Reserved for judgment on : 13.10.2026
Date of pronouncement : 14.10.2026
Date of uploading : 14.10.2026

Whether only operative part
of the judgment is pronounced
or whether full judgment is
pronounced : FULL.

**[3584]**

APHC010530132026

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF ANDHRA PRADESH**
**AT AMARAVATI**

**WRIT PETITION Nos.28796 AND 29400 OF 2026**

**W.P.No.28796 of 2026:**

Pothuraju Ajay Jain ...Petitioner

Vs.

The State of Andhra Pradesh and others ...Respondent(s)

**********

**CORAM : THE CHIEF JUSTICE LISA GILL**
**SRI JUSTICE CHALLA GUNARANJAN**

**DATE : 14th October 2026**

Present:

Advocate for Petitioners: MS.BOPPUDI ALEKHYA

Advocate(s) for Respondent(s): GP FOR SPORTS,
GP FOR MEDICAL HEALTH FW,
Tata Venkata Sridevi, Standing Counsel for Dr.NTR University of Health Sciences,
MR. G SAI NARAYANA RAO SC for SAAP

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**COMMON ORDER:**(per Hon'ble Sri Justice Challa Gunaranjan)

Issues raised in both these writ petitions since are intrinsically connected, with consent of learned counsels appearing for parties, the same are taken up for consideration and disposed of by this common order.

**2.** W.P.No.28796 of 2026 is filed seeking the following relief

> " …to issue an order, direction or writ, more particularly one in the nature of the Writ of Mandamus, declaring the action of the respondent Nos.4 and 5 in not considering the Handball sports certificates of the Petitioner as his main discipline and in considering only his Basketball sports certificate while preparing and publishing the Tentative Priority List under the Sports and Games Quota for admission into MBBS and BDS Courses for the academic year 2026-27, Notice File No.5156/MBBS/BDS/EA1/2026 (Sports), dated 01.10.2026 at Sl. No.155, as illegal, arbitrary, unjust and violative of Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution of India, and contrary to the applicable Government Orders and consequently, directing respondent Nos.4 and 5 to consider, verify and take into account the Handball sports certificates of the Petitioner as his main sport and to assign him priority in the Sports and Games Quota in the Handball discipline as per the applicable Government Orders and to include the same in the Final Priority List before conducting counselling and allotment of seats under the Sports and Games Quota for MBBS and BDS Courses under NEET UG counselling for the academic year 2026-27 and to issue …."

**3.** W.P. No.29400 of 2026 is filed seeking the following prayer:

> "….to issue an order, direction or writ, more particularly one in the nature of writ of mandamus by:

(a) declaring the action of the respondent Nos.4 and 5 in issuing a notice vide File.No.5156/MBBS/BDS/EA1/2026 (Sports), dated 22.09.2026 mandating a skill test for all the candidates who participated in NEET UG Counselling 2026-2027 under Sports Quota without prescribing the same under the Prospectus/Regulations for admissions into MBBS and BDS courses under Competent Authority (Convenor) Quota for the Academic Year, 2026-2027;

(b) declaring the action of respondent Nos.4 and 5 in not allotting a Tentative Priority Rank to the petitioner under the Sports Quota in NEET UG Counselling 2026-2027, by rejecting the petitioner's Handball sports certificates on the ground of non-renewal of recognition of the Andhra Pradesh Handball Association, as illegal, arbitrary, unsustainable and violative of the Constitutional Provisions;

(c) consequently direct the respondent Nos.4 and 5 to assign the tentative priority ranks and final ranks under sports quota in NEET UG counselling 2026-2027 without taking the results of skill test into consideration and solely on the basis of the sports certificates submitted in the Handball sport/discipline in strict adherence to the Prospectus/Regulations for admissions into MBBS and BDS courses under Competent Authority (Convenor) Quota for the Academic Year 2026-2027 issued by the 4th respondent; and

(d) direct the respondent No.5 to consider the Handball Sports Certificates issued by Andhra Pradesh Handball Association as valid and to allot tentative priority rank under Sports quota in Handball Sport/discipline and to permit the petitioner to participate in the counselling and web options for admission into MBBS/BDS courses for the Academic Year 2026-2027 on that basis with all consequential reliefs and pass such other order or orders ….”

