

# Law must not become tool to harass husband's kin: SC quashes dowry case

**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court on Wednesday quashed a dowry harassment case against a woman's parents-in-law and sister-in-law in Uttar Pradesh, saying that the vague allegations in matrimonial disputes should not be allowed to trigger criminal prosecution against a husband's relatives.



A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan was hearing a petition filed to challenge the Allahabad High Court order, which refused to quash an FIR lodged against the complainant's sister-in-law and parents-in-law under IPC Sections 498A (Matrimonial Cruelty), 323 (Voluntarily Causing Hurt) and provisions of the Dowry Prohibition Act.

In an order, the court said, "Time and again, this court has observed that merely stating certain vague and omnibus allegations without any cogent material evidence to support the same should not become a fillip to jumpstart the criminal machinery of the State."

criminal law should not become a means of "unleashing personal vendetta" against family members of the husband, and courts must be cautious where sweeping accusations are made without concrete evidence.

"A mere statement stating that the accused herein frequently demanded dowry and harassed the complainant for the same is not sufficient to initiate criminal proceedings against them when the same are not corroborated or bolstered by other materials placed on record," the bench said.

The complainant had alleged that after her marriage in April 2017, her husband and in-laws demanded Rs 8.5 lakh and a car as dowry and subjected her to cruelty. She had also accused them of assaulting her during pregnancy in 2017, leading to a miscarriage, and levelled allegations of molestation against her father-in-law.

In December 2023, the Allahabad High Court refused to quash the FIR lodged in November 2023 against the complainant's sister-in-law and parents-in-law. It noted that the Investigating Officer (IO) had

dropped the charge of causing miscarriage and that the medical records did not support the allegation.

The court also noted the delay of more than six years in lodging the FIR, saying the prosecution had failed to provide a satisfactory explanation.

"We find that the citizens who allege commission of an offence should not dawdle on their rights but should rather pursue them in real time in order to achieve the ends of justice," the bench said, adding that such delays can be fatal in cases involving personal disputes where evidence is already limited.

It further observed that the allegations against the in-laws were largely general and lacked specific details about their role.

Allowing the appeals, the court quashed the FIR, chargesheet and the pending criminal case against the complainant's sister-in-law and parents-in-law, while clarifying that its observations would not affect any other matrimonial proceedings between the parties.

# Vice President to visit Jharkhand on 28th March to attend IIM Ranchi convocation

**RANCHI:** Vice President C P Radhakrishnan will visit Jharkhand on March 28 to attend the 15th convocation of IIM Ranchi, an official said on Wednesday.

The Vice President will confer medals to seven outstanding students of the institution, she said.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Jharkhand Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar and Chief Minister Hemant Soren will also attend the event.

IIM Ranchi Dean (academics), Professor Tanusree Dutta, in a press conference, said the event will be conducted in two sessions and the first session will begin at 3 pm, which will be attended by the Vice President as the chief guest.

"The Vice President will confer medals to seven outstanding students, including toppers from five programmes -- MBA, MBA-BA, MBA HRM,

MBA Executive (Summer) and MBA Executive (Winter). Additionally, two special awards will be presented for overall excellence -- the Student Citizenship Award and the Professor Ashish Hajela Award," she said. A total of 558 degrees will be awarded during the event, which include 26 PhD degrees and 11 PhD (executive) degrees.

The Vice President will also launch IIM Ranchi's virtual reality case repository, the first-of-its-kind among B-schools in India, she said. The initiative aims to transform the way case studies are taught and understood, making learning more practical, immersive, and aligned with real-world business environments.

IIM Ranchi Director, Professor Deepak Kumar Srivastava, said, "Instead of just reading a case, students will be able to enter the scenario through VR headsets. They can virtu-



ally observe operations in industries such as logistics, manufacturing, and supply chain. For example, a student can see how goods are packaged in a warehouse, how trucks are assembled, or how supply chain decisions impact operations at the ground level. This immersive exposure helps students understand not only what decisions are made, but why and how they impact real systems."

IIM Ranchi faculty Professor Kushagra Sharan, who led the development of the first VR case, said,

"Management education is about decision-making in complex environments. The VR-based approach enhances this by allowing students to see multiple dimensions of a situation -- operational, human, financial, and strategic -- simultaneously through lived experience. It reduces guesswork and builds clarity. When students can visually experience the environment, they are better equipped to analyse trade-offs, evaluate consequences, and make informed decisions."

## India riding on reform express, reforms happening with conviction: Sitharaman

**NEW DELHI:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday said India is riding on the reform express and reforms are happening with conviction and clarity.

Replying to the debate on Finance Bill 2026 in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman said, "Reform is not happening out of compulsion, but out of conviction, with clarity, confidence and commitment. India is riding on the reform express under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi."

She further said there is a trust-based tax administration that is being improved by reducing unnecessary hardship for honest taxpayers.

The government has taken various steps to empower MSMEs, farmers, and cooperatives because they are at the heart of creation of employment for production and for the overall development of India, she said.

