

# MID-AIR: ON SUSPENSION OF TABLE TENNIS FEDERATION

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Human resources, Youth, Sports and related issues

After India's fruitful outing at the Tokyo Olympics last year, the expectations of the sports-loving fraternity in the country were obviously high for the Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games later this year. However, several sports bodies, including the Indian Olympic Association, the [Table Tennis Federation of India \(TTFI\)](#) and the Equestrian Federation of India are all involved in legal battles. As a result, players across disciplines are not sure of their plans to prepare for these Games. The TTFI's latest suspension following a Delhi High Court order, and the appointment of a Committee of Administrators (CoA), have left the players in a quandary. In table tennis, India bagged eight medals including three golds from the 2018 Commonwealth Games and a mixed doubles bronze from the 2018 Asian Games. Sharath Kamal, a former Commonwealth Games champion and the country's spearhead for over 15 years, has pointed out the possibility of the players, across age groups and those from para table tennis, missing out on playing in several key events lined up in March. Since February 15 was the last date to submit entries for three out of four World Table Tennis (WTT) events scheduled in Singapore and Doha, the TTFI's suspension has unsettled the players. Sharath and G. Sathiyam informed the WTT about the court order and requested that their doubles' entry be accepted.

However, worse is the plight of other players, cutting across categories and age groups, and it is a cause for worry. Desperate for a solution to this stalemate, Sharath intends to meet the Sports Minister and the Sports Authority of India officials and brief them about the situation. The present state of uncertainty arose following the TTFI's suspension on a petition from leading woman player Manika Batra after she was dropped from the squad to the Asian championship last year for being absent from the national camp. In her plea, she claimed that the team coach, Soumyadeep Roy, asked her to lose the match to Sutirtha Mukherjee in the Asian Olympic qualifier at Doha during March 2021. In November, the court appointed a three-member inquiry committee to look into these allegations. Following the inquiry report, the court suspended the TTFI. As per the court order, the CoA will be sending the entries to the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF). However, with the ITTF and the WTT reserving the right to accept or reject entries sent by anyone other than its affiliates, players are not sure of the way forward. The suspended officials who are directed to assist the CoA in the day-to-day functioning of the TTFI are hopeful of the ITTF upholding the players' interest. Else, table tennis players will continue to remain victims while the governing sports body reveals fissures.

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