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* **IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**

+ **W.P.(CRL) 3708/2024**

M/S R.S.S. ESTATE LLP & ORS.Petitioners

Through: Mr. Naman Verma, Advocate.

versus

STATE GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI AND ANR.Respondents

Through: Mr. Amol Sinha, ASC with Mr. Kshitiz Garg, Mr. Ashvini Kumar, Mrs. Chavi Lazarus, Mr. Nitish Dhawan, Advocates.

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE PURUSHAINDR KUMAR KAURAV

ORDER

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13.07.2026

CRL.M.A. 20013/2026

1. The present petition has been filed seeking following reliefs:-

“a. Allow the present Application and issue appropriate directions to the Registry of this Hon’ble Court for masking/anonymisation of the names and personal identifiers of the Petitioners from the publicly accessible digital versions of the proceedings bearing W.P.(CRL.) 3708/2024 titled “M/s R.S.S. Estate LLP & Ors. vs. State Govt. of NCT of Delhi & Anr.” including from the cause title, pleadings, applications, orders, judgment/order dated 29.01.2025 and all other digitally accessible records pertaining thereto available in the public domain;

b. Direct the Ld. Registry that the publicly accessible digital version of the aforesaid proceedings and judgment/order dated 29.01.2025 be made available only in anonymized form by substituting/masking the names and personal identifiers of the Petitioners in such manner as this Hon’ble Court may deem fit and proper, while preserving the unredacted judicial record in the internal records of this Hon’ble Court;



- c. Pass consequential directions for restricting unrestricted name-based retrievability, indexing and searchability of the aforesaid proceedings, judgment/order and judicial records through internet search engines, online legal databases and digital platforms, including consequential directions in terms of Rule 3(1)(d) of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021;*
- d. Pass appropriate consequential directions to online legal repositories, legal databases and intermediaries hosting the aforesaid proceedings/judgment to give effect to the masking/anonymisation directions passed by this Hon'ble Court and to disable unrestricted name-based search functionality qua the Petitioners in relation thereto;*
- e. Pass appropriate directions for removal of FIR No. 83/2024 dated 08.07.2024 registered at Police Station Economic Offence Wing, Delhi under Sections 420/120-B IPC from official websites of state, if available online;*
- f. Pass such other or further order(s) as this Hon'ble Court may deem fit and proper in the facts and circumstances of the present case and in the interest of justice."*
2. The petitioners had earlier preferred W.P.(CRL.) 3708/2024, which came to be disposed of *vide* order dated 29.01.2025, whereby FIR No. 83/2024 dated 08.07.2024, registered at Police Station Economic Offences Wing, Delhi under Sections 420 and 120-B of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 ('IPC'), and all proceedings emanating therefrom were quashed.
3. The petitioners have now filed the present application seeking masking/anonymisation of their names and personal identifiers from the publicly accessible digital records pertaining to W.P.(CRL.) 3708/2024, including the order dated 29.01.2025, and consequential directions for restricting the name-based searchability of the said records.
4. Learned counsel appearing on behalf of the petitioners submits that the disputes between the parties stood amicably resolved and, pursuant thereto, the aforesaid FIR and all proceedings emanating therefrom were



quashed. It is submitted that despite the same, the names of the petitioners continue to remain associated with the said proceedings in the digital domain.

5. It is further submitted that the continued availability of the aforesaid records on internet search engines and online legal databases is causing prejudice to the reputation, goodwill and professional standing of the petitioners, who are engaged in the business of real estate development and allied commercial activities.

6. In support of the aforesaid submissions, learned counsel places reliance upon the decision of this Court in ***Laksh Vir Singh Yadav vs. Union of India & Connected Matters***,¹ to contend that the petitioners are entitled to masking of their names and personal identifiers from the publicly accessible digital records pertaining to the aforesaid proceedings.

7. This Court has heard learned counsel for the petitioners and perused the material placed on record. The short question which arises for consideration is whether, in the facts of the present case, the petitioners are entitled to masking/anonymisation of their names and personal identifiers from the publicly accessible digital records of W.P.(CRL.) 3708/2024.

8. In ***Laksh Vir Singh Yadav*** (supra), the scope and ambit of the relief of masking was examined and parameters governing the grant of such relief were laid down. The Court has explained that masking entails replacement of the name of a party and such other personal identifiers as may be necessary with a neutral reference in the publicly accessible digital version of a judicial record, while preserving the complete unredacted version in the internal records of the Court.