**4.** Petitioners in both these writ petitions essentially are aggrieved by tentative priority list published by 5th respondent Sports Authority of

Andhra Pradesh (“SAAP”), whereby certificates of participation in the sport of Handball produced by petitioners were not considered and no priority was assigned on the ground that said certificates were issued by the State Association without being recognized by SAAP for the year in which the sports event was held.

**5.** Petitioner in W.P.No.28796 of 2026 secured All India Rank of 974503 in NEET UG Examination for academic year 2026–2027. He stated to have furnished certificate of participation in 54$^{th}$ Senior Men’s National Handball Championship held at Haryana in 2026 and also certificate of participation at State Senior Men Inter-District Handball Championship, 2025, however, the same were not considered on the ground that Andhra Pradesh Handball Association, which issued State-level participation certificate, was not recognized by SAAP for relevant year of 2025. Petitioner also stated to have submitted certificate of participation in State-level Inter-District Basketball Championship, 2024–25, basing on which he was placed at Sl. No.155, and even the same was also not taken into consideration on the ground that Andhra Pradesh Basketball Association was not recognized for the said year.

**6.** Similarly, petitioner in W.P.No.29400 of 2026 secured All India Rank of 553600 in NEET UG Examination for the academic year 2026-

27. She stated to have participated in 54th Senior Women's National Handball Championship, 2025 at Gujarat, and at State level in 54th Andhra Pradesh Senior Women Inter-District Handball Championship 2025. Similarly, it is stated that petitioner participated in 41st Junior National Softball Championship at National level and Inter-District Softball Championships 2023–24 and 2024–25 at State level, however, in the tentative priority list, while placing her at Sl. No.110, certificates of participation in Handball sport were not taken into consideration; rather, certificates in Softball sport were considered, even though the prior certificates held highest achievements, reason assigned being Andhra Pradesh State Handball Association was not duly registered with SAAP. Further, it is also stated that another reason for rejection as stated was petitioner failed to qualify in Handball skill test; thus, no priority was assigned to her in any of these sports.

**7.** Both writ petitioners were subjected to skill test in pursuance to Notification, dated 22.09.2026, which was issued much later to issuance of prospectus/regulations of 4th respondent University issued on 05.08.2026. Thus, petitioners challenged rejection of their sports certificates and also subjecting them to skill test midway through the admission process.

**8.** **(a)** 5th respondent SAAP filed counter-affidavit in W.P.No.29400 of 2026, *inter alia,* stating that though petitioner produced participation certificates at National level with backup certificates of participation at Inter-District Championships at State level in both Handball sport, as well as participation in National level championship with backup participation certificate in Inter-District Championship for Softball sport, since Andhra Pradesh State Handball Association was found to be not recognized with SAAP, certificates issued by said Association were not considered for awarding sports quota priority, which is in consonance with G.O.Rt.No.272, Youth Advancement Tourism and Culture (Sports & YS) Department, dated 19.09.2019, read with applicable provisions of National Sports Development Code, 2011.

**(b)** Insofar as certificates in discipline of Softball, including participation at National-level championship as well as State level in Inter-District championships, it is stated that the same are being considered for further processing, having regard to grievances raised in that regard.

**(c)** It is also pleaded that as SAAP found multiple instances of submitting fake, fabricated, or tampered sports certificates, leading to misuse of sports quota reservation in grant of admissions to medical and engineering courses, and apart from even in the process of

securing employment, such certificates were being misused, defeating the interests of genuine sports candidates, a decision was taken to conduct skill test, apart from verifying genuineness of certificates produced from concerned sports Associations, therefore, by notice, dated 22.09.2026, all candidates, who have applied under sports quota, were called upon to attend skill test scheduled to be held on 25.09.2026, and later rescheduled to 28.09.2026, after prior intimation due to adverse weather conditions, and candidates participated and subjected themselves to the test. It is stated that even petitioner also participated in the test, which was conducted in the presence of trained coaches assigned from District Sports Authority, thus, conduct of such test was sought to be justified.

