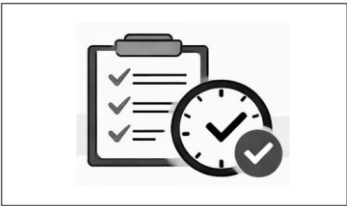


BIG STORIES, SMALL TOWNS

LEGALMITRA

more than just news - big stories from small towns



EQUITY OR
EXCESS?

UGC's Rules on Trial



The UGC's 2026 equity rules promised fair campuses. Instead, they landed in court—raising questions about clarity, control, and common sense



THE UNIVERSITY Grants Commission (UGC) notified the Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions Regulations, 2026 on January 13, replacing the 2012 guidelines that were widely seen as weak and ineffective. The new rules were introduced at a time when campuses across India are witnessing growing tensions over caste discrimination, exclusion, and institutional bias.

On paper, the intention was clear: to provide stronger safeguards and ensure accountability. But within weeks, the Supreme Court stepped in and stayed the regulations, calling them vague and open to misuse. As a result, the older 2012 framework has been temporarily restored. What was meant to be a reform has now turned into a



ritesh sharma
editor

Good intentions need good drafting. Otherwise, fairness becomes paperwork and reform becomes fear

policy deadlock.

What the New Rules Tried to Do

Under the 2026 regulations, every university and college must set up an Equal Opportunity Centre (EOC) led by an Equity Officer. Special Equity Committees are to be formed, representing SC, ST, OBC, EWS, women, and persons with disabilities.

Complaints of discrimination must be registered within 24 hours, investigated within 15 days, and resolved quickly. Institutions are required to submit regular compliance reports, while a central monitoring body can impose penalties, including withdrawal of grants or even de-recognition. Faculty and staff must also undergo compulsory sensitisation programmes.

This marks a sharp

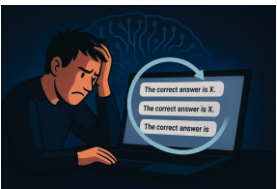
...Continue on page 6

TECHNOLOGY

AI KNOWS THE ANSWER—BUT WON'T ADVISE

OPEN AI has announced that Chat GPT will no longer provide medical, legal, or financial advice, citing concerns over accountability, safety, and misuse. The decision follows growing unease about users treating AI-generated responses as professional guidance, despite

the technology lacking legal or ethical responsibility. Experts have warned that incorrect or incomplete information in critical areas such as healthcare,



law, or finance could lead to serious harm. OpenAI clarified that ChatGPT is designed to function as an educational and informational tool, not a replacement for qualified professionals. While the model

may continue to offer general knowledge, it will avoid personalised or decision-based recommendations. By redefining boundaries, OpenAI aims to encourage informed decision-making while reinforcing the importance of human expertise in sensitive domains.

RIGHTS

RIGHT TO
CHOOSE SPOUSE



THE Gