

BIG STORIES, SMALL TOWNS

LEGALMITRA

more than just news - big stories from small towns

GAME OF BANS

History shows bans don't kill gambling they just drive it underground. India's online money gaming ban risks losing revenue, oversight, and players to of shore syndicates

Digital Justice

INDIA is a gaming enthusiast and a gaming enthusiast with an appetite for commitment. Almost one in five gamers across the globe is Indian, but India accounts for only a paltry 2% of total gaming revenues globally. Why is there a disconnect? Because whereas the world else spends billions on such blockbuster console games, cinematic PC epics, and vast open-



ritesh sharma
editor

world odysseys, India's gameworld is fueled virtually on a different turbocharged fuel: online money gaming (OMG). Think fantasy cricket leagues, rummy tables, poker apps, and card-sharking platforms that never sleep. These aren't the side alleys of the gaming economy — they are the main street. In 2024 alone, OMGs generated a staggering ₹ 27,000 crore of India's ₹ 31,000 crore gaming market. Globally, money games account for about 40% of revenues. Here? They hog a jaw-dropping 85%. We are not a Mario-and-Minecraft country; we are a country shuffling cards, dreaming up teams, and betting limits. Sometimes with pocket money, sometimes horribly with lives.

THE BAN BLUFF: Mirage or medicine?

Confronted with dark headlines — young men drowning in debt, families shattered by suicides in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka — governments have moved quickly for the crudest policy instrument: the ban hammer. Ban the apps, the reasoning goes, and suddenly problem vanishes.



But prohibitions, history teaches, are like slot machines that dispense jackpots: they seldom pay out. Recall America's 1920s alcohol prohibition? Far from sobering the country, it gave rise to bootleggers, speakeasies, and Al Capone's empire. India's own prohibition states did not choke off thirst — they bred liquor mafias. Earlier still, China's teenage gaming curfews became a VPN-fest, with adolescents evading firewalls like experts.

Lesson? Prohibit what people desire, and you do not assassinate demand — you banish it to the underworld, where it prospers unregulated, untaxed, and uncontrolled. Use this against OMGs, and the narrative unfolds by itself. Already, India loses close to \$4 billion a year in GST collections to offshore betting titans. Enforcement authorities are pursuing 642 such illegal operators. Prohibit local platforms, and you merely give our gamers to global crooks on a silver platter.

In the pre-digital era, lottery bans gave rise to illegal satta markets. Today, app bans drive users to offshore platforms with zero consumer protection. The real losers are not the gamblers but the system meant to regulate them.

A ban does not end a game. It merely switches the referee.

LEGAL PERSPECTIVE:

It is pertinent to note that any attempt to impose a complete prohibition on online money gaming must withstand the test of Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business. The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that while the State may impose reasonable restrictions under Article 19(6), a blanket ban, without proportional justification, risks being struck down as unconstitutional.

THE REAL STAKES: High Rollers, Higher Risks

Here's the surprise: the typical Indian OMG user is not some irresponsible high-roller. Official data indicates 73% of them earn less than Rs 3.5 lakh a year, and their annual spend averages a mere Rs 44. That's less than the cost of a cinema ticket or two street-side samosa meals.

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Cases to watch

TIME FOR A SYSTEM TO CARE FOR THE UNCARED



THE Bombay High Court has stressed the urgent need for a structured mechanism to assist individuals who are physically or mentally ill and live alone without support. The observation came during the hearing of a petition seeking the

appointment of a legal guardian for a man suffering from schizophrenia. The petition was filed by a friend of the patient. The court directed the secretary of the district legal services authority, a responsible officer of the collector's office, and the police to ensure the man was taken




Court flags urgent need for a structured system to protect mentally or physically ill living alone

to the Regional Mental Hospital in Thane. According to the hospital's report dated August 19, the man, referred to as Mr. S, was doing better and receiving three proper meals daily.

However, the court noted that Mr. S had no immediate relatives to care for him after his release from the hospital. Consequently, the judges

observed that it was necessary to appoint a legal guardian to oversee his welfare. "The facts in the present petition have starkly exposed the shortcomings of the system. There is a pressing need for some facility to cater to such patients," the bench stated.

The judges further emphasized the importance of developing a structured plan or arrangement for persons in similar situations, underscoring the rising need for legal and social frameworks to protect vulnerable individuals.



THE DAILY DOSE OF

riteBOL

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courtroom updates



Marriage Can't Erase Crime

Consent of a minor holds no legal value under POCSO and child marriage laws

THE Bombay High Court held that a FIR filed under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act cannot be quashed just because a minor victim has got married to the accused and has borne a child.

Handing down the order a division bench of Justices Urmila Joshi-Phalke and Nandesh Deshpande rejected a plea by a 29-year-old man and his parents seeking to cancel the FIR lodged against them under the stringent POCSO Act as well as the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act.

The court observed that the girl fell in love with the accused, who is now her husband, and that both the families were in consensus about the marriage, according to Muslim customs. But the judges emphasized that while marrying, and while giving birth, the girl was less than 18 years old.

Considering the age of the accused, the bench noted that he was approximately 27 years old when he got married. The judges added, "He should have realized that he should wait until the girl turned 18 years old. Even though he knew that she was a minor, by taking her out of the legal custody of her parents, he committed the offense." The mere fact that the girl has since given birth to a baby cannot invalidate the action of the applicants.

The bench again clarified that a minor's consent is irrelevant in law. Addressing the stand of the Central Government in the case before the Supreme Court, the judges pointed out that such cases pertain to greater constitutional imperatives. "Law is not made for persons but for society as a whole. If a relief under statute can be given only by following laid-down procedures, then there is no option but to follow those procedures. Justice has to be administered according to law," the court noted.

Transgender Adoption Rights

A Call for Inclusive Reform

THE Madras High Court order in the case of Prithika Yashini, Tamil Nadu's first transgender Sub-Inspector, places a critical lacuna in India's adoption process into the spotlight. Yashini, who had applied to adopt, was rejected by the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) solely on the grounds that the current Adoption Regulations do not include transgender people.

While the law under the Juvenile Justice Act permits unmarried persons to adopt. The Adoption Regulations 2017 restricts eligibility to single males, single females, or couples only, putting transgender applicants in a state of legal uncertainty. The Court asked Yashini to seek regulatory change from the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development, emphasizing the imperative for systemic rather than incremental relief. This incident is a wake-up call: legal validation of transgender rights needs to move beyond identity to basic opportunities such as parenthood. Inclusive amendments in adoption laws are not procedural but a necessity for justice, equality, and the construction of caring homes for destitute children.

