SUPREME COURT *Chronicle*

Issue XXXI | May 2026



HIGHLIGHTS

National Conference on Judicial Process Re-Engineering & Digital Transformation

North-Zone Regional Conference on "Enhancing Access to Justice" by NALSA

CLEA International Conference of Sustainable Energy: An Agenda for India @ 2047

Initiation of SAMADHAN SAMAROH

Hon'ble Chief Justice of India



Justice
SURYA KANT

22nd BIENNIAL State Level Conference of JUDICIAL OFFICERS

Reimagining the
JUDICIARY in the Era of
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



Chief Justice's Corner

Dear Readers,

The May 2026 edition of the *Supreme Court Chronicle* captures our continuing journey toward establishing a more responsive, transparent, and forward-looking legal system. Throughout the past month, our focus has remained steadfast on transforming traditional paradigms by integrating cutting-edge technological advancements with citizen-centric, consensual dispute resolution frameworks.

This issue highlights the landmark National Conference on *"Judicial Process Re-Engineering & Digital Transformation"*, jointly organised by the eCommittee of the Supreme Court and the Department of Justice, Government of India. Through newly launched services like the *Single Sign-On Portal,* and *Electronic Delivery of Summons* through email etc., we are actively re-engineering the present to secure a robust, inclusive, and digital-first justice ecosystem.

We also put a spotlight on the nationwide institutional launch of the *SAMADHAN SAMAROH* initiative. Advancing our core vision of 'participative justice' and 'doorstep delivery,' this extensive project shifts our approach from protracted adversarial trials to collaborative mediation. By establishing community-oriented outreach cells, structured pre-conciliation sittings, and digital mediation corridors across state lines, the judiciary is coming closer to the common man to resolve long-drawn disputes through shared consent.

Furthermore, this edition covers the 22nd Biennial State Level Conference of Judicial Officers in Karnataka, which deliberated on *"Reimagining the Judiciary in the Era of Artificial Intelligence"*. While recognising the immense capacity of automated tools to enhance research efficiency and ease data analysis at the grassroots level, our companion judges rightly underscored that technology must always serve as an aid rather than a replacement for human conscience and independent reasoning.

As we advance past these milestones, our fundamental goal remains to weave technology, collaborative mediation, and structural re-engineering into a single, cohesive vision. The true measure of our progress lies in how effectively we dismantle systemic delays and ease the burdens of ordinary litigants. By combining administrative foresight with institutional empathy, the Indian judiciary continues to evolve, keeping the rule of law accessible, compassionate, and deeply protective of every citizen.

Justice Surya Kant
Chief Justice of India

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National Engagements

Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony: Zone-II of the High Court of Telangana



05 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India along with Shri A Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister of Telangana; Justice P S Narasimha, Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, Justice S V N Bhatti and Justice Alok Aradhe, Judges, Supreme Court of India; Justice Aparesh Kumar Singh, Chief Justice, High Court for the State of Telangana; Justice P Sam Koshy and Justice Moushumi Bhattacharya, Judges, High Court for the State of Telangana at the Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony for Zone-II of the new Telangana High Court Complex

05 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India; Shri A Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister of Telangana and Justice P S Narasimha, Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, Justice S V N Bhatti and Justice Alok Aradhe, Judges, Supreme Court of India attended the foundation stone laying ceremony for Zone-II of the new Telangana High Court complex. The New High Court complex is a sixty-acre campus housing fifty-seven structures, including an auditorium for judicial training, a three-level Central Record Room, and residential and administrative facilities.



05 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India along with Shri A Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister of Telangana; Justice P S Narasimha and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, Judges, Supreme Court of India at the Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony for Zone-II of the new Telangana High Court Complex

Meeting with The President and International Policy Advisor of The Law Society of England and Wales



07 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India met with Mr Mark Evans, President, The Law Society of England and Wales; Ms Preeti Sawhney, International Policy Advisor (South Asia and ASEAN), The Law Society of England and Wales and Ms Tanvi Dubey, Advocate on Record, Supreme Court of India at the Chief Justice of India's Residential Office

07 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India met with Mr Mark Evans, President, The Law Society of England and Wales, and Ms Preeti Sawhney, International Policy Advisor (South Asia and ASEAN), The Law Society of England and Wales, at the Chief Justice of India's Residential Office.

The high-level meeting underscores the continuing commitment to fostering international cooperation and strengthening institutional ties between the legal fraternities of India and the United Kingdom. Such courtesy visits play a vital role in promoting mutual understanding, exchanging institutional goodwill, and facilitating a broader dialogue on global legal standards. This interaction reaffirms the shared dedication of both jurisdictions to advancing professional collaboration and maintaining robust bilateral relations within the global legal community.

Prize Distribution for Painting Competition



07 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India, with the participants of drawing/painting competition during the prize distribution for drawing/painting competition held in the Supreme Court of India, New Delhi

Inauguration of Annual Cultural Events, Supreme Court of India



09 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India; Justice Vikram Nath, Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah and Justice Prasanna B Varale, Judges, Supreme Court of India, at the inauguration of the Annual Cultural Events 2026

09 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India inaugurated the Annual Cultural Events 2026 of the Supreme Court of India. The Chief Justice of India, while inaugurating the Annual Cultural Events 2026, emphasised that the strength of the Supreme Court lies not only in its judicial output but also in the collective efforts of its officers and staff who sustain the institution. He concluded by appreciating the organisers for their efforts and formally declared the Cultural Events 2026 open, expressing hope that such initiatives continue to enrich the institution.



09 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India; Justice Vikram Nath, Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah and Justice Prasanna B Varale, Judges, Supreme Court of India, felicitated the participants at the inauguration of the Annual Cultural Events 2026

Indian Council of Arbitration (ICA) International Conference



10 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India, delivered the Inaugural Address at the 5th Edition of the ICA International Conference

10-11 April 2026: The 5th edition of the ICA International Conference organised by the Indian Council of Arbitration on *"Arbitration in the Era of Globalization: Legal Technology, Economic Development, and Cross-Border Disputes"* was held at the Auditorium of the High Court of Delhi.

In his speech, Justice Surya Kant emphasised the pivotal role of arbitration in sustaining economic confidence in a globalised world where cross-border commerce demands efficient and predictable dispute resolution. He concluded that strengthening institutional arbitration, capacity, and global alignment is essential for positioning India as a reliable hub for cross-border dispute resolution.

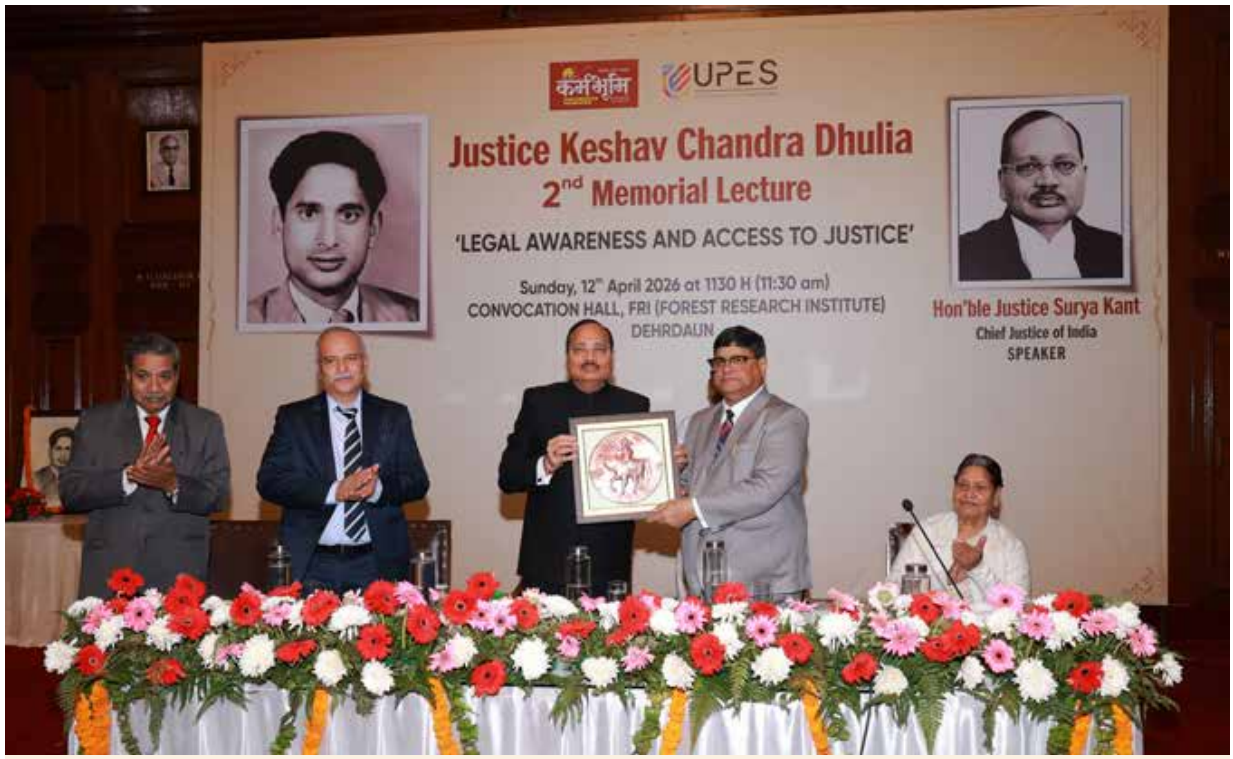
Justice B V Nagarathna, Judge, Supreme Court of India, chaired Technical Session- I on the Second day of the International Conference on *"Navigating the ADR Quagmire: Harmonizing Arbitration & Mediation"* and delivered the Keynote Address.

Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Judge, Supreme Court of India, chaired Technical Session-2 on *"ADR Mechanisms: A Catalyst for Global Economic Growth & Investor Confidence"* and delivered the keynote address.



11 April 2026: Justice B V Nagarathna and Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Judges, Supreme Court of India attended the 5th edition of the ICA International Conference on "Arbitration in the Era of Globalization: Legal Technology, Economic Development, and Cross-Border Disputes"

Justice Keshav Chandra Dhulia 2nd Memorial Lecture



12 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India felicitated by Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia, Former Judge, Supreme Court of India, during the Justice Keshav Chandra Dhulia 2nd Memorial Lecture organised by the Karmabhoomi Foundation, Uttarakhand at the Forest Research Institute, Dehradun, Uttarakhand. Justice Satish Chandra Sharma, Judge, Supreme Court of India and Mrs Sumitra Dhulia, Wife of Late Justice Keshav Chandra Dhulia were also present during the lecture.

12 April 2026: The Justice Keshav Chandra Dhulia 2nd Memorial Lecture was organised by the Karmabhoomi Foundation, Uttarakhand at the Forest Research Institute, Dehradun to commemorate the birth anniversary of Justice Keshav Chandra Dhulia, on the theme, *"Legal Awareness and Access to Justice"*.

Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India delivered the Lecture on *"Legal Awareness and Access to Justice"*. The family members of late Justice Keshav Chandra Dhulia, including Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia, Former Judge, Supreme Court of India, Mrs Sumitra Dhulia, Mr Tigmanshu Dhulia and Mr Himanshu Dhulia along with Justice Satish Chandra Sharma, Judge, Supreme Court of India also attended the session.

Paying tribute to Justice Keshav Chandra Dhulia, the Chief Justice described him as a jurist whose legacy extended beyond reported judgments and judicial tenure, residing instead in the values of integrity, discipline, public service, and intellectual independence that he embodied and passed on to future generations.

Turning to the theme of the lecture, the Chief Justice observed that the Constitution of India envisages justice not merely as a formal right, but as a lived reality accessible to every citizen.

Emphasising that justice ultimately remains a deeply human experience, he called for a collaborative ecosystem involving the judiciary, executive, legal profession, academic institutions, and civil society to ensure that legal awareness and access to justice become lived realities for every citizen.

4th Ashok Desai Memorial Lecture



13 April 2026:
Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India and Manu S Pillai, Author and Historian, during the 4th Ashok Desai Memorial Lecture held at India International Centre, New Delhi

13 April 2026: The 4th Ashok Desai Memorial Lecture was held at the India International Centre, New Delhi. Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India delivered the Lecture on the topic *"Reimagining Justice: The Indian Judiciary 50 Years Hence"*.

The Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant paid tribute to Shri Ashok H Desai, highlighting his profound contributions to Indian constitutional law, his role in landmark cases, and his enduring legacy of integrity, intellectual depth, and commitment to the rule of law. Shri Desai's career served as a bridge between past jurisprudence and the future of the legal system, illustrating how individual contributions can shape long-term legal evolution.

Building on this foundation, the Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant reflected on the transformation of the Indian judiciary—from a paper-based, resource-constrained system to a technology-driven institution, and projected its future trajectory.

The judiciary of 2076 was envisioned as highly accessible, technologically integrated, and responsive to complex, interdisciplinary disputes involving areas like artificial intelligence, environmental rights, and digital ecosystems.

The evening was also addressed by Manu S Pillai, Author and Historian, who spoke on the topic, *"Resisting Injustice: the Raj, the Law, and the Making of Modern India"*.

Commemorating Birth Anniversary of Dr B R Ambedkar



14 April 2026:
Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India, paid his respects to Dr B R Ambedkar, commemorating his Birth Anniversary, at the Supreme Court of India, New Delhi

14 April 2026:
Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India, paid his respects to Dr B R Ambedkar commemorating his Birth Anniversary, at the Supreme Court of India, New Delhi



Retirement of Justice Rajesh Bindal



15 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India along with other Judges of the Supreme Court of India during the farewell for Justice Rajesh Bindal, Judge, Supreme Court of India

15 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India delivered a ceremonial bench address on the occasion of the retirement of Justice Rajesh Bindal from the Supreme Court of India. The address reflected on a professional association spanning over four decades, tracing Justice Bindal's journey from a first-generation lawyer at the Punjab and Haryana High Court to the Supreme Court of India, with an intervening service across the High Courts of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Calcutta, and Allahabad.

The Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant highlighted Justice Bindal's journey as a first-generation lawyer who built a distinguished practice marked by diligence and integrity.

He noted Justice Bindal's expertise in taxation and civil law, and his reputation for thoroughness, which inspired confidence in complex and high-stakes matters. Recalling their time on the Bench, the Chief Justice observed that Justice Bindal was known for his exceptional rate of disposal and commitment to judicial efficiency.

Emphasising his contributions to institutional reform, he highlighted Justice Bindal's early and influential role in integrating technology into the justice system, particularly through initiatives like the MedLEaPR system for digitising medico-legal records, which later gained nationwide adoption.

The Chief Justice further noted that Justice Bindal's judgments consistently reflected sensitivity to the human impact of systemic issues, alongside his contributions to administrative reforms within the Court.

He concluded by describing Justice Bindal as a judge of exceptional industry and a reformer of quiet conviction, expressing gratitude for his service and wishing him well in his future endeavours.

22nd Biennial State Level Conference of Judicial Officers, Karnataka



18 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India, delivered the inaugural address at the 22nd Biennial State Level Conference of Judicial Officers on "Reimagining the Judiciary in the Era of Artificial Intelligence" in Karnataka

18 April 2026: The 22nd Biennial State Level Conference of Judicial Officers in Karnataka, was organised with the theme, *"Reimagining the Judiciary in the Era of Artificial Intelligence"* by the Karnataka State Judicial Officers Association at Dr Babu Rajendra Prasad International Convention Centre, G K V K Campus, Bengaluru.

Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India; Shri Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister of Karnataka; Justice B V Nagarathna and Justice Aravind Kumar, Judges, Supreme Court of India, and Justice Vibhu Bakhru, Chief Justice, High Court of Karnataka inaugurated the Conference.

Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India delivered the inaugural address at the conference focused on the changing nature of judicial functioning in a rapidly evolving technological environment and the responsibilities of district-level judicial officers as the most immediate interface between the judiciary and the citizen.

The Chief Justice observed that the judiciary presently stands at a moment of institutional introspection, shaped not only by legislative and doctrinal developments but also by structural changes brought about by artificial intelligence and emerging technologies.

On the role of artificial intelligence, the Chief Justice acknowledged its potential to improve efficiency in legal research, case management, and administrative functions. However, he cautioned against excessive reliance on AI tools, observing that judicial decision-making involves ethical reflection, contextual understanding, and constitutional values that cannot be replicated by machines.

He called upon judicial officers to approach AI-generated material with caution, scrutiny, and independent verification.

Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India, attended the Valedictory Programme of the 22nd Biennial State Level Conference of Judicial Officers and delivered the Valedictory Address. In his remarks, Justice Vikram Nath emphasised that artificial intelligence is here to stay and will increasingly shape judicial administration, including research, translation, transcription, case management and data analysis. Justice P S Narasimha delivered the Special Address on *"Integrating, Institutionalising, and Regulating Artificial Intelligence in Judicial Process"*.

CLEA International Conference on 'Sustainable Energy: An Agenda for India @ 2047'



18 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India; Shri Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister of Karnataka; Justice Vibhu Bakhru, Chief Justice, High Court of Karnataka; Justice D K Singh, Judge, High Court of Karnataka; Shri K J George, Minister of Energy, Government of Karnataka and Prof (Dr) S Sivakumar, President, CLEA during the inauguration of the CLEA International Conference on 'Sustainable Energy: An Agenda for India @ 2047' on the theme, "Reimagining Law, Policy, and Innovation for Energy Justice"

18-19 April 2026: CLEA International Conference on 'Sustainable Energy: An Agenda for India @ 2047' on the theme *"Reimagining Law, Policy, and Innovation for Energy Justice"* was organised in Bengaluru by the Commonwealth Legal Education Association and the Department of Energy, Government of Karnataka at Shangri-La, Bengaluru. The Conference brought together legal experts, policymakers and industry leaders to shape India's energy future. It focused on building sustainable, equitable energy frameworks, culminating in the Bengaluru Declaration on Sustainable Energy & Energy Justice @ 2047.

Justice Surya Kant delivered the keynote address as the Chief Guest, at the inaugural ceremony of the CLEA International Conference on Sustainable Energy. In his address, Justice Surya Kant stated that India's development journey does not require a binary choice between economic growth and environmental protection, noting that both rights are embedded within Article 21 of the Constitution.

Justice Surya Kant traced the evolution of India's environmental jurisprudence: from reactive liability models to a proactive, preventive framework, with

the doctrine of continuing mandamus as a key judicial innovation. He highlighted the landmark MC Mehta line of cases and noted the recent institutional step of formally reorganising those legacy petitions into independent suo motu proceedings for focused attention.

