

Apex Court voices concern over rising instances of digital arrest in country



NEW DELHI: Rising incidents of online frauds in the country, especially digital arrests to dupe citizens by fabricating judicial orders, have come under the scanner of the Supreme Court which on Friday sought responses of the Centre and the CBI saying such offences strike at the "very foundation" of public trust in the system.

The top court took cognisance of a glaring case of digital arrest of a senior citizen couple in Haryana's Ambala on the basis of forged orders of the court and probe agencies for fraudsters to extort Rs 1.05 crore. A bench of justices Surya Kant and Joyimalya Bagchi said it is no ordinary crime where it could have asked the

police to expedite the probe and take the case to its logical conclusion but a matter where coordinated efforts between the central and state police are required to unearth the full extent of the criminal enterprise.

It flagged the rising number of digital arrest cases across the country and sought the response of the Centre and CBI in the case registered as suo motu after the 73-year-old woman wrote to Chief Justice of India B R Gaiavai on September 21 informing about the incident of defrauding them using court orders.

The bench said forging apex court, high court orders, signatures of judges to digitally arrest innocent people, including

senior citizens, strikes at the bottom of trust and faith of people in judicial institutions.

"The fabrication of judicial orders bearing forged signatures of judges strikes at the very foundation of the public trust in the judicial system besides the rule of law. Such action constituted direct assault on the dignity of the institution," the top court said.

It said the forgery of documents and the criminal misuse of the name, seal and judicial orders of this court or high court is a matter of grave concern and such a grave criminal act cannot be treated as an ordinary or solitary offence of cheating or cyber crime.

Govt focusing on empowering tribal people to speak up for their rights: President Murmu

NEW DELHI: President Droupadi Murmu on Friday said the government's Aadi Karmayogi Abhiyan is a step towards empowering tribal communities to speak up for their rights and shape their own future, stressing that every tribal village must become self-reliant and self-respecting. Addressing the "National Conclave on Aadi Karmayogi Abhiyan" here, Murmu said the initiative seeks to ensure active participation of tribal communities in the country's development journey and extend the benefits of growth to all tribal regions.

"The tribal people know this is a democratic country; they vote, but they have never learned to demand anything. Whether there is a road in



their village or electricity, whatever government facility they receive, they accept it as it is... That is why today the government has to think about them," she said.

Murmu said while some members of the tribal community have become IAS and IPS officers, many still strugg-

le for equal access to houses, schools, roads, electricity and water. She said the government launched the Aadi Karmayogi Abhiyan to help tribal people become more aware, assertive and self-reliant and urged them to contribute to making India a developed nation by 2047.

Bihar minister Mangal Pandey declares assets worth over Rs 2.34 crore

PATNA: Bihar minister Mangal Pandey has declared moveable and immoveable assets worth over Rs 2.34 crore in his election affidavit, officials said on Friday.

Pandey, a former state BJP president contesting assembly polls for the first time, is contesting from Siwan.

According to Pandey's affidavit, he holds movable assets worth Rs 1.47 crore and immovable property worth Rs 87 lakh.

His wife holds movable assets worth Rs 52.84 lakh and immovable assets worth Rs 43 lakh.

The total income declared by Pandey in his affidavit for 2024-25 is Rs 18,92,836 while that of Urmila is 12,77,642.

Centre, states exhibited 'grossly apathetic attitude' towards transgender community: SC

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday said the Centre and states have exhibited a "grossly apathetic attitude" towards transgenders by defacing the lived realities of this community with their inaction.

The apex court expressed serious concern over the discrimination faced by transgenders despite enactment of a law in 2019 and directed the Centre to come out with an "equal opportunity policy" within three months of the report submitted by an advisory panel. The court flagged the sporadic or a complete

lack of implementation of measures to ensure the prevention of discrimination against transgenders in various spheres of life, both public and private.

A bench of justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan said the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, was enacted to secure the dignity, equality and inclusion of transgenders in the mainstream, considering the cruel history of their policing.

The bench said unfortunately, it appeared that the 2019 Act and the Transgender Persons (Protection of

Rights) Rules, 2020, have been "brutishly reduced to dead letters".

"The Union of India and the States have exhibited a grossly apathetic attitude towards the transgender community, by defacing the lived realities of this community with their inaction," it said.

"Considering the protraction of this inaction, such an attitude cannot be reasonably considered to be inadvertent or accidental; it appears intentional and seems to stem from deep-rooted societal stigma and the lack of bureaucratic will to effectuate

Fuel loading at Fast Breeder Reactor in Kalpakkam begins

NEW DELHI: India's most complex atomic power plant -- the Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor -- moved a step forward as engineers started loading fuel into the unit, which will be the only second of its kind in the world.

The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) granted permission for loading fuel into the 500 MWe Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor being developed by the Bhartiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam (BHAVINI) at Kalpakkam in Tamil Nadu.

"We faced technical problems in loading the fuel in March last year. We have solved those problems, and got the regulatory clearance to load fuel on Thursday. The work has started," Ajit Kumar Mohanty, Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission, said here.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi witnessed the core loading at the facility in March last year.