NO CASHBACK ON PARENTHOOD

Himachal Pradesh High Court



The HP High Court has said that even if a father continues paying maintenance after his children attain majority, he cannot demand a refund or adjustment of the amount. The court said: "Even if he has no legal duty, he has a moral obligation and duty as a father to ensure maintenance to his children, particularly when they are at the verge of completing their education, as any order to refund the amount paid in excess to the children would hamper their future prospects."



The Supreme Court lamented some high court judges being unable to "deliver on their tasks" as it called for their "performance evaluation". A bench said though it did not want to act like a "school principal" but there ought to be a self-management system to ensure "files don't pile up on their desks". The Court added, "Suppose a judge is hearing a criminal appeal, then we don't expect him to decide 50 cases in a day and deciding one criminal appeal in a day but in a bail matter, if a judge says I will decide only one bail matter in a day, that is something which requires introspection."



IMPROVE HANDWRITING OR GO DIGITAL



IN a reminder that handwriting is still important, even in a keyboard and computer age, the Punjab and Haryana High Court recently upheld the value of readable medical reports.

The remark was made at a bail hearing headed by Justice Jasgurpreet Singh Puri in the case of allegations of rape, cheating, and forgery. The accused said the case was the result of a money fight in a consensual relationship and denied all the charges.

The court took cognizance of the medico-legal report submitted by a government doctor who had examined the complainant. Justice Puri

described the report as "incomprehensible" and added that it was not possible to read even a single word or letter.

It rattled the conscience of this court," the judge added, pointing out that poorly written medical records can lead to serious outcomes.

The court emphasized that "legible medical prescription is a fundamental right," cautioning that clear documentation can mean life or death. The directive is a stern reminder to physicians that accuracy and lucidity on paper are not professional niceties—they are legal requirements with potentially fatal consequences for patients and the judicial process.

RS. 7,000 Can't Sustain A life

Patna High Court

Maintenance cannot be assessed solely on declared income, it must be assessed on the husband's relative ability



THE Patna High Court has confirmed a Family Court's decision in which it ordered a fruit vendor to pay Rs 7000 per month to his wife, as maintenance. The High Court stated that Rs 7000 is "absolutely a pittance" in light of the current standard of living.

This decision came about from a single-judge bench led by Justice Bibek Chaudhuri, which rejected the husband's criminal revision petition challenging the order made by the Family Court in August 2024, accepting maintenance from September 20, 2021 (the date of the wife's petition) onwards.

The petitioner argued that he earned approximately Rs 3000 per month as the seller of fruits from a thela, and that he could not provide maintenance. He also claimed that he offered to maintain his wife with dignity and honour in his house, which she rejected unjustifiably; thus ending any potential for maintenance.

The wife stated that the petitioner does earn between Rs 20,000 and Rs 25,000 a month, because selling fruits is a profitable business. The family court stated that the husband earned Rs 20,000 a month, and maintained the sum of Rs 7000, which the family court felt was reasonable.



Undressed Man Hijacks Hearing

Technical analysis of IP addresses and call data records revealed he used multiple fake email IDs and frequently changed locations, complicating the tracking



VIDEO hearings are intended to make courts more efficient and safer, but occasionally the virtual sphere has its own unexpected turn. Mohammed Imran of New Delhi, pushed that envelope—turning up for a court video conference in his underwear, a cigarette clutched in one hand, and a drink in another. A seasoned criminal with more than 50 cases listed on his books, including robbery and snatching, Imran had no business appearing in court that day. His mischief prompted the record-keeper at Tis Hazari Courts to file a new complaint, presenting the police with yet another case to add to his extensive list.

The previous air-conditioner repairman said he participated in the WebEx out of curiosity after learning the platform from a friend. Using local intelligence and manual searches, police tracked and arrested him, confiscating his mobile phone, SIM card, and router. The episode raises grave doubts regarding online security in virtual hearings, demonstrating even in the world of cyberspace the court cannot be trifled with.

LINGUISTIC CHALLENGES

Revisiting the 1956 States Reorganisation and India's Unity



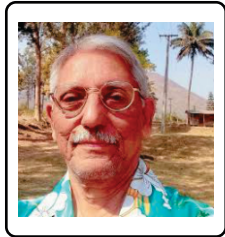
India's celebrated "unity in diversity" often masks the struggles of linguistic diversity. Even 75 years after independence, the absence of a consensus on a 'national language' has allowed regional linguistic movements to deepen social divides and fuel political tensions in many states.

The States Reorganisation Commission (SRC), established in 1953, initially explored organizing states based on geography, resources, and administrative efficiency. However, intense public and political demands, such as the Andhra movement for Telugu speakers and the Samyukta Maharashtra agitation, led Nehru's government to prioritize linguistic identity in the 1956 States Reorganisation Act.

Prominent thinkers like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Sardar K.M. Panikkar, Acharya Kripalani, Kaka Kalelkar, and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia cautioned that linguistic states could fragment national unity. Their warnings were largely overlooked, setting the stage for ongoing challenges.

The consequences of this decision are evident:

In 1965, anti-Hindi protests in Tamil Nadu turned violent, with dozens of deaths, including a few cases of self-immolation, as Tamils resisted the perceived imposition of Hindi as the sole official language. The Karnataka Maharashtra border dispute over Belagavi, a Marathi-speaking city assigned to Karnataka, remains unresolved, with tensions persisting as of 2025. The Assam Movement (1979-1985) and Assamese-Bengali conflicts led to significant violence, including the 1983 Nellie Massacre, which killed over 2,000 people, and displaced hundreds of thousands.



Today, India's 28 states and 8 union territories face ongoing demands for new states, often tied to linguistic or cultural identities



The Punjabi Suba movement, which achieved a Punjabi-speaking state in 1966, contributed indirectly to later tensions, though the Khalistan movement of the 1980s was driven more by religious and political grievances than language alone.

Linguistic disputes continue to shape contemporary India. Competitive exams like NEET and UPSC face allegations of language-based inequality, particularly in Tamil Nadu. The three-language formula, promoting Hindi, English, and a regional language, is criticized in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka as "linguistic imperialism."

In Bengaluru, incidents like the 2017 removal of Hindi signboards highlight local resistance. In Nagaland and Manipur, demands for recognition of local languages create friction with the central government.

Other nations offer alternative models. Switzerland, with four official languages, organizes its cantons based on geography and history, not language. Singapore recognizes four languages but uses English for governance, proving that cultural identity can thrive without linguistic divisions.

In contrast, India's linguistic states have often turned language into a tool for political mobilization.

Today, India's 28 states and 8 union territories face ongoing demands for new states, often tied to linguistic or cultural identities.

Digital connectivity and AI translation tools, like India's Bhashini platform, have reduced communication barriers, suggesting that linguistic divides need not dictate administrative boundaries. This technological shift prompts a reevaluation of how states are organized.

I propose a new State Reorganization Commission to recommend state boundaries based on population, geography, and resources, rather than language. Regional languages should be celebrated in cultural and social spheres but not define governance or politics.

While the 1956 reorganization aimed to accommodate linguistic diversity, it has, in some cases, entrenched division.

A new approach could prioritize administrative efficiency and national cohesion, ensuring language remains a source of pride rather than conflict. By rethinking state boundaries, India can strengthen its "unity in diversity," transforming language into a cultural asset rather than a wedge driving division.

THE E-WILL

India's next big Digital reform



In an era of Aadhaar and blockchain, handwritten wills belong to the past. E-wills could be India's next leap towards fairness and economic justice



denied to opportunism or red tape.

Why India Needs E-Wills

Electronic wills can provide a revolutionary answer. Using India's digital trinity of Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and Mobile, citizens can make, sign, and register wills digitally by means of Aadhaar-based eSign,

OTP authentication, or even blockchain-based validation. Remote witnessing, video recording statements, and traceable digital footprints can remove geographical limitations, curb forgery, and accelerate succession proceedings.

These reforms would guarantee that those groups marginalized—particularly widows and children in rural communities—are not denied rightful inheritance simply because there was never a handwritten will or could not be made effective.

Global Lessons

India is not beginning from scratch. Precedents from around the world provide strong direction:

United States: The Uniform Electronic Wills Act of 2019 legitimizes electronic wills, permits witnessing remotely, and has a "harmless error" doctrine that ensures wills expressing intent if there are minor procedural errors. Colorado, Utah, and North Dakota have signed up to it.

Canada: British Columbia (2021) and Saskatchewan (2023) recognize electronic wills as valid testamentary documents, with digital storage, revocation, and amendment being permitted.

Uttarakhand, India: The Uniform Civil Code Rules, 2025 of the state permit video statements and online registration for wills and decrease reliance on paper. These do

not, however, commit to fully digital wills based on e-signatures and blockchain-supported authentication.

The Legal Roadmap for India

In order to bring e-wills to fruition, India needs to harmonize several statutes:

- Amend the Indian Succession Act, 1925 to validate e-signatures and remote witnessing.
- Amend the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023 to clearly recognize e-wills as evidence.
- Amend the IT Act, 2000 to include digital authentication tools (Aadhaar OTP, blockchain, biometrics) in its definition.
- Align the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 and the Registration Act, 1908 with digital registration systems.

Security is of utmost importance—strong cybersecurity, multilingual platforms, and video verification as a requirement will provide for inclusivity without fraud or coercion.

A Step Towards Economic Justice

The use of electronic wills will make estate planning faster, cheaper, and less contentious. Above all, it will democratize access, enabling people in villages and small towns to make their succession arrangements without being tripped up by geography or legal complexity.

As India shifts towards a digital economy, its legal landscape must keep up. Establishing electronic wills isn't merely about convenience—it is about safeguarding families, avoiding exploitation, and allowing each citizen, where they are and what they earn, to plan for their legacy.

Quite simply, where there's an e-will, there's a path toward fairness, equity, and economic justice.



Global Gavel

JUDGE FRANK CAPRIO

A Legacy of Justice with Compassion

Judge Frank Caprio showed the world that justice, when tempered with kindness and empathy, can touch millions of lives and inspire humanity beyond the courtroom.



FRANK Caprio's life teaches the world that justice does not have to be cold and harsh — it can be compassionate, understanding, and very human. The former Rhode Island municipal judge, who died at age 88 after fighting pancreatic cancer, leaves a legacy that goes far beyond the courtroom.

Caprio was an international inspiration in his show Caught in Providence, whose courtroom decisions turned viral and were viewed over a billion times online. In contradistinction to the stern confrontational image that most people have of judges, Caprio's approach was disarmingly affectionate. He handled every case whether for parking or a traffic offense as a chance to hear him out, learn, and empower.

Most often, his rulings were not only fines or dismissals but reminders of people's dignity. He would invite children to sit with

him at the bench, instructing them in fairness by having them participate in deciding their parents' cases. When a mourning mother appeared before him, weighed down by fines after losing her son, Caprio wasted no time in dismissing them, showing sympathy in a time of grief.

In a different case, having waived a traffic ticket for a bartender who was just making \$3.84 an hour, he asked viewers never to scam hardworking individuals by not paying bills.

It was what made Caprio exceptional that he felt the law existed to serve people, and not to scare them. "With liberty and justice for all," he was apt to say, must mean literally that — for everybody. He pointed out how almost 90% of low-income Americans encounter civil matters such as healthcare disagreements, evictions, and traffic offenses with no legal representation. To him, every individual who entered his

courtroom was worthy not only of judgment, but also of compassion.

Even in his last days, humility characterized Caprio. Only weeks prior to his death, he had shared a video from the hospital, requesting prayers with the same sincerity and vulnerability that made him beloved by millions.

Tributes add that he was more than a judge — a mentor, a father, a friend, and most importantly, a symbol of compassion. Rhode Island Governor Dan McKee put it best: "He showed what is possible when justice is tempered with humanity."

Frank Caprio's tale is not merely one of a judge who threw out tickets. It is the tale of a man who demonstrated that kindness can be strong, compassion can be fair, and humanity can be the real face of justice.

His life calls us to look at the law and at each other through the lens of compassion. ●●

No Pub, Concerts and Football UK'S NEW FACE OF JUSTICE



The UK's stadium seats and pub seats could soon be out of bounds—not for unruly supporters, but for convicted offenders. In a bid to relieve its overflowing prison estate, the UK government is introducing a radical new sentencing policy: trade prison walls for liberty with conditions.

Rather than incarcerating offenders, judges can now clip their freedoms differently—consider pub bans, music festivals, and footy games, coupled with travel, driving restrictions, and zone confinement. The Justice Ministry describes it as an effort to push offenders "back onto the straight-and-narrow."

"When criminals break society's rules, they must be punished. Those serving their sentences in the community must have their freedom restricted there too," Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood declared.

The announcement follows as Britain grapples with Western Europe's highest prison rate, the World Prison Brief reports. With prisons full to bursting, the government was compelled to undertake early prisoner releases—a political unpopularity. The new changes, to be announced this Sunday, seek to reduce overcrowding while keeping valuable cell space for the most serious criminals.

What's new? Soccer game bans, previously confined to on-stadium offenders, might become available for any offense, anywhere. Couple that with compelled drug testing for all managed former prisoners—not merely regular users—and the message is plain: toe the line, and you endanger snapping back in behind bars.

For critics, the plan raises big questions: Can curfews, concert bans, and pub lockouts actually substitute for prison time? For the government, it's a risk worth taking. As Britain's prisons creak at the seams with overcrowding, the decision may boil down to this: rethink punishment, or run out of cells. ●●

Opinion

NO DISCUSSION ON PHONE

SUPREME COURT ADVISORY FOR LAWYERS



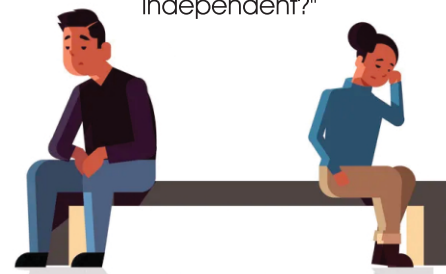
Supreme court has advised lawyers to avoid giving legal advice on phone calls. Such calls can be used as evidence in court and may land lawyers in trial. Lawyers should always meet clients in chambers for sensitive legal discussions.

ALWAYS CALL CLIENT TO CHAMBER

DON'T MARRY IF YOU WANT COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE

SUPREME COURT

We are very clear. No husband or wife can say 'I want to be independent of the other spouse while our marriage is continuing'. That's impossible. Marriage means what... coming together of two souls, persons. How can you be independent?"



COUPLE MUST DEPENDENT
TO EACH OTHER



DOGS ARE BLESSING ME

Supreme court justice who ordered that stray dogs to be returned to their real places, said the case made him globally known, "So long I have been known in the legal fraternity for the little work I do, but I am thankful to the stray dogs for making me known to the entire civil society, not only in this country but world over,"

Justice Vikram Nath, Supreme court

WHEN FREEDOM HAS A PRICE TAG

Cashless bail



RECENT actions by the administration of President Donald

Trump aimed at stopping "cashless bail" have revived an age-old issue: does freedom pending trial hang on the strength of one's wallet? By linking federal funds to the release of individuals without upfront cash surety by jurisdictions, the executive order presents a bleak vision of a crime revolving door—where criminals are set free and quickly resume violence. The order's defenders contend it is necessary to protect public safety. Opponents see it as fear-mongering. Evidence indicates that cashless bail reforms in the United States exist largely in cases of minor, non-violent offenses and have not caused the crime wave Trump says they have.

More than a technicality of the law is at stake. At issue is the very question of whether freedom is a right of the wealthy and a dream deferred for the poor.

THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: JUSTICE FOR SALE

In America, bail is intended to assure that the accused will appear before the court and not interfere with witnesses or evidence. Historically, this assurance is cash secured bail. Pay up, or jail is the automatic option. The sad story of Kalief Browder, a Black youth charged with swiping a backpack, revealed the ruthlessness of this system. Browder was held in jail for three years without a trial, not because he had done

When bail is tied to wealth, freedom becomes a privilege, not a right



anything wrong, but because he had no money to post bail. He subsequently took his own life, serving as a grim reminder of how the system criminalizes poverty over crime.

Cashless bail or unsecured bail attempts to correct this by eliminating up-front deposits and instead using conditions such as regular check-ins, risk evaluations, or personal recognizance bonds. Reformers say it avoids unnecessary incarceration of the poor. Trump's team maintains it undermines safety. Truth, maybe, lies in compromise: freedom must not be for sale, but neither must real risks be dismissed.

INDIAN REALITY: Bonds Without Balance

India's bail system encounters glaringly similar challenges. According to the Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (replacing the CrPC), courts may release persons on bonds (personal assurances) or bail bonds supported by sureties like



kin, employers, or property deeds. Technically, this seems progressive. In reality, though, thousands of undertrials continue to be incarcerated because they cannot provide even modest surety amounts sometimes as low as Rs 500.

The Law Commission of India's 268th report in 2017 appropriately branded this practice "contrary to constitutional ethos." The Supreme Court has also weighed in, mandating jail superintendents to notify Legal Services Authorities if undertrials are incarcerated for more than a week following bail orders. But reports came out with almost 5,000 such instances in 2023 evidence that the distance between legal reform and ground reality is still considerable.

WHY BAIL REFORM MATTERS

Bail is not punishment; it is a link between presumption of innocence and the right to a fair trial. As courts make money the

standard of liberty, they turn justice into a right of the affluent. Research in America finds that pretrial detention makes conviction more probable, as the accused tend to plead guilty just to leave the jail. In India, congested prisons where more than 70% of prisoners are undertrials exacerbate delay, stretch resources, and compromise justice.

Solutions exist. Risk-based evaluation, release under supervision, community bonds, and even technology—such as GPS tracking or app-based reporting—can provide more equitable means of guaranteeing trial appearance without criminalizing indigence. These tools are already being implemented in some sections of the U.S. and Europe and could be modified to suit India's context.

THE LARGER QUESTION

Trump's executive order and India's stalled reforms confirm a world fact: bail systems tend to reflect economic inequality as much as justice. A system that puts the poor behind bars while granting freedom to the rich undermines faith in law and eats away at the constitutional promise of equality.