He outlined four pillars of Energy Justice: affordability, accessibility, equity, and inclusion, and drew on indigenous traditions such as the Apatani and Gond communities as living models of sustainable stewardship. Examining the Electricity Act of 2003 and tools like the Renewable Purchase Obligation, he called for stronger, more future-ready regulatory frameworks. He closed with Gandhi's caution against greed, urging that India's abundant natural resources be governed wisely and justly as instruments of national renewal.

Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India delivered the Valedictory Address, as Chief Guest, at the Valedictory Ceremony of the International Conference organised by CLEA. In his address, Justice Vikram Nath emphasised that sustainable development in India cannot be secured without law, since law provides structure, discipline, accountability and legitimacy to the pursuit of growth. He underlined that the transition to cleaner energy systems must be understood not only in economic or technological terms, but as a question of justice, including how burdens are distributed and how fairness and accountability are ensured in the process. Justice Nath further noted that courts do not design energy policy, but play an indispensable role in preserving the discipline of legality, guarding against arbitrariness, and ensuring that constitutional values are not overshadowed by short-term gains.



18 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India; Shri Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister of Karnataka; Justice Vibhu Bakhru, Chief Justice, High Court of Karnataka; Justice D K Singh, Judge, High Court of Karnataka; Shri K J George, Minister of Energy, Government of Karnataka and Prof (Dr) S Sivakumar, President, CLEA during the CLEA International Conference on 'Sustainable Energy: An Agenda for India @ 2047'

Inaugural and Presidential Address: Four Decades of Journey of Karnataka Lokayukta



18 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India; Justice Aravind Kumar, Judge, Supreme Court of India; Justice B S Patil, Lokayukta, State of Karnataka; Justice K N Phaneendra, Upa Lokayukta, State of Karnataka; and Justice B Veerappa, Upa Lokayukta, State of Karnataka during the event marking four decades of the Karnataka Lokayukta at Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru

Inauguration of Additional Court Buildings and Guest House at Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court



19 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India with Justice J K Maheshwari, Justice M M Sundresh, Judges, Supreme Court of India; Justice S A Dharmadhikari, Chief Justice, High Court of Madras; Justice R Suresh Kumar and Justice S M Subramaniam, Judges, High Court of Madras, during the inauguration of the Additional Court Buildings at the Madurai District Court and a Guest House at the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court

Address at the 22nd D P Kohli Memorial Lecture: Central Bureau of Investigation

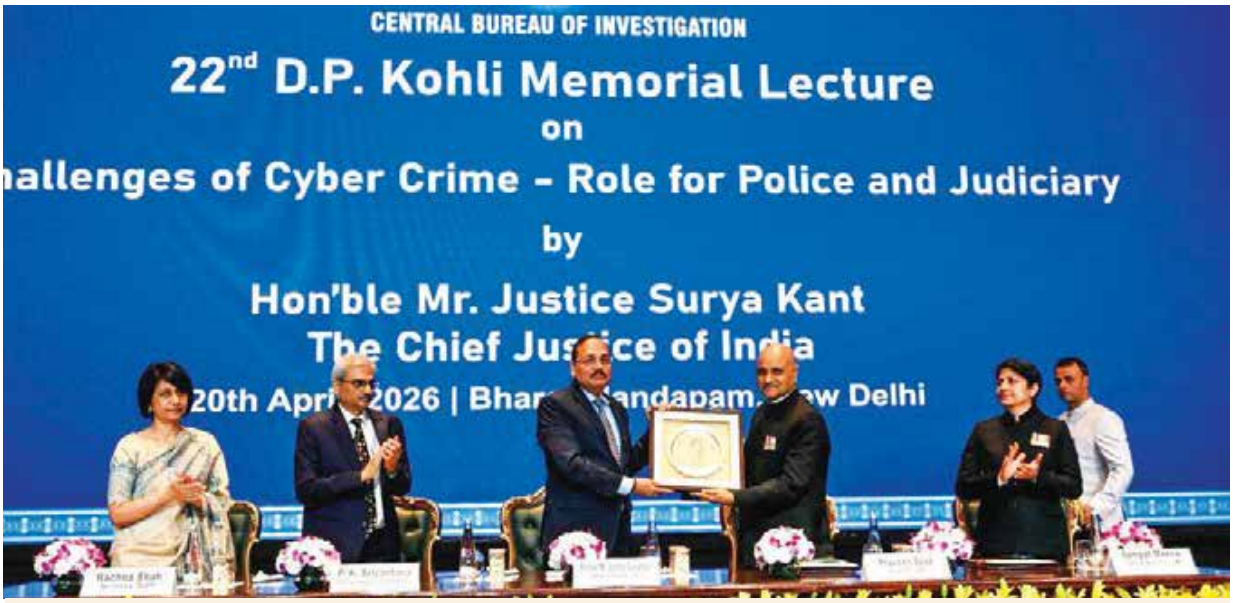
20 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India delivered the 22nd D P Kohli Memorial Lecture organised by the Central Bureau of Investigation on the theme of "Challenges of Cyber Crime: Role for Police and Judiciary", at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi



20 April 2026: The 22nd D P Kohli Memorial Lecture was organised by the Central Bureau of Investigation to pay tribute to the Shri D P Kohli, the founding Director of the CBI.

Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India, in his address reflected on the growing challenges posed by cybercrime and the evolving role of investigative agencies and the judiciary in addressing them. Paying tribute to Shri D P Kohli, the founding Director of the CBI, the Chief Justice described him as a visionary institution-builder whose principles of *"Industry, Impartiality and Integrity"* continue to guide the organisation.

At the event, the Chief Justice of India conferred the Police Medal for Meritorious Services on 23 officials of the CBI. The event also marked the launch of the CBI AI Chatbot, *"ABHAY"*.



20 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India; Shri Praveen Sood, Director, CBI; Shri P K Srivastava, Chief Vigilance Commissioner; Ms Rachna Shah (IAS), Secretary, Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) and Ms Sampat Meena (IPS), Special Director, CBI at the 22nd D P Kohli Memorial Lecture organised by the Central Bureau of Investigation on the theme of "Challenges of Cyber Crime: Role for Police and Judiciary", at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi

Address at the Conference of the Association of Retired Judges of Supreme Court & High Courts of India and Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority



25 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India; Shri Bhajan Lal Sharma, Chief Minister, State of Rajasthan; Justice Sanjeev Prakash Sharma, Acting Chief Justice, High Court of Rajasthan; Justice K L Sharma, National President, Association of Retired Judges of Supreme Court & High Courts of India along with Justice N K Jain, President of the Rajasthan Chapter; Justice V S Dave, Patron of the Association and Justice Mahendra Dayal, Secretary General of the Association at the Conference of the Association of Retired Judges of Supreme Court & High Courts of India and Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority

25 April 2026: The Association of Retired Judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts of India and the Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority in Jaipur jointly organised the conference, *"The Bench Beyond Retirement: The Role of Retired Judges in Advancement of ADR and Awareness of Laws for Common Masses"* in Jaipur.



25 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India, addressed the Conference of the Association of Retired Judges of Supreme Court & High Courts of India and Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority on the theme, "The Bench Beyond Retirement: The Role of Retired Judges in Advancement of ADR and Awareness of Laws for Common Masses" at Prithvi Raj Chouhan Auditorium, Constitution Club, Jaipur

Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India, in his address, used the setting of Jaipur and Rajasthan's traditions of preservation, wisdom and community memory to frame a larger reflection on judicial retirement. He observed that when a judge retires, institutions often celebrate the career and then move on, but this assumption is deeply wasteful.

The address identified four transformative roles for retired judges: serving as mediators and arbitrators, acting as legal educators in schools, colleges, and Gram Panchayats, functioning as pre-litigation counsellors within legal services mechanisms, and building institutions by mentoring mediators and legal aid lawyers. Concluding with the image of Rajasthan's stepwells, he described former judges as reservoirs of public wisdom from which a wise Republic must continue to draw strength.

5th Convocation Ceremony of Chaudhary Bansi Lal University, Bhiwani



25 April 2026: Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant; Justice Sheel Nagu, Chief Justice, Punjab & Haryana High Court and Prof Deepti Dharmani, Vice Chancellor, Chaudhary Bansi Lal University, Bhiwani, along with other faculty members of Chaudhary Bansi Lal University, felicitated students at the Convocation Ceremony of Chaudhary Bansi Lal University, Bhiwani

25 April 2026: Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant delivered the Convocation Address at the 5th Convocation Ceremony of Chaudhary Bansi Lal University, Bhiwani. At the Convocation Ceremony, Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant reflected on the deeper meaning of a university degree.

Chief Justice of India opened with the metaphor of a ship leaving its harbour, marking the graduates' transition from the safety of academic life to the wider world. He spoke warmly of his personal memories of Chaudhary Bansi Lal, who had entrusted him with the role of Additional Advocate General at just 32–33 years of age, and expressed that accepting this invitation was partly a tribute to that legacy.

Chief Justice Surya Kant urged graduates not to treat their degree as merely a ticket to employment, but as a reflection of the habits of mind, discipline, and intellectual integrity they had cultivated. Drawing on Swami Vivekananda's vision of education as character formation, he stressed that what one becomes in the process of learning matters far more than the certificate itself.

He concluded with a counsel of rootedness, urging students, many from villages and towns of Haryana, to remain connected to their communities and families. He reminded them that the truest measure of individual achievement is the dignity and opportunity it generates for others around them.

Inauguration of Projects of the High Court of Gujarat, Ahmedabad





03 April 2026: Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India attended the inauguration of various projects of the High Court of Gujarat at Ahmedabad, including (i) the Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony of Type-7 Residential Multi-Storey Flats for Judges of the High Court of Gujarat at Plot No. 150, Judges' Bungalows Road, Bodakdev, and (ii) the inauguration of the Gujarat High Court Judges' Guest House, Dhuliakot, Law Garden, Ahmedabad, along with (iii) the Foundation Stone Unveiling Ceremony of 4BHK bungalows for the Director and Deputy Director in the campus of the Gujarat State Judicial Academy, Gujarat High Court, Ahmedabad. The programme was also attended by Justice N V Anjaria and Justice Vipul M Pancholi, Judges, Supreme Court of India along with Justice Sunita Agarwal, Chief Justice, High Court of Gujarat, Justice A S Supehia, Judge, High Court of Gujarat and Chairperson, High Court Building Committee, and other Judges of the High Court of Gujarat

21st Justice P D Desai Memorial Lecture at Gujarat High Court, Ahmedabad



03 April 2026: Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India, delivered the 21st Justice P D Desai Memorial Lecture on the theme "Open Justice in the Digital Republic", at the Auditorium, Gujarat High Court, Sola, Ahmedabad, organised by the Praleen Public Charitable Trust and the Justice P D Desai Memorial Lecture Committee. The programme was also attended by Justice N V Anjaria and Justice Vipul M Pancholi, Judges, Supreme Court of India along with Justice Sunita Agarwal, Chief Justice, High Court of Gujarat, Justice A S Supehia, Judge, High Court of Gujarat and Chairperson, High Court Building Committee, and other Judges of the High Court of Gujarat

Annual Conference of Judges of the District Judiciary on "Reshaping Dispensation of Justice – Transcending the Narratives", Ahmedabad



04-05 April 2026: Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India, attended the Annual Conference of Judges of the District Judiciary on "Reshaping Dispensation of Justice – Transcending the Narratives", organised by the High Court of Gujarat in collaboration with the Gujarat State Judicial Academy, at the Gujarat High Court Auditorium. The Conference was also attended by Justice N V Anjaria and Justice Vipul M Pancholi Judges, Supreme Court of India, along with Justice Sunita Agarwal, Chief Justice, High Court of Gujarat, along with Judges of the High Court of Gujarat, and Judicial Officers of the District Judiciary

1st Dr Rajendra Prasad Memorial Lecture, Chanakya National Law University



04 April 2026: Justice B V Nagarathna along with Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Judges, Supreme Court of India; Justice Sangam Kumar Sahoo, Chief Justice, Patna High Court and Chancellor, CNLU; Mr P K Shahi, Advocate General, State of Bihar and Prof Faizan Mustafa, Vice Chancellor, CNLU, Patna, at the 1st Dr Rajendra Prasad Memorial Lecture on the topic, "Constitutionalism Beyond Rights: Why Structure Matters" at the Chanakya National Law University, Patna, Bihar



04 April 2026: Justice B V Nagarathna and Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Judges, Supreme Court of India with Justice Sangam Kumar Sahoo, Chief Justice, Patna High Court and Chancellor, CNLU and the Judges of the Patna High Court

Book Launch and Laudation Ceremony of Tamil Advocates of the Supreme Court, at Indian Law Institute, New Delhi



06 April 2026: Justice M M Sundresh, Judge, Supreme Court of India and Justice Harish Vaidyanathan Shankar, Judge, Delhi High Court and Ms V Mohana, Senior Advocate at the Book launch and Laudation Ceremony in appreciation of the scholarly works of Tamil Advocates of the Supreme Court at Indian Law Institute (ILI), New Delhi

7th Annual Convocation of University Campus of Tiruchirappalli



25 April 2026: Justice M M Sundresh, Judge, Supreme Court of India; Justice S A Dharmadhikari, Chief Justice, Madras High Court and Chancellor, Tamil Nadu National Law University; Justice M Govindaraj, Judge, Madras High Court; Prof (Dr) V Nagaraj, Vice Chancellor, Tamil Nadu National Law University, at the 7th Annual Convocation of Tamil Nadu National Law University. Justice M M Sundresh also delivered the Convocation Address at the Justice Padmini Jesudurai Auditorium, Tamil Nadu National Law University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu

Inauguration of the Renovated Heritage Court Building in Pudukkottai, Tamil Nadu



25 April 2026: Justice M M Sundresh, Judge, Supreme Court of India; Justice S A Dharmadhikari, Chief Justice, Madras High Court and Justice R Suresh Kumar, Judge, Madras High Court, attended the inauguration of the renovated heritage court building in Pudukkottai, Tamil Nadu

Inauguration of Two Multi-story Court Buildings at the Combined Court Building Campus at Tamil Nadu



26 April 2026: Justice M M Sundresh, Judge, Supreme Court of India attended inauguration of two multi-story Court buildings at the Combined Court Building Campus at Salem, Tamil Nadu. Justice S A Dharmadhikari, Chief Justice, Madras High Court and Justice R Suresh Kumar, Judge, Madras High Court also attended the inauguration

Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) Seminar at Srinagar



03 April 2026: Justice P S Narasimha attended the Inaugural Session of Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) Seminar on "Telecom, Broadcasting & Cyber Sectors: Disputes & Resolution" at Srinagar. Justice Arun Palli, Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh; Justice D N Patel, Chairperson, TDSAT; Mr Sanjeev Bansal and Mr Manjul Bajpai, Advocates were also present during the session

5th Soli Sorabjee Memorial Lecture at New Delhi



14 April 2026: Justice P S Narasimha attended and delivered the 5th Soli Sorabjee Memorial Lecture on Human Rights in the Empire of Artificial Intelligence at India International Centre, New Delhi

20th Meeting of the General Council at Chanakya National Law University,



03 April 2026:
Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah attended the '20th Meeting of the General Council' as Member of the General Council, at Chanakya National Law University Campus, Nyaya Nagar, Mithapur, Patna

Colloquium on "Crime Against Women" at Jharkhand Judicial Academy



25 April 2026: Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Judges, Supreme Court of India, attended the Colloquium on "Crime Against Women" organised by Jharkhand State Legal Services Authority and Department of Women, Child Development & Social Security, Govt of Jharkhand. Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah delivered a speech as Guest of Honour at the event that was held at Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Auditorium, Judicial Academy, Jharkhand, Ranchi

17th Foundation Day of National University of Study and Research in Law, Ranchi



26 April 2026:
Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Judge, Supreme Court of India attended the 17th Foundation Day of National University of Study and Research in Law, Ranchi, as Chief Guest, invited by Prof Dr Ashok R Patil, Vice Chancellor, NUSRL, Ranchi at the Plenary Hall, NUSRL, Ranchi. The 17th Foundation Day Event was also attended by Justice Mahesh Sharadchandra Sonak, Chief Justice, Jharkhand High Court; Justice Sujit Narayan Prasad, Judge, Jharkhand High Court and Mr Rajiv Ranjan, Advocate General, Jharkhand

Book Launch Event at Kurukshetra



04 April 2026: Justice Rajesh Bindal, Judge, Supreme Court of India attended the release of books by Dr Harish Kumar 'Ladla', former IGP Haryana at Kurukshetra

Book Launch: 'Tech, Law & Trust: India's Path to Sovereign IP'



17 April 2026:
Justice K V Viswanathan, Judge, Supreme Court of India participated as Chief Guest at the launch of the Book "Tech, Law & Trust: India's Path to Sovereign IP" by Dr Tamali Sen Gupta, at India International Centre, New Delhi

1st R N Mittal Memorial National Moot Court Competition 2026



26 April 2026: Justice K V Viswanathan, Judge, Supreme Court of India participated in the valedictory ceremony of the 1st R N Mittal Memorial National Moot Court Competition 2026, along with Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya, Chief Justice, High Court of Delhi, held at Faculty of Law, Delhi University, New Delhi

Global Engagements

CLEA Biennial International Conference and Commonwealth Mooting Competition 2026, Malaysia



03 April 2026: Justice K V Viswanathan, Judge, Supreme Court of India; Justice Tan Sri Datuk Nallini Pathmanathan, Judge, Federal Court of Malaysia and Mr R Venkataramani, Attorney General for India, felicitated participants at the CLEA Biennial International Conference and Commonwealth Mooting Competition 2026

02 and 03 April 2026: Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra and Justice K V Viswanathan, Judges, Supreme Court of India, on an invitation from Commonwealth Legal Education Association (CLEA), participated in the *'CLEA Biennial International Conference and Commonwealth Mooting Competition 2026',* under the theme *"Law and Justice in a Globalizing World",* with a special conference stream titled *'Lawyering 2030: Skills, Strategy and Legal Education for a Changing Commonwealth',* organised by the CLEA in collaboration with the Federal Court of Malaysia. Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra and Justice K V Viswanathan represented Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India during the Inaugural and the Closing Ceremony of the Conference, respectively and presented Inaugural and Closing addresses.

03 April 2026: Justice K V Viswanathan, Judge, Supreme Court of India, delivered a speech during Plenary Session 6 of the Conference titled "Navigating the Landscape of International Arbitration"



National Conference on Judicial Process Re-Engineering & Digital Transformation

Day 1: 11 April 2026

The eCommittee, Supreme Court of India, in collaboration with the Department of Justice, Government of India, organised a two-day National Conference on *"Judicial Process Re-Engineering & Digital Transformation"* at the Administrative Buildings Complex, Supreme Court of India, New Delhi. The Conference focused on improving judicial efficiency, transparency, accessibility and citizen-centric service delivery through process re-engineering and digital innovation.

The inaugural session was attended by Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India and Patron-in-Chief of the eCommittee, Supreme Court of India, who delivered the inaugural address and released the Biennial Report on Phase III of the eCourts Project. Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India and Chairman of the eCommittee, Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Law and Justice and Shri Jitin Prasada, Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, also addressed the gathering.

In his inaugural address, Justice Surya Kant highlighted that "the challenge lies in ensuring that technology deepens, rather than merely decorates, access to justice for every citizen, regardless of economic or geographical circumstance". He specifically highlighted 2,331 eSewa Kendras as a critical means of extending digital justice to citizens across all literacy levels.



11 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India and Patron-in-Chief of the eCommittee, Supreme Court of India; Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India and Chairman of the eCommittee; Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Law and Justice; Shri Jitin Prasada, Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, and Justice Anjani Kumar Mishra, Vice-Chairman, eCommittee, Supreme Court of India at the National Conference on "Judicial Process Re-Engineering & Digital Transformation"

The Chief Justice articulated a future where the judiciary is "natively digital", functioning as a paperless and seamless service rather than a physical destination. Concluding his address, Justice Surya Kant expressed confidence that the deliberations at the Conference would translate into concrete outcomes that would significantly enhance the experience of every citizen seeking justice.

The Conference included five working sessions addressing different aspects of judicial digital transformation.

Working Session I

Working Session I was chaired by Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India and Chairman, eCommittee; and featured Justice Aidan Xu, Judge of the General Division of the High Court, Supreme Court of Singapore. In his address, Justice Nath started with highlighting the bond between India and Singapore and compared India's scale spanning approximately 4 crore virtual hearings, NJDG with over 3.3 crore court records, progressing as a vast federation with Singapore's precision as a "unified city-state" providing a "masterclass" for any judiciary. Justice Aidan Xu shared insights into Singapore's technology-driven judicial reforms and emphasised that technological solutions must be guided by legal and procedural requirements. He stressed that access to justice should remain central to all technological initiatives and cautioned that while Artificial Intelligence can assist judicial processes, it cannot replace independent judicial reasoning.



11 April 2026: Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India delivered an address at the Working Session I of the National Conference on "Judicial Process Re-Engineering & Digital Transformation"



11 April 2026: Justice Aidan Xu, Judge of the General Division of the High Court, Supreme Court of Singapore delivered an address at the Working Session I of the National Conference on "Judicial Process Re-Engineering & Digital Transformation"

Working Session II

Working Session II was chaired by Justice P S Narasimha, Judge, Supreme Court of India, and focused on technological reforms relating to land demarcation, inventory management and digitisation of records. Justice Narasimha emphasised that technological advancements in the judiciary must align with existing legal frameworks through proper standardisation and regulation. He observed that technology, including initiatives like eMalkhana, can improve judicial efficiency but must be implemented with careful oversight and legal coherence.

Justice Ashwani Kumar Mishra, Judge, High Court of Punjab and Haryana, discussed the use of GNSS and geo-referencing systems for accurate land demarcation. Justice Bibhu Datta Guru, Judge, High Court of Chhattisgarh, presented the eMalkhana initiative for digital inventory management and tracking of case property. Justice M Sundar, Chief Justice, High Court of Manipur, addressed issues relating to digitisation, preservation and destruction of records, highlighting the need for standardised safeguards to ensure authenticity and integrity of electronic evidence.

Working Session III

Working Session III was chaired by Justice B V Nagarathna, Judge, Supreme Court of India, and focused on electronic evidence and criminal justice reforms under the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023. Justice Nagarathna highlighted the increasing significance of electronic evidence and stressed the importance of authenticity, forensic validation and institutional preparedness in dealing with digital records. Justice Ananda Sen, Judge, High Court of Jharkhand, discussed procedural safeguards relating to handling and preservation of electronic evidence. Justice Nikhil S Kariel, Judge, High



11 April 2026: Justice P S Narasimha, Judge, Supreme Court of India; Justice Ashwani Kumar Mishra, Judge, High Court of Punjab and Haryana; Justice Bibhu Datta Guru, Judge, High Court of Chhattisgarh, and Justice M Sundar, Chief Justice, High Court of Manipur during Working Session II of the National Conference on "Judicial Process Re-Engineering & Digital Transformation"



11 April 2026: Justice B V Nagarathna, Judge, Supreme Court of India; Justice Ananda Sen, Judge, High Court of Jharkhand; Justice Nikhil S Kariel, Judge, High Court of Gujarat and Mr Govind Mohan, Union Home Secretary, Government of India during the Working Session III of the National Conference on "Judicial Process Re-Engineering & Digital Transformation"

Court of Gujarat, highlighted technology-driven judicial reforms introduced through the SARAS Rules of the Gujarat High Court. Mr Govind Mohan, Union Home Secretary, Government of India, discussed broader policy initiatives relating to digital integration of law enforcement and judicial institutions.

Day 2: 12 April 2026

Working Session IV

Working Session IV, chaired by Justice Rajesh Bindal, Judge, Supreme Court of India, focused on Artificial Intelligence, data security and judicial



12 April 2026: Justice Rajesh Bindal, Judge, Supreme Court of India and Justice A Muhamed Mustaque, Chief Justice, High Court of Sikkim during the Working Session IV of the National Conference on "Judicial Process Re-Engineering & Digital Transformation"

process re-engineering. Justice Bindal stressed the need for secure digital infrastructure, updated procedural rules and greater e-awareness among stakeholders. Justice A Muhamed Mustaque, Chief Justice, High Court of Sikkim, emphasised the importance of consultative and problem-oriented judicial reforms and observed that technological implementation must remain responsive to the practical needs of judges, lawyers, staff and litigants.

Working Session V

Working Session V of the National Conference was chaired by Justice Sandeep Mehta, Judge, Supreme Court of India, and Justice Prasanna B Varale, Judge, Supreme Court of India, co-chaired the Session. Justice Purushaindra Kumar Kaurav, Judge, High Court of Delhi, discussed the framework established under the Rules for e-Inspection of Digitised Court Records, 2023 of the Delhi High Court, enabling remote access to judicial records. Justice B M Shyam Prasad, Judge, High Court of Karnataka presented the Surety and Scrutiny Management Application. The presentation highlighted the key features and benefits of the Surety Scrutiny Management Application in enhancing efficiency and transparency in the surety verification process. Mr Niraj Verma, Secretary, Department of Law and Justice, elaborated upon the objectives of Phase III of the eCourts Mission Mode Project and highlighted integration of technologies such as cloud computing, Artificial Intelligence and interoperable criminal justice systems.



12 April 2026: Justice Sandeep Mehta, Judge, Supreme Court of India, and Justice Prasanna B Varale, Judge, Supreme Court of India; Justice Purushaindra Kumar Kaurav, Judge, High Court of Delhi; Justice B M Shyam Prasad, Judge, High Court of Karnataka and Mr Niraj Verma, Secretary, Department of Law and Justice during Working Session V of the National Conference on "Judicial Process Re-Engineering & Digital Transformation"



12 April 2026: Justice J K Maheshwari; Justice Sandeep Mehta; Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah; Justice Prasanna B Varale, Judges, Supreme Court of India; and Justice Anjani Kumar Mishra, Vice Chairman, eCommittee, Supreme Court of India during the valedictory ceremony of the National Conference

Valedictory Ceremony

The Conference concluded with the valedictory address delivered by Justice J K Maheshwari, Judge, Supreme Court of India, who observed that judicial innovation and technological integration are essential for a modern and citizen-centric justice delivery system. He emphasised that Phase III of the eCourts Project seeks to move beyond mere digitisation towards creating an integrated and intelligent digital judiciary. The Vote of Thanks was delivered by Justice Anjani Kumar Mishra, Vice Chairman, eCommittee, Supreme Court of India, who acknowledged the contributions of all participants and stakeholders and expressed confidence that the deliberations would contribute significantly to strengthening India's digital justice ecosystem.

Glimpses of National Conference
on Judicial Process Re-Engineering and Digital Transformation












eCommittee, Supreme Court of India
eCourts
SINGLE SIGN-ON
eCourts Single SignOn




High Court
of Judicature
at Allahabad


High Court
of
Kerala



SAMADHAN SAMAROH, 2026

Special Lok Adalat at the Supreme Court of India

The Vision Behind *SAMADHAN SAMAROH*

To advance the vision of 'participative justice' and 'doorstep delivery of justice', the Supreme Court of India, under the initiative of Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India, is organising the *Supreme Court Action for Mediated Adjudication and Disputes Harmonisation Across the Nation* (*SAMADHAN)* SAMAROH. Justice Surya Kant envisioned the *SAMADHAN SAMAROH* as a collaborative justice initiative founded on the identification of cases amenable to settlement and the creation of structured mechanisms for consensual dispute resolution. He emphasised that meaningful justice delivery requires the proactive participation of all stakeholders, including advocates and members of the Bar, the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), the Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association (SCAORA), constitutional authorities, High Courts, legal services institutions, governments, public sector undertakings, financial institutions, insurance companies, and other public bodies, without whose cooperation and support such a mammoth exercise would not have been possible, recognising collective effort as indispensable for the successful and timely resolution of disputes.

The exercise commenced in April 2026 under the guidance of the Chief Justice and his companion Judges of the Supreme Court and will culminate in the holding of a Special Lok Adalat on 21, 22 and 23 August 2026.

The Special Lok Adalat seeks to facilitate amicable settlement of pending matters before the Supreme Court of India through consent-based resolution mechanisms, including mediation, conciliation, and Lok Adalat processes. The initiative is aimed at substantially reducing pendency at the apex court level through structured pre-Lok Adalat counselling and engagement with parties.

Stakeholder Engagement

Of the approximately 36,000 cases identified for *SAMADHAN SAMAROH*, over 8,400 matters are exclusively between private parties. The remaining cases involve the Union of India, State Governments, Public Sector Undertakings,





financial institutions and statutory bodies, which constitute by far the largest category of litigants before the Supreme Court.

Recognising this in the lead-up to *SAMADHAN SAMAROH*, structured meetings were held in April 2026 with a wide cross-section of stakeholders, including Chief Justices of all High Courts, Law Officers, Chief Secretaries and Law Secretaries of State Governments, and Chairmen and Managing Directors of banks and insurance companies. The highlight of these meetings is the engagement of institutional litigants, being the largest category of litigants before the Supreme Court, which has been treated as central to the success of the initiative.

Pathway to Resolution

SAMADHAN SAMAROH is different in its functioning from a routine Lok Adalat exercise. The initiative does not rely on a single institutional mechanism. It deploys the entire network, including the State Legal Services Authorities (SLSAs) at the High Court level, down through the District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs) and to the Taluka Legal Services Committees (TLSCs) at the grassroots as an integrated apparatus for outreach, notice service, mediation and efforts for pre-Lok Adalat conciliation.

Cases identified by the Supreme Court are communicated to the respective High Courts. Pre-Lok Adalat conciliation sittings have commenced under the supervision of SLSAs and DLSAs. Once a settlement is reached, the settlement deeds will be signed and authenticated by the authorised officers, or the consent forms of the parties will be forwarded for their appearance in the final sittings, following which the matter will proceed to the Special Lok Adalat in August. All outcomes are communicated to the SC One Stop Centre, which ultimately coordinates the final sittings.

At the apex of this structure sits a Monitoring Committee, headed by Justice P S Narasimha, Judge, Supreme Court of India. Further, the High Courts have been divided into five zones, each under the direct supervision of a designated Judge of the Supreme Court and Registrar of the Supreme Court. Each High Court, in turn, operates through a Nodal Officer who serves as the real-time point of contact with the Supreme Court's One Stop Centre, the War Room that coordinates the entire exercise from New Delhi.

Cases pending before the Supreme Court do not exist in a vacuum. The parties are residing

in different places across the country. The DLSA in their district, the TLSC in their taluka, the trained mediator who speaks their language and understands their local context, these are not peripheral actors in the *SAMADHAN SAMAROH* process. They are its backbone.

High Courts have been specifically tasked with preparing schedules for pre-Lok Adalat exercises and ensuring that SLSAs, HCLSCs, DLSAs and TLSCs conduct virtual or physical meetings with parties.

The Hon'ble Prime Minister had also emphasised the significance and value of mediation, which lends to *SAMADHAN SAMAROH* a cross-institutional momentum that reinforces the Supreme Court's efforts at the highest level of the executive as well.

Categories of Cases Eligible for *SAMADHAN SAMAROH*

The following categories of cases have been identified as suitable for *SAMADHAN SAMAROH*: disputes about Banking and Civil Law; Compensation and Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT) matters; Consumer and Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) disputes; matters arising under the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881; Family Laws; Labour and Industrial Laws; Land Acquisition matters; Property Tax disputes; Rent and Eviction matters; Service Laws; Transfer Petitions; and issues relating to Direct and Indirect Taxation. These categories encompass the broad spectrum of disputes, covered under the *SAMADHAN SAMAROH.*

The Process: From Identification to Settlement

The process flow of *SAMADHAN SAMAROH* is designed to move cases through successive stages of engagement toward a resolution prior to their culmination into a Special Lok Adalat to be held at the Supreme Court of India on 21st, 22nd and 23rd August, 2026.

As emphasised by the Chief Justice of India, the success of the endeavour will ultimately depend upon the effectiveness and sincerity of the pre-Lok Adalat Conciliation sittings as well as the cooperation and participation of all the stakeholders involved. *SAMADHAN SAMAROH* is therefore envisioned not merely as a dispute resolution initiative but as a collaborative institutional effort aimed at securing accessible and participatory justice.

Parties and their counsels who wish to participate in *SAMADHAN SAMAROH* may register by filling out the prescribed Google Form made available on the official website of the Supreme Court at www.sci.gov.in. The last date for submission of the Google Forms is 31 July 2026.

To ensure wider accessibility and participation, appearance before the Special Lok Adalat may be made either through physical presence or by virtual mode, thereby eliminating geographical barriers for parties who may not be in a position to travel to New Delhi. *SAMADHAN SAMAROH* seeks to encourage meaningful participation of litigants, counsels and all concerned stakeholders in furtherance of expeditious and amicable settlement of disputes.

FOR ASSISTANCE & INFORMATION

One Stop Centre (War Room): **011-23112428** | **011-23112528**
One Stop Centre, Room 806 & 808, B Block, Administrative Buildings Complex,
Supreme Court of India: **011-23116464** | **011-23116465**
Email: speciallokadalat2026@sci.nic.in
Google Form for Litigants/AORs: https://forms.gle/jqxefqF4BCWzukoP6
Last date to fill the form: **31 July 2026**

Justice S Rajendra Babu
34th Chief Justice of India



Justice S Rajendra Babu was born on 1 June 1939, in Bangalore, Karnataka. He pursued his LLB from Raja Lakhamagouda Law College, Belgaum, Karnataka University, where he obtained First Class Honors. Karnataka University conferred an honorary doctorate upon him in 2005. Throughout his judicial career, he made contributions to diverse branches of law, authoring several landmark judgments from Constitutional Law to IPR.

EARLY LIFE AND CAREER

Justice Babu enrolled as an advocate on 4 January 1969. He represented the Income Tax Department as Additional Standing Counsel and also represented the Government of Karnataka as High Court Government Pleader. His practice focused on taxation, constitutional law, and civil matters.

JUDICIAL CAREER: HIGH COURT AND SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

Justice Babu was appointed as a permanent judge of the Karnataka High Court on 19 February 1988 and thereafter was appointed as a Judge of the Supreme Court of India on 25 September 1997. He was appointed as the Chief Justice of India on 2 May 2004.

During his Supreme Court tenure, Justice Babu authored 426 judgments. In the year 2001 alone, he wrote 114 judgments. The subject matter distribution of his judgments was: service law (18.8 percent), labour and industrial law (14 percent), and constitutional law (13.6 percent).

Some of the judgments given by Justice Babu, across different disciplines, during his tenure at the Supreme Court of India include *Kishori v. State of Delhi*, 1999 (1) SCC 148; *Danial Latifi v. Union of India* (2001) 7 SCC 740; *Centre for Public Interest Litigation v. Union of India* (2003) 7 SCC 532; and *Gramophone Co of India Ltd v. Mars Recording (P) Ltd*, among others.

His tenure as Chief Justice lasted from 2 May 2004 to 1 June 2004, a period of 30 days, making him the second shortest-serving Chief Justice in Indian history. He retired on 1 June 2004 upon reaching the mandatory retirement age of 65.

POST-RETIREMENT POSITIONS

Justice Babu assumed the office of Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission on 2 April 2007. He was the fifth Chairperson of the Commission. Under his chairmanship, the NHRC's programme of visits to 28 selected districts was started to promote and protect human rights at the grassroots and several national conferences were organised on topics including relief and rehabilitation of displaced persons, the right to education, mental health, manual scavenging, detention, and human rights education in schools. He completed his term as Chairperson on 31 May 2009, serving for 2 years and 2 months.

Justice Babu held the ICICI Chair (Professor) at the National Law School of India University. Justice Babu served as President of the International Nursing Services Association, where he imparted training in community health work for over 25 years.

Legal Aid

Annual Conference of Judges of the District Judiciary, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

04 April 2026: The Gujarat State Legal Services Authority (GSLSA) organised a series of initiatives at the Gujarat High Court Auditorium, Ahmedabad, on the occasion of the Annual Conference of Judges of the District Judiciary.

A total of 25 Multi-Utility Vehicles (MUVs) for GSLSA and District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs) were ceremoniously flagged off by Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India and Executive Chairman of the National Legal Services Authority, in the presence of Justice N V Anjaria, Justice Vipul M Pancholi, Judges, Supreme Court of India; Justice Sunita Agarwal, Justice Alpesh Y Kogje, and Justice A S Supehia.

GSLSA also announced the launch of the "Community Mediation (Trading Community)" initiative across Gujarat under the aegis of NALSA.

On the same occasion, certificates were distributed to 11 mediators from Gujarat who have been newly empanelled as trainers on the panel of the Mediation and Conciliation Project Committee after successfully completing Training of Trainers programmes. The certificates were presented by Justice Vikram Nath in the presence of Judges of the Supreme Court and the Gujarat High Court.











04 April 2026: Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India and Executive Chairman of the National Legal Services Authority, along with Justice N V Anjaria and Justice Vipul M Pancholi, Judges, Supreme Court of India participated in the series of initiatives taken up by the Gujarat State Legal Services Authority on the occasion of the Annual Conference of Judges of the District Judiciary, at Gujarat High Court Auditorium, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

North-Zone Regional Conference on "Enhancing Access to Justice" by NALSA



11-12 April 2026: A group picture of Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India & Patron-in-Chief, NALSA along with Lt Gen Gurmit Singh, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd), Governor of Uttarakhand, Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India, Mr Pushkar Singh Dhami, Chief Minister, Government of Uttarakhand, Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India & Executive Chairman, NALSA, Justice S V N Bhatti and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma, Judges of the Supreme Court of India and other officials at the NALSA North-Zone Regional Conference on "Enhancing Access to Justice"

The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), in collaboration with the Uttarakhand State Legal Services Authority (UKSLSA), convened the North Zone Regional Conference on *'Enhancing Access to Justice'* with the theme *"Justice Beyond Barriers: Rights, Rehabilitation and Reform for the Most Vulnerable"* at Taj Mussoorie Foothills, Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

Day 1: 11 April 2026

The first day of the Conference featured two thematic technical sessions addressing key dimensions of access to justice:

The first technical session on *"Effective Implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006: From Recognition to Realization"* was chaired by Justice J K Maheshwari, Judge, Supreme Court of India & Chairman, SCLSC, with Mr Justice N Kotiswar Singh, Judge, Supreme Court of India, as Co-Chair. The session also featured Justice Sheel Nagu, Chief Justice, High Court of Punjab & Haryana and Justice G S Sandhawalia, Chief Justice, High Court of Himachal Pradesh as distinguished speakers along with Ms Anitha Shenoy, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India, and Ms Shomona Khanna, Advocate, Supreme Court of India. The deliberations examined the historical context of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, the status of individual and community claims, and challenges in recognition of community forest rights, with emphasis on ensuring effective implementation and meaningful realisation of rights for forest-dwelling communities and featured an intervention by a representative from the Van Gujjar community.

The second technical session on *"Prison Reforms, Undertrial Justice & Human-Centric Legal Aid"* was chaired by Justice Sandeep Mehta, Judge, Supreme Court of India. The session also featured Justice Arun Bhansali, Chief Justice, High Court of



11-12 April 2026: Justice J K Maheshwari, Judge, Supreme Court of India, delivered the Inaugural Address and chaired the first technical session on "Effective Implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006: From Recognition to Realization at the NALSA North-Zone Regional Conference on "Enhancing Access to Justice", Dehradun, Uttarakhand

Allahabad, Justice Arun Palli, Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh and Justice Manoj Kumar Tiwari, Judge, High Court of Uttarakhand & Executive Chairman, UKSLSA, along with Mr. Gaurav Agrawal, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India, and Prof (Dr) Vartika Nanda, Delhi University & Founder, Tinka Tinka Foundation. The deliberations focused on challenges relating to undertrial incarceration, humane treatment of prisoners and strengthening institutional accountability within the prison system.

Day 2: 12 April 2026

Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India & Patron-in-Chief, NALSA, Lt Gen Gurmit Singh, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd), Governor of Uttarakhand, Mr Pushkar Singh Dhami, Chief Minister, Government of Uttarakhand, Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India & Executive Chairman, NALSA, Justice S V N Bhatti and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma, Judges of the Supreme Court of India, Mr Arjun Ram Meghwal, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India, Mr Justice Manoj Kumar Gupta, Chief Justice, High Court of Uttarakhand & Patron-in-Chief, UKSLSA and Justice Manoj Kumar Tiwari, Judge, High Court of Uttarakhand & Executive Chairman, UKSLSA were present during the second day of the Conference. The programme was also attended by Chief Justices and Judges of the participating High Courts, officers of SLSAs and members of the District Judiciary.

Delivering the Keynote Address, Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India observed that *"the real barrier to justice today is not the absence of laws, but the gap between rights and their accessibility"*. He emphasised that access to justice must move beyond formal legal entitlements and be anchored in the lived realities of citizens, particularly those at the margins. Highlighting NALSA's expanding outreach across diverse and often remote regions, he underscored the need for legal services institutions to respond with sensitivity, adaptability and



11-12 April 2026: Justice Sandeep Mehta, Judge, Supreme Court of India, delivered an address at the NALSA North-Zone Regional Conference on "Enhancing Access to Justice", at Dehradun, Uttarakhand



11-12 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India delivered the keynote address at the NALSA North-Zone Regional Conference on "Enhancing Access to Justice", at Dehradun, Uttarakhand

institutional innovation, describing such efforts as platforms for *"constitutional listening"* that bridge the distance between rights and their effective realisation.

Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India observed that access to justice must evolve beyond physical access to courts into a framework defined by reach, awareness and trust. Emphasising that justice must move closer to the citizen, he highlighted initiatives such as the Nyaya Portal, best practices documentation and Mobile Utility Vehicles as instruments of last-mile delivery. He commended grassroots innovations such as the *"One Village, One PLV"* model of Uttarakhand and underscored the growing role of community mediation in fostering participatory, responsive and preventive justice systems. Invoking Mahatma Gandhi, he noted that the true measure of justice lies in how effectively it reaches the last person in need.

Lt Gen Gurmit Singh, Governor of Uttarakhand, stressed that justice must be timely, affordable and



11-12 April 2026: Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India delivered the keynote address at the NALSA North-Zone Regional Conference on "Enhancing Access to Justice", at Dehradun, Uttarakhand



11-12 April 2026: Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India & Patron-in-Chief, NALSA, Lt Gen Gurmit Singh, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd), Governor of Uttarakhand, Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India, Mr Pushkar Singh Dhami, Chief Minister, Government of Uttarakhand, Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India & Executive Chairman, NALSA, Justice Manoj Kumar Gupta, Chief Justice, High Court of Uttarakhand & Patron-in-Chief, UKSLSA and Justice Manoj Kumar Tiwari, Judge, High Court of Uttarakhand & Executive Chairman, UKSLSA during the NALSA North-Zone Regional Conference on "Enhancing Access to Justice"

accessible even in remote regions, cautioning that delays erode public trust. The Chief Minister, Government of Uttarakhand, emphasised the need to ensure timely justice to the last person, highlighting ongoing reforms and the importance of removing barriers to access. Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal noted that sustained grassroots legal aid efforts, though incremental, have transformative impact, contributing to the constitutional vision of justice for all.

Justice Manoj Kumar Tiwari delivered the vote of thanks, expressing sincere gratitude to all dignitaries, participating High Courts and delegates for their valuable contributions to the Conference.

The session also witnessed the launch of the UKSLSA's *Nyay-Mitra Portal* by Justice Surya Kant and the release of an *e-Booklet on Best Practices & Legal Aid Initiatives* by Justice Vikram Nath, followed by audio-visual presentations showcasing ongoing initiatives.

As part of the programme, Multi Utility Vehicles (MUVs) were also flagged off for District Legal Services Authorities and UKSLSA, aimed at strengthening last-mile outreach and enhancing the mobility and effectiveness of legal services institutions in delivering legal aid to remote and underserved areas.

The third technical session on *"Justice for Acid Attack Survivors: Compensation, Rehabilitation & Dignity-Centric Support"* was chaired by Justice S V N Bhatti, Judge, Supreme Court of India, with Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya, Chief Justice, High Court of Delhi, as Co-Chair and featured Ms Laxmi Agarwal, Founder, The Laxmi Foundation and Dr Navpreet Kaur, Co-Founder, The Laxmi Foundation. The deliberations

underscored the need for a humane and victim-centric approach to justice delivery, emphasising that rehabilitation must extend beyond formal processes to meaningful engagement and sustained support systems.

The fourth technical session on *"Strengthening Legal Protection & Support Systems for Women and Children"* was chaired by Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India & Executive Chairman, NALSA, with Justice Sanjeev Kumar, Judge, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh & Executive Chairman, Jammu & Kashmir Legal Services Authority, as Co-Chair and featured Ms Manju Dhaundiyal, Consultant (Women and Children Issues) and Ms Sampurna Behura, Executive Director, India Child Protection.

The deliberations emphasised the need for a holistic and coordinated approach to safeguarding the rights of women and children, focusing on strengthening legal and institutional frameworks, addressing implementation gaps and enhancing outreach and awareness mechanisms.

The Conference concluded with a shared commitment to advancing innovative, inclusive, and people-centric approaches to justice delivery, in furtherance of the constitutional mandate of ensuring equal access to justice for all.



11-12 April 2026: Multi Utility Vehicles (MUVs) were flagged off for District Legal Services Authorities and UKSLSA

Fresh from the Bench

Ashwini Kumar Upadhyaya v. Union of India
(2026 INSC 432)

"For a nation that has historically embraced the idea of the world as one family, the modern construct of 'citizenship' cannot be reduced to a basis for exclusion or division. It is, therefore, inconceivable that citizens be classified or discriminated against on grounds such as caste, colour, creed, gender, or any other marker rooted in an 'us versus them' mindset"

Coram: Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Sandeep Mehta

In a judgment dated **29 April 2026**, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court dealt with issues concerning the regulation of 'hate speech' and 'rumour-mongering', the boundaries of judicial power regarding the creation of criminal offences, and the efficacy of existing statutory frameworks for the registration of First Information Reports (FIRs). The Court gave a closer look to the extent to which current substantive criminal laws already penalise acts promoting communal enmity, determining that there is no legislative vacuum but rather a deficit in consistent enforcement. Furthermore, the Court evaluated whether adequate procedural mechanisms exist under the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) to address police inaction in registering FIRs, ultimately affirming that the existing multi-tiered statutory remedies are comprehensive and declining to issue a continuing mandamus that would compel legislative action or bypass established legal procedures.

Background

The petitioners relied upon the 267th Report dated 23.03.2017, of the Law Commission of India, which recommended certain amendments to the criminal law, including the introduction of specific provisions dealing with 'incitement to hatred'. Secondly, the petitioners pointed to the emergence of public speeches during the COVID-19 pandemic, allegedly targeting particular religious minorities, wherein it was insinuated that members of those communities were responsible for spreading the virus by engaging in communal conduct rather than adhering to public health protocols such as social distancing. The Court noted that most of the issues in the petitions had become infructuous as they pertained to reliefs during the pandemic. However, with respect to the other reliefs, the Court framed the following issues:

a. Whether this Court can create or expand criminal offences in the absence of legislative action.
b. Whether the existing field of substantive criminal law adequately deals with offences relating to hate speech, or the field is legislatively unoccupied.
c. Whether the existing framework of criminal procedural law provides adequate and efficacious remedies to address the grievances raised by the petitioners, particularly in cases of non-registration of a First Information Report.
d. Whether a continuing mandamus be issued in the present case.

Court's Reasoning and Key Observations

Regarding the first issue, i.e. the power of the Court to create or expand criminal offences in the absence of legislative action, the Court highlighted the principle of separation of powers. It noted that while the Constitution of India does not recognise the doctrine of separation of powers in its absolute

rigidity, it nonetheless envisages a functional separation of powers to a significant degree. The Court further relied on its earlier decision in the case of *SCWLA v. Union of India,* (2016) 3 SCC 680 stated that in the absence of constitutional silence or a legislative vacuum, the Judiciary cannot assume the role of the Legislature by determining what ought to constitute an offence or by prescribing the appropriate punishment for a particular criminal act. The Court relied upon its recent judgment in the case of *Union of India v. K Pushpavanam,* 2023 INSC 701 where it was held that no constitutional court can issue a writ of mandamus to a legislature to enact a law on a particular subject in a particular manner. The Court may, at the highest, record its opinion or recommendation on the necessity of either amending the existing law or coming out with a new law.

With respect to the second issue on the legislative vacuum for offences relating to hate speech, the Court noted that the criminal law contains several provisions which penalise acts that promote enmity between different groups, outrage religious sentiments, or disturb public tranquillity. These provisions represent a conscious legislative effort to regulate speech which threatens communal harmony and public order. The mere occurrence of incidents of hate speech cannot lead to the conclusion that the law is silent on the subject. The Court noted that in Chapter II of the 267th Report of the Law Commission of India, titled "*Legal Provisions on Hate Speech in India*", the Law Commission surveyed the existing legislative provisions addressing hate speech under Indian law. It recognised that there were provisions addressing this issue in the Indian Penal Code, 1860, Representation of the People Act, 1951, the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 etc.

Regarding the issue on the lack of adequate and efficacious remedies to address the grievances raised by the petitioners, particularly in cases of non-registration of a First Information Report the Court stated that there was adequate mechanisms under the CrPC/BNSS for an informant when he/she is aggrieved by non-registration of an FIR. While referring to its judgment in *Sakiri Vasu v. State of UP* (2008) 2 SCC 409, the Court noted that the first remedy available is to approach the Superintendent of Police under Section 154(3) of CrPC (Section 173 of BNSS). If the grievance persists, the informant may thereafter invoke the jurisdiction of the Magistrate under Section 156(3) of CrPC (Section 175 of BNSS), who is empowered to direct registration of the FIR and consequent investigation. However, where the grievance of the complainant persists even after exhaustion of the statutory remedies, the constitutional Courts may exercise their jurisdiction to ensure that the statutory duty of registering and investigating cognisable offences is not defeated by inaction or arbitrary refusal on the part of the authorities. The Court noted that any deficiency lies not in the absence of law, but in its application and enforcement in specific cases.

Lastly, with respect to the issue that whether a continuing mandamus is warranted in the present case, the Court firstly noted that the concept of a continuing mandamus was evolved in the case of *Lok Prahari v. Union of India,* 2021 INSC 261 wherein it was observed that it is a judicial innovation evolved through interpretative exercise and does not constitute a substantive writ remedy in itself. The Court noted that a continuing mandamus enables the Court to ensure that the fruits of its judgments are not rendered illusory on account of administrative or institutional inertia. It provides an effective mechanism to secure compliance and to ensure that the rights declared by this Court are translated into tangible outcomes, rather than remaining merely on paper.

Outcome and Directions

In the present matter however the Court refused to issue a continuing mandamus because firstly, it would keep the matter pending in anticipation of future contingencies. Secondly, the issuance of a continuing mandamus in anticipation of a possible failure in discharge of statutory duty would result in this Court assuming functions that are not constitutionally vested in it.

In Re: Illegal Sand Mining in the National Chambal Sanctuary and Threat to Endangered Aquatic Wildlife (2026 INSC 380)

"The State cannot be permitted to plead helplessness or take shelter under its own inadequacies, particularly when such inadequacies directly contribute to the perpetuation of illegality, violence, loss of human life, and the irreversible destruction of habitats vital to critically endangered species"

Coram: Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Sandeep Mehta

In an order dated **17 April 2026**, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court, in proceedings arising from suo motu cognisance concerning illegal sand mining in the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary, issued interim directions to curb illegal mining activities affecting protected wildlife habitats and public infrastructure.

Background

The Court had originally taken suo motu cognisance on 13.03.2026, following disturbing reports of rampant illegal sand mining within the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary, which was causing severe degradation of critical wildlife habitats, including those of the endangered Gharial. On 20.03.2026, the Court observed that destruction of wildlife habitat in protected areas would attract offences and penalties under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 and the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, and issued notice to the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, their respective Principal Secretaries, Director Generals of Police, and the relevant State Departments, as well as the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

On 02.04.2026, the Court took on record the First Report of the Amicus Curiae and CEC Report No. 8, granted time to the States to file responses, stayed the notification dated 23.12.2025 issued by the State of Rajasthan under Section 18 of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, and directed transfer of Original Application No. 248 of 2022 from the National Green Tribunal to be tagged with the present proceedings.

The present Interlocutory Application was moved by the Amicus Curiae on account of three developments: Murder of Forest Guard Shri Harikesh Gurjar on 8.04.2026, in Morena, Madhya Pradesh), Murder of Forest Guard Shri Jitendra Singh Shekhawat (8-9.01.2026, Dholpur, Rajasthan): and Threat to Structural Integrity of an Inter-State Bridge on National Highway-44: Reports dated 7.04.2026 which disclosed that heavy machinery including excavators, tractors, and dumpers was being deployed for sand extraction dangerously close to and even beneath several pillars of a bridge constructed circa 2016-2017 on National Highway-44 connecting Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan near the Morena-Dholpur border. Deep pits ranging from 30 to 50 feet had been created around certain pillars, causing the formation of large water-filled cavities that compounded the bridge's structural vulnerability and posed risk of imminent structural failure.

Court's Reasoning and Key Observations

The Court observed that, despite repeated directions issued on both the judicial and administrative sides no effective or meaningful steps appear to have been taken thus far to address the continuing illegal sand mining activities and the resultant ecological degradation.

The Court situated its intervention within the constitutional framework, observing that the

issues arising in the present matter transcend mere questions of regulatory compliance and strike at the very heart of environmental governance. The protection of natural resources and fragile ecosystems is not only a statutory obligation but a constitutional imperative. It further held that environmental protection forms an integral facet of the right to life under Article 21, and that continued degradation of natural resources and fragile ecosystems for short-term gains and greed, coupled with administrative indifference, cannot be countenanced in a system governed by the rule of law.

Outcome and Directions

Exercising powers under Article 142 of the Constitution, the Court issued the following directions for immediate compliance:

A. **CCTV Surveillance:** The States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh were directed to install high-resolution, Wi-Fi enabled CCTV cameras on elevated poles/ masts at all routes frequently used for illegal sand mining and along vulnerable riverine stretches, in consultation with the CEC, so as to minimise ecological disturbance.

B. **Monitoring Responsibility:** Live feeds from such cameras are to be placed under the direct control of the Superintendent of Police/Senior Superintendent of Police and the Divisional Forest Officer of each concerned district, who are required to designate officers not below the rank of Sub-Inspector/Station House Officer for continuous monitoring. Detection of illegal activity is to be followed by mandatory, prompt action including mobilisation of enforcement teams and initiation of legal proceedings.

C. **GPS Tracking (Pilot Basis):** On a pilot basis, GPS tracking devices are to be mandatorily installed in all vehicles and machinery including dredgers, loaders, excavators, and tractors registered or operating in District Morena, Madhya Pradesh and District Dholpur, Rajasthan. Data generated is to be made accessible to District Magistrates and police authorities. Any vehicle or machinery found non-compliant is liable to immediate seizure, with release permissible only upon express permission of the Court.

D. **Control Rooms:** The States are to submit, by the next date of hearing, a detailed feasibility report on establishing dedicated control rooms in each district falling within or adjoining the Sanctuary, to centrally receive and monitor live CCTV feeds and GPS data, along with a proposed inter-departmental coordination framework.

E. **Seizure and Prosecution:** Any vehicle or machinery found involved in illegal sand mining is to be immediately seized; drivers, owners, and all persons involved are to be prosecuted under applicable environmental, conservation, and mining statutes, and confiscation proceedings are to be diligently pursued.

F. **Environmental Compensation:** State Pollution Control Boards of all three States are directed to initiate time-bound proceedings for assessment, imposition, and recovery of environmental compensation from violators strictly in accordance with the "Polluter Pays" principle.