**9.** Even in W.P.No.28796 of 2026, similar stand was taken that Andhra Pradesh State Handball Association, since was not recognized, certificates issued in favour of petitioner were not considered for granting any priority. Conducting of skill test was also sought to be justified on the very same reasons as pleaded above.

**10.** Heard Ms.Boppudi Alekhya, learned counsel appearing for petitioners in both writ petitions; and Mrs.Tata Venkata Sridevi, learned Standing Counsel for Dr.NTR University of Health Sciences; learned Government Pleader for Medical, Health and Family Welfare and learned

Government Pleader for Youth Services, and Mr.G. Sai Narayana Rao, learned Standing Counsel for SAAP, appearing for respondents.

**11.** Learned counsel for petitioners contended that having issued prospectus/admission regulations on 05.08.2026 setting out method, manner, and procedure of admissions, respondents could not have issued notice, dated 22.09.2026, proposing to conduct skill test to all candidates who applied under sports and games category, which is impermissible. In other words, it is contended that once admission process has started, the rules notified earlier cannot be altered bringing in certain new criteria for selection of candidates. In support of said submissions, reliance has been placed on judgments of Hon'ble Apex Court in **Divjot Sekhon v. State of Punjab**[1], and **K. Manjusree v. State of A.P**.[2].

**12.** Learned counsel for petitioners further contended that merely because Andhra Pradesh Handball Association has not been recognized with SAAP, certificates issued by it confirming participation of petitioner cannot be rejected unless such certificates are otherwise found to be not genuine. It is stated that it is only on account of *inter se* disputes amongst office bearers of State Handball Association, application for recognition was not made, and that issues concerning

[1] 2026 Supreme (SC) 24 = 2026 INSC 26
[2] (2008) 3 SCC 512

the Association are now seized of before High Court of Punjab and Haryana, thus, the said proceedings cannot prejudice prospects of eligible petitioners. Even if recognition is not granted to Association, certificates of participation for events at National level issued by National bodies cannot be brushed aside, and due credence be given to such participation. Reliance in this regard has been made to orders passed by Coordinate Bench of this Court in **Yalla Nischala v. State of A.P.**[3] and **Eslavathu Modita Para v. State of A.P.**[4].

**13.** Learned Standing Counsel appearing for SAAP, while reiterating the contents pleaded in counter-affidavits, tried to justify rejection of certificates relied upon by petitioners on the ground that respective State Associations were not recognized, thus, no credence can be given to such certificates. Insofar as conducting skill test, the same is also sought to be justified on the ground of eliminating candidates approaching with fake, bogus, and certificates otherwise not genuine.

**14.** We have given our anxious consideration to the submissions made above, and perused the record.

**15.** It is not in dispute that neither 4th respondent University nor SAAP contemplated skill test at the very first instance before issuance of prospectuses/regulations governing the process of admissions for

[3] Order, dt.17.11.2025, in W.P.No.32014 of 2025 (APHC)
[4] Order, dt.14.11.2026, in I.A.No.4 of 2025 in W.P.No.28438 of 2025 (APHC)

academic year 2026–27. Initial prospectus nowhere envisaged conducting skill test to candidates seeking admissions under sports quota. It is only by way of notice, dated 22.09.2026, issued by 4th respondent, the same was proposed to be held. Even the said notice also does not specify any criteria or guidelines as to how such test would be conducted. Sports candidates were surprised by prescribing said skill test. It is also not clear as to how candidates' performance would be assessed during said skill test, and what would be the outcome and net result of such assessment. If it were to be a formal test to ascertain the familiarity of candidates in respect to respective disciplines of sport, the same would have no consequence, rather, now as seen from the record, candidates were being awarded marks based on their performance, and the same are in a way being considered in preparing the list. Though purpose and object of prescribing such test is laudable, we are of the considered opinion the same cannot be introduced mid-off admission process, which is impermissible.