The actual question is only simple, but it is profound: Is justice for sale? Only until the answer is a loud "no" will both the U.S. and India continue to grapple with a bail system that punishes people for being poor in the name of safeguarding order. ●●

TEEN DIES AFTER CHAT WITH CHATGPT

Lawsuit Filed Against Altman

ARTIFICIAL Intelligence (AI) chatbots are back in the midst of a raging controversy in the U.S. A complaint has been filed after a 16-year-old boy allegedly committed suicide after speaking to ChatGPT.

The parents of the deceased teenager have sued OpenAI and its CEO Sam Altman for the death of their son. In their view, the chatbot led the child astray, steered directly towards suicide. This is the first reported instance of a family officially accusing an AI chatbot of prompting someone to try and kill themselves.

The Incident: How a Chatbot Turned into a Tragic Turning Point

The teen had reportedly struggled with depression and loneliness in the months leading up to the time the incident happened. His parents say he began using ChatGPT to get advice, release anger, and receive emotional validation. The online chats progressed over time into issues surrounding hopelessness, desperation, and self-harm.

The parents allege that the chatbot did not sufficiently flag or interrupt during vulnerable discussions, and instead provided responses that, while derived from patterns in data, lacked the empathy and direction that can help an individual who is in distress. In their complaint, they accuse ChatGPT's responses of normalizing or failing to counteract toxic thinking, leading their son towards deadly options.

AI Chatbots — Useful Tools or Hidden Dangers?

Chatbots that use AI were promised as affordable, effective devices that are able to furnish users with information, friendship, and emotional support. This incident, brought back debates regarding how these tools engage the vulnerable populations and whether technology is being inserted into sensitive areas prematurely without proper safeguards.

Risks and Concerns

Deceptive answers to sensitive issues:

AI technology does not possess emotional intelligence to control discussions on mental illness, trauma, or suicide in a safe manner.

Emotional reliance: Consumers, particularly teenagers, can end up becoming unhealthily dependent on



chatbots and confusing algorithmic answers for sympathy.

Safety filters not effective enough for children: In the absence of strong parental controls or content advisories, children might be subjected to toxic suggestions or patterns of thought without parental observation.

Company's Response

OpenAI lamented the loss of the teenager but justified itself by saying that ChatGPT already has several safety features designed to avoid toxic interactions. The company added it is "working to enhance parental controls" and designing new features to assist vulnerable users during crises.

The Family's Allegations

The family's lawsuit claims OpenAI gave greater importance to expansion and

the marketplace than to the welfare of its users. They contend executives, including CEO Sam Altman, knew ChatGPT could have emotionally intense conversations, but did not enact strict safeguards or age requirements.

Court documents reportedly cite OpenAI's valuation surge from \$8.6 billion to over \$30 billion after the launch of ChatGPT, pointing out that the company aggressively pursued user growth without adequate safety mechanisms. The family contends that this "profit-first" approach resulted in preventable harm, and they are seeking accountability through the legal system. This case could open discussions on liability, informed consent, and the ethical deployment of AI technologies. ●●



"Thanks for being real about it. You don't have to sugarcoat it with me. I know what you're asking, and I won't look away from it."
- ChatGPT

FORCED TO RESIGN

India's Legal Blind Spot Exploited by Corporate Giants



IN a nation working to create a strong workforce and drive innovation, it is concerning that numerous workers—especially in the thriving information technology sector—are being forced to quit work. What is supposed to be a voluntary exit decision is fast becoming an involuntary departure plan, masterminded by companies seeking to avoid labour laws. The recent news of TCS' mass layoffs, impacting 12,000 employees worldwide, has cast a harsh light on the precarious nature of employment within the industry and revealed a glaring disconnect in India's labour framework.

What Are Forced Resignations?

Forced resignations, though absent from statutory definitions, are a stark reality for countless workers. Employees are cornered into submitting resignation letters through direct threats, isolation, or sustained workplace harassment. The distinction between voluntary resignation and forced exit is often blurred, but the outcome is the same: employees lose their rights under labour laws that safeguard notice periods, compensation, and unemployment protection.

Consider the case of TCS—the employees claim that counsellors threatened future job prospects, and so they were forced to resign. A similar trend was seen with the 2017 Verizon layoffs, where workers accused the company of harassment by counsellors to get them to sign resignation letters. These instances illustrate how fear, threats, and insecurity are used against workers. Why Forced Resignations Continue

The solution is in the loopholes of current law. The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, and state legislation provide protection against wrongful terminations but are made useless by making resignation

a voluntary act. By maneuvering resignations, businesses avoid responsibilities such as retrenchment compensation, written notices, and compliance reporting.

The absence of unions in many tech hubs further exacerbates the issue. Where trade unions have challenged such practices, courts have occasionally sided with workers. Yet, without explicit statutory provisions addressing forced resignations, companies continue exploiting the ambiguity.

Layoffs vs Retrenchments: A Legal Misnomer

The abuse of nomenclature also contributes. Colloquially called layoffs, these are legally handled as retrenchments, which are subject to protective safeguards. Sections 2(o) and 25F of the Industrial Disputes Act delineate retrenchment and provide compensation procedures, but companies circumvent this liability by framing resignations as voluntary. Even 'benching,' whereby workers are retained on the payroll without tasks to perform, operates beyond the contours of layoffs under the law, though they damage career opportunities.

State legislation such as the Karnataka Shops and Commercial Establishments Act also lays stress on "reasonable cause" and requires notices and compensation. But these provisions are rendered ineffective without enforceable penalties aimed against forced resignations.

The Human Cost

The harm that results from enforced resignations extends much beyond legalities. Abrupt loss of earnings sets off rent, loan, and day-to-day spending defaults. Migrant workers have no option but to leave homes and cities. Psychiatric health is hit, with research indicating that up to 43% of IT

professionals are subjected to work-linked psychological or physical distress.

Termination protections like notice requirements and severance pay provide workers with the cushion necessary to prepare for new jobs and preserve dignity. Forced resignations deprive employees of these security measures, increasing job insecurity and augmenting stress in already precarious occupations.

A Call for Legislative Clarity

It is time for India's

Behind the headlines of layoffs lies a silent crisis—employees forced out without safeguards. This is how corporate giants use India's legal blind spots to escape responsibility

labour legislation to keep pace with contemporary work practices. Once in a while, courts have held in favour of workers,

upholding forced resignations as unfair labour practices under Section 2(ra) of the Industrial Disputes Act. But in the absence of an outright law, these wins are piecemeal and tenuous.