Once operationalised, the 500 MWe Fast Breeder Reactor will be only the second of its kind in the world after Russia, which operates the other fast breeder reactor of 800 MWe.

A few other countries had tried mastering the complex technology, but had given up.

The commissioning of the Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) will mark the second stage of India's three-stage nuclear programme that aims to recycle spent fuel to reduce the inventory of radioactive waste.

"Now, we expect first criticality to be achieved within six months of fuel loading. Then, we will gradually raise the power to full capacity," Mohanty said. The PFBR being developed at Kalpakkam is the first-of-its-kind nuclear reactor to use plutonium-based

mixed oxide as fuel and liquid sodium as coolant.

It will also utilise the spent fuel of Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors, which form the mainstay of nuclear power in India at present.

While the state-run Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) operates nuclear power plants in the country, the PFBR at Kalpakkam is being developed by the Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam (BHAVINI).

Last July, the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) granted permission for loading of fuel, the first approach to criticality and conducting low-power physics experiments for the PFBR.

PFBRs are critical for India's nuclear programme as the spent fuel from these reactors will be used to power the thorium-based reactors that form the third stage of the closed fuel cycle.

The government has announced a nuclear energy mission that aims to produce 100 GW electricity through nuclear power.

At present, India's installed nuclear power capacity stands at 8.18 GW. An additional 7.30 GW nuclear energy projects are under construction or commissioning, and 7.00 GW have been sanctioned and are currently undergoing pre-project activities.

Upon completion of these projects, India's nuclear power capacity is expected to reach 22.48 GW by 2031-32.

Beyond this, the NPCIL plans to add another 15.40 GW through indigenous Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors and 17.60 GW through Light Water Reactors with foreign cooperation, bringing the total installed capacity to 55 GW.

Court summons doctor for negligence during childbirth in 2018 case

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court has summoned a doctor in a case where a baby delivered through surgery was allegedly reduced to a vegetative state due to her negligence.

The charges include "endangering life and personal safety of others" and causing grievous hurt by such act, but do not include "causing death by negligence".

Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Amardeep Kaur was hearing a protest petition against the closure report filed by the Delhi Police in connection with the delivery in February 2018.

The complainant, Alok Kumar, said that due to the doctor's negligence, the baby suffered birth hypoxia, was reduced to a vegetative state, and passed away in December 2023 because of continued illness.

He has alleged that the investigation was carried out with a pre-conceived notion to give a clean-chit to the accused, Dr Shakuntala Kumar and her team, despite the Delhi Medical Council (DMC) and AIIMS holding them liable for negligence.

In its October 15 order summoning the doctor, the court said, "It is clear from the statement of Dr Shakuntala herself that the delivery of the baby was attempted a month prior to the actual expected date of delivery (EDD) and no procedure was actually required to be conducted upon the patient (mother), Anshu Bala, on February 11, 2018."

The court said that due to an error by the doctor in calculating and recording a wrong EDD, the mother was subjected to a premature medical procedure.

Coal block allocation letter constitutes 'property': Delhi HC

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Friday said that a coal block allocation letter constitutes "property" within the meaning of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), adding that "intangible property" has assumed immense legal and commercial significance in modern era.

A bench of justices Anil Kshetarpal and Harish Vaidyanathan Shankar said that the coal block allocation letter was an instrument evidencing a right or interest to obtain a mining lease from the government and extract coal through its utilisation.

The bench made the observation while overturning a single-judge judgment of July 2022, which had held that mere allocation of coal block cannot be termed as proceeds of crime under the PMLA. "Since the allocation letter enabled the commission of money laundering, the letter is not only relevant but also constitutes property involved in money laundering under the scheme of the (Prevention of Money Laundering) Act," the court said. The bench added, "In the modern era, as also evidenced by the usage of terms to define property under Section 2(i)(v) of the PMLA, intangible property has assumed immense legal and commercial significance."

"The evolution of Intellectual Property laws now comprehends rights such as copyrights, trademarks, design rights, patents, licenses, digital assets and contractual entitlements, all of which are firmly recognised as valuable forms of property within the framework of common law," the court said.

The court was hearing an appeal against the single judge order, that had reached the findings on a plea filed by Prakash Industries Limited (PIL) challenging an attachment order issued by the Enforcement Directorate.

Northeast transforming into India's growth engine under Modi govt: Scindia

NEW DELHI: The Northeastern region has witnessed a remarkable transformation over the past year under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Friday.

Expressing his pride, Scindia noted that the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER) has advanced on the three pillars of reform, reach and results, achieving record growth in infrastructure, investment, governance and youth engagement.

"The Northeast today represents the spirit of a new India -- empowered, connected and future-ready.

Guided by the Prime Minister's vision, the region has transformed from a frontier into a front-runner, symbolising confidence and competitiveness," he said at a press conference.

Congress seeks ban on ABVP across edu institutions after campus incidents

NEW DELHI: In the wake of three ABVP students held for allegedly taking photographs of girls who were changing clothes in a Madhya Pradesh college, the Congress on Friday called for strict action and a ban on RSS-ABVP in universities and high schools across the country.

