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MIDDLE EAST – ASIA – AFRICA

AVIP

Newsletter | Issue 43 | July 2026

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BEYOND THE BEAUTIFUL GAME: HOW INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY WINS THE FIFA WORLD CUP

A stadium rarely looks more theatrical than it does in the final minutes before kickoff. Floodlights settle into their calibrated glow. Broadcast cameras pan across a sea of color. Drones trace elegant paths above the bowl. AI-driven graphics begin to populate screens with predictive formations and live probability models. Sponsors take their places on LED boards that can change message by market. Players emerge in meticulously engineered boots and shirts. Fans raise scarves, record the moment on smartphones, and wait for the first touch of a match ball that is no longer merely stitched leather, but a data-generating device.

At that moment, football appears to be about athletic instinct, emotion and spectacle. Yet almost everything visible in the scene exists because someone designed it, coded it, branded it, licensed it, filmed it, engineered it, or protected it. The modern game is not only played on grass; it is built on patents, trademarks, copyright, industrial designs, confidential know-how and carefully negotiated commercial rights.

Image credit: Google's Nano Banana 2

This is why the phrase **"IP and Sports: Ready, Set, Innovate!"** deserves to be read as more than a campaign line. In football, innovation and creativity do not sit at the edges of the sport; they structure the entire event economy, from elite officiating systems to global merchandising, from player data tools to digital archives. Long before the referee blows the first whistle, intellectual property has already won the match.

PATENTS: ENGINEERING THE MODERN GAME

The most consequential football innovations are often those that disappear into the rhythm of the match. Supporters may debate a decision from the referee, but the systems that now shape elite officiating and performance are the result of years of technical development, capital investment and patent strategy.

Take the connected match ball. FIFA's collaboration with adidas introduced embedded sensor technology into the official World Cup ball, allowing real-time ball data to support officiating decisions. Adidas said the in-ball suspension system could track touches at a rate of 500 times per second, feeding precise data to video officials and supporting semi-automated offside calls. By the 2026 FIFA World Cup, reporting around FIFA's technology briefing described an upgraded version of that ecosystem: enhanced connected-ball functionality, 16 tracking cameras in each stadium, richer 3D visualizations and expanded decision support for officials, including ball-out-of-play and wrongly awarded corner scenarios.

That progression tells an important IP story. Patents matter not merely because they protect an invention, but because they make high-risk R&D commercially intelligible. A smart ball, for example, is not a single invention. It is a stack of innovations: sensor miniaturization, impact tolerance, signal integrity, energy management, data transmission, materials engineering and system integration. Each technical layer may be patentable; together, they become a licensable product architecture that can be deployed at scale.

The same logic applies to goal-line technology and Hawk-Eye's broader officiating infrastructure. WIPO has previously explained how camera-based systems process real-time images to determine whether the ball has crossed the line, highlighting the role of computer vision and protected technology in modern officiating. More recent reporting suggests FIFA and Hawk-Eye have deepened that relationship through a joint venture focused on automating data collection and advancing football technology products, with enhanced semi-automated offside systems tested in high-profile competitions ahead of the 2026 World Cup.

For rights holders, investors and sports-technology companies, the commercial lesson is clear: football's most valuable inventions are increasingly hybrid systems. They combine hardware, software, machine vision, data analytics and tournament integration. Patent portfolios in this sector therefore do more than secure exclusivity; they help attract funding, structure joint ventures, support cross-licensing and create defensible market positions in a rapidly converging industry.

Performance technologies follow the same pattern. Wearable trackers, GPS vests, smart shin guards, recovery technologies, hydration systems, injury prediction tools and AI-led tactical analysis are all part of a broader football innovation economy. FIFA's 2026 rollout of Football AI Pro, described as a generative-AI knowledge assistant for team analysts, shows how performance intelligence is moving from static reporting to query-driven, real-time tactical insight. What began as sports science support is becoming a protected technology layer that influences coaching, scouting, player valuation and medical risk management.

Image credit: Google's Nano Banana 2

Did you know?

FIFA's connected-ball system has been described as capturing touch data at 500 times per second, a reminder that even the "first touch" now has a digital shadow.

TRADEMARKS: BUILDING BILLION-DOLLAR SPORTING BRANDS

If patents help engineer football, trademarks help sell it to the world. Few sporting assets demonstrate this more powerfully than FIFA, the FIFA World Cup, and the commercial language that surrounds major tournaments.

A modern football event is a dense trademark environment. Tournament names, logos, word marks, mascots, official slogans, trophy imagery, club crests, jersey badges and sponsor activations are all vehicles of source identification and accumulated goodwill. Their value lies not only in recognition, but in exclusivity. When consumers see a tournament emblem on a product, a hospitality package or a digital campaign, the mark signals authenticity, permission and commercial origin.