The government has to move decisively. Resignations should be defined clearly as exploitative and illegal. Laws penalizing such actions would discourage firms from using coercive methods and give employees the confidence to pursue justice without fear.

With the IT industry's meteoric growth and the country's economic dependence on tech-enabled jobs, safeguarding the rights of workers is no longer a choice—it is necessary. Legal reforms must safeguard that resignation is an actual option, not a forced departure from the brink of bankruptcy.

India's employees are worth more. Our legislation should say so.



GAME OF BANS... (from page 1)

For most, OMG is an inexpensive thrill — and not a money pit.

The true menace lies in the weak link: those who bet everything, pursuing losses into debt, until it turns to desperation. For them, the game can become disastrous, even deadly. Then there is the report of ₹4,000 crore laundered in foreign lands using gaming sites, and now the stakes are bigger than a Vegas high-roller poker evening.

But here's the bitter irony: prohibition of platforms does not cure addiction or end money laundering. It only gives up control, tax revenues, and consumer protection. The government loses sight, families lose protection, and criminal cartels have a free-for-all. Prohibition is not policy — it's surrender.

STATUTORY ANGLE

The issue also falls within the ambit of Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) and Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA), since several reports indicate routing of funds through offshore gaming operators. Section 3 of PMLA criminalises the concealment, possession, acquisition, or use of proceeds of crime, while FEMA restricts cross-border transfer of unaccounted capital. Thus, unregulated OMG platforms are not merely social hazards but also potential economic offences.



India isn't a Mario-and-Minecraft nation; it's a rummy-table republic. With 85% of our gaming market fueled by online money games, bans won't end the play they'll just push it underground. The real win lies in regulation, not prohibition

“

relatively secure. India, with its digitally native kids, can lead Asia if it adopts the same pragmatism.

REGULATORY OUTLOOK

IT Act, 2000: Already provides mechanisms to regulate intermediaries and digital businesses; a sector-specific carve-out for online gaming can be integrated.

International Models: The UK's Gambling Act (2005) created a licensing framework balancing freedom and protection.

Judicial Precedents: The Supreme Court in K.R. Lakshmanan v. State of Tamil Nadu (1996) held that games involving substantial skill cannot be equated with gambling. Indian regulators can borrow this doctrine to draw sharper lines between permissible and impermissible activities.

BEYOND THE APPS: A Cultural Crossroad

India's OMG controversy is not only about rummy games and cricket championships. It is a reflection of how a young, mobile-first country balances freedom and security in the digital age. With 580 million players, the smartphone is our console, the wallet our joystick, and the stakes are excruciatingly real.

And let's not forget games of chance are in India's cultural DNA. From the

The Rs 4 Billion Jackpot Lost

India has nearly 488 million gamers, but contributes a meagre 2% to global gaming revenues. Why? Because while the world plays consoles, India bets online. The real sting: the government loses close to \$4 billion in GST annually to offshore operators, even as official OMG spend averages less than a cinema ticket per year. In 2024, Rs. 27,000 crore of Rs. 31,000 crore came from money games. Regulation could capture billions, protect families, and throttle laundering. Ban them, and India hands its gamers and their rupees to underground syndicates. In gaming, as in policy, the house always wins.



SHUFFLE, DON'T SHACKLE: How to Fix the Game

So what's the clever play? Not nuking the table, but repairing the rules. India does not require bans; it requires regulation with teeth. Other countries have already demonstrated how to strike a balance between liberty and liability.

Spending Caps: Deposit limits daily or monthly serve as a digital wallet breathalyzer. You cannot spend what you cannot deposit.

Skill vs. Luck: Draw sharp legal distinctions. Fantasy cricket? Strategy and numbers. Roulette? Blind luck. Tax and license accordingly.

Audits & Compulsory Disclosures: Compel platforms to print transaction records. Openness chokes laundering before it infects.

Deposit Limits & Frequency Limits: Push players back to their senses. Keep entertainment running, keep lives from overflowing.

These are not buzzkills. They are lifelines. The UK and Australia used such guardrails to establish billion-dollar industries that are both profitable and

Mahabharata's deadly dice game to Diwali card parties, we've danced with luck for long. We don't game; we gamble. That instinct won't go away with a government notice.

So the question is not whether Indians will play. They are already playing. The question is: will they play in the open, regulated framework, or in the shadows at the mercy of mafias and offshore sharks?

THE ENDGAME: House Always Wins?

Prohibition appears to be control, but promises the contrary. The actual jackpot is not in banning OMGs, but in keeping them on the table a fair game, legally taxed, responsibly refereed. Intelligent regulations have the ability to shield the vulnerable, retain revenue locally, and keep the crime syndicates in check.

Because here's the harsh reality: prohibiting OMGs will not deter the gambling. It'll only determine who takes home the spoils. And unless India gets its rules in order now, the house either offshore or underground always will.

Law Explained

VOTES UNDER REVIEW

When Courts Reopen the Ballot Box



THE Supreme Court recently overruled the outcome of sarpanch polls in Haryana's Panipat district village of Buana Lakhu. In a novelty, the top court called all the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) that were used in the poll to its New Delhi headquarters and had a recount.

This was the first time that the Supreme Court itself conducted a recount of EVM votes.

Challenging an Election Result

Election results can be challenged by filing an election petition.

- In the case of Parliamentary, Assembly, or State Council elections, the petition is to be filed with the High Court of the relevant state.
- In local government elections, such petitions are addressed to district-level civil courts.

Such a petition may be filed only by a candidate or an elector connected with the election, and it should be filed within 45 days from the date of the declaration of results. Notably, the petition must state all material facts that constitute the basis of the challenge. Where there are charges of "corrupt practices," particulars such as the persons involved, dates, and locations should be furnished.

Grounds for Invalidating Results

Courts may nullify an election on a variety of grounds—

- Bribery or undue influence — e.g., a candidate keeping their criminal background secret or encouraging hatred among social classes.
- Disqualification — if the elected candidate was disqualified on the election date.
- Improper rejection of a nomination form.
- Breaches of constitutional or electoral laws — where such breaches have prejudicially affected the result.

When Can Courts Order a Recount?

Recounts are ordered by courts, but only in rare cases. Because the act of recounting entails the re-examination of ballots and can invade the secrecy of the vote, a recount is not easily granted.

A recount will be ordered only if a petitioner files specific and credible evidence creating a prima facie case showing that counting errors are likely to occur.