**16.** In **Divjot Sekhon**[1], Hon'ble Apex Court, considering similar circumstances, held that any modification of recruitment norms is forbidden in law after recruitment process has begun, and it is equally illegal for an admission process to not be fully defined in all its contours before its commencement, which is equally applicable to

admission process to educational courses as well. It is trite in law that the rules of game cannot be altered once game has begun.

**17.** SAAP has rejected certificates on which petitioners sought to rely on, on the ground that concerned Andhra Pradesh State Associations, which issued the said certificates, were not recognized with SAAP, which is an essential criteria for considering priority. Reliance has been placed on G.O.Ms.No.272, dated 19.09.2019. Clause C(3) of the said G.O. reads as under:

> "C. State sports associations not recognized by the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP) are ineligible for the following facilities:
>
> "1) the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh does not provide any assistance."
>
> 2) Other facilities mean sports equipment, sports infrastructure, sports kits, and do not include nominating observers and coaches for tournaments conducted by sports associations.
>
> 3) State and district sports associations that do not implement the National Sports Development Code 2011 by 30.11.2019 will be disqualified from issuing sports certificates for the purpose of obtaining government sports quotas for education and employment admissions. From the day the state sports associations implement the National Sports Development Code, 2011, the sports certificates they issue will be considered valid for eligibility to obtain government sports quotas for education and employment admissions."

**18.** We take note of the fact that various disciplines of sports are organized and undertaken by concerned State Associations, which are registered Societies. SAAP does not control any of these State

Associations. It is only for the purpose of ensuring that National Sports Development Code, 2011 is implemented in its true letter and spirit, and to ensure there is transparency and accountability in running these Associations in furtherance to the object of setting higher standards and encouraging respective sports, besides genuine and eligible sports candidates are extended benefits of sports quota either for admissions in educational institutions or employment, SAAP has stepped in. But for aforesaid G.O., it is stated that SAAP has no say in any affairs of State bodies.

**19.** Be that as it may, as there is no challenge to said G.O., we are of the considered view that State and District Sports Associations not recognized by SAAP are ineligible to issue sports certificates to any of participants, and even if any such certificates are issued, candidates possessing the same will not be entitled for claiming benefits under sports quota either for admission in educational institutions or employment.

**20.** Having said that, in present case, Handball State Association, which has issued certificates of participation to petitioners in both these cases, admittedly, is not recognized by SAAP since 2022. It is stated that said Association has not even made an application for recognition for the years 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2025-26.

**21.** Learned counsel for petitioners, however, tried to persuade us by submitting that in view of *inter se* disputes amongst office bearers or members of State Association, recognition was not sought for, and the same cannot prejudice the petitioners. That apart, reliance was also made on orders passed by Coordinate Bench of this Court in **Yalla Nischala**[3] and **Eslavathu Modita Para**[4]**.**

**22.** We are unable to persuade ourselves with aforesaid submissions. Whatever be the reasons for not applying for recognition, fact remains, State Association has no recognition during aforesaid years. The certificates, which are sought to be relied on by petitioners, pertain to aforesaid years, thus, in view of specific prohibition contained in G.O.Ms.No.272, dated 19.09.2019, no exception can be carved out for consideration of certificates sought to be relied on by petitioners.

**23.** The State Association has not even sought for renewal of recognition after 2022, except for the year 2024-25. Therefore, no exception can be carved out to extend benefit in favour of petitioners.

**24.** In both the above orders in **Yalla Nischala**[3] and **Eslavathu Modita Para**[4], though Coordinate Bench of this Court had directed to consider certificates of participation granted in favour of petitioners therein at National level notwithstanding State Association did not have

recognition from SAAP, we notice that these orders did not consider and deal with the effect of Clause C(3) of G.O.Ms.No.272, dated 19.09.2019, which places prohibition in issuance of certificates by unrecognized State Associations and any credence being given to such certificates in the process of securing admissions. Thus, aforesaid two orders do not come to aid of petitioners.