That is why brand protection around elite tournaments is so aggressive. The issue is not merely piracy in the crude sense; it is the more sophisticated problem of association. Ambush marketing remains a persistent legal and commercial threat because a brand can attempt to capture tournament attention without using official marks directly. Commentary around the 2026 World Cup has emphasized exactly this point: campaigns may avoid FIFA logos while still creating an impression of affiliation, thereby diluting sponsor value and eroding the premium paid for official rights.

The practical importance of trademark enforcement is especially visible in merchandise. Counterfeit jerseys are not a peripheral nuisance; they are evidence of how powerful football brands have become. In 2024, Hong Kong customs reported seizing counterfeit products worth HK$52 million, including more than 6,000 fake UEFA Euro 2024 and Copa América jerseys. During the 2026 tournament cycle, public reporting also described seizures of counterfeit World Cup-related goods in North America, including Toronto police action involving counterfeit merchandise bearing unauthorized FIFA, Nike, adidas and Puma marks.

For football businesses, this is not only an enforcement problem; it is a valuation problem. Trademark portfolios underpin licensing revenue, sponsorship pricing and investor confidence. A club crest, a federation emblem or a player's personal brand can become a standalone asset class when properly registered, policed and commercialized. Adidas, Nike and Puma understand this well. Their football businesses rely on a blend of product marks, sponsorship associations, trade dress, athlete endorsements and long-term licensing strategies tied to clubs, tournaments and culture.

Player branding adds another layer. In the digital economy, elite footballers are no longer only athletes; they are personality-led media businesses. Their names, signatures, logos, celebrations and even recurring visual motifs can have trademark significance. For advisors, the modern question is not simply whether a mark is registrable. It is whether the brand architecture around an athlete is built for licensing, anti-counterfeiting, merchandising, gaming, social media and post-career monetization.

COPYRIGHT: PROTECTING FOOTBALL'S STORIES

The ball may move for 90 minutes, but football's commercial afterlife can last for decades. Copyright is what gives structure to that afterlife.

Broadcasting is the most obvious example. Live match production requires layered creative inputs: camera direction, graphics packages, theme music, commentary, edited highlights, promotional reels, documentaries and archive programming. FIFA's 2026 partnership with YouTube shows how rights holders are now thinking beyond traditional linear distribution. FIFA said media partners would be able to publish extended highlights, behind-the-scenes footage, Shorts and video-on-demand content, and even stream the first 10 minutes of every match or a select number of matches in full on their YouTube channels under the new arrangement.

This is copyright in action as both shield and currency. Rights holders do not only seek to prevent unauthorized copying; they segment and monetize rights across territories, languages, windows and platforms. A single tournament can generate distinct licensing layers for live broadcast, near-live clips, highlights, archives, creator access, social media edits and documentary storytelling. The legal architecture is complicated precisely because the underlying content is so valuable.

Football also raises increasingly difficult authorship questions in the platform era. Who owns AI-generated tactical visualizations? What rights subsist in automatically generated highlight packages? How should leagues and federations approach fan-created clips that mix original commentary with protected footage? These are no longer speculative issues. As FIFA expands controlled digital distribution and creator access for the 2026 World Cup, the boundaries between official content, derivative content and transformative fan media will only become more commercially significant.

Video games and digital archives deepen the copyright story further. Football titles depend on an extraordinary matrix of rights, including club names, player likenesses, kits, stadium visuals, music, footage and database elements. Meanwhile, archive exploitation has become a strategic asset. FIFA's YouTube arrangement specifically includes unlocking content from its digital archive, including full-length past matches and iconic moments. In legal terms, football's memory economy is every bit as important as its live economy.

INDUSTRIAL DESIGNS: THE BEAUTY OF INNOVATION

Football has always understood that function alone does not sell. The game also trades in silhouette, surface and visual identity, and that is where industrial designs become commercially powerful.

The eye is drawn instinctively to form: the contour of a boot, the geometry of a trophy, the panel arrangement of a match ball, the shape of a stadium seat, the cut of a jersey and the packaging of a special-edition release. These aesthetic features may not determine the entire product's function, but they often determine consumer desire. In a market where marginal performance gains matter, visual distinction can be just as valuable as technical superiority.

Consider the official World Cup ball. Public reporting on the 2026 adidas Trionda Pro emphasized not only its performance features but also its thermally bonded panel construction and design identity as the tournament's official match ball. The commercial significance of that object lies in the fusion of engineering, branding and design. Consumers do not buy only a ball; they buy a tournament artifact with visual and symbolic resonance.

The same is true for jerseys and boots. Football apparel sits at the intersection of trademark, copyright, design and licensing law. A shirt can embody crest rights, sponsor marks, graphic artwork and potentially protected ornamental elements. A boot can combine patented soleplate technologies with design-protected shapes and brand-signifying visual language. For manufacturers, industrial design protection can help bridge the gap between technical innovation and mass-market desirability.