G. **Joint Patrol Teams:** Dedicated, fully-operational joint patrol teams comprising police and forest officials are to be constituted in each district falling within or adjoining the Sanctuary, deployed on a continuous, round-the-clock basis and equipped with modern surveillance and communication equipment, protective gear, and appropriate arms.

H. **Checkpoints:** All existing or newly established checkpoints are to be equipped with adequate and modern protective gear, communication

devices, surveillance aids, and necessary arms, with personnel appropriately trained and supported.

I. **Standard Operating Procedure:** The three States are directed, in close coordination with one another, to formulate and implement a comprehensive, uniform, and time-bound SOP covering operational protocols for interception, seizure, arrest, and emergency response, including safeguards for enforcement personnel and mechanisms for real-time inter-State information sharing and joint operations.

J. **Personal Accountability:** Any dereliction of duty, negligence, inaction, or failure to comply with the Court's directions shall be viewed with utmost seriousness, with concerned officers held personally accountable and liable to contempt proceedings.

K. **Compliance Affidavits:** The States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh are directed to place on record, by the next date of hearing, comprehensive affidavits indicating compliance progress and a detailed plan of action with timelines.

The Court additionally cautioned that if concrete and effective measures are not forthcoming by the next date of hearing, it would be constrained to invoke its extraordinary jurisdiction to direct deployment of paramilitary forces or the Central Reserve Police Force, impose a complete ban on sand mining in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, and levy heavy penalties on the States for failing to safeguard critical habitats and the river ecosystem. The Interlocutory Application stood disposed of, with the main matter listed for further consideration on 11.05.2026.

In Re: Phalodi Accident (2026 INSC 388)

"The loss of even a single life to avoidable hazards like illegal parking or blackspots represents a failure of the State's protective umbrella. The 'Right to Life' enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution of India is not merely a guarantee against the unlawful taking of life, but a positive mandate upon the State to ensure a safe environment where human life is preserved and valued"

Coram: Justice J K Maheshwari and Justice Atul S Chandurkar

In an order dated **13 April 2026**, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court of India issued comprehensive interim directions to address systemic negligence and catastrophic infrastructure failures on National Highways following two tragic road accidents that claimed 34 lives. The Court recognised highway safety as an integral facet of the right to life under Article 21 and issued wide-ranging directions covering encroachment removal, surveillance systems, emergency response, wayside amenities, and institutional coordination.

Background

Following the tragic loss of 34 lives in successive road accidents on 2 November and 3 November 2025 in district Phalodi, Rajasthan and district Rangareddy, Telangana, the Supreme Court of India vide order dated 10.11.2025 took *suo motu* cognizance of "the systemic negligence and catastrophic infrastructure failures that led to these evitable casualties".

Recognising such lapses as a grave infringement on the right to safe passage and a dereliction of statutory duty by authorities, who addressed illegal

encroachments in the aftermath of the tragedies occurred, the Court issued notice to State and National authorities demanding a comprehensive report on these administrative failures and the resulting threat to public safety.

The Amicus Curiae made various suggestions and recommendations on 15.02.2026. On 16.02.2026, the Solicitor General and the Amicus Curiae were directed to sit together and identify areas requiring (i) further deliberations, (ii) improvement, and (iii) immediate improvement necessitating directions.

National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) placed its comments on record on 16.03.2026 and filed an additional affidavit on 08.04.2026 in response to the proposed interim directions.

On the hearing date, the Solicitor General and the Amicus Curiae jointly tendered suggestions indicating the nature of interim directions to be considered. The Court found the same to be practical in nature and necessary to be issued.

Court's Reasoning and Key Observations

The Court issued the following interim directions:

- **On Unauthorised Parking:** No heavy or commercial vehicle shall park/stop on any National Highway carriageway or paved shoulder except at a designated bay, lay-bye, or Wayside Amenity; enforcement shall be effected through the Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS) real-time alerts to State Police, GPS, timestamped photographic evidence, and integrated eChallan generation. District Magistrates shall set up standard operating procedures for periodical inspections and patrolling. Compliance within 60 days.
- **On Inspection, Survey and Citizen Grievance:** Highway Administration, National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), and State Public Works Departments (PWDs) shall within 30 days file a consolidated report on: (i) composition and schedule of dedicated inspection teams; (ii) state-wise encroachments identified, notices issued under Section 26 of the Control of National Highways (Land and Traffic) Act, 2002, and structures demolished; and (iii) compliance status with directions in *Gyan Prakash v. Union of India,* 2025 INSC 753. NHAI shall confirm full operationalisation of the Rajmargyatra Encroachment Complaint Module and toll-free number 1033. Drone-based aerial surveys shall be conducted at least twice annually with six-monthly reports filed before the Court.
- **On Encroachment Prohibition and Removal:** Construction/operation of any new dhaba, eatery, or commercial structure within the Right of Way (ROW) of any National Highway is prohibited with immediate effect. District Magistrates shall enforce demolition/removal of all unauthorised structures within 60 days.
- **On Grant and Renewal of Licenses:** No department, authority, or local body shall grant or renew any licence, NOC, or trade approval for any site within Highway safety zones without prior NHAI/PWD clearance; all such existing licences for such sites shall be reviewed within 30 days.
- **On District Highway Safety Task Force:** Every District Magistrate shall within 15 days constitute a District Highway Safety Task Force comprising officers of District Administration, Police, NHAI, PWD, and local bodies. The District Collector and Commissioner of Police/Superintendent of Police shall bear joint responsibility for timely encroachment removal. The Task Force shall hold fortnightly review meetings.

State Governments shall within 60 days prohibit change of land use within 40 metres (residential) and 75 metres (commercial) from the mid-point of any National Highway.

- **On Surveillance and Patrolling:** Dedicated Highway Surveillance Teams of State Police and Transport Department personnel shall be constituted within 30 days for regular National Highway patrolling, supplementing NHAI's 24x7 route patrolling vehicles at intervals not exceeding 50 km. All vehicles shall be equipped with Vehicle Tracking Devices.
- **On Operationalisation of ATMS:** NHAI shall operationalise its Advanced Traffic Management System comprising TMCC cameras, VSDS speed detectors, VIDS cameras, Variable Message Signboards, and Emergency Call Boxes across all 4/6-lane highways and expressways. Affidavit of compliance within 60 days. Any non-operational units shall be made functional within 60 days.
- **On Emergency Response and Wayside Amenities:** NHAI is directed to deploy within 60 days BLS ambulances and recovery cranes which can be deployed immediately at intervals not exceeding 75 km on every National Highway stretch, at toll plazas, Wayside Amenities, or dedicated posts, in affirmance towards the State's positive obligation under Article 21 of the Constitution of India to ensure prompt and timely emergency medical response.
- **On Truck Lay-Bye Facilities:** NHAI and Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) shall ensure construction of truck lay-bye facilities at intervals of every 75 km on all National Highways, with priority to the Amritsar-Jamnagar Highway. All Wayside Amenities shall include rest areas, food services, washrooms, safe parking, first-aid facilities and retro-reflective signage visible from 500 metres, in full compliance with Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) standards.
- **On Accident Blackspots and Lighting:** MoRTH/NHAI are directed to publish a comprehensive list of accident blackspots on National Highways within 45 days. NHAI shall issue a Policy Framework mandating installation of high intensity LED/high-mast lighting, speed enforcement cameras, retro-reflective warning signs, and transverse bar markings at every blackspot; full installation shall be completed within 4 months of the Policy Framework.
- **On Institutional Coordination:** MoRTH shall within 60 days place before the Court a report on constitution of an Inter-State Highway Safety Coordination Committee for standardising enforcement protocols including uniform driving-hour limits, surveillance standards, parking enforcement, and penalty regimes across State boundaries.
- **On Compliance Reporting:** All implementing agencies [NHAI, NHIDCL, State PWD, Border Roads Organisation (BRO)] shall be jointly and severally responsible for compliance within their respective jurisdictions. MoRTH upon securing the consolidated district-wise and agency-wise compliance report shall file the same in a tabular form before this Court within 75 days from the date of uploading of this order.
- **On Constitutional Framework:** The Court observed: National Highways constitute approximately 2 percent of India's total road length but account for nearly 30 percent of all road fatalities. The Court further held that the 'Right to Life' enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution of India is not merely a guarantee against the unlawful taking of life, but a positive mandate upon the State to ensure a safe environment where human life is preserved and valued'. Recognising 'the safety of the commuter as an integral

facet of the right to live with dignity as a constitutional obligation under Article 21', the Court issued the directions in exercise of powers under Article 142. The Court emphasised: 'We reiterate that no pecuniary or administrative constraint can outweigh the sanctity of human life, and the strict timelines provided herein reflect the urgency of this constitutional obligation'.

Outcome and Directions

The Court issued comprehensive interim directions covering thirteen areas of highway safety with specific timelines ranging from 15 to 75 days. The Registry shall send a copy of the order to the Chief Secretary/Administrator and Director General of Police of all States and Union Territories, State Legal Services Authorities, and National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited. A copy of the order shall be forwarded to the Road Safety Committee headed by Justice (Retd) Abhay Sapre. MoRTH shall place the Committee's recommendations pertaining to causes of highway accidents within 75 days. Matter listed after two months for reporting compliance.

Canara Bank v. Kavita Chowdhary (2026 INSC 363)

"A bank receiving cheques for collection acts as an agent of the customer and is under an obligation to exercise due diligence in presenting the instruments within the prescribed validity period. Failure to do so resulting in the instrument becoming stale, in the absence of any reasonable explanation, would result in negligence in the discharge of banking duties which would constitute deficiency in rendering service within the meaning of the consumer protection law"

Coram: Justice B V Nagarathna and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan

In a judgment delivered on **15 April 2026**, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court examined whether banks are liable for deficiency in service when they fail to present cheques within their validity period, causing them to become stale. The issue arose when a customer deposited two cheques which were returned, but the bank failed to re-present them within the validity period despite having two full working days to do so. The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission had awarded 10 percent of the cheque amount as compensation. The bank contended that the delay was excused under Section 75A of the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881 as it was caused by circumstances beyond its control, and that no actual loss could be proven since the drawer company was already under liquidation.

Background

The present appeals arose from consumer complaints filed by the Respondents, Kavita Chowdhary and Priya Chowdhary. The Respondent held a savings bank account with Canara Bank at its Maharani Bagh Branch, New Delhi. On 29.05.2018, she deposited two CTS cheques dated 03.03.2018, one for ₹ 11,36,868 and another for ₹ 94,73,900, both issued by Assotech Limited and drawn on Vijaya Bank. The cheques were presented for clearing on the same day.

The cheques were returned on 30.05.2018 with the reason "bank on strike" (30.05.2018 and 31.05.2018 were strike days). However, the bank failed to re-present the cheques on the subsequent working days of 01.06.2018 or 02.06.2018, which was the last day of validity (03.06.2018 being a Sunday). The cheques were eventually presented on 04.06.2018 and 08.06.2018, by which time they had become stale and were returned with the endorsement "instrument out dated/stale".

The complainant alleged that the bank's negligence deprived her of legal remedies against the drawer, including proceedings under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881. The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission found deficiency in service and awarded 10 percent of the total cheque amount as compensation along with interest at 8 percent per annum. Aggrieved, Canara Bank appealed to the Supreme Court.

Court's Reasoning and Key Observations

- **Wide meaning of "service" and "deficiency":** The Court reiterated that the expressions "service" and "deficiency" as defined under the Consumer Protection Acts have a wide meaning. Service extends not only to actual users but to those who are capable of using it. Banking services, whether provided by public or private sector banks, are covered. The test is whether the nature of the duty and function performed constitutes a service, regardless of whether the entity is statutory or not.
- **Bank's duty of due diligence:** A bank receiving cheques for collection acts as an agent of the customer and is under an obligation to exercise due diligence in presenting the instruments within the prescribed validity period. This is a fundamental banking duty that cannot be compromised.
- **No reasonable explanation for delay:** The Court found that there was no explanation as to why the two cheques were not re-presented on 01.06.2018 or 02.06.2018, when the bank knew the validity would expire on 02.06.2018. The strike ended on 31.05.2018, leaving two full working days for re-presentation.
- **Section 75A of the NI Act not applicable:** While Section 75A of the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881 excuses delay caused by circumstances beyond the holder's control, it requires presentation to be made within a reasonable time once the cause of delay ceases. The bank failed to act within reasonable time after the strike ended.
- **Deficiency in service established:** The failure to re-present the cheques within the validity period, resulting in them becoming stale, constituted negligence in the discharge of banking duties and amounted to deficiency in rendering service within the meaning of consumer protection law. This finding was based on pleadings and evidence and did not suffer from patent error or perversity.
- **Compensation must be fair and reasonable:** The Court held that while the sine qua non for entitlement to compensation is proof of loss or injury due to negligence, the computation must be fair, reasonable, and commensurate to the loss. The consumer forum must take all relevant factors into account and apply established judicial standards.
- **Uncertain loss warrants moderate compensation:** The Court noted that even if the cheques had been presented in time and dishonoured, this would not ipso facto lead to conviction under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act. Three conditions must be satisfied and the outcome of any such

proceeding would be uncertain. Additionally, the drawer company was under liquidation, making recovery prospects speculative. The loss was therefore indeterminate despite the finding of deficiency in service.

Outcome and Directions

The Supreme Court dismissed the appeals on the primary issue of deficiency in service, upholding the finding of the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission. However, the Court modified the quantum of compensation:

- The compensation was reduced from 10 percent to 6 percent of the total cheque amount of Rs. 1,06,10,768 to be paid to each complainant. The Court clarified that 10 percent compensation was on the higher side and did not accurately reflect the nature of loss where the loss itself was uncertain despite established deficiency in service.
- Interest was also reduced from 8 percent to 6 percent per annum from the date of filing the complaints.
- The Court held that 6 percent of the face value, along with 6 percent interest, constituted reasonable compensation given the indeterminate nature of the actual loss suffered.
- The litigation costs of ₹50,000 in favor of each complainant and other directions of the Commission were left undisturbed.

S. Valliammai & Others v. S. Ramanathan & Anr. (2026 INSC 372)

"Bar to sue under Order II Rule 2 which pertains to relinquished claims or omitted reliefs is distinct from a suit being "barred by any law" under Order VII Rule 11(d). Order II Rule 2 does not forbid the filing of a suit but limits the reliefs that can be granted, which often requires a comparative analysis of plaints and the recording of evidence to determine if the causes of action are identical"

Coram: Justice B V Nagarathna and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan

In a judgment delivered on **16 April 2026**, a two-judge bench allowed the appeal and set aside the order of the High Court of Madras which had allowed a Civil Revision Petition to reject the appellants' plaint, thereby restoring the trial court's order and the plaint in the second suit. The Supreme Court observed that a plea under Order II Rule 2 of the Code of Civil Procedure (CPC) cannot be a basis for the rejection of a plaint under Order VII Rule 11(d) as the former requires evidence to be established and does not constitute a "bar by law" in the same sense as the latter.

The case involves a property dispute within a family where the original owner (Late Shri M Sokkalingam) and his wife (plaintiff No. 1) allegedly entered into an oral partition with their children, leading to daughters (plaintiffs No. 2 and 3) relinquishing shares for a monetary settlement. Subsequently, the original owner executed a Power of Attorney (PoA) in favor of a friend/advocate (respondent No. 2), who then executed settlement deeds for several properties in favor of the son (respondent No. 1). The parents initially filed a suit for permanent injunction regarding a Chennai property and bank accounts; however, following the father's death, the mother and daughters filed a second suit seeking to declare the PoA null and void due to fraud and coercion. The respondents moved to reject the plaint in this second suit, arguing it was barred under Order II Rule 2 CPC because the challenge to the PoA should have been included in the first suit.

Court's Reasoning and Key Observations

- **Distinction between "Bar to Sue" and "Suit Barred by Law":** Relying on *Mohammad Khalil Khan v. Mahbub Ali Mian,* 1948 SCC OnLine PC 44 the Court held that a "bar to sue" under Order II Rule 2 which pertains to relinquished claims or omitted reliefs is distinct from a suit being "barred by any law" under Order VII Rule 11(d). Order II Rule 2 does not forbid the filing of a suit but limits the reliefs that can be granted, which often requires a comparative analysis of plaints and the recording of evidence to determine if the causes of action are identical.

- **Requirements for Order VII Rule 11(d):** For a plaint to be rejected under this provision, the bar must be apparent from a meaningful reading of the "statement in the plaint" and appended documents alone, without considering the written statement or external evidence.

- **Technical Nature of Order II Rule 2:** Relying on *B Shambumal v. State Bank of Mysore,* AIR 1971 Mys 156, since the plea of a bar under Order II Rule 2 is technical, it must be established satisfactorily by the defendant through evidence and cannot be presumed through "inferential reasoning" at the threshold stage of a rejection application.

- **Analysis of the Present Case:** The Court found the High Court's approach improper for analysing the averments of the second suit as if they were evidence in juxtaposition with the first suit. It noted that the application of Order II Rule 2 requires the defendant to produce the earlier plaint in evidence to prove identity in the causes of action, a process that goes beyond the scope of an Order VII Rule 11 application. (Cases relied on: *N V Srinivasa Murthy v. Mariyamma,* AIR 2005 SC 2897; *State Bank of India v. Gracure Pharmaceuticals Ltd.,* (2014) 3 SCC 595).

Outcome and Directions

The Supreme Court allowed the appeal, set aside the judgment of the High Court, and restored the order of the trial court in O S No. 2320 of 2013 along with the plaint. The parties were directed to bear their respective costs, and the Court clarified that its observations were limited to the disposal of the appeal and should not affect the merits of the suit during the trial.

Lucknow Public School, Eldico and Anr. v. The State of Uttar Pradesh & Ors. (2026 INSC 422)

"The Court emphasised that the right to education under Article 21A of the Constitution will remain an empty promise if the mandate of the RTE Act, 2009 is not implemented in letter and spirit. The statutory framework under Section 12 of the RTE Act and Rule 8 of the UP RTE Rules, 2011 creates clear obligations that cannot be diluted by schools"

Coram: Justice P S Narasimha and Justice Alok Aradhe

In a judgment dated **28 April 2026**, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court reiterated the constitutional and statutory obligation of neighbourhood schools to grant admission to students forwarded by the State Government without delay under Section 12 of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009.

Background

The present Special Leave Petition arose from a writ petition filed by a student in the High Court who had applied to the Basic Education Department, State of Uttar Pradesh, for admission into pre-primary class in a neighbourhood school in accordance with the procedure prescribed under the UP Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, 2011 for the academic year 2024-25.

The student was duly selected through the statutory process, and the published list containing her name was officially sent to the petitioner school (Lucknow Public School, Eldico) for admission into the pre-primary class. When the student approached the school to complete admission formalities, she was neither given admission nor permitted to attend classes on the ground that there was "some uncertainty about the student's eligibility".

