket Association of Bengal Rules.

Mr. De, Ld. Senior Counsel appearing for the complainant, submits that Rule 67 of the Cricket Association of Bengal, Memorandum and Rules is squarely attracted on the ground of “conflict of interest”. Mr. De contended that “conflict of interest” is defined in Section 3 (k) and if the said definition of “conflict of interest” is read conjointly with Rules 67 of the said Rules, then there will be no hesitation to hold that by holding two posts simultaneously in the aforesaid two places where decision taken in one of such bodies may influence the decision to be taken by the other body, “conflict of interest” as defined in Section 3(k) will be attracted. As such, he prays for dismissal of Sri Lahiri from the post of Councillor / Member of the Apex Council. He referred to paragraph 21 of the Order dated 21st July, 2020 passed by the Ethics Officer, The Board of Control for Cricket in India in Complaint No. 5/2019, wherein an identical situation was dealt with, by the Ethics Officer of BCCI. It was held therein as follows:

“21. The concept of conflict of interest is not necessarily a question about something one does or intends to do but a question of what it can possibly or potentially do. However, in so far as the Rules of the BCCI are concerned, the said principle has been codified in Rule 1(A)(g) read with Rule 38(1)(i) of the Rules. Rule 1(A) (g) of the Rules refers to the situations, where an individual associated with the BCCI in any capacity acts, or omits to act, in a manner that brings or is perceived to bring the interest of the individual in conflict with the interest of the game of Cricket and that may give rise to apprehension of, or actual favoritism, lack of objectivity, bias, benefits (monetary or otherwise) or linkages, as set out in Rule 38 of the Rules. Hence, the question of conflict of interest has to be considered on the touchstone of the

definition, which clearly brings within its ambit all situations, which even have the potential or perception of giving rise to apprehension of any kind of favoritism, lack of objectivity, bias benefits (monetary or otherwise) or linkages by or to a person associated with the BCCI, in any capacity.”

Relying upon the aforesaid paragraph of the said Order, Mr. De invited the Undersigned to place Mr. Lahiri under suspension from the post of the Councillor of the Apex Council of CAB, until the matter is decided, on affidavit.

Mr. Sen Ld. Senior Counsel appearing for CAB, submits that the above view of the Ethics Officer of BCCI as expressed in the Order dated 21st July, 2020, in Complaint No. 5/2019 was subsequently reconsidered in his subsequent Order dated 14th November, 2019 passed in complaint no. 6/2019, wherein it was held that mere holding of post by any individual associated with BCCI as identified in Sub-Rule 4 of Rule 38 of the Rules, may not *per se* be sufficient for arriving at the conclusion of existence of “conflict of interest”. It was further held therein that whether holding of such post(s) gives rise to “conflict of interest” or not must, also be tested on the anvil of reasonable apprehension of, or actual favoritism, lack of objectivity, bias, benefits, etc. as contemplated in the definition of the “conflict of interest” in Rule 1 (A) (g) of the BCCI Rules.

Mr. Sen submitted that no definite allegation has been made against Mr. Lahiri, which may lead the Undersigned to hold that there may arise reasonable apprehension of, or actual favoritism, lack of objectivity, bias, benefits, etc. as Mr. Lahiri holds two posts simultaneously; one as Councillor in the Apex Council of CAB and the other as representative of a franchise team viz. Novus Purulia Royals. He further contended that interim order cannot be passed on mere assumption of facts that certain incident

may occur as a consequence of certain steps that may be taken by Mr. Lahiri in deciding the fate of the matches.

Mr. Sen further contended that Bengal T20 League commenced on 5th June, 2026 and it will be concluded on 21st June, 2026. He further contended that Novus Purulia Royals have already played five matches and there was no complaint from any quarter that Mr. Lahiri exercised his position as Councillor in the Apex Council to influence the ultimate decision relating to the matches in which the said franchise team participated. He further contended that in the absence of reasonable apprehension of, or actual favoritism, lack of objectivity, bias, benefits, etc. even no interim order can be passed against him in the manner as prayed for. He further contended that the interim order was prayed in such a fashion, if such interim order is allowed, the ultimate relief as prayed for in the said application will be granted even at the ad interim stage without allowing Mr. Lahiri to use affidavit in support of his defense in this proceeding.

Mr. Lahiri contended that even by holding two posts in two places as aforesaid, there is no scope for attraction of the concept of “conflict of interest” as the Apex Council has a limited role in the conduct of the said Bengal T20 League. The Apex Council only selects the venue for holding the matches and also settled the fixtures, fixing the dates for holding the matches. Apex Council has no role in conducting the auction for negotiating with the players. Thus, even by participating in the auction process for negotiating with the players as a representative of a team viz. Novus Purulia Royals, there can hardly be any chance of attraction of concept of “conflict of interest”. He further contended that even the result of the matches is not decided by the CAB. The matches are conducted by JSW Sports Pvt. Ltd. which is an out-sourced independent Agency over which he has no control.

Mr. Lahiri thus opposes the complainant's prayer for interim order and prays for direction for filing affidavit in this proceeding.

Heard the Ld. Counsel of the parties. In the above background of the case, the Undersigned feels that paragraph 19 of the Order of Ethics Officer of BCCI dated 14th November, 2019 in Complaint no. 6/2019 has a great bearing in deciding the dispute involved in this proceeding even at the ad interim stages. Accordingly, paragraph 19 of the said Order is set out hereunder:-

"19. Having reconsidered the matter in the light of the afore-stated provisions, while maintaining that on a literal interpretation, it may not be possible to hold that Sub-rule (4) of Rule 38 of the Rules, is merely directory. Nevertheless, on a harmonious and meaningful construction of all the provisions in the BCCI Rules, I am of the opinion that the said Sub-rule (4) cannot be divorced from sub-Rule (1) of Rule 38 of the Rules. Hence, while examining the question whether or not there is a "conflict of interest" in the case of a particular individual, the actual or potential consequences of the instances illustrated in extension in Sub-rule (1) of the Rule 38 of the Rules or other possibilities of potential/actual conflicts similar to those given in Sub-rule (1) of the Rule 38 of the Rules, have to be kept in view. To put it differently, for examining an instance of "conflict of interest", mere holding of post/s by an individual associated with the BCCI, as identified in Sub-rule (4) of Rule 38 of the Rules, may not per se be sufficient for arriving at the conclusion of existence of "conflict of interest". But whether holding of such post(s) gives rise to "conflict of interest" or not must also be tested on the anvil of reasonable apprehensions of, or actual favoritism, lack of objectivity, bias, benefits, etc., as contemplated in the definition of "conflict of interest" in Rule 1(A)(g) of the Rules."

Thus in the absence of any definite and pin-pointed allegation made against Mr. Lahiri, the Undersigned even cannot hold prima facie that there is reasonable apprehension of attraction of the concept of “conflict of interest” because of occupying two positions by Mr. Lahiri in two different bodies, as stated above, the Undersigned declines to pass any interim order as prayed for, in this proceeding. The Undersigned holds that even for passing this interim order, affidavits of the Parties, are necessary.

On the prayer of Mr. Lahiri as also of Mr. Sen, Ld. Senior Counsel appearing for CAB, they are permitted to file affidavit-in-opposition to the complaint of the complainant by 27th June, 2026. Reply, if any, be filed by the complainant by 10th July, 2026. Let this complaint be placed for hearing on 11th July, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. Venue will remain the same.

CAB is directed to communicate this order to all concerned, at the earliest.

Sd/-

Justice Jyotirmay Bhattacharya
Former Chief Justice, High Court at Calcutta,
Presently, Ethics Officer, Cricket Association of Bengal