

# Prolonging criminal case for unreasonable period a type of suffering: Supreme Court

**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court has said prolonging a criminal case for an unreasonable period was a type of suffering, amounting to mental incarceration for the person facing the proceedings.

Justices N V Anjaria and A S Chandurkar made the observation while reducing a woman's sentence in a corruption case to the actual period undergone.

While confirming her conviction, the bench noted the incident occurred over 22 years ago and the woman was now 75.

It, however, increased the fine imposed on her by Rs 25,000 above the original fine.

"The prolongation of a criminal case for an unreasonable period is in itself a kind of suffering. It amounts to mental incarceration for the person facing such proceedings," the bench said on August 21.

The apex court verdict came on an appeal filed by the woman against the August 2010 verdict of the Madras High Court confirming the trial court order.

The trial court convicted the woman, who served as an inspector of Central



Excise, under the provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, and sentenced her to undergo one year imprisonment.

It was alleged by the prosecution that in September 2002, she demanded illegal gratification of Rs 300.

The top court said a person, who has appealed against conviction and ev-

eryday awaits the fate of litigation, spends time in distress.

"In the present-day system of administration of justice, in which proceedings have often protracted unreasonably and therefore unbearably, the passage of long time itself makes the person suffer a mental agony," the bench said.

# Delhi HC upholds man's 10-year jail term for rape

**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi High Court has upheld the 10-year imprisonment of a man for repeatedly raping his nine-year-old daughter.

The high court dismissed the man's appeal against the trial court's conviction and sentencing verdict, saying it had thoroughly examined the records and found no reason to differ with the conclusion of the trial court.

Justice Manoj Kumar Ohri said the convict was unable to shake the credibility of any of the witnesses who supported the prosecution case by thorough examination or pointed any fatal gaps in the prosecution case or explained the findings in the medical or FSL reports.

"In view of the version recorded in the initial complaint and statement under Section 164 CrPC being corroborated by the MLC and the FSL report, and the unwavering testimony of

prosecution witness 5 (class teacher of victim), the child victim turning hostile has not dented the prosecution case," the high court said in its judgment passed on August 26.

According to the prosecution, a complaint was lodged in September 2017 on behalf of the minor girl alleging her father raped her daily and confided her ordeal in her school teacher.

However, the girl and her mother turned hostile and did not support the prosecution case.

The court said though the oral testimonies of the child survivor and her mother did not support the prosecution's case, medical and forensic evidence pointed to the father's involvement in the offence.

"Thus, the evidence of a hostile witness cannot be written off and the same has to be considered with due care and circumspection.



# 'Vote Chor, Gaddi Chhod': Nagaland Cong stages rally against alleged poll fraud

**DIMAPUR:** The Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee (NPCC) on Wednesday held a rally in Dimapur under the slogan 'Vote Chor, Gaddi Chhod' (Vote thieves, vacate seat) to raise public awareness on alleged assaults on citizens' electoral rights.

Addressing the gathering, AICC in-charge Nagaland and MP Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka said all rights and privileges enshrined in the Constitution will be taken away by the BJP-led central government if citizens fail to protect it.

"They don't believe in the Constitution," he alleged.

Ulaka claimed that the Congress has "definite proof" of election manipulation in 70-80 Lok Sabha seats during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, asserting that the BJP did not have the real mandate to govern.

"They didn't have the mandate, but due to the Election Commission and 'vote chori', the BJP managed to win some seats. Otherwise, Modi would not have become the PM," Ulaka claimed.

Stating that the struggle is currently political but will eventually turn into a mass movement, he said, "During the first phase, we fought in Parliament, and now we are taking it to the streets. Our fight is not only on media, but also on the ground to ensure the Constitution is protected."

The Congress, he said, is staging the campaign to protect citizens' electoral rights and warned that if such practices are not stopped, "they will hit the streets in Nagaland and throughout the country."