Unable to secure admission despite being on the official list, the student filed a writ petition before the High Court of Allahabad praying for directions to the State and school authorities to grant admission. The High Court allowed the writ petition, holding that once the admission process is completed by the competent authority and the list is forwarded to the school, the school has no option except to grant admission to the students. The High Court observed that schools cannot sit in appeal over decisions taken by the State Government. Aggrieved by this order, the school filed the present Special Leave Petition before the Supreme Court.

Court's Reasoning and Key Observations

- **Constitutional and statutory framework is binding:** The Court emphasised that the right to education under Article 21A of the Constitution will remain an empty promise if the mandate of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 is not implemented in letter and spirit. The statutory framework under Section 12 of the RTE Act and Rule 8 of the UP RTE Rules, 2011 creates clear obligations that cannot be diluted by schools.
- **Limited scope for schools to reconsider government decisions:** Once the government assesses an application for admission and forwards the list to schools, the schools are bound to admit the students. The limited window for schools to reconsider the government's decision is a conscious legislative choice to avoid delays in securing children's right to education. Schools cannot sit in appeal over the State Government's selection process.
- **Transparency and binding nature of admission process:** Rule 8 of the UP RTE Rules, 2011 mandates that the admission process must be totally transparent and schools must follow the process prescribed by the State Government from time to time. Once the list is published and forwarded to schools, they are bound to grant admission.
- **Neighbourhood school concept is transformative:** The Court held that the neighbourhood school concept enshrined in the RTE Act is a deliberate constitutional strategy to operationalise equality of status and social integration during a child's formative years. By mandating that schools admit at least 25 percent of class strength from weaker and disadvantaged sections, the law seeks to transform the social structure by breaking down barriers of caste, class, and gender.
- **Five duty bearers identified:** The Court, referring to its earlier decision in *Dinesh Biwaji Ashtikar v. State of Maharashtra,* 2026 INSC 56, identified five duty bearers responsible for implementing the right to education: (i) the appropriate government, (ii) the local authority, (iii) neighbourhood schools, (iv)

parents/guardians, and (v) primary school teachers. Each has specific obligations and must be supported adequately.

- **Schools can represent but must admit in the interregnum:** The Court clarified that while schools may have disagreements with the government's selection and can make representations to concerned authorities, they must not wait for the outcome of such representations. They are mandated to grant admission to students whose names appear in the forwarded list in the interregnum. This immediacy is essential to actualise the promise of Article 21A.
- **Implementation must be a national mission:** The Court observed that ensuring admission of at least 25 percent of class strength with children from weaker and disadvantaged groups must be treated as a national mission. Every institution and individual, Central and State Governments, Advisory Councils, Commissions, and especially neighbourhood schools, are duty bearers. The judiciary also bears the burden to ensure the admission process is easily accessible, effective and efficient.

Outcome and Directions

The Supreme Court dismissed the Special Leave Petition and affirmed the High Court's judgment with the following observations:

- The school was directed to grant admission to the student without any delay, as her name appeared in the official list forwarded by the State Government.
- Schools cannot refuse or delay admission on grounds of "uncertainty about eligibility" when the student has been duly selected through the statutory process by the competent authority.
- While schools may make representations to authorities if they disagree with the selection, they must grant admission in the interregnum and cannot wait for the outcome of such representations.
- The Court reiterated that effective implementation of Section 12 of the RTE Act requires schools to publish available seats well in advance, record specific reasons for any denial, and ensure these are reviewed by educational authorities within strict timelines.
- The Court ordered no costs in the matter.

State Bank of India v. Amit Iron Private Limited & Ors. (2026 INSC 323)

"The flexibility in the concept of natural justice is inevitable as it encompasses different layers and as to which one would be applicable would depend on the nature of the enquiry and the framework of the law under which it is held. For example, an opportunity to be served with a show cause notice and eliciting a reply with an obligation to pass a reasoned order is one facet of natural justice"

Coram: Justice J B Pardiwala and Justice K V Viswanathan

In a judgment dated **7 April 2026**, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court considered whether borrowers are entitled to a mandatory personal hearing before their loan accounts are classified as "fraud" under the Reserve Bank of India's Master Directions on Frauds. The issue arose following divergent High Court interpretations of *State Bank of India v. Rajesh Agarwal,* 2023 INSC 303, which had read principles of natural justice into the RBI framework. Borrowers contended that fraud classification carries severe civil consequences akin

to "civil death", affecting access to institutional finance, reputation and even exposure to criminal proceedings. Banks and the RBI argued that requiring oral hearings would frustrate the objective of swift fraud detection and reporting.

Background

The present appeals arose from proceedings initiated by SBI and Bank of India. In one matter, the Respondent's loan account had been declared a Non-Performing Asset (NPA), after which a show cause notice alleging fraudulent conduct was issued. Though replies were submitted, the account was ultimately classified as fraud without granting a personal hearing. The Calcutta High Court held that *Rajesh Agarwal* required both a personal hearing and supply of the forensic audit report. Similar directions were issued by the Delhi High Court in another connected matter involving *Liliput Kidswear Ltd.* Aggrieved by these directions, the banks approached the Supreme Court.

Court's Reasoning and Key Observations

- **Natural justice is flexible, not formulaic:** The Court reiterated that principles of natural justice are not rigid or universal. Their content depends upon the statutory framework, purpose of the exercise, and surrounding circumstances. The RBI's fraud-classification mechanism was found to be an administrative risk-management process rather than a judicial adjudication.
- **No mandatory right to personal hearing:** The Court clarified that *Rajesh Agarwal* did not create an absolute right to a personal or oral hearing. The requirement of *audi alteram partem* is sufficiently met when borrowers receive a detailed show cause notice, an opportunity to file a written response, and a reasoned order dealing with their submissions. Oral hearings are not an indispensable component of natural justice in every administrative process.
- **Need for expeditious fraud detection:** The Court noted the alarming increase in banking frauds and observed that regulatory directions seek early detection and dissemination of fraud-related information. Making oral hearings mandatory in every case could convert a time-sensitive administrative mechanism into a prolonged adjudicatory process.
- **Administrative efficiency and public interest:** The Court accepted the RBI's concern that compulsory hearings could create substantial logistical burdens on banks, delay reporting obligations, and provide opportunities for borrowers to dissipate assets, conceal evidence, or abscond. Public interest in maintaining financial stability required preserving the efficiency of the fraud-reporting framework.
- **Disclosure of Forensic Audit Reports:** While rejecting a mandatory hearing requirement, the Court held that borrowers are ordinarily entitled to the complete Forensic Audit Report and not merely its conclusions. Findings without underlying reasons would not permit an effective response. However, limited redactions are permissible where disclosure affects third-party rights or confidentiality concerns, provided reasons are recorded.

Outcome and Directions

The Supreme Court allowed the appeals filed by the banks and clarified the procedural requirements governing fraud classification:

- Borrowers are not entitled as of right to a personal or oral hearing before classification of an account as fraud.

- Compliance with natural justice requires:
  a. issuance of a detailed show cause notice;
  b. disclosure of relied-upon material;
  c. opportunity to file a response; and passing of a reasoned order.

- Banks are ordinarily required to furnish the entire Forensic Audit Report, and not merely its findings or conclusions, subject to limited and reasoned redactions.

The judgments of the High Courts directing mandatory personal hearings were set aside.

Ex. Sqn. Ldr. R. Sood v. Union of India & Ors. (2026 INSC 366)

"While courts ordinarily refrain from examining the sufficiency or adequacy of evidence in disciplinary matters, such restraint operates only where the finding of guilt is preceded by a duly conducted inquiry"

Coram: Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice K V Viswanathan

The judgment delivered on **15 April 2026**, a two-judge Bench set aside the High Court's Division Bench order. The Supreme Court observed that the initiation of administrative action following a judicial discharge is bad in law and that the punishment imposed was manifestly unreasonable and discriminatory compared to the lenient treatment of the superior officer who issued the underlying orders.

Background

The appellant, commissioned in the Air Force in 1972, was dismissed in 1993 following a 1987 incident where, acting on superior orders to prevent a disruption during a high-level inspection, he relocated an inebriated General Reserve Engineering Force (GREF) driver to a remote desert location where the driver subsequently died. Although a Sessions Court discharged the appellant of all criminal offences in 1990 due to a lack of a prima facie case, the Air Force initiated administrative action under Rule 16 of the AF Rules once the three-year limitation for a court-martial had expired. While the Single Judge of the Delhi High Court quashed the dismissal as time-barred, the Division Bench restored the dismissal, prompting this appeal.

Court's Reasoning and Key Observations

- **Higher Pedestal of Discharge:** The Court held that a discharge is a pre-trial termination for lack of evidence and stands on a higher pedestal than an acquittal, as it signifies there were no materials to justify even launching a trial. Once an accused is discharged, they are no longer an accused and are entitled to the same benefits as an acquitted person.

- **Finality of Election:** When authorities exercise discretion to have a delinquent tried by a criminal court rather than a court-martial, a judicial verdict (acquittal or discharge) brings finality to the matter, excluding independent disciplinary action on the same facts. The Court noted that once the road is chosen, the traveller must walk it to the end.

- **Vagueness of "Morally Convincing Evidence":** The Court found the authority's reliance on "morally convincing evidence" to be vague and insufficient for disciplinary findings, as it failed to disclose relied-upon material or a clear process of reasoning.
- **Principle of Equality in Punishment:** The Court found the punishment manifestly unreasonable because the appellant's superior, who issued the instructions to remove the driver and later encouraged suppressing the truth, was only awarded "severe displeasure", while the appellant was dismissed. The principle of equality is violated when a subordinate receives the harshest punishment for complying with a superior's wrongful order while the superior receives lenient treatment.

Outcome and Directions

The Supreme Court allowed the appeals and set aside the dismissal order dated September 22, 1993. Since the appellant has passed the age of superannuation, he is entitled to the following:

- **Arrears of salary and allowances at 50%** from the date of dismissal until his scheduled retirement.
- **Notional promotion** to be considered by a Review Departmental Promotion Committee.
- **Pensionary benefits** as admissible under law.
- **Interest at 9% per annum** on financial benefits from the 1995 date of the writ petition until payment.
- **Restoration of Honor:** The Chief of Air Staff is directed to ensure the appellant is "signed off in the normal manner" as he would have been but for the illegal dismissal.

Deepesh Maheshwari and Anr. v. Renu Maheshwari and Ors. (2026 INSC 306)

"Scope of proceedings under Section 96 of the Code of Civil Procedure and Order IX Rule XIII CPC are distinct. Order IX Rule XIII CPC confers a wider jurisdiction, enabling the applicant to demonstrate sufficient cause for non-appearance and seek setting aside of an ex parte decree"

Coram: Justice Sanjay Karol and Justice Augustine George Masih

In a judgment delivered on **1 April 2026**, a two-judge bench allowed the appeal, set aside the High Court of Madhya Pradesh's order which had dismissed a civil revision against the rejection of an Order IX Rule XIII CPC application, and quashed the ex parte grant of a Succession Certificate. The Supreme Court observed that the lower court's finding that a minor is expected to respond to a public notice or initiate legal proceedings independently is unsustainable in law and suffers from serious legal infirmities.

Background

The case involved an application filed by respondents Nos. 1 and 2 under Section 372 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925, to receive the retiral benefits of their deceased father. Although the respondents were aware of appellant No. 1 (a minor at the time), they failed to implead him or ensure the appointment of a lawful guardian

to represent his interests in the succession proceedings. Consequently, the appellants filed an application under Order IX Rule XIII CPC to set aside the certificate, which was concurrently rejected by the Trial Court, District Court, and High Court on the grounds that the appellants had also appeared in a separate appeal against the certificate's grant.

Court's Reasoning and Key Observations

- **Legal Incapacity of Minors:** The Court held that a minor is legally incapacitated from taking steps to implead himself or raise objections upon the publication of a public notice. The observation that a minor should have responded to such notice was termed wholly erroneous and perverse.
- **Requirements for Setting Aside Ex Parte Decrees:** Relying on *Neerja Realtors Pvt. Ltd. v. Janglu,* 2018 INSC 67 and *Parimal v. Veena* (2011) 3 SCC 545, the court observed that to succeed under Order IX Rule XIII CPC, an applicant must demonstrate that summons were not duly served or there was sufficient cause for non-appearance.
- **Revocation for Suppression of Material Facts:** Under Section 383 of the Indian Succession Act, a certificate is liable to be revoked if the application was defective or material facts were suppressed or misstated. The Court found that the respondents had incorrectly described the minor's mother and omitted the minor, thereby vitiating the proceedings.
- **Scope of Order IX Rule XIII CPC:** Relying on *Bhanu Kumar Jain v. Archana Kumar* (2005) 1 SCC 757-3J, the scope of proceedings under this provision is distinct from Section 96 of the CPC, as it confers a wider jurisdiction to demonstrate sufficient cause for non-appearance and seek the setting aside of an ex parte decree.

Outcome and Directions

The Supreme Court allowed the appeal, quashed the impugned order, and set aside the ex parte order granting the Succession Certificate. The matter is restored to its original number, and the parties are directed to appear before the competent court. Given that the matter dates back to 2011, the concerned Court is requested to decide the matter expeditiously, preferably within one year.

Union of India v. Sir Sobha Singh and Sons Pvt. Ltd. (2026 INSC 406)

" Section 3 of the GG Act confers upon the Government grants a special statutory immunity and elevates the stipulations contained therein to a position of supremacy"

Coram: Justice Sanjay Karol and Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra

In a judgment dated **22 April 2026**, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court allowed an appeal filed by the Union of India, holding that the Delhi Rent Control (DRC) Act, 1958, does not govern premises held under a government grant, as such grants are regulated exclusively by the tenor of the grant under the Government Grants (GG) Act, 1895.

Background

The dispute concerns premises situated at Sujan Singh Park, New Delhi, forming part of a 7.58-

acre property leased in perpetuity by the Governor General in Council to the respondent under a lease deed dated 26.04.1945. After Independence, the Government of India stepped in as the lessor and continued to occupy several flats, servant quarters and garages constructed on the leased land for housing government officials. While the respondent asserted that the Government occupied the premises as a tenant paying rent and was therefore governed by the Delhi Rent Control Act, 1958, the appellant contended that its occupation arose directly from the perpetual lease and was protected under the Government Grants Act, 1895. Following alleged non-payment of rent for the period 01.04.1989 to 31.03.1991, the respondent initiated eviction proceedings under Section 14(1)(a) of the DRC Act. The Additional Rent Controller ordered eviction, which was affirmed by the Rent Control Tribunal after remand by the Supreme Court. The appellant thereafter challenged the orders before the High Court, contending that Section 3 of the Government Grants Act excluded the application of the DRC Act; however, the High Court rejected the contention and upheld the existence of a landlord–tenant relationship, leading to the present appeal.

Court's Reasoning and Key Observations

- **Government Grants Act Overrides Rent Control Law:** A grant under the Government Grants Act, 1895, creates a distinct legal relationship governed exclusively by the terms of the grant and the statutory protection afforded to it. The rights and obligations of the parties must be determined solely by the grant and not by the ordinary principles governing landlord–tenant relationships. Since the Delhi Rent Control Act applies only to conventional tenancies under the general law, it has no application to premises held under a Government grant.
- **Supremacy of the Government Grant:** The Court held that Section 3 of the GG Act embodies a clear legislative mandate that every government grant takes effect according to its tenor, notwithstanding any rule of law, statute, or enactment to the contrary. The Court held that the expression "any rule of law, statute or enactment" is of the widest amplitude and admits of no restrictive construction. However, the Government's rights and obligations remain confined to the express terms of the grant and cannot extend beyond its stipulations.
- **Lack of Jurisdiction under the DRC Act:** Since the Delhi Rent Control Act was found inapplicable to the relationship between the parties, the Additional Rent Controller lacked jurisdiction to entertain the eviction proceedings. Consequently, the eviction proceedings and the orders passed therein were vitiated from their inception.
- **No Implied Right of Eviction:** The Court held that the absence of an alternative remedy cannot confer jurisdiction where none exists. Further, as the lease deed did not contain any provision permitting eviction for non-payment of rent, no such right could be implied. The respondent's remedy was therefore limited to recovery of rent in accordance with law and not eviction of the appellant.

Outcome and Directions

The Supreme Court allowed the appeal and set aside the High Court's judgment and the underlying eviction orders. However, the Court observed that this judgment does not preclude the respondent from pursuing other appropriate civil remedies in accordance with the law to recover rental arrears.

Dhan Jee Pandey v. State Of Bihar & Anr
(2026 INSC 349)

"Suspension of sentence may be justified only where a palpable infirmity is apparent on the face of the record"

Coram: Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah and Justice R Mahadevan

In a judgment dated **10 April 2026**, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court allowed appeals by the informant Dhan Jee Pandey and set aside the order of the Patna High Court's suspension of the sentences and granting of bail to convicted offenders during the pendency of the appeals. The Court held that in the cases of murder convictions under section 302 IPC, suspension of the criminal sentence is permissible only in exceptional and compelling circumstances.

Background

It was alleged that on 04.01.2016, while the informant and his brother, Ramashankar Pandey @ Jhamman Pandey (deceased), were at a village chatti, Respondent No. 2 and other accused persons arrived, abused the deceased, restrained him, and Shiv Jee Pandey fired a gunshot at his head, causing his death, while other accused persons opened fire at the informant, who escaped unharmed. Based on the fardbayan of the informant/appellant, Dhan Jee Pandey, the case was registered under Sections 302, 307, 120B and 34 IPC and Section 27 of the Arms Act. Upon conclusion of the trial, the learned Additional District Judge II-cum-Special Judge (Excise), Buxar, by judgment dated 18.08.2018 and order of sentence dated 23.08.2018, convicted Respondent No. 2 and other accused persons under Sections 302/34 and 307/34 IPC and Section 27(3) of the Arms Act, sentencing them, inter alia, to life imprisonment. Aggrieved, Respondent No. 2 preferred an appeal before the High Court and, during its pendency, obtained suspension of sentence and bail by the impugned order, leading to the filing of the present SLP by the informant seeking cancellation of the said relief.