This Finance bill aims to support them with very many measures that improve liquidity but also reduce the compliance burden and give them the opportunity to have greater contribution towards the larger economy, she added. Elaborating further on the Bill, the Finance Minister said customs reforms have been proposed by altering many provisions with the objective to promote trade facilitation.

# Noida airport inauguration: Admin on high alert regarding security, traffic



**NOIDA/LUCKNOW:** The Uttar Pradesh government on Wednesday said preparations for the inauguration of Noida International Airport by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 28 have reached final stages.

The district administration is working on war footing to ensure a smooth inauguration ceremony, the government said in a statement issued in the state capital Lucknow.

All departments are rapidly completing their assigned responsibilities, it added.

According to the statement, this ambitious project has been translated into reality owing to active and continuous efforts of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. With his vision, the project is emerging as a major symbol of development in

the state. Following earlier review meetings by district administration, all departments are now finalising their responsibilities, the statement said.

Security arrangements, traffic management, parking, route operations, medical facilities, fire services, electricity supply, cleanliness, drinking water, barricading, signage and public announcement systems are all being put in place.

The event venue, heli-pad, parking areas and entry-exit routes have been fully organised. Special arrangements have been made to ensure smooth traffic flow. Surveillance has been strengthened through CCTV cameras, with continuous monitoring from control room, it stated.

Considering the large expected turnout of VIPs, public representatives, in-

dustrialists, officials and general public, arrangements for cleanliness, drinking water and lighting have been further reinforced.

The state government said it is developing this project as a new hub for investment, employment and infrastructure growth, which will help accelerate Uttar Pradesh's goal of becoming a one-trillion-dollar economy.

At the administrative level, continuous monitoring is being carried out to ensure that the inauguration event is conducted smoothly and successfully, it stated.

Chief Minister Adityanath is personally tracking updates. Recently, he inspected the airport and reviewed all preparations, giving necessary directions to officials, it added.

## Panneerselvam slams parties contesting under Lotus symbol in NDA

**THENI:** Former chief minister O Panneerselvam, who joined the DMK recently, flayed the AIADMK-led NDA in Tamil Nadu, stating it is an 'alliance that follows orders from Delhi'.

Taking potshots at smaller parties in the AIADMK-led NDA for deciding to contest in the BJP's Lotus symbol for the April 23 Assembly polls, Panneerselvam asked, "The alliance that Palaniswami has formed by joining with the BJP functions under whose leadership?"

When reporters responded to his query that Edappadi K Palaniswami heads the AIADMK-led NDA alliance, he said, "If Palaniswami is the NDA alliance leader, and if other parties do not contest on their own party symbols, should not they be contesting on the AIADMK's two leaves symbol?"

# EC within powers to transfer officers for conduct of free and fair elections: Poll panel to Calcutta HC

**KOLKATA:** The Election Commission on Wednesday told the Calcutta High Court that it is within its powers to transfer and post officers for the conduct of free and fair elections.

Making submissions before a division bench presided by Chief Justice Sujoy Paul in a PIL challenging the transfer of several IAS and IPS officers in West Bengal by the Election Commission soon after the announcement of assembly polls, its counsel stated that the petition is a camouflage service matter and cannot be treated as a public interest litigation.

Senior lawyer D S Naidu, appearing for the EC, submitted before the court that the commission has been vested with residuary powers to deal with any unforeseen circumstances or exigencies impeding the conduct of free and fair elections. Senior counsel

Kalyan Banerjee, representing the petitioner, argued that the EC's plenary powers are not in question but are subject to any law or bylaw enacted under Article 327 of the Constitution.

Article 327 of the Constitution empowers Parliament to enact laws regarding elections to both Houses of Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) and state legislatures (Assembly and Council).

Banerjee, who is also a Trinamool Congress Lok Sabha MP, claimed before the division bench, also comprising Justice Partha Sarathi Sen, that it is the duty of the Election Commission to conduct free and fair elections, but the constitutional body is acting in an "arbitrary" and "non-transparent manner".

He further stated that petitioner Arka Kumar Nag, a practising lawyer, is not an employee of the West Bengal government, but is a retainer lawyer for the state. Questioning the maintainability of the petition as a PIL, Naidu had on Monday submitted that the petitioner is a full-time state lawyer and thus cannot claim to be a public-spirited person in filing the PIL.

The court adjourned the hearing until Friday, when it will be taken up again. The petitioner claimed in the PIL that 79 officers -- 63 police personnel and 16 civil servants -- have been shifted by the EC since the announcement of the assembly polls on March 15.

Banerjee on Wednesday stated before the court that 70 returning officers have been transferred by the EC since the matter was first heard on Monday. Assembly elections in West Bengal will be held in two phases on April 23 and 29, and the counting is scheduled on May 4.

# Manipur CM meets President, briefs her on evolving situation in state

**NEW DELHI/IMPHAL:** Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh called on President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in the national capital on Wednesday.

The President's office shared a picture of the meeting in a post on X.

"Chief Minister of Manipur Yumnam Khemchand Singh called on President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan," it said.

Singh, too, took to X to announce the meeting.