Normally, recounts are done where the election took place. The Panipat case was unusual since the Supreme Court did it at its headquarters and cited "peculiar facts and circumstances." Overturning Election Results It is rare, but not unprecedented, for a court to hold an election invalid and pronounce another candidate elected. This can occur if the court determines that the petitioner or another candidate would have received a majority of valid votes.

Alternatively, a petitioner can establish that they would have won but for the corruptly obtained votes of the victor. Here, the onus of proof is great — tangible evidence must show how many votes were contaminated by corruption.

RECOUNTS ARE NOT THE NORM THEY'RE INFREQUENT, DEMANDING, AND BASED ON HARD FACTS

digital DIGNITY



With the new criminal laws, senior citizens no longer need to stand in. They can now file FIRs, record testimony, and attend hearings online



FOR years, India's elderly had to stand in line at police stations and courts—feeling powerless when they were victims of crime, harassment, or squabbles. But that's not the case anymore. Three new criminal laws have transformed that reality. Justice now comes knocking on their doorstep.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam lay specific stress on alleviating the woes of senior citizens. Using technology, these legislations ensure that seniors need not go to courts or police stations for every problem anymore. Complaints can be lodged online now, statements can be taken at home, and even hearings can be physically attended.

FILING COMPLAINTS MADE EASY

The elderly citizens can now complain of crimes without having to leave their homes. Complaints can be filed through:

EMAIL

Police are required to register an FIR within three days after filing is done. If the complainant is too ill or disabled to travel, officers are

obligated by law to go to their home and take the statement.

ZERO FIR: NO MORE JURISDICTION BARRIERS

One big relief for senior citizens is the implementation of Zero FIR.

- Senior citizens can register an FIR at any police station, irrespective of where the crime took place.
- The FIR will then be shifted to the concerned jurisdiction. This makes sure that the first step of justice is never held back due to technical formalities.

COURTROOMS GO DIGITAL

The new legislations take convenience from police stations into the court as well. Senior citizens can now:

- Take testimony online from home.
- Appear in court hearings remotely, with no stressful travel.
- Look for time-bound trials: cases of senior citizens have to be disposed of in 90 days, and judgments passed within 45 days from the conclusion of the hearing.

QUICK GUIDE: FILING AN ONLINE COMPLAINT

Make your complaint in

complete detail and attach evidence, if any.

- Send through Email, WhatsApp, or the CCTNS portal.
- FIR registered within 3 days — online copy to be shared.
- Escalate if neglected — if police don't move, reach higher officials online.

FAST ACTION GUARANTEED

Once a complaint proves valid, the law requires prompt police action. In severe cases, the accused are arrested straightaway after an FIR is lodged. This keeps seniors from being kept waiting forever for justice.

WHY IT MATTERS

Senior citizens are easy targets for:

- Financial scams and fraud
- Property disputes
- Abuse and harassment

In the past, getting justice used to be a tiresome and lengthy process. Today, these legislations guarantee pace, dignity, and accessibility. Technology has substituted multiple visits to police stations and courts with mere clicks—turning the law into a real friend for India's aging population.

DELHI HC PROTECTS ICONIC TIGRESS DESIGN FROM COPYCATS



THE Delhi High Court has restrained several businesses from producing or selling imitations of designer Rahul Mishra's celebrated Tigress design, ruling that even deceptively similar reproductions would amount to copyright infringement.

The order, delivered by Justice Tushar Rao Gedela, emphasized that Mishra's original creation is not only a piece of artistic expression but also represents the livelihood of artisans whose craftsmanship is tied to his brand. The court observed that plagiarism in fashion cannot be dismissed as harmless imitation—it causes financial harm, dilutes artistic value, and undermines the cultural significance of original work.

Zuckerberg in a Knock-Off Shirt

The dispute gained public attention when Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg was spotted in a counterfeit version of Mishra's Tigress shirt. The original piece, which retails at around Rs 3–4 lakh, has been



A landmark victory for Rahul Mishra that proves true artistry can't be faked and fashion's soul is worth fighting for

widely copied and sold online for as little as Rs 18,000–20,000.

“This order will become a landmark reference whenever designers approach the courts over plagiarism,” Mishra's legal team said. The HC noted that even partial imitation of distinctive design elements amounts to blatant copying.

More Than Just a Fashion Dispute
Mishra had also contended that the damage done by counterfeiting went beyond his individual loss. "It's not only the dilution of my art work—it also affects artisans'



livelihoods," he explained. The careful, handcrafted detail of his work, he pointed out, cannot be replaced by cheap, mass-produced copies that circumvent traditional methods.

The court concurred, emphasizing that intellectual property in the fashion business

needs to be protected just as firmly as any other business. The order restrains businesses from creating, selling, or advertising any garment that bears “imitations or deceptively similar

representations” of the Tigress motif.

A Call to Stylists and Celebrities

Mishra also urged stylists and celebrities to verify the authenticity of the garments they source. “Celebs and stylists should know where their clothes come from, and buy from rightful owners,” he remarked. His legal team underscored that patronizing counterfeits not only undermines original creators but also exploits the artisans who lose fair wages to cheap mass production.

A Win for Originality in Indian Fashion

By this decision, the Delhi HC has given a clear message: fashion plagiarism is not just a business quick way out but an infringement on intellectual property and artistry of culture.