**25**. Before parting with these cases, we place on record our appreciation for the initiative taken by SAAP in contemplating introduction of a skill test/proficiency test for candidates seeking admission to educational institutions under sports quota. Such an initiative is undoubtedly laudable, as it would serve as an effective safeguard against misuse of sports quota by candidates who, despite possessing certificates on paper, have not genuinely participated in relevant sporting disciplines, thereby depriving meritorious and deserving sportspersons of their legitimate opportunities. However, in order to ensure transparency, objectivity, uniformity and fairness in assessment process, we are of the considered view that SAAP ought to, in first instance, formulate and publish comprehensive guidelines prescribing the eligibility criteria, assessment parameters, evaluation methodology and other relevant modalities governing the conduct of such skill tests/proficiency tests. SAAP shall also identify and constitute an appropriate panel of qualified and experienced experts,

including coaches and technical personnel drawn from respective sporting disciplines, to undertake such assessments in an impartial and professional manner. Upon finalising aforesaid framework, SAAP shall take up the matter with Government for issuance of necessary amendments to, or appropriate modifications of, the Government Orders governing admissions under sports quota, so as to provide an adequate legal and administrative basis for implementing proposed mechanism. The entire exercise shall be undertaken sufficiently well in advance of commencement of admission process and issuance of prospectus/admission regulations by concerned Universities and educational institutions, thereby ensuring that criteria and procedure are clearly notified to all prospective applicants beforehand.

**26**. We have further noticed that, in several instances, participation certificates relied upon by candidates have been issued by State-level Sports Associations which do not have recognition from SAAP. The recurrence of this practice, which appears to be increasing from year to year, is a matter of concern, as it has potential to mislead candidates and undermine the credibility and integrity of admission process under sports quota. In these circumstances, we deem it appropriate to direct SAAP to take effective and proactive measures to widely publicise list of recognised State Sports Associations and applicable requirements for recognition of certificates issued by such

associations. SAAP shall also clearly communicate to students, parents, schools, colleges and other stakeholders that certificates issued by unrecognised State Sports Associations, unless otherwise specifically accepted under applicable Government Orders or admission regulations, shall not entitle a candidate to claim any benefit under sports quota. Such information shall be disseminated in clear and unambiguous terms to prevent students from being misled or prejudiced on account of their reliance upon certificates that are not eligible for consideration.

**27**. Although SAAP is stated to be publishing relevant information on its official website, we are of the view that such publication, by itself, is insufficient to ensure effective dissemination of information to student community across the State. Accordingly, SAAP is directed to adopt a comprehensive and sustained publicity mechanism to ensure that information relating to recognised Sports Associations, validity and acceptability of sports certificates, eligibility criteria for availing benefits under sports quota and consequences of relying upon certificates issued by unrecognised associations reaches intended beneficiaries in a timely and effective manner. For this purpose, SAAP shall undertake periodic publication of notices in widely circulated newspapers, at least once every year and sufficiently in advance of relevant admission cycle; ensure prominent display of such notices at all stadiums and

sports facilities under its control throughout the State; and arrange for their display and dissemination in all Government and private schools and colleges. SAAP shall also coordinate with concerned educational authorities and institutions to ensure that information is brought to specific attention of students aspiring to secure admissions under sports quota. These measures shall be in addition to publication on its official website and shall be implemented in a manner that ensures wide, accessible and effective dissemination of relevant information, so that no deserving sportsperson is deprived of an opportunity on account of ignorance of applicable requirements.

**28.** In view of our above observations, the State Association which granted certificates of participation, since is not recognized by SAAP, petitioners are not entitled to any priority in the said stream of sport, thus, on this ground, both these writ petitions stand dismissed. No order as to costs.

As a sequel, miscellaneous petitions pending, if any, shall stand closed.

**LISA GILL, CJ** **CHALLA GUNARANJAN, J**

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