Stadium design is equally revealing. The modern venue is an experiential object. Seating, lighting rigs, tunnels, dugouts, hospitality spaces and digital signage are all designed not only for performance but for spectacle, comfort and recognizable identity. In an increasingly image-led sports economy, design rights deserve far more strategic attention than they often receive.

TRADE SECRETS: FOOTBALL'S HIDDEN COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Not every valuable football innovation should be published to the world in exchange for a patent term. Some of the most sensitive assets in sport derive their value precisely from remaining confidential.

Trade secrets are the private playbook of modern football. They can include scouting databases, recruitment models, opponent-specific tactical plans, proprietary fitness algorithms, injury-risk indicators, nutrition programs, recovery protocols, contract analytics and internal valuation models. In elite environments, the difference between a patented technology and a protected secret is often a strategic choice rather than a doctrinal one.

The reason is simple. Patent protection requires disclosure. If a club, startup or performance lab believes that confidentiality can be maintained and competitive advantage sustained, secrecy may be more attractive than publication. That is especially true for machine-learning models trained on proprietary performance data, internal benchmarking methods and decision-making systems that are difficult to reverse engineer from the outside.

This is where legal discipline matters. Trade secrets do not protect themselves. Their value depends on access controls, employment terms, consultant agreements, cybersecurity, NDAs, clean data governance and disciplined information flows across coaching, medical and executive functions. In sports-tech transactions, one of the most overlooked risks is the assumption that because a dataset or algorithm is "important," it is legally protected. Without confidentiality architecture, it may not be.

LICENSING: FOOTBALL'S INVISIBLE ECONOMY

Behind every visible football product sits a contract. Licensing is the invisible economy that converts intangible rights into global cash flow.

This is the engine room of the sport. Tournament organizers license marks for merchandise and promotional campaigns. Brands license technology for officiating and performance systems. Broadcasters acquire layered media rights. Gaming companies secure use rights for teams, athletes and league assets. Digital platforms negotiate clip rights, archive access and creator permissions. What appears to fans as a seamless spectacle is, in commercial reality, a network of negotiated permissions.

The logic extends well beyond shirts and scarves. A connected-ball system may involve technology licensing and data-governance terms. A club's mobile app may involve software licensing, image rights, sponsorship obligations and content rights. Fantasy football products may require rights to statistics, marks and audiovisual elements. Digital collectibles and NFTs, while more muted than at their peak, still illustrate how sports organizations continue to test new licensing structures around fan identity and scarcity.

Licensing also explains why IP diligence matters so intensely in football transactions. Investors do not merely ask whether a sports-tech company has a good product; they ask whether the company owns, controls or validly licenses the IP that makes commercialization possible. Innovation without a clean rights chain rarely scales.

Did you know?

FIFA's YouTube arrangement for the 2026 World Cup includes not only highlights and creator access but also the release of content from FIFA's digital archive, showing how archival copyright can be relicensed as a live commercial asset.

AI, DATA AND THE FUTURE OF FOOTBALL

Football is entering a phase in which data is no longer a support function; it is becoming part of the sport's grammar.

At the 2026 World Cup, FIFA's technology stack has been described as using 16 tracking cameras per stadium, producing around 150 million data points per match and feeding AI-enhanced visualizations and decision support for officiating. FIFA has also introduced Football AI Pro as a generative-AI knowledge assistant, giving team analysts query-based access to match-related insights before and after games. This matters because it signals a shift from passive analytics to interactive intelligence.

The implications are wider than coaching. AI is now reshaping refereeing support, player valuation, opponent analysis, scouting, injury prediction, fan personalization, content generation and stadium operations. In broadcasting, automated clip selection, captioning and visualization tools are already changing production workflows. In recruitment, clubs and investors increasingly rely on data-led judgments about potential, durability and tactical fit.

But the law is chasing the technology. Who owns AI-generated visual outputs derived from match data? What contractual rights do teams have over data produced in federated tournaments? Can an AI summary of match footage be commercialized independently, or is it derivative of protected broadcast content? As tournament ecosystems become more data-rich and more automated, legal advisors will need to manage overlapping layers of copyright, database rights, confidential information, contract and personality rights.

The central strategic point is this: AI does not weaken IP in football; it multiplies its importance. The more sport becomes measurable, modelled and media-rich, the more valuable protected intangible assets become.

LESSONS FOR INNOVATORS AND BUSINESSES

For startups, sports-tech founders, universities, manufacturers and investors, football offers a sophisticated lesson in commercialization discipline: innovation alone is rarely enough.