9. The Court, further, held that such entitlement flows from the right to informational privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution and is governed by the principle of proportionality, having regard to the existence of any legitimate public interest in the continued association of an individual's name with the judicial record. The relevant para are extracted as under:-

*“215. The entitlement to masking flows from the same constitutional foundation as the entitlement to de-indexing, that is, the right to informational privacy as a facet of Article 21, as recognised in **K.S. Puttaswamy** (supra). The proportionality analysis that underlies the right to be forgotten is equally applicable. The continued association of an individual's name with a judicial record in the public digital domain causes disproportionate harm to informational privacy, dignity and reputation that is not justified by any legitimate public interest in the eligible categories identified in this judgment.*

*216. In cases of acquittal, discharge, or quashing, the presumption of innocence (a substantive guarantee under Article 21), requires that the judicial determination of innocence be given full practical effect. Masking gives that determination its full effect at the level of the court record itself. In cases of settlement, the consensual extinguishment of the proceedings by the complainant removes any basis for the continued association of the individual's name with the record. In matrimonial and purely private civil disputes, **K.S. Puttaswamy** (supra), at para 323, identifies the sanctity of family life, marriage and personal relationships as lying at the very core of the protected zone of privacy. The intimate details of such proceedings have no legitimate claim to continued name-based retrievability once they have concluded.*

217. The same absolute bars that deny de-indexing in cases of convictions for offences against women or children, breach of public trust, and the public conduct of public figures, apply equally to masking. There is no separate or more permissive standard.”

10. The Court has further observed that, extinguishing proceedings on the basis of a settlement removes the basis for the continued association of an individual's name with the record. At the same time, the entitlement to masking remains subject to the proportionality analysis contemplated in

¹ 2026:DHC:4891



paragraph 215 of the said decision viz. the continued association of an individual's name with a judicial record in the public digital domain must cause disproportionate harm to informational privacy, dignity and reputation that is not justified by any legitimate public interest.

11. In the present case, the proceedings in question arose out of a commercial transaction concerning immovable property. The petitioners are stated to be engaged in the business of real estate development and allied commercial activities. The dispute which formed the subject matter of the aforesaid proceedings, therefore, arose in the course of their commercial dealings.

12. The petitioners themselves assert that their credibility and reputation amongst clients, investors, financial institutions and business associates are integral to their commercial activities. The proceedings sought to be masked arise from a transaction in the same field in which the petitioners continue to carry on business. It is, therefore, the case that the continued accessibility of the information sought to be masked is relevant and material to, *inter alia*, a proposed investor wanting to engage with the petitioner-company and its promoters. Indeed, the proposed investors/stake-holders have a right to be informed of the persons they are dealing with. The Court, particularly, where no intrinsic personal liberty issues arise, should be slow in erasing from the memory of people events that have a bearing on the future.

13. The information sought to be masked does not pertain to the intimate or personal sphere of the petitioners. It cannot, thus, be treated at par with information concerning family life, marriage or personal relationships falling within the core zone of privacy. The information pertains to a commercial transaction undertaken in the course of their business activities.



The dispute which arose and became the subject matter of the instant *lis* was allowed to boil to the level of Court proceedings, this being the case, there is no overwhelming consideration which would allow the masking of the proceedings.

14. That apart, the petitioners have made general assertions regarding prejudice to their reputation, goodwill and professional standing. No material has been placed on record to demonstrate any specific prejudice occasioned by the continued availability of the judicial record or to establish that such availability has caused disproportionate harm warranting the relief of masking. Even otherwise, in larger public interest it should be known to general public about the antecedents of the petitioner.

15. It is also pertinent to note that the order dated 29.01.2025 itself records the settlement arrived at between the parties and the consequential quashing of the FIR. The judicial record, therefore, reflects the ultimate outcome of the proceedings and cannot be said to present an incomplete or misleading account of the legal position.

16. In view of the aforesaid, this Court is unable to hold that the continued association of the petitioners' names with the judicial record causes such disproportionate harm to their informational privacy as would warrant the grant of relief of masking in terms of the principles laid down in ***Laksh Vir Singh Yadav*** (supra).

17. For the foregoing reasons, this Court finds no merit in the present application. The same is, accordingly, dismissed.

PURUSHAINDRA KUMAR KAURAV, J

JULY 13, 2026/aks/nk