

If rogue online platforms are deliberately designed to facilitate unauthorised streaming and communication of copyrighted cinematograph films, and exploitative use of a legitimate platform's URL structure and goodwill, the Court may grant ex parte ad interim injunctive relief to restrain such infringement and direct suspension of domains

The **Delhi High Court** in the case of **UNIVERSAL CITY STUDIOS PRODUCTIONS vs PLAYIMDB.COM [CS(COMM) 492/2026]** dated **May 08, 2026**, has ruled that where the material on record prima facie shows that websites are rogue online platforms deliberately designed to facilitate unauthorised streaming and communication of copyrighted cinematograph films, including through redirect mechanisms, embedded players and exploitative use of a legitimate platform's URL structure and goodwill, the Court may grant ex parte ad interim injunctive relief under Order XXXIX Rules 1 and 2 CPC to restrain such infringement and to direct domain name registrars, ISPs and governmental authorities to suspend domains and block access.

The Court's reasoning is founded on the proposition that such conduct prima facie infringes the copyright owner's exclusive rights under Sections 14(d) and 51 of the Copyright Act, 1957, that the defendants in such a case are not passive intermediaries where they actively facilitate infringement, and that the balance of convenience and irreparable harm requirements are satisfied in favour of the copyright owner.

Accordingly, the Court granted an ex parte ad interim injunction restraining defendant nos. 1 to 6, as well as associated mirror, redirect or alphanumeric websites, from hosting, streaming, reproducing, distributing, making available to the public, or communicating to the public the plaintiff's original content. It directed defendant nos. 7 to 12, being the domain name registrars, to lock or suspend the identified websites and furnish registrant details, including KYC and related particulars, to the plaintiff within 72 hours. It also directed defendant nos. 13 to 21, being ISPs, to block access to the identified websites within 72 hours, and directed DoT and MeitY to notify registered ISPs to block access to those infringing websites.

The Court further permitted the plaintiff, if additional infringing websites were discovered during pendency of the suit, to notify the DNRs and ISPs with supporting evidence for immediate suspension/blocking and to seek impleadment and extension of injunction orders through appropriate applications.

The Court also clarified that if any website not primarily engaged in infringement was blocked pursuant to the order, such website could approach the Court with an undertaking that it did not intend illegal dissemination of the plaintiff's content, and the Court would consider modification of the injunction if warranted. Procedurally, notice was issued, timelines were fixed for filing written statements, replication, and affidavits of admission/denial, and the matter was listed before the Joint Registrar on 5 August 2026 for completion of service and pleadings and before the Court on 14 October 2026.

The Court prima facie found that the defendants were violating the plaintiff's copyright by operating rogue websites designed to enable unauthorised access to the plaintiff's films and

that such acts amounted to hosting, uploading, streaming, reproducing, distributing, making available to the public, and communicating to the public the plaintiff's original content without permission. The Court observed that these are acts falling within the exclusive rights of the copyright owner under Section 14(d), and further held that the conduct complained of also prima facie violated Sections 14 and 51 of the Copyright Act, 1957. It additionally noted that the defendants were not passive intermediaries but were actively facilitating infringement through redirect mechanisms, embedded players, backend source-resolution systems, and instructional material guiding users to pirated content.

The Court further observed that the defendants' websites were prima facie rogue online platforms deliberately structured to facilitate large-scale infringement, and that use of domain names incorporating "IMDb" reflected dishonest adoption intended to exploit IMDb's goodwill and induce users into accessing infringing streams under the guise of legitimacy. On this basis, the Court held that the balance of convenience lay in favour of the plaintiff and that continued operation of the impugned websites would cause persistent and irreparable injury to the plaintiff's statutory and commercial rights, including loss of revenue, dilution of exclusive exploitation rights and uncontrolled circulation of pirated copies, none of which could be adequately compensated in damages at a later stage.