The winners in this market usually understand five things early.

a) First, protect the right asset in the right way. A sensor system may call for patents; a coaching model may be better held as a trade secret; a platform brand may need early trademark filings.
b) Second, think in portfolios, not silos. The strongest football businesses often combine patents, software rights, data controls, trademarks and design protection rather than relying on a single doctrine.
c) Third, build licensing readiness from day one. If the rights chain is fragmented, partners and investors will hesitate.
d) Fourth, anticipate enforcement. Counterfeiting, unauthor -ized association and unlicensed content use are not exceptional in football; they are predictable features of success.
e) Fifth, align legal strategy with the business model. Rights that cannot support manufacturing, sponsorship, media distribution or exit value are underperforming assets.

Image credit: Evolution of Football Innovation (Conceptual illustration by the author; AI-assisted visualization generated using Meta.)

For universities and research institutions, the message is equally urgent. Sports science, biomechanics, wearables, turf systems and AI tools increasingly sit on the boundary between academic insight and commercial sport. Technology transfer offices that treat football innovation as a serious commercialization sector, rather than a niche curiosity, are likely to find substantial opportunity.

For investors, the sector rewards deeper diligence. A compelling demo is not enough. The decisive questions concern ownership, freedom to operate, data rights, tournament access, regulator acceptance, and whether the company's IP strategy matches its go-to-market ambitions.

FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT OFF-BALL MOVEMENT

Football's drama still belongs to the players. Yet the global sport that surrounds them is shaped by another class of competitor: inventors, engineers, designers, coders, broadcasters, rights holders, entrepreneurs and brand custodians whose ideas make the spectacle possible.

That is why **WIPO: "IP and Sports: Ready, Set, Innovate!"** feels especially apt in football. Innovation gives the game new tools. Creativity gives it meaning. Commercialization gives it scale. Intellectual property gives it structure, incentives and continuity.

Trophies are lifted in a moment; value is built over years. Every goal may last a moment, but innovation changes the game forever. Intellectual property is the rulebook that ensures those innovations are protected, rewarded and able to inspire the generations still waiting for their first whistle.

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Vikas Anil Awale

INDIA'S NEW SPORTS GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK: NATIONAL SPORTS BOARD & NATIONAL SPORTS TRIBUNAL RULES, 2026

On 22 May 2026, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports notified two sets of rules under the National Sports Governance Act, 2025: the **National Sports Governance (National Sports Board) Rules, 2026** and **National Sports Governance (National Sports Tribunal) Rules, 2026.** These rules operationalise the two flagship institutional pillars of India's restructured sports administration framework; a regulatory body for governance oversight and a dedicated adjudicatory forum for disputes.

1. National Sports Board (NSB)

Aim & Purpose:

The National Sports Board functions as the apex regulatory authority for sports governance in India. Its core mandate is to grant recognition to National Sports Bodies (NSBs) and ensure their ongoing compliance with governance, financial and ethical standards prescribed under the Act.

Composition:

The Board comprises a chairperson and two Members, appointed by the Central Government from a panel recommended by a Search-cum-Selection Committee constituted under the National Sports Board (Search-cum-Selection Committee) Rules, 2026.

Term & Conditions:

Each appointee holds office for three years or until age 65, whichever is earlier, with eligibility for one re-appointment. Deputation appointees are paid at the level of Secretary/Additional Secretary to the Government of India. No member may, during their tenure, hold any position in any International or National Sports Body, affiliated unit, or National Sports Promotion Organisation.

Powers & Functions:

The Board maintains a roster of the National Sports Election Panel and a register of NSB affiliate units, both public documents under Section 74, Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023. It may specify model guidelines on sports governance, consult stakeholders, recommend adoption of international best practices, and organise training programmes and conferences in collaboration with international sports bodies.

Financial Accountability:

The Board is subject to detailed financial oversight too. The Board has to prepare annual accounts (balance sheet, income & expenditure, receipts & payments) in the CAG-prescribed format, forwards them to the CAG within three months of the financial year-end, and ensures CAG-certified accounts with the audit report are laid before each House of Parliament. All records must be preserved for a minimum of five years.

2. National Sports Tribunal (NST)

Aim & Purpose:

The National Sports Tribunal is established as a dedicated adjudicatory body for sports-related disputes, aimed at reducing reliance on civil courts and providing independent, speedy, cost-effective resolution of disputes concerning sports governance and administration. It is designed as a single-window mechanism to curtail multiplicity of litigation.

Composition:

The Tribunal consists of a Chairperson and Members appointed by the Central Government on the recommendation of a Search-cum-Selection Committee constituted. Serving judges of the Supreme Court or High Courts and members of organised services must resign or take voluntary retirement from their parent service before joining.

Term & Conditions:

The Chairperson serves for five years or until age 70, and Members until age 67, in each case whichever is earlier, with eligibility for one re-appointment. Both will get allowances equivalent to Group 'A' GoI officers at the corresponding pay level.