Ulaka said, "The people of Nagaland will definitely support the Congress, stand up for truth, and help save the Constitution."

He added that the Congress is reorganising its party workers, announcing that Rahul Gandhi will visit the state soon.

AICC secretary in-charge of Nagaland, Christopher Tilak, also accused the BJP of consistently damaging the values of the Constitution by placing "RSS-trained people" in key institutions.

"They try to dilute constitutional values, and today people have started losing hope in these institutions," he said.

Tilak added that while talk of saving the Constitution was earlier taken lightly, particularly by youngsters, the present is "the right time to convert the abstract concept of the Constitution into a concrete reality that connects with the youth."

NPCC president and Lok Sabha MP Supongmeren Jamir said the Constitution grants every citizen the right to vote, but this right itself is under threat under the present regime.

He asserted that the party is determined to fight and protect citizens' rights, declaring that it is "the only party that safeguards the Constitution, culture, and tradition."

# Student found with severe burns school washroom dies in hospital

**PATNA:** A 12-year-old girl died on Wednesday soon after being found with severe burn injuries inside the washroom of a government-run school in Patna, police said.

The victim, a class 5 student, was found unconscious with critical burns in the washroom of the Girls' Middle School within Gardani Bagh police station limits.

"Police immediately reached the spot and took the girl to Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH) where she succumbed to injuries. It is still not clear how the girl sustained severe burns and how she reached the washroom. A case has been registered and the matter is being investigated," Patna SP (central) Diksha told reporters.

Following news of the girl's death, her family members reached the school, created a commotion and assaulted a few police personnel, the SP claimed, adding that the situation was soon brought under control. Police did not reveal the identity of the deceased.

# Delhi Police busts online investment scam; three held

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi police nabbed three men for allegedly duping a senior citizen of Rs 31 lakh through a fake stock market investment scheme, officials said on Wednesday.

The accused, identified as Mohseen (37), Nayar Ali (39) and Kaif (22), were apprehended on Tuesday.

According to the police, the 62-year-old victim, who works with a construction company, was targeted through social media, where the accused introduced him to a fraudulent investment platform. He was then added to a group that offered fake stock tips and investment advice.

"The accused lured the victim with promises of high returns through IPO funding and profit withdrawals. Believing the claims, he transferred money through online methods into multiple personal bank accounts," a senior police officer said.

When the victim attempted to withdraw his money, the fraudsters allegedly threatened him and coerced him into transferring additional amounts.

The total loss reported was around Rs 31 lakh.

# Ganesh Chaturthi festivities begin with devotional fervour across Telangana

**HYDERABAD:** The nine-day Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations began with devotional fervour and gaiety across Telangana on Wednesday.

Lakhs of Lord Ganesha idols in various sizes and forms have been installed for worship in Hyderabad and all other towns and villages in the state.

The devotees visited temples and offered prayers at homes on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi, known as Vinayaka Chavithi in Telangana and neighbouring Andhra Pradesh.

Despite rain, the Monda Market here witnessed heavy rush of devotees to buy Ganesh idols, flowers, fruits and puja material.

The major attraction of the Ganesh Chaturthi in the state has been the giant-sized Ganesh idol installed at the pandal at Khairatabad in Hyderabad.

This year, a 69-ft-tall idol has been installed at the Khairatabad pandal. It has been named 'Viswa Santhi Maha Sakthi Ganapati', wishing peace and happiness all over the world, organisers said.

The government and police made elaborate arrangements to ensure the smooth conduct of the festivities.

Governor Jishnu Dev Varma offered prayers at the Khairatabad pandal. Thousands of devotees visited the Khairatabad pandal on Wednesday evening.

Several voluntary organisations distrib-



uted clay Ganesha idols in the state capital in the run-up to the festival to promote eco-friendly festivities.

At Kachiguda, a vibrantly decorated pandal drew large crowds with its unique 'Operation Sindoor' theme. The centerpiece was the idol of Lord Ganesha mounted on a missile launcher.

"We have been creating such thematic pandals for the last five years to showcase the pride of our country," an organiser told PTI Videos. The organisers had set up pan-

dals modelled on Chandrayan mission in the past.

The idols installed across the state for worship would be immersed in water bodies following the nine-day festivities.

Thousands of idols would be immersed in the Hussain Sagar lake and other lakes and tanks in Hyderabad.

The Governor, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, Union Ministers G Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay Kumar and leaders of all major parties wished devotees on the occasion.

# Three men held for extortion bid, were using name of Lawrence Bishnoi gang

**NEW DELHI:** Three people have been arrested from Punjab for allegedly demanding Rs 25 lakh from a jeweller in east Delhi's Kalyanpuri area by threatening him in the name of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, an official said on Wednesday.

The accused have been identified as Rohit Bhullar (23), a resident of Tarn Taran, Arshdeep Singh alias Karan (21) and Gurjinder Singh alias Gagan (21), from Gurdaspur. Among them Gurjinder has a criminal record and is previously involved in three cases, police said.

"The matter came to light on August 12 when the director of Giri Zever Mahal in Kalyanpuri received a WhatsApp call demanding Rs 25 lakh in Bishnoi's name, along with life threats if he failed to comply," Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) Abhishek Dhanias said.

The officer said that an FIR was registered at the Kalyanpuri police station and a probe was launched.

Following an investigation, Bhu-

llar and Arshdeep were arrested from Punjab. The mobile phone and WhatsApp account used for extortion were recovered, the DCP said.

During interrogation, Arshdeep revealed that they had acted on the instructions of a man identified as Sheru, originally from Gurdaspur but now residing in Bahrain. Sheru allegedly directed them to issue threats to the victim.

Arshdeep further disclosed that Sheru had involved Gurjinder Singh alias Gagan to arrange vehicles for following the victim. Acting on technical inputs, Gagan was also traced and apprehended from Punjab, the officer said.

"Gagan confessed that he came into contact with Arshdeep through social media in April this year. Arshdeep later visited his village and lured him into joining the gang, promising quick money through extortion. The trio, along with Sheru, allegedly conspired to target the jeweller," the DCP said.

# Assam LoP writes to SHRC over infant's death in govt hospital

**GUWAHATI:** Leader of the Opposition in Assam Assembly, Debabrata Saikia, on Wednesday urged the State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) to lodge a suo motu case and inquire into the death of a newborn in Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH).

In a letter written to the chairperson of Assam Human Rights Commission (AHCRC), Saikia sought to fix accountability in the death of the newborn at GMCH neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) on August 18, allegedly due to negligence.

"This incident, prima facie attributable to overcrowding, staff shortages, and abject failure in duty of care in the NICU, consti-

tutes a blatant violation of fundamental human rights enshrined in the Constitution.

"I urge the commission to take suo motu cognisance under Section 21(5) of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 (PHRA)," he said.

A four-day-old infant died after she was found hanging from the wires of a medical equipment in the NICU of GMCH on August 18. The infant, born in the same hospital on August 15, was admitted to the NICU for infection and jaundice.

Saikia demanded that a committee of independent experts be constituted to investigate the incident and submit a time-bound report on systemic failures in As-

sam's hospitals, including staffing and infrastructure deficiencies.

"That liability be fixed on the chief minister of Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma, and the Department of Health for irresponsible statements causing emotional distress, and for systemic lapses, recommending disciplinary action," he added.

Further, Saikia demanded that immediate interim compensation of Rs 10 lakh be paid to the parents under the Assam Victim Compensation Scheme, 2012, with final relief based on inquiry findings.

He said that state protection, including security and legal aid, should

be provided to parents of the deceased infant under whistleblower laws for facing threats.

"The persistent recurrence of medical negligence in Assam's public health-care facilities, coupled with the state's failure to effect meaningful reforms, necessitates immediate and robust intervention by the AHCRC pursuant to the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993," Saikia said in the letter.

The commission's statutory authority to initiate suo motu inquiries, recommend prosecutions, and direct compensatory relief must be invoked to curb impunity and uphold fundamental rights, he said.

# Mizoram sticks to stand that its border with Assam is based on 1875 notification: Minister

**AIZAWL:** Mizoram Home Minister K Sapdanga on Wednesday reaffirmed the government's stand that its boundary with Assam is based on a notification issued in 1875.

The assertion came days after a fresh tension on the Mizoram-Assam border.

Addressing the assembly on the first day of the monsoon session, Sapdanga said that the Mizoram government approved the areas demarcated in the 'Inner Line on the Southern Frontier of the District of Cachar', which was notified on August 20, 1875, as the state's actual boundary with Assam. Assam, however, asserts that the border de-

fined by a map prepared by the Survey of India in 1933 is its constitutional boundary with Mizoram.

According to the home minister, both Mizoram and Assam have held talks on more than 10 occasions since 1988 to amicably resolve the vexed border dispute.

The last official-level discussion between the two states on the boundary issue was held in Guwahati on April 25 to find an amicable solution to the long-standing dispute, he said.

Sapdanga said that the next round of official-level talks has been proposed to be held in Mizoram, but the exact date of that is yet to be

finalised. Apart from ministerial-level and official-level talks, the two states are also taking steps to resolve the dispute by providing important border-related documents to each other, he said.

The home minister said that the Mizoram government formed a study team to task with collecting important documents to strengthen the state's claim.

Sapdanga also said that the state government has constructed and maintained border roads along the state border with Assam.

However, it has stopped maintaining or using some of those roads, as it can induce violation of the sta-

tus quo and an agreement signed by the two states in previous talks.

On August 15, police and forest department officials from Assam reportedly entered Saikhawthlir village in west Mizoram's Mamit district and damaged around 290 rubber plants being cultivated by the villagers. The area was claimed by both states.

The incident sparked tensions along the inter-state border, which was soon defused following a meeting between district officials and police officers of the two northeastern neighbours. Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma recently said that he spoke

to his Assam counterpart Himanta Biswa Sarma and both agreed to continue to maintain status quo on the disputed areas along the inter-state border.

Three Mizoram districts — Aizawl, Kolasib and Mamit — share a 164.6 km long border with Assam's Cachar, Sribhumi and Hailakandi districts.

The border dispute between the two northeastern states, which mainly stemmed from two conflicting colonial-era demarcations — one from 1875 under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation and another from 1933, is a long pending issue that has been unresolved till date.

**CHANDIGARH:** Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Wednesday visited the flood-hit areas in Gurdaspur district to take stock of the situation and asked the district administration to use the state government's helicopter for delivering relief supplies to those affected.

Swollen rivers and rivulets and incessant rains have submerged many villages and low-lying areas in several districts of Punjab.

During his visit to Gurdaspur, Mann interacted with residents and reviewed the ongoing relief and rescue operations.

"There are many villages where people are unable to leave their homes, and some are sitting on the roofs of their homes," Mann noted, expressing concern for families, including children, in these situations.

He confirmed, "I have told the deputy commissioner that the Punjab government's helicopter is available for whatever

assistance the people need, whether it be milk, water, or rations. I can use my car."

Meanwhile, the situation remains grim in many flood-affected areas of Punjab. Local district administrations, alongside the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), the Army, and state agencies, are continuing their relief and rescue efforts.

The Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi rivers, as well as seasonal rivulets, have risen significantly due to heavy rainfall in their catchment areas of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, inundating large swathes of farmland and villages along their banks.

Additionally, the release of surplus water from the Pong, Bhakra, and Ranjit Sagar dams has worsened the conditions for villages in several districts of Punjab.

The worst-affected villages are in the Pathankot, Gurdaspur, Fazilka, Kapurthala, Tarn Taran, Ferozepur, Hoshiarpur and Amritsar districts.