

## News

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**A Delhi court dismisses Nirmala Sitharaman's objection and permits Somnath Bharti to represent his wife in a defamation case.**



Sitharaman is being sued by Lipika Mitra for allegedly causing marital strife between her and Bharti.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's request to prevent Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and advocate Somnath Bharti from defending his wife, Lipika Mitra, in the defamation lawsuit Mitra filed against her was denied by a Delhi court on Wednesday.

According to Rouse Avenue Court Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate (ACJM) Paras Dalal, a husband and wife are two distinct legal persons with distinct proprietary and economic interests.

The Court stated that even while it is possible to argue that both parties are concerned about each other's rights and interests, this cannot be questioned as being immoral and unethical.

According to this Court, a spouse may defend or prosecute their spouse. Even in cases where a spouse is defending or prosecuting on behalf of their spouse, there is no restriction on the ability to seek the maximum penalty or compensation. The husband and wife are two distinct natural persons under the law, and their financial interests may differ, the Court stated.

Citing his marital link with the complainant and possible financial interest, Sitharaman has asked for orders to order Bharti to step down as Mitra's attorney. She had maintained that there would be a conflict of interest if Bharti were called as a witness in the case.

The Court did take note of Mitra's argument, though, that Bharti is not on the list of witnesses and that she has no plans to invite him to testify.

Sitharaman can observe the defamation proceedings, the court ruled, but he won't be given a hearing until it has examined the complainant and the witnesses.

**"The proposed accused may, therefore, observe the current case's proceedings, but she will not be able to be heard until the complainant and witnesses have been questioned, provided that the case is strong enough to move forward to this point."**

Additionally, the Court denied Mitra's request to have the ₹5,000 in expenses associated with her non-appearance waived.

As a result, this Court is hesitant to grant the current application. The judge declared, "The same is rejected, and the complainant side shall pay the cost imposed by Order dated 16.07.2025 by the next date of hearing."

In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Sitharaman was accused by Mitra of "making and publishing defamatory, derogatory and libelous remarks in print and electronic media" about her and Bharti. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader is accused of misrepresenting alleged marital discord between Mitra and Bharti in order to further his political agenda.

Alongside Bharti, advocates Anand Prakash Gautam and Samta Sharma represented Mitra.

Sitharaman was represented by advocates Zoheb Hossain, Sanjeev Menon, and Satyam.

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