Powers of the Tribunal:

The Tribunal may pass such orders or directions as necessary to meet the ends of justice or prevent abuse of process. It may also grant interim relief including injunctions and stays after hearing the parties. All orders are executable as decrees of a civil court and, on expiry of the appeal period, are deemed final decrees.

Post-tenure Restrictions:

Members may not practise before the Tribunal post-retirement, nor undertake arbitration assignments while in office. A two-year cooling-off period applies post-tenure, prohibiting employment with any entity governed by the Act. This restriction does not extend to employment under Central/State Governments.

Techno-Legal Infrastructure:

The Central Government may notify a digital portal enabling online filing of disputes, virtual hearings, publication of orders, and maintenance of digital records. Once notified, all Tribunal orders will be digitally signed and conveyed electronically to all parties.

Key Takeaway

Together, these Rules give institutional teeth to the National Sports Governance Act, 2025. Entities operating in the Indian sports ecosystem including sports federations, clubs, athletes and their advisors should take note that governance compliance with NSB standards is now a condition of recognition, and sports disputes have a dedicated, tech-enabled forum with civil-court-equivalent enforcement powers. Taken together, these Rules signal that Indian sports administration is entering a new era of professionalism and regulatory rigour, one where transparency, integrity safeguards, and institutional independence are built into the system by design. For sports federations, clubs, athletes, and their advisors, understanding and aligning with this framework is no longer a matter of choice but of legal necessity.

IP UPDATES

BAHRAIN:
BAHRAIN ACCEDES TO THE LOCARNO AGREEMENT FOR INDUSTRIAL DESIGNS

The Kingdom of Bahrain has enacted Law No. (21) of 2026, approving its accession to the **Locarno Agreement Establishing an International Classification for Industrial Designs.** The Locarno Agreement, adopted in 1968 and amended in 1979, provides a standardized international classification system for industrial designs, facilitating their registration, administration, and search through internationally recognized classes and subclasses. This accession further demonstrates Bahrain's commitment to harmonizing its intellectual property framework with international standards and best practices.

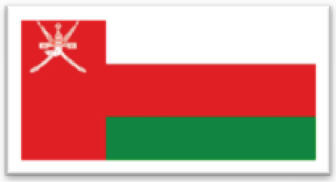
LIBYA:ELECTRONIC TRADEMARK PUBLICATION SYSTEM EXPANDED

The Libyan Commercial Registry Department continues to publish trademark applications electronically through its official online platform. The latest publication batch includes trademark numbers **55261 to 57597.** Under Libyan trademark regulations, newly published marks are subject to a **30-day opposition period** commencing from the date of publication. Notably, a substantial number of previously accepted trademark applications with publication numbers below 55261 remain unpublished. The authorities have yet to clarify the procedure or timeline for addressing this backlog.

SAUDI ARABIA:
SAIP APPROVES IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS FOR GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS

The Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property (SAIP) has approved the **Implementing Regulations of the Geographical Indications Protection System** pursuant to Board Resolution No. 2026/39/01 dated 30 April 2026, following the issuance of the Geographical Indications Protection System under Royal Decree No. M/102 dated 17 November 2025. According to the Official Gazette (Umm Al-Qura), SAIP will begin accepting GI applications once the system and regulations come into force, while substantive examination will commence following the publication of the official fee schedule. The regulations establish the framework for the registration and protection of geographical indications and prohibit the registration of generic or misleading geographical names. This development strengthens Saudi Arabia's IP regime and supports the protection of products linked to specific geographic origins.

OMAN:
OMANI FRANKINCENSE RECEIVES INTERNATIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION PROTECTION



Omani frankincense has secured international protection as a **Geographical Indication** (GI) through the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), becoming the first product from the Gulf region to obtain registration under the **Lisbon System.** The registration formally recognizes the unique qualities, reputation, and geographical origin of Omani frankincense. The achievement follows Oman's accession to the **Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement,** which facilitates international recognition and protection of geographical indications and appellations of origin.

This milestone is expected to enhance the global market value and recognition of Omani frankincense while providing stronger legal protection against unauthorized use of its name abroad.

ALGERIA:
INAPI ADOPTS STRICTER DEADLINE FOR PATENT AMENDMENTS

The Algerian Patent Office (INAPI) has introduced a significant practice change regarding amendments to **PCT applications entering the national phase.** Under the revised approach, applicants must submit any claim amendments or substantive modifications **within one month from entry into the Algerian national phase.** Amendments filed after this deadline will no longer be accepted or considered during substantive examination.

After the one-month period, only corrections of material or clerical errors may be requested, subject to supporting evidence and payment of the prescribed fees. This marks a departure from previous practice, under which amendments were occasionally accepted during substantive examination. The new policy is also being applied to pending applications, making timely submission of amendments increasingly critical for applicants.