Court's Reasoning and Key Observations

- **Error in Grant of Suspension of Sentence:** The Court observed that the prosecution's case was founded on credible ocular evidence which had been duly appreciated and accepted by the trial court while recording the conviction. In such circumstances, the High Court ought not to have interfered without properly evaluating the evidentiary basis of the conviction.
- **Liability under Section 34 IPC:** Reiterating the settled doctrine of constructive liability under Section 34 IPC, the Court held that where an offence is committed in furtherance of a common intention, every participant is equally liable for the acts carried out in execution of that common intention. Therefore, the absence of a specific overt act by Respondent No. 2 could not dilute his culpability at the stage of considering suspension of sentence.
- **Incarceration and Pendency of Appeal Not Sufficient Grounds:** The Court held that undue emphasis cannot be placed solely on the period of incarceration undergone by a convict or the pendency of the appeal. These factors, though relevant, cannot outweigh the seriousness of the offence and the existence of credible evidence supporting the conviction. Accordingly, they could not justify the suspension of the sentence in the present case.

- **Significance of Criminal Antecedents:** The Court took note of the criminal antecedents of Respondent No. 2, observing that several cases involving allegations of violence and use of firearms had been registered against him. Although it was argued that such cases stemmed from political rivalry and had resulted in acquittals, the Court held that antecedents remain a relevant consideration in assessing whether suspension of sentence should be granted.
- **Allegations of Threats and Intimidation:** The Court also considered material indicating that Respondent No. 2 had allegedly attempted to intimidate the informant by issuing threats and instituting false cases against him. At the interlocutory stage, the explanation offered by the respondent that these allegations were politically motivated did not inspire confidence, and the Court treated such conduct as an additional factor militating against the grant of bail.

Outcome and Directions

The Supreme Court allowed the criminal appeal. The impugned order granting suspension of sentence to Respondent No. 2 was set aside. Consequently, the bail bond furnished by Respondent No. 2 stood cancelled, and he was directed to surrender before the concerned trial Court within a period of two weeks from the date of the judgment.

Poonam Dwivedi v. State of U.P. (2026 INSC 351)

"For claiming reservation under EWS category, Income and Asset Certificate of the specified financial year in the prescribed form must be in possession of the candidate on or before the cut-off date"

Coram: Justice Manoj Misra and Justice Prasanna B. Varale

In a judgment dated **10 April 2026**, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court dismissed the appeals and upheld the order of the Allahabad High Court, which had declared the appellant's Economically Weaker Section (EWS) certificates invalid. The Court held that for claiming reservation under the EWS category, a candidate must possess a valid income and asset certificate for the specified financial year on or before the application cut-off date. The Court observed that certificates issued prior to the closure of the relevant financial year are inherently erroneous as they cannot accurately reflect the total annual income for that period.

Background

Pursuant to an advertisement dated 15.12.2021 issued by the Uttar Pradesh Subordinate Service Selection Commission for recruitment of 9212 Female Health Workers, including 10% reservation for EWS candidates, the appellants applied under the EWS category and qualified in the written examination. However, they were excluded from the final merit list on the grounds that their EWS certificates did not pertain to the relevant financial year 2020–2021, as required under the advertisement and the UP Public Services (Reservation for Economically Weaker Sections) Act, 2020. Most appellants had submitted certificates issued before the close of

the financial year 2020–2021, while one appellant submitted a certificate relating to the financial year 2021–2022. Although a Single Judge directed the issuance of fresh certificates, the Division Bench of the High Court reversed the decision, holding that the certificates were invalid for claiming EWS reservation. Aggrieved, the appellants approached the Supreme Court contending that they should not be denied reservation benefits due to defects in certificates issued by State authorities.

Court's Reasoning and Observations

- **Mandatory Cut-off Possession:** Following the precedent in *Divya v. Union of India*, (2024) 1 SCC 448, the Court reaffirmed that for EWS reservation, a valid income and asset certificate in the prescribed form must be in the possession of the candidate on or before the cut-off date.
- **Logical Impossibility of Pre-dated Certificates:** The Court found an "error apparent on the face" of certificates issued in early 2021. Because the 2020–2021 financial year ended on 31.03.2021, any certificate issued in January or February 2021 could not possibly certify the total family income for the entire preceding financial year as required by the law.
- **Root of Eligibility:** Citing *UPSC v. Gaurav Singh & Ors.* (2024) 2 SCC 605, the Court held that a certificate relating to a financial year other than the one specified goes to the root of the candidate's eligibility. Even the certificate of Sunita Kumari, though dated within the correct window, was invalid because it related to the 2021-2022 financial year instead of 2020-2021.
- **Candidate Responsibility:** The Court rejected the argument that the State was at fault for issuing the certificates, noting the appellants obtained them even before the advertisement was published and failed to seek fresh, compliant ones during the application window.
- **Systemic Integrity of Recruitment:** The Court observed that modern public recruitment involves massive volumes of applications processed via software. In such a framework, any error in the application "is bound to result in rejection". Entertaining challenges to such rejections would frustrate the rights of hundreds of thousands of other aspirants by stalling the recruitment process.

Outcome and Directions

The Supreme Court dismissed the appeals, upholding the High Court's judgment. The Court issued the following findings:

1. The respondents were justified in rejecting the claims of the appellants because their certificates were not in conformity with the financial year requirements stipulated in the advertisement and the 2020 Act.

2. No relief can be granted as the appellants did not possess the necessary certificates in the prescribed form by the cut-off date of 5.01.2022.

3. The Court declined to interfere with the High Court's order, disposed of all pending applications, and made no order as to costs.

Home Care Retail Marts Pvt. Ltd. v. Haresh N. Sanghavi (2026 INSC 415)

"The Court held that any party to an arbitration agreement, including an unsuccessful party, may invoke Section 9 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 for interim relief after the arbitral award has been rendered but before its enforcement, though courts must exercise care, caution and circumspection while dealing with such applications"

Coram: Justice Manoj Misra and Justice Manmohan

In a judgment dated **24 April 2026**, a two-judge bench resolved the issue on the maintainability of applications under Section 9 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 by unsuccessful parties at the post-award stage. The Court held that any party to an arbitration agreement, including an unsuccessful party, may invoke Section 9 for interim relief after the arbitral award has been rendered but before its enforcement, though courts must exercise care, caution and circumspection while dealing with such applications. The judgment overturned precedents set by the Bombay, Delhi, Madras, and Karnataka High Courts while affirming the approach adopted by the Telangana, Gujarat, and Punjab & Haryana High Courts.

Background

The question arose due to conflicting pronouncements by different High Courts across the country on '*whether a petition under Section 9 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 at the post-award stage, by a party that has lost in the arbitral proceedings and has no enforceable award in its favour, is maintainable in law*'.

Court's Reasoning and Key Observations

- **On Statutory Interpretation and the Meaning of "Party":** The Court held that clear statutory words must be construed in their natural sense without interpretative embellishment. Where literal reading produces intelligible results, there is no ground for adding or changing words. The Court noted that Section 9 uses "a party", defined in Section 2(h) as a party to an arbitration agreement. Neither provision distinguishes between successful and unsuccessful parties. The Court concluded that the meaning of "a party" cannot vary based on arbitral outcome, as such variation would amount to impermissible judicial amendment.
- **On the Object and Scope of Section 9:** The Court noted that Section 9 permits any party to seek interim measures at three stages: before arbitration, during proceedings, and after the award but before Section 36 enforcement. The provision does not distinguish between successful or unsuccessful parties. The Court noted that the Indian Act extends the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) Model Law's Article 9, which allows interim measures before or during proceedings, to include after the award but before enforcement and concluded that the purpose of Section 9 is ensuring parties retain the right to seek interim measures until the judicial process concludes.
- **On the Interplay of Sections 9, 34, and 36:** The Court held that recourse under Section 34 or stay under Section 36(2) cannot bar seeking Section 9 protection. Sections 34 and 36 provide remedies against awards, whereas

Section 9 protects the subject matter or amount in dispute. Denying Section 9 relief would leave unsuccessful parties remediless. The Court noted that declining interim relief would leave no forum for subject matter protection, even where the challenged award is stayed.

- **On the existing position in legal jurisprudence:** The Court held that the premise that courts under Section 34 may only dismiss objections or set aside awards is untenable. The Constitution Bench in *Gayatri Balasamy v. ISG Novasoft Technologies Limited,* 2025 INSC 605, settled that Courts under Sections 34 and 37 can modify severable awards by excising invalid portions, correcting errors, and modifying post-award interest. The Court held that "subject matter of arbitration" and "amount in dispute" in Section 9(1)(ii) are broader than "fruits of arbitration".

- **On Purposive Interpretation:** The Court held that even applying purposive interpretation, "a party" must mean any party to the arbitration agreement. Losing parties may require interim protection where an award was rendered without proper notice or where fraud or corruption can be prima facie demonstrated. Courts may stay the award and grant Section 9 measures to balance equities. The Court held that in rare and compelling cases, unsuccessful parties may invoke Section 9 to seek continuation of existing interim protection, particularly given *Gayatri Balasamy's* recognition of the power of the Court to modify awards under Section 34.

- **On Judicial Restraint and Purposive Construction:** The Court emphasised that courts interpret law, they do not alter it. The Court held that contextual or purposive interpretation cannot be invoked where statutory language is unambiguous. Where statutory expressions are clear, courts must refrain from such construction. Arriving at meaning contrary to plain language would violate the statute and breach separation of powers.

- **On Standards for Grant of Relief:** The Court clarified that Section 9 interim relief continues being guided by established principles: prima facie case, balance of convenience, and likelihood of irreparable harm. Section 9 confers wide power to secure the amount in dispute before, during, or after arbitral proceedings but before Section 36 enforcement. The Court need only determine whether the applicant has a prima facie case, whether balance of convenience favors relief, and whether the applicant approached court with reasonable expedition.

Outcome and Directions

The Civil Appeal arising out of SLP(C) No. 11139/2020 was disposed of. The Civil Appeals arising out of SLP(C) No. 29972/2015 and SLP(C) No. 26876/2014 were listed for hearing on merits after four weeks. The judgment overruled the precedents set by the Bombay High Court, the Delhi High Court, the Madras High Court and the Karnataka High Court. The judgment approved and affirmed the approach adopted by the Telangana High Court, the Gujarat High Court and the Punjab & Haryana High Court. The judgment clarified that the Constitution Bench decision in *Gayatri Balasamy v. ISG Novasoft Technologies Limited,* 2025 INSC 605, which recognises the power of courts to modify arbitral awards under Sections 34 and 37, vitiated the fundamental premise of the Dirk India line of cases that courts can only uphold or set aside awards.

Dhananjay Rathi v. Ruchika Rathi
(2026 INSC 360)

"Any deviation from the terms of the settlement arrived in mediation and later confirmed by the Court should be dealt with strictly as such deviation harbors an attack to the foundational basis of the entire process of mediation"

Coram: Justice Rajesh Bindal and Justice Vijay Bishnoi

In a judgment dated 13 April 2026, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court addressed the growing concern of parties withdrawing from mediated settlement agreements in matrimonial disputes after reaping partial benefits. Invoking its extraordinary powers under Article 142(1), the Court quashed the subsequent "premeditated" litigation and dissolved the marriage on the ground of irretrievable breakdown, emphasising that the sanctity of the mediation process must be preserved to prevent the abuse of the legal system.

Background

The Appellant-Husband and Respondent-Wife, married on 19.02.2000 and parents of two children, developed matrimonial disputes and began living separately in 2022–23, leading the husband to file a divorce petition under Section 13 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. During mediation, the parties entered into a Settlement Agreement dated 16.05.2024, agreeing to dissolve the marriage by mutual consent, settle all financial and property claims, and not initiate further proceedings against each other. Pursuant thereto, the husband withdrew the contested divorce petition, the parties filed a joint petition under Section 13B, and the First Motion was allowed on 14.08.2024, with both sides partly performing their settlement obligations. Subsequently, the wife withdrew her consent for mutual divorce and initiated proceedings under the Domestic Violence Act against the husband and his mother. The husband thereafter filed contempt and quashing proceedings, and the High Court, by the impugned interim order, permitted continuation of the domestic violence proceedings while directing the wife to deposit ₹89 lakhs. Aggrieved thereby, the husband has filed the present SLP.

Court's Reasoning and Key Observations

- **The Inviolability of Mediated Settlements:** The Court held that, while the law allows withdrawal of consent before a final decree of mutual divorce, it does not permit a party to unilaterally "step back" from the terms of a comprehensive settlement agreement that resolved all disputes.
- **Exception to the rule:** The Court observed that the exception to the above rule is that a party can resile from the Settlement Agreement arrived in the mediation proceedings, if it successfully demonstrates that the said Settlement Agreement was procured by force, fraud or undue influence. The party can also resile from the Settlement Agreement on account of non-fulfillment of any of the conditions by the opposite party as set out in the Settlement Agreement.
- **Quashing Premeditated Litigation as Abuse of Process:** A perusal of the DV complaint revealed a lack of specific allegations

regarding domestic violence; instead, the Court found only "trivial disagreements exaggerated" to justify the litigation. The Court observed that the DV proceedings were an "afterthought" initiated only after the husband filed a contempt petition. The Court emphasised that criminal prosecution fuelled solely by bursts of emotion after a failed settlement leads to "harassment and abuse of law" and that such proceedings must be nipped in the bud to ensure that the legal process is not weaponised during matrimonial discord.

- **Holistic View of Irretrievable Breakdown:** Taking into account the judgment of Shilpa Sailesh v. Varun Sreenivasan, (2023) 14 SCC 231, the Court determined that the marriage was "emotionally dead and beyond salvation". With the parties living separately for years, adult children leading independent lives, and a high degree of acrimony that had "snapped" the sacrosanct thread of the relationship, the Court found no possibility of reconciliation. It held that in cases where one party has already performed a significant portion of their settlement obligations, and the other resiles without justification, the Court must intervene under Article 142 to do "complete justice" and prevent the parties from being left remediless due to statutory gaps.

Outcome and Directions

The Supreme Court gave the following directions:

- The appeal was allowed, the Domestic Violence proceedings arising out of DV Complaint No. 3186/2025 were quashed, and the impugned High Court order was set aside.
- The Court dissolved the marriage between the parties by exercising its powers under Article 142(1) of the Constitution, subject to compliance with the directions contained in the judgment.
- The contempt proceedings filed by the husband before the Delhi High Court, along with all consequential proceedings, were closed.
- The husband was directed to pay the balance settlement amount of ₹70,22,871/- and hand over the PPF passbook to the wife within two weeks, failing which the divorce would not take effect.
- Upon such payment, both parties were directed to execute the agreed relinquishment deeds within four weeks; in case of the wife's non-appearance, the Registrar was authorised to register the deeds in favour of the husband.
- The amount of ₹89,00,000/- deposited by the wife before the High Court was directed to be refunded to her along with accrued interest.
- All civil and criminal proceedings arising out of the matrimonial dispute, whether initiated by the parties or their relatives, were quashed and closed, and a complete bar was imposed on any future litigation relating to the marriage.

Unchgaon Village Panchayat v. Kolhapur Municipal Corporation and Another (2026 INSC 405)

"Even where factual disputes exist, if their adjudication would necessarily involve examination of the validity or effect of statutory determinations relating to municipal limits or actions taken under special statutes, the Civil Court would lack jurisdiction"

Coram: Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra and Justice K V Viswanathan

In a judgment delivered on **22 April 2026**, a two-judge bench dismissed the appeals, thereby affirming the Bombay High Court's decision that a Civil Court lacked jurisdiction to entertain the suit. The Supreme Court observed that the determination of municipal limits is a legislative function rather than an administrative one, and challenges to actions taken by a planning authority are expressly barred from Civil Court jurisdiction under Section 149 of the Maharashtra Regional and Town Planning (MRTP) Act, 1969.

The case originated from a dispute over whether certain lands in Village Uchgaon fell within the jurisdiction of the Unchgaon Village Panchayat or the Kolhapur Municipal Corporation. In 2013, the Corporation issued a public notice asserting that these lands were within municipal limits and that unauthorised structures there were subject to demolition. The Panchayat filed a civil suit seeking a declaration that the lands were not validly included in the Corporation's limits; however, while the trial court initially claimed jurisdiction, the High Court reversed this, ruling that the matter was legislative in nature and beyond the Civil Court's scope.

Court's Reasoning and Key Observations

- **Legislative Nature of Power:** The Court reasoned that specifying area limits under Section 3 of the MMC Act is a statutory power that partakes the character of a legislative function and its validity cannot ordinarily be adjudicated by a Civil Court.
- **Express Statutory Bar:** Since the Corporation's actions were taken in its capacity as a planning authority, Section 149 of the MRTP Act provides that such orders or notices shall be final and shall not be questioned in any suit or other legal proceedings.
- **Belated Challenges:** The Court noted that the inclusion of these lands was traceable to notifications from as far back as 1945. It held that legislative actions that have remained in force for decades attain finality and cannot be unsettled in collateral civil proceedings initiated much later.
- **Public Law v. Private Rights:** The reliefs sought were directed at invalidating the assertion of statutory authority and planning control, which are matters falling within the domain of public law, rather than the enforcement of private civil rights.

Outcome and Directions

The Supreme Court dismissed the appeals, finding no error in the High Court's conclusion that the Civil Court lacked jurisdiction. Consequently, the interim order of status quo was vacated, and the related contempt petition was disposed of.