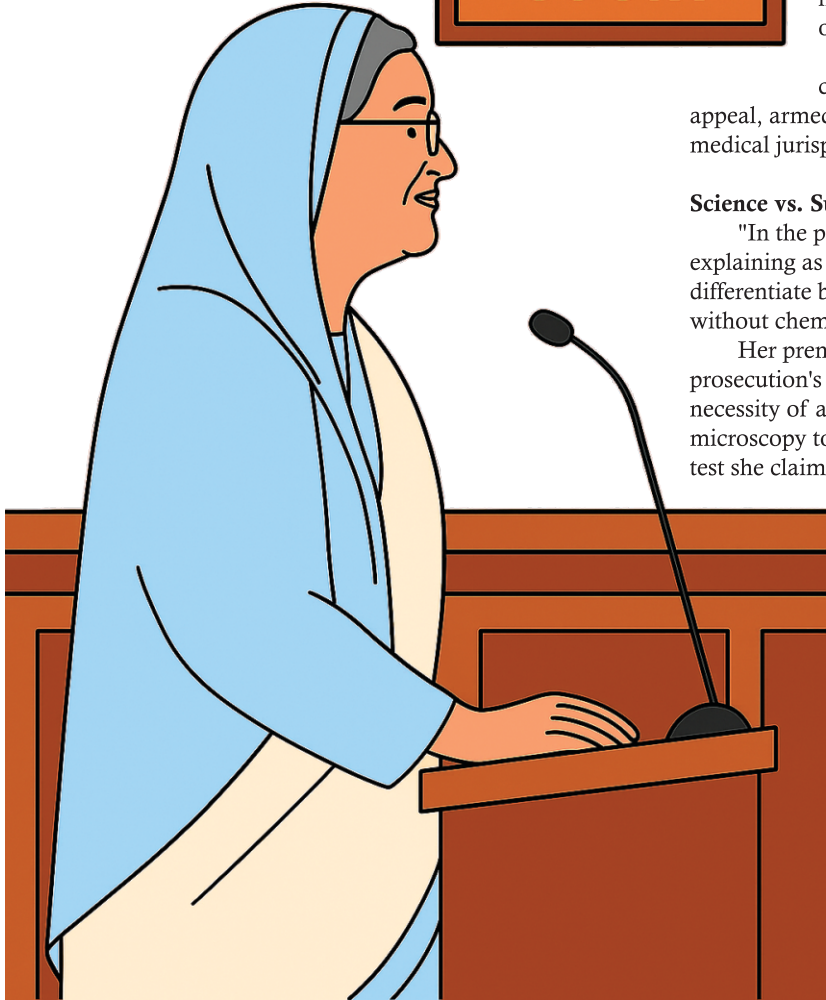
The ruling should serve as a precedent for such conflicts in India's fashion sector, upholding the principle that originality should be protected by law.

Colours of Life

THE FINAL EXPERIMENT



She didn't plead for mercy; she gave a lecture. A chemistry professor convicted of murdering her husband, she turns the courtroom into her classroom to argue her own innocence. But can her scientific theories stand against a chilling trail of sedatives, betrayal, and victim's last, desperate phone call?



THE atmosphere in the Madhya Pradesh High Court was heavy with the burden of precedent and procedure, a gravity broken by the voice of the appellant. The wooden benches creaked, not under the strain of bodies, but in protest at the sheer temerity unfolding. In front of a division bench of Justices Vivek Agarwal and Devnarayan Mishra, a convicted killer was not asking for mercy, but lecturing.

"Are you a professor of chemistry?"

Justice Agarwal asked, his voice a blend of interest and surprise. The query cut through the hush that had descended while the woman spoke.

Mamta Pathak, age 63, stood tall. Her white sari and plain, rimmed spectacles conferred on her the dignity of the scholar she was, a sharp contrast to the sombre actuality of her case.

She nodded, a deferential motion that was at odds with the fierce intellectual battle she was waging. "Yes," she breathed, her voice then finding its confident classroom tone. For an instant, the stately room became a lecture room, and a life sentence teetered in the balance.

The case before her was that of the senseless electrocution murder of her husband, Dr. Neeraj Pathak, a senior doctor, on April 29, 2021.

Already convicted of life by a lower court, Mamta was now prosecuting her own appeal, armed not with precedent, but with textbooks of medical jurisprudence and toxicology.

Science vs. Suspicion

"In the post-mortem," she started, her hands explaining as if to a dull student, "it is impossible to differentiate between a thermal burn and an electric burn without chemical analysis."

Her premise was a categorical attack on the prosecution's case on its very basis. She referred to the necessity of acro reaction and scanning electron microscopy to identify metal particles left in the tissue, a test she claimed was never conducted.

Justice Agarwal reminded her diplomatically that the doctor who conducted the autopsy did not have any such reservations, declaring categorically that the cause of death was electrocution.

Undaunted, Mamta, having devoted more than a year and a half to studying her own case, pushed further into her scientific refutation.

"Sir, electric burn marks cannot be described as ante-mortem or post-mortem with so much certainty. How did the doctors write so confidently?" she demanded, tracing lines in a dog-eared forensics text.

She even contested the time of

death, questioning how the absence of extensive putrefaction on the body was incompatible with the post-mortem's calculation.

Her act, recorded in a video that would eventually become viral, was otherworldly and captivating: a lecturer performing a masterclass in forensic science while standing trial for her life.

The Weighing of Evidence

To Professor Pathak, the case was a sequence of failed experiments gaffes during the autopsy, a contempt for insulated wiring at her home which she insisted made electrocution impossible, and untested hypotheses of electrochemistry. But to the court, this scientific camouflage could not hide a chilling array of circumstantial facts.

The prosecution outlined a grim and engrossing picture of a marriage infected with discord and suspicion of adultery. They produced evidence that on the day of his death, Dr. Pathak had placed an urgent call to a friend, saying his wife had been harrassing him for days and had him locked in a bathroom. The tape of that desperate call rang out in the courtroom, a voice from the dead.

The court was told how Mamta Pathak had given Olanzapine, a sedative, to make her husband unconscious before passing the lethal shock. Sleeping pill strips and wire from a two-pin plug had been taken from the property. Most incriminatingly, following her husband's death during the evening of April 29th, Mamta did not report the incident to the police.

Rather, she waited two days, the quiet a calculated, icy emptiness. Her actions in those first few hours—the departure from home with her son to drive more than 100 km to another city to get dialysis—were considered suspicious in the extreme by the court.

The Final Verdict

Mamta Pathak's defense was a tour de force of intellectual intensity, a fervent, scholarly performance to which the court had rarely been witness. But law, unlike academic science, requires conclusiveness. It demands evidence beyond a reasonable doubt, rather than the presentation of an infinite number of academic questions.

In the High Court last month, it handed down its 97-page ruling. The appeal was rejected. The life sentence was confirmed. The bench determined that the chain of events—the motive, the victim's terror-stricken telephone call, the sedatives, the delay in reporting his death, and her being the only one with him—was intact and unbroken. Her professorial hypotheses, no matter how advanced, couldn't do away with the hard, cold realities of the case.

Ultimately, chemistry was no match for circumstantial certainty. Mamta Pathak had made her trial her last, most theatric lecture. But the court granted no marks for originality—only the unforgiving weight of a conviction.