EGYPT:
EGYPT UPDATES OFFICIAL IP FEES AND INTRODUCES NEW SERVICES

The Egyptian Intellectual Property Authority has issued **Decisions No. 64 and 65 of 2026,** introducing new services and revising official fees with effect from **5 April 2026.**

Key developments include:

- Introduction of a **Specialized Search Service** for companies.
- Implementation of additional fixed official fees for services relating to **trademarks, trade names, industrial designs, and geographical indications,** payable in addition to existing official fees and stamp duties.
- Launch of a new service enabling applicants to obtain official copies of previously issued expert reports, subject to additional fees.

These changes form part of a broader modernization of the Authority's fee structure and service offerings.

PATENT CASES

ABBVIE IRELAND UNLIMITED COMPANY (Appellant) vs DEPUTY CONTROLLER OF PATENTS DESIGNS (Respondent)

CASE NO.: C.A.(COMM.IPD-PAT) 65/2024
DECIDED ON: 29th April 2026

The appellant filed the present appeal challenging the impugned order passed by the respondent refusing the appellant's divisional patent application under section 2(1)(ja) for lack of inventive step and under section 16 for non-maintainability of divisional application. The appellant states that the Patent Office raised an objection of unity of invention during the First Examination report, corresponding to which the divisional patent application was filed. Therefore, the appellant cannot be denied a right to file the divisional application. The appellant argued that the respondent failed to appreciate that the claims of the parent application and the present divisional application relate to two distinct inventive concepts and further failed to conduct proper inventive step analysis with regard to the cited prior art before refusing the present divisional application. The respondent countered that detailed comparative analysis was conducted with the cited prior art before refusing the present divisional application. And the application has been refused on merits of lack of inventive step, the appellant is under misconception that the divisional application has been refused as not maintainable.

The Hon'ble Delhi High Court noted that the impugned order denotes rejection of the present divisional application on the ground of non-maintainability under Section 16; and lack of inventive step under Section 2(1)(ja). The Hon'ble Court states that once the divisional application is filed pursuant to the object of the unit of invention, the said application cannot be rejected on the ground that the claims allegedly stood granted in the parent application. And the appellant urges that the teaching of the prior art do not lad to the claimed invention, as they are not obvious to the person skilled in the art. All the objections and responses must be carefully considered and dealt with in the reasoned order. The Hon'ble Court concluded by setting aside the impugned order and directing the respondent to consider the matter fresh on the objection of lack of inventive step under Section 2(1)(ja) of the 1970 Act.

NAVYA NETWORK INC. (Petitioner) vs ASSISTANT CONTROLLER OF PATENTS AND DESIGNS (Respondent)

CASE NO.: COMMERCIAL MISCELLANEOUS PETITION (L) NO. 15327 OF 2025
DECIDED ON: 15th April 2026

The present petition has been filed by the petitioner challenging the impugned order passed by the respondent refusing the petitioner's patent application *(hereinafter referred s 'subject application')* under the ground of lack of inventive step under Section 2(1)(ja) and non-patentability under Section 3(k). The petitioner argued that the respondent failed to provide any reasoning on how the subject application lacked inventive step when compared with the cited prior arts. Further the petitioner stated that the respondent didn't consider the submission on patentability made by them, which included novelty and inventive step, and the reasoning provided under section 3(k) in the impugned order is completely different than the reasoning provided during the hearing notice, thereby depriving their opportunity to address the objection. The respondent countered that the subject application has been rightly rejected as it failed to disclose any technical effect or contribution and were priorly disclosed in the cited prior arts.

The Hon'ble Bombay High Court observed the following matter and noted the absence of reasoning/analysis in the impugned order while refusing the subject application. The Hon'ble Court further stated that the reasoning provided by the respondent during the hearing notice and the impugned order is different, leaving petitioner with no opportunity to respond. The Hon'ble Court concluded by setting aside the impugned order and remanded the matter back for afresh consideration.

TRADEMARK CASES

BLACK DIAMOND MOTORS PVT. LTD. (Petitioner) vs REGISTRAR OF TRADE MARKS, MUMBAI & BLACK DIAMOND TRACK PARTS PVT. LTD. (Respondents)

CASE NO.: CMP/23/2026 with IA/2089/2026 in CMP/23/2026
DECIDED ON: 17th June 2026

In the present case, the Petitioner filed a statutory appeal challenging an order passed by respondent no. 1 permitting respondent no. 2 to place on record an affidavit of evidence in rectification proceedings despite a delay of more than three years. The dispute primarily concerned whether the time limit prescribed under Rule 45 of the Trade Marks Rules, 2017 for filing evidence is mandatory or merely directory.

The Petitioner contended that Rule 45 prescribes a mandatory deadline and that respondent no. 1 lacked jurisdiction to permit the delayed filing of evidence. Reliance was placed on judicial precedents treating the provision as mandatory. Respondent no. 2, on the other hand, argued that Rule 45 is directory in nature and that respondent no. 1 retains discretion under Section 131 of the Trade Marks Act, 1999 to extend time and accept evidence even after expiry of the prescribed period.