"Honoured to call on Hon'ble President Droupadi Murmu Ji at Rashtrapati Bhavan. Briefed her on the evolving situation in Manipur and the coordinated response underway. Reiterated that unity, harmony, and peace remain our guiding principles," he said in the post.

Singh was sworn in as the 13th chief minister of the strife-torn state on February 4. It came nearly a year after the resignation of N Biren Singh, following months of ethnic violence between

Meitei and Kuki communities in Manipur, leading to the imposition of President's Rule.

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic strife between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023.

The Manipur government under Singh recently held talks with representatives of the Kuki Zo Council in Guwahati, for the first time in nearly three years after the ethnic conflict broke out in 2023, to explore the scope of peace

and rebuilding trust between Meiteis and Kuki Zo communities in the state.

In a Facebook post later on Wednesday, Singh said key issues concerning peace, stability, and the restoration of normalcy in Manipur were discussed with the President.

"I had the privilege of apprising Her Excellency of the evolving situation in Manipur and the calibrated and coordinated response being undertaken to address the prevailing challenges," he said.

## Himachal cuts power tariff by one paisa per unit for all consumers

**SHIMLA:** The Himachal Pradesh government will reduce power tariff by one paisa per unit for all categories of electricity consumers in FY27, and the new rates will be effective from April 1, 2026.

The Tariff Order for Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board Limited (HPSEBL) was issued by Himachal Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission (HPERC) here on Wednesday.

The Commission estimated the Annual Revenue Requirement (ARR) of the HPSEBL for the financial year 2026-27 at Rs 8,636.16 crore after truing up for the past periods in comparison to Rs 8,403.25 crore for 2025-26.

The average cost of supply for HPSEBL after truing up has been estimated to be Rs 6.75 per unit by the commission for FY27 against Rs 6.76 per unit for FY26, which is a reduction of 1 paisa per unit compared to last year.

mission has reduced the energy charges prevailing at present by a rate of 1 paisa per unit for all categories of consumers.

The tariff for lifeline consumers with consumption up to 60 units will be Rs 4.71 per unit, domestic consumers in 1-125 units slab and above 125 units would be Rs 5.44 per unit and Rs 5.89 per unit, respectively, while the Non-Domestic and Agricultural consumers in 0-20 kVA slab would be charged at Rs 6.37 per unit and Rs 5.03 per unit.

The tariff for commercial consumers in the 0-20 kVA (kilovolt-ampere) slab and 20-100 kVA has been determined at Rs 6.39 per unit and Rs 6.30 per unit, while the tariff above 100 kVA would be Rs 6.20 per unit.

The tariff for small industry in 0-20 kVA slab has been fixed at Rs 5.71 per unit, while the tariff for 21 kVA to 50 kVA slab and Medium Industrial consumers (50-100kVA) would be Rs 5.60 per unit.

**NEW DELHI:** The Curtain Raiser for the North Tech Symposium 2026 was held on Wednesday at the Manekshaw Centre in the national capital, formally launching preparations for the three-day defence technology event scheduled to be held in Prayagraj from May 4 to 6. The symposium is being organised in coordination with the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM).

The event brought together senior leaders from the Indian Army, defence industries, start-ups, academic institutions, DP-SUS, paramilitary forces and the Ministry of Defence to outline the symposium's vision and encourage wider participation. Among the key attendees were Lt Gen Anindya Sengupta, GOC-in-C Central Command; Lt Gen Pratik Sharma, GOC-in-C Northern Command; and SIDM Vice President Neeraj Gupta, along with other senior officials.

Delivering the keynote address, Lt Gen V Hariharan, GOC Strike One Corps, highlighted that the North Tech Symposium has been conceived as a joint initiative of the Central and Northern Commands in collaboration with SIDM to bridge operational requirements with technological innovation.

He said the symposium aims to serve as a dynamic platform where military needs meet industry-driven solutions, bringing together the armed forces, government agencies, defence manufacturers, start-ups and academia to deliberate on practical, technology-enabled responses to emerging challenges.

Outlining the objectives, Hariharan emphasised the need to strengthen interaction among key stakeholders, promote the indigenisation of critical and niche technologies and broaden the role of industry and academic institutions in the defence ecosystem.

He noted that discussions at the symposium would also focus on multi-dimensional security challenges that demand coordinated and innovative responses.

Recognising the growing role of various stakeholders, he said organisations such as DRDO have been at the forefront of advancing indigenous defence capabilities, while industry and start-ups continue to inject agility, creativity and momentum into defence innovation. Academic and research institutions, he added, are producing skilled professionals who are contributing significantly to cutting-edge technologies with defence applications. Collaboration with internal security forces, government bodies and technology institutions also remains crucial.

Looking ahead, Lt Gen Hariharan said the 2026 edition aims to emerge as the premier forum for user-driven technology exchange in the defence sector. "Meaningful



dialogue and collective effort will be essential to strengthen India's operational readiness and technical capabilities," he said, urging robust participation to make the

symposium a landmark event in the country's defence preparedness. "Together, let us shape the future of defence technology," he remarked.