Training Hub

Branch Specific Training - Editorial Branch



11 April 2026: A Branch-specific training session was conducted for officers and officials posted in the Editorial Branch. Participants received comprehensive training in Adobe InDesign, Photoshop, Illustrator, and CorelDRAW, delivered by an in-house Resource Person, Mohd Shafiqullah Arzoo with expertise in graphic designing

Training on Work related to the Library







11 April 2026: A training session on "Work Related to Library" was conducted for officials posted in the Judges' Library. It provided an overview of the Library's role in supporting the Judges with legal information and research. The training covered procedures for requisition, issue, and return of books, law reports, and reference materials. Participants were introduced to key resources such as Statutes, Law Reports, Commentaries, Periodicals, and Online Legal Databases. Guidance was also given on how to seek research and reference assistance from the Library for the courts

Training related to Vigilance Matters



15 April 2026: A Training on Vigilance Matters was conducted for Assistant Registrars and Deputy Registrars of the Registry. The session highlighted vigilance, integrity, and ethical conduct in official duties, honesty, transparency, accountability, and discipline. It also included a detailed discussion on the provisions of the Supreme Court Officers and Servants (Conditions of Service and Conduct) Rules, 1961

Induction Training Programme for Newly Recruited and Appointed Senior Personal Assistants and Personal Assistants







24-25 April 2026: An Induction Training Program was conducted for the newly recruited/appointed Personal Assistants and Senior Personal Assistants. The training covered the functioning of the Supreme Court Registry, judicial and administrative processes, service rules, duties of Personal Assistants, handling of records in physical and digital formats, and key provisions of the Supreme Court Rules, 2013. Participants also received detailed inputs on judges' service conditions, allowances, facilities, coordination with Registry and external agencies, use of legal databases and library resources, medical facilities, as well as communication skills and legal terminology

Bid Adieu



30 April 2026: Justice Sandeep Mehta, Judge, Supreme Court of India, attended the retirement function held to felicitate the retiring employees at the Supreme Court of India, New Delhi



30 April 2026: Justice Sandeep Mehta, Judge, Supreme Court of India, presented a memento to felicitate the retiring employee Ms Rajni Gupta, Assistant Registrar at the Supreme Court of India, New Delhi



30 April 2026: Justice Sandeep Mehta, Judge, Supreme Court of India, presented a memento to felicitate the retiring employee Ms Anju Arora, PS to Registrar at the Supreme Court of India, New Delhi



30 April 2026: Justice Sandeep Mehta, Judge, Supreme Court of India, presented a memento to felicitate the retiring employee Shri Ramesh Kumar, Senior Chauffeur at the Supreme Court of India, New Delhi



30 April 2026: Justice Sandeep Mehta, Judge, Supreme Court of India, presented a memento to felicitate the retiring employee Shri Rajendra Kumar Panda, Restorer (Library) Grade-II at the Supreme Court of India, New Delhi



30 April 2026: Justice Sandeep Mehta, Judge, Supreme Court of India, presented a memento to felicitate the retiring employee Shri Mahadev Prasad, Restorer (Library) Grade-I at the Supreme Court of India, New Delhi



30 April 2026: Justice Sandeep Mehta, Judge, Supreme Court of India, presented a memento to felicitate the retiring employee Shri Ram Dhan, Restorer Grade-I at the Supreme Court of India, New Delhi



30 April 2026:
Justice Sandeep Mehta, Judge, Supreme Court of India, presented a memento to felicitate the retiring employee Shri Jaishi Ram, Clerk, at the Supreme Court of India, New Delhi

Beyond the Court: Creativity Abound

World Autism Awareness Day (2 April)



By: **Ankita Zadoo**
Court Assistant

In His World, We Found a New Way to See Ours

Every year, on World Autism Awareness Day, people discuss autism through diagnoses, therapies, and statistics. But beyond these labels are human beings simply trying to be understood. Autism is not a tragedy, but the isolation and misunderstanding surrounding it is.

For many families, the journey doesn't begin with fanfare, but in the quiet subtleties of daily life: a child who avoids eye contact, whose name, when called, goes unheard. Parents spend years navigating a labyrinth of doctor visits, burdened by unanswered questions and hidden anxieties. Yet somewhere along that difficult road, many discover the beautiful truth: their child is not less, but simply different.

Individuals on the spectrum experience the world with an intensity that others may never fully grasp. Sounds feel thunderous, crowds become overwhelming, emotions cannot find expression through conventional social cues. While society expects everyone to fit into one mould, autistic individuals remind us that there is no single correct way to think, feel, speak, or connect.

Real inclusion is built in everyday moments: a teacher allowing a child extra time for a response, classmates choosing friendliness over mockery, colleagues creating a supportive workspace, strangers choosing civility over staring. Sometimes, the greatest kindness is simply providing another with comfort and a safe space. The goal should never be to "fix" autistic people, but to build a society where they feel accepted and safe as themselves.

World Autism Awareness Day means far more to me personally because autism is not distant or theoretical in my family, but something we live with every day. When my nephew was younger, we were deeply worried for him, because he struggled to communicate and often became frustrated over small things. Like every family, we worried about how he would survive in a world that often misunderstands autistic individuals like him. But as we understood him better, our perspective changed. His mind worked differently, and in many ways, brilliantly.

Where others saw limitations, we noticed abilities that left us speechless. His memory is one of the sharpest in our family. Ask him the day for any random date in the calendar, and he answers within seconds before anyone else can even begin calculating. It almost feels magical. During one family gathering, we tested him repeatedly, thinking perhaps it was coincidence, but every single answer was correct. Everyone was stunned while he giggled innocently, oblivious to how extraordinary he truly was.

We slowly realised autism was not a limitation but a different way of experiencing the world. He still faces challenges, but he also possesses amazing abilities that many of us do not.

A more compassionate society begins when we stop asking autistic individuals to fit into our world, and instead make space for their world too. Different minds do not weaken humanity, they complete it. Today, I do not see someone lacking, but someone unique, gifted, and capable in ways the world is still learning to appreciate. Families of autistic children deserve recognition because behind every small milestone lies immense emotional strength, patience and unconditional love.

World Autism Awareness Day is ultimately a reminder of something deeply human that every person deserves to be seen, heard, respected, and loved, exactly as they are.

By: **Ms. Chandresh**
AR-cum-PS

देखता हूँ समझता हूँ, बस बयान नहीं कर पाता

देखता हूँ समझता हूँ,
बस बयान नहीं कर पाता,
चलता हूँ गिरता हूँ,
पर हार में नहीं मानना चाहता;

आसमान को छूनाt चाहता हूँ,
बस वक़्त कम नहीं चाहता,
सपनों को हकीकत में बनाना चाहता हूँ,
बस बोझ नहीं बनना चाहता;

अलग हो तुम जब कहते हो सब,
तो दर्द बहुत होता है,
बस उस दर्द को लब्जों में,
बयान में नही कर पता;

चिल्लाता हूँ गुस्सा होता हूँ,
पर ज़ख़्म में तुम्हे देना नहीं चाहता,
वक़्त दो मुझको थोडा सा,
खुद का एहसास में तुम्हे हुँ करना चाहता;

मेरी माँ के प्यार को,
दो गुना में उसे हुँ देना चाहता,
मेरे पिता के सपने को, हुँ
खूब अच्छे से पूरा में हुँ करना चाहता;

सफर आसान नहीं है मेरा,
खुद को समझा जो में नहीं पता,
पर शिद्दत से करता हुँ हर काम,
ये एहसास तो सबको हुँ करा जाता;

वक़्त लगेगा थोड़ा ज्यादा,
थोड़ी मेहनत भी और लगेगी,
पर अस्तित्व होगा मेरा शानदार,
ये सबको में दिखला जाउगा

Autism एक कमी नहीं, नए शक्ति का वरदान है,
ये सबको उस दिन दिखला जाउगा !!
Autism एक कमी नहीं, नए शक्ति का वरदान है,
ये सबको उस दिन दिखला जाउगा !!

By: **Ankita Zadoo**
Court Assistant

Every Life Has Value

A room full of chaos but in a corner he stood,
Tall, dark and quite, like a mannequin made of wood,

He seemed confused and anxious at the same time,
Terrified of running into people like it was a crime,

I slowly wriggled closer to have a look at him,
But seeing me approaching, his smile turned into grim,

I tried to initiate some friendly conversation,
But was rather met by a stark hesitation,

His eyes twinkled brighter than any star,
While his emotions seemed fighting an internal war,

Initially, I thought he was some victim of racism,
But after a while he spoke -"I SUFFER FROM AUTISM",

Hearing this, people began mimicking him for fun,
He tried escaping but there was no place to run,

He was either mocked or pitied throughout his life,
Gradually losing hope for acceptance after every strife,

Being unaware of the agony he daily went through,
I finally understood that the pain is really true,

The beautiful soul before me is autistic,
While the people around him enjoyed being sadistic,

The need is to support, change the point of view,
and tell our very conscience that 'EVERY LIFE HAS VALUE'.

By: **Ashneet Kaur**
Jr. Court Assistant

एक ऐसी मैं किताब लिखूँगा

एक ऐसी मैं किताब लिखूँगा, उसमें सारे ख्वाब लिखूँगा
जीवन के सारे लम्हों का, पूरा एक हिसाब लिखूँगा

नियम जिंदगी का मैं बना कर, खुशियों का एहसास बुनूंगा
कुदरत के सारे मौसम पर, एक पूरी किताब लिखूँगा

दुनिया की अनगिनत किताबें, पढ़कर मैं विद्वान बनूँगा
सरल नियम कानून बनाकर, जीवन खुशहाली से जियूँगा

कानून ज्ञान से भरी किताबें, पढ़कर ही मैं सब समझूंगा
कानून नियम पारंगत हो सब, सब के मन में विश्वास भरूंगा

संविधान में क्या क्या लिखा है, कितने अनुच्छेदों में बंटा है
उसमें समाधान बदलावों पर मैं, पूरा एक इतिहास रचुंगा

ज्ञान समुद्र होती हैं किताबें, ऊर्जा का यह श्रोत हैं
मंद मंद यह ज्ञान संवारे, सबका बढ़ाती विवेक है

दिमाग को करती तेज किताबें, ज्ञान विधा से मैं परखूँगा
अपनी मैं रचना कौशल को, देखूँगा और खुद जाँचुंगा

प्रकाशन का अधिकार समेटे, ख़ुद में मैं विश्वास भरूंगा
अपनी मीठी वाणी से मैं, सबको मंत्र मुग्ध कर दूँगा

सुकून का पल देती हैं किताबें, जन्नत का सैर कराती हैं
ज्ञान चक्षु का मार्ग खोल कर, सहनशीलता लाती हैं

मृदु भाषा हमे ज्ञानी बनाये, पढ़ने की ताकत समझाये
सही गलत का भेद कराये, यह सत्य वचन मैं सबसे कहूँगा

By: **Mohd Tasvirul Islam**
Assistant Librarian

A World within Worlds

While I try to explain,
It might sound strange.

Please! don't be offended if I don't look at you,
Bec's I can see the world differently from you.

Where thoughts are encrypted codes,
My uniqueness cracks through the textures of clothes.

Might hate different ways back to home,
But love places have never been before.

From Einstein, Newton, Darwin to Dickson,
Can see the world, others might not find it different.

Don't force us to fit in,
We are different and that's how we are within.

Have great imagination of little worlds,
Can shine from different angles.

No one is good at everything,
Can all replicate Wiltshire' paintings?

Busy or kind, that's how others define,
Though, we are autistic and ready to shine.

Can concentrate all day and create awesome,
And wish to share but others don't blossom.

Making friends sometimes seems difficult,
But efforts find their way as we see different.

Bad days don't limit me,
But, can see you care about me.

Little things makes the difference,
That's how it is, we are not aliens.

Trying to be normal, trying to fit in,
But it's fake, not the truth within.

By: **Adarsh Maurya**
Junior Court Assistant



Sketch by: **Dr Jyotsna Eveline Reuben**
Director, Judges Library

Earth's Quiet Plea

Beneath our hurried feet she lies,
A patient world with ancient eyes.

She wears the mountains like a crown,
Yet bears our greed, though pulling down.

Her rivers once in silver ran,
Untouched by careless hand of man.

Her forests whispered songs of peace,
Where life and harmony would never cease.

But now the winds carry a cry,
As smoke replaces azure sky.

The oceans sigh beneath the weight,
Of choices made, though not too late.

For Earth is not a thing we own,
Nor merely soil, nor rock, nor stone.

She is the breath in every tree,
The pulse of all humanity.

So let this day be more than word,
More than promise faintly heard.

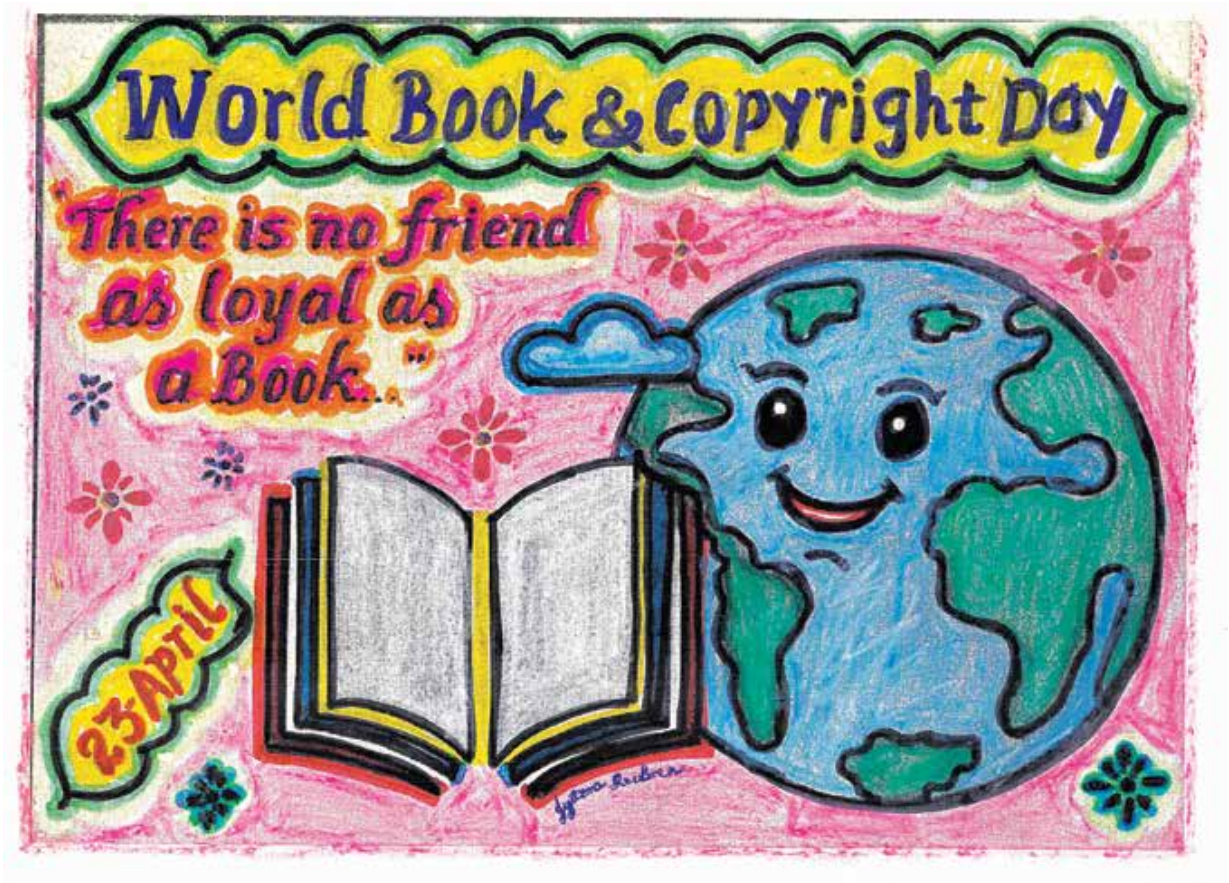
Let action bloom where hope is sown,
And kindness shape the seeds we've grown.

For future hands will ask one day,
What did we do? What did we say?

May we then answer, proud and clear
"We chose to hold our planet dear".

By: **Pragya Bharti**
Junior Court Assistant

Book and Copyright Day (23 April)



Sketch by: **Dr Jyotsna Eveline Reuben**
Director, Judges Library



Photo by: **Deepak Dhyani**
Junior Court Assistant

Caption: 'Where History Meets the Horizon'

Justice that never sleeps:
The Supreme Court stands tall in tricolour brilliance, guarding the constitution round the clock.

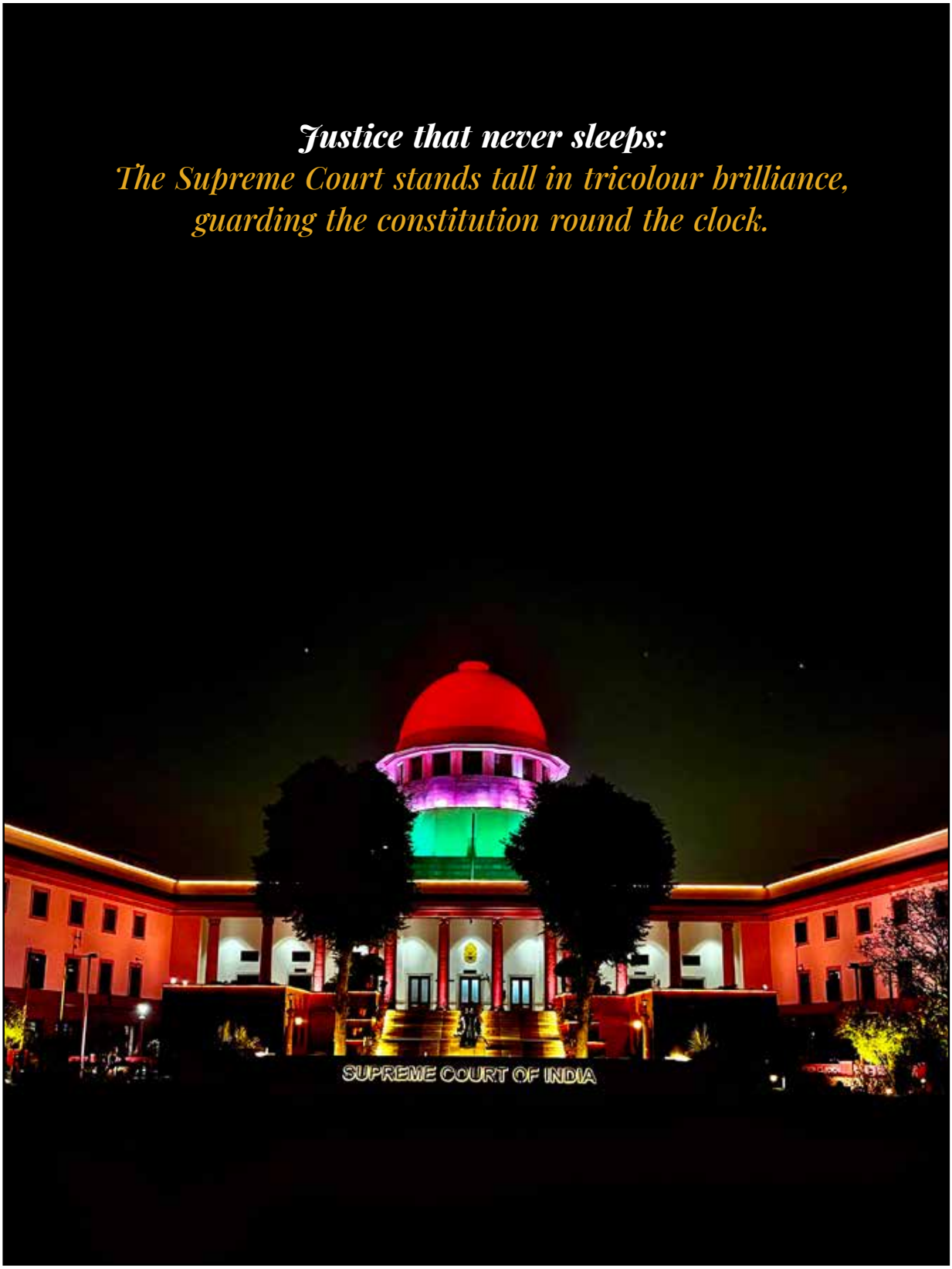


Photo by:
Sujay Samrendra,
Junior Court Assistant



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