The Hon'ble Bombay High Court held that Rule 45 stipulates a directory and not a mandatory deadline. The Hon'ble Court observed that Rules 46 to 48 of the Trade Marks Rules, 2017 confer discretion upon the Registrar to permit additional evidence where necessary for a fair adjudication. The Hon'ble Court emphasised that procedural provisions should facilitate justice rather than defeat substantive rights and that treating Rule 45 as mandatory would lead to absurd consequences. The Hon'ble Court further held that Section 131 of the Trade Marks Act empowers respondent no. 1 to extend such procedural timelines even after their expiry, subject to sufficient cause being shown.

Accordingly, the Hon'ble Court dismissed the appeal and upheld the order passed by respondent no. 1 permitting the delayed affidavit of evidence filed by respondent no. 2 to be taken on record. The Hon'ble Court confirmed that respondent no. 1 had acted within its jurisdiction and that no interference with the impugned order was warranted.

RENEE COSMETICS PRIVATE LIMITED (Petitioner) vs MS. RUPALI SHARMA & ANR. (Respondents)

CASE NO.: C.O. (COMM.IPD-TM) 107/2025 & I.A. 11431/2025
DECIDED ON: 5th June 2026

In the present case, petitioner filed a rectification petition against respondents seeking cancellation of the registered trademark **"GLASS SKIN"** in Class 03. The dispute arose after the respondent alleged infringement of the mark **"GLASS SKIN"** and the petitioner's product listing was removed from an e-commerce platform on the basis of the respondent's trademark registration.

The petitioner argued that **"GLASS SKIN"** merely describes the intended purpose and result of skincare products, referring to the popular Korean beauty trend of achieving clear, luminous skin. The respondents, on the other hand, contended that the mark was *"suggestive"* rather than descriptive, requiring imagination on the part of consumers and therefore deserving trademark protection.

The Hon'ble Delhi High Court held that the expression **"GLASS SKIN"** is descriptive of the nature, intended purpose, and end result of cosmetic products. The Hon'ble Court observed that the term had been extensively used by various stakeholders in the beauty industry and even by the respondents itself in a descriptive manner. Applying the principles relating to descriptive and suggestive marks, the Hon'ble Court concluded that **"GLASS SKIN"** directly conveys the characteristics and intended effect of the goods and is therefore barred from registration under Section 9(1)(b) of the Trade Marks Act, 1999.

Accordingly, the Hon'ble Court allowed the rectification petition and directed the Registrar of Trade Marks to cancel and remove the registration of the mark **"GLASS SKIN"** from the Trade Marks Register.

M/S L'OREAL (Plaintiff) vs M/S. SEEMA COSMETICS (Defendant)

CASE NO.: CS (COMM) 224/2020

DECIDED ON: 5th June 2026

In the present case, Plaintiff filed a suit against defendant seeking permanent injunction and other reliefs for alleged trademark infringement, passing off, dilution, and copyright infringement. The plaintiff contended that the defendant had adopted and was using the mark ***"TIANNUO MAGIC KAJAL"*** along with a deceptively similar trade dress and packaging, thereby infringing its trademark ***"L'ORÉAL KAJAL MAGIQUE"*** and copying the artistic features embodied therein. The defendant denied the allegations and argued that it was not using the impugned mark, that "Kajal" is a generic term incapable of exclusive appropriation, and that its packaging and branding were entirely distinct from those of the plaintiff.

The Hon'ble Delhi Commercial Court observed that noted that the plaintiff failed to properly prove its trademark registration by producing original or certified copies of the relevant registration documents. Hon'ble Court also held that the word "Kajal" is generic and incapable of conferring exclusivity, and that the dominant features of the competing marks **"L'ORÉAL"**and **"TIANNUO"** were entirely different, making the marks dissimilar when viewed as a whole. The Hon'ble Court additionally found that the plaintiff had failed to establish goodwill, misrepresentation, damage, or ownership of copyright in the alleged artwork through admissible evidence. All claims for injunction, damages, rendition of accounts, delivery up, and costs were rejected, and the matter was decided in favour of the defendant.

ROBERT A MERRY AND CO LTD & ANR. (Plaintiff) vs PICCADILY AGRO INDUSTRIES LTD (Defendants)

CASE NO.: CS(COMM) 9/2026 & CS(COMM) 1164/2025

DECIDED ON: 29th May 2026

In the present cross-suits, Plaintiff, an Irish whiskey manufacturer, filed a suit against defendants alleging passing off arising from the latter's use of the mark **"WHISTLER"** for whiskey products. Defendant, in turn, filed a suit for trademark infringement and passing off on the basis of its Indian registration of the mark **"WHISTLER",** seeking to restrain plaintiff from marketing its Irish whiskey under the marks **"WHISTLER"** and **"THE WHISTLER"** in India.