All India Mahila Congress president Alka Lamba condemned the incident at a government college in Mandasaur, stating that those who advocate the slogan "Beti Bachao" are paradoxically filming their daughters while they change.

"This act has been done by the BJP-backed ABVP members. The incident exposes the BJP's 'chaal-charitra-chehra'," Lamba alleged, addressing a joint press conference with National Students' Union of

India (NSUI) President Varun Choudhary.

Lamba also referenced a previous case from Karnataka in 2023, where an ABVP student leader was accused of producing obscene videos of female students and blackmailing them. Furthermore, she cited an alleged rape case at the South Asian University in Delhi.

"After this incident, we want to tell the country's prime minister, home minister (Amit Shah), and Delhi's chief minister that such incidents will not be tolerated.

If you believe that by concealing evidence you can protect the accused, we will not allow it. We will fight this battle at every level," Lamba asserted.

Additionally, Choudhary claimed that a woman ABVP

office-bearer slapped a professor at BR Ambedkar College of Delhi University. "The full video of this incident is available. Action should be taken as soon as it is acknowledged, yet several hours have passed without any response," he stated.

Choudhary emphasised that the Congress demands a thorough investigation into the cases from Mandasaur, Ambedkar College, South Asian University, and the alleged suicide of IT professional Anandaji from Kerala.

"We call for strict action against anyone found responsible after these investigations and a nationwide ban on RSS and ABVP in all universities and high schools. This country must be governed by the Constitution, not by the reprehensi-

ble ideology of RSS-ABVP," the NSUI president said.

The police detained three students from the Bhanupura Government College in Mandasaur district after they were accused of secretly taking photographs of girls changing ahead of a cultural event, an official said on Wednesday.

The suspects, aged between 20 and 22, are all members of the ABVP, with one being the city secretary. The police took action based on a written complaint from the college's acting principal, an official stated.

In another incident, a first-year BTech student residing in a South Asian University hostel accused four individuals, including a security guard, of sexually assaulting her on campus premises.

Tribals take out 'Hunkar' rally in Ranchi opposing Kurmis' demand for ST status

RANCHI: Thousands of people from various tribal groups took out a rally in Ranchi on Friday to protest the Kurmi community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

The rally 'Adivasi Hunkar Maharally' was organised under the banner of Adivasi Bachao Morcha at Prabhat Tara Maidan in Dhurwa.

Adivasis from 33 communities from different parts of the state participated in the rally.

"In today's rally, a total of 33 tribal communities took part to demonstrate their unity against the Kurmi community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. Until the Kurmi community's mindset changes, such movements will continue," said Geetashree Oraon, former minister and convener of Adivasi Bachao Morcha. She

said that Jharkhand's Kurmis can never become tribals. She blamed the Kurmis for the state's "failure" to implement the PESA Act and noted that numerous historical documents confirm they were never a tribal community. Their ancestors, upon learning the truth, distanced themselves from the tribal fold, Oraon claimed.

She further stated that the Kurmis once claimed descent from Shivaji, but are now wrongly pressuring the government for tribal inclusion, a move that the Adivasis will continue to oppose fiercely. She also urged the state Congress president to thoroughly review those documents. Lakshmi Narayan Munda, one of the tribal leaders, said the Kurmis' demand for ST status is "incorrect and amounts to an encroachment on tribal rights in the state.

Satellites can track CO2, methane in metros like Mumbai and Delhi: IIT Bombay researchers

MUMBAI: Researchers at Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT Bombay) have found that remote sensing data can be used to reliably measure the levels of carbon dioxide and methane in metro cities like Mumbai and Delhi.

As India lacks an extensive network of ground stations to measure greenhouse gases (GHGs), IIT Bombay researchers Prof Manoranjan Sahu and Adarsh Alagade turned to satellite data.

Using satellite derived measurements, they noticed that greenhouse gas (GHG) levels in Delhi and Mumbai are on the rise and show seasonal and spatial variations.

Further, the researchers also developed city-specific statistical models to forecast the



level of GHGs.

They demonstrated that remote sensing data can be used to reliably measure the levels of carbon dioxide and methane in metro cities.

"By identifying trends and hotspots, satellite-based monitoring gives policymakers evidence to target the worst source

es - for instance, prioritising landfill gas capture, traffic management in high-emission corridors, or industrial emissions enforcement - and to evaluate the real-world impact of policies over time," explained Prof Sahu regarding the benefit of using satellite-derived data.

The researchers used data

from NASA's Orbiting Carbon Observatory-2 (OCO-2), which traces carbon dioxide, and the European Space Agency's Sentinel-5P, which tracks methane.

As these satellites did not provide direct emission numbers, the researchers relied on specialised algorithms to extract the necessary values from the raw data.

To ensure reliability, the IIT researchers validated their satellite readings against the Total Carbon Column Observing Network (TCCON), a network of ground level measuring stations, spread globally, offering highly accurate measurements of CO and CH. Using satellite-derived measurements the researchers observed methane and CO concentrations over the last few years.