Plaintiff contended that it was the prior adopter and international proprietor of the marks **"WHISTLER"** and **"THE WHISTLER",** having acquired substantial global goodwill and transborder reputation. Defendants argued that it was the registered proprietor of **"WHISTLER"** in India since 2008 and that plaintiff had failed to establish any significant spillover of reputation or goodwill in India prior to defendant's adoption and use of the mark.

The Hon'ble Delhi High Court emphasized the territoriality principle governing passing-off actions and held that mere worldwide reputation is insufficient unless the claimant establishes substantial goodwill and reputation within India. The Hon'ble Court observed that registrations and commercial success abroad do not automatically confer enforceable rights in India and that a foreign proprietor must demonstrate spillover of goodwill into the Indian market before claiming protection against an Indian user. The Hon'ble Court found that the plaintiff had failed to establish the requisite transborder reputation in India prior to the defendant's adoption and registration of the mark and declined to grant interim protection to the plaintiff and restrained the use of the mark **'WHISTLER'** in India by the plaintiff.

BURBERRY LIMITED (Plaintiff) vs KRISHAN KUMAR AND ORS (Defendants)

CASE NO.: CS (COMM) 332/19

DECIDED ON: 29th May 2026

BURBERRY

In the present suit, plaintiff filed a suit against multiple defendants engaged in the sale and trade of fashion accessories, apparel, belts, handbags, and allied goods, seeking permanent injunction and other reliefs for infringement and passing off of its well-known trademark **"BURBERRY".** The plaintiff alleged that the defendants were manufacturing and selling counterfeit products bearing the

the **BURBERRY** mark, logos, and labels without authorization, thereby infringing its statutory and common law rights. The defendants contested the suit on various grounds, including lack of authorization of the plaintiff's representative to institute the proceedings, absence of territorial jurisdiction, and denial of involvement in any infringing activities. Defendant No. 2 further contended that the allegedly infringing goods belonged to a third party and that he had no knowledge of any infringement.

The Hon'ble Saket District Court observed that although the plaintiff had established ownership and reputation in the **BURBERRY** trademarks, it failed to prove that the suit had been instituted through a duly authorized person, as the authority relied upon had expired prior to the filing of the suit and no valid board resolution or supporting authorization was produced. The Hon'ble Court noted several inconsistencies in the Local Commissioner's report and the plaintiff's evidence. Hon'ble Court held that the plaintiff failed to prove infringement against Defendant Nos. 1, 4, and 5, as there was insufficient and unreliable evidence linking the seized goods to them. However, the Hon'ble Court held Defendant No. 3 liable for infringement, noting that goods bearing the **'BURBERRY'** label were found and that the defendant's failure to produce the seized goods indicated dealing in counterfeit products.

Accordingly, the Hon'ble Court restrained Defendant No. 3 from dealing in counterfeit **BURBERRY** goods and awarded ₹3 lakhs in damages to the plaintiff. However, since the suit was not properly instituted and infringement was not proved against the remaining defendants, the suit was dismissed.

COPYRIGHT CASES

M/S BHARATI BHAWAN PUBLISHERS AND DISTRIBUTORS (Plaintiff) vs SANJAY SINGH AND ORS (Defendants)

CASE NO.: CS(COMM) 598/2026
DECIDED ON: 26th May 2026

In the present case, Plaintiff filed a suit against defendants seeking protection of its copyrights in educational publications. The suit was instituted after the plaintiff discovered that counterfeit and pirated copies of its books were being reproduced and sold through online marketplaces without its authorization.

The plaintiff contended that it was the exclusive owner of copyrights in several educational publications and that the defendants were illegally reproducing, printing, distributing, and selling pirated copies of its books. It was further argued that the counterfeit books lacked the plaintiff's original security features, such as holograms and 3D security stickers, thereby evidencing unauthorized reproduction of the copyrighted works. Since the matter was considered at the ad interim stage, no substantive defence was recorded from the defendants.

The Hon'ble Delhi High Court observed that the material placed on record established a prima facie case of copyright infringement and book piracy. The Hon'ble Court noted that the impugned publications appeared to be unauthorized reproductions of the plaintiff's copyrighted works and that the absence of the plaintiff's security features further supported the allegation of piracy. The Hon'ble Court emphasized that the unauthorized reproduction and sale of educational books not only infringed the plaintiff's statutory rights under the Copyright Act but also adversely affected its goodwill and commercial interests. Accordingly, the Hon'ble Court granted an ex parte ad interim injunction restraining the defendants from infringing plaintiff's copyright.

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This Newsletter is published by Audiri Vox at 309 Churchill Tower Business Bay, P.O. Box 415116 Dubai-Untited Arab Emirates 7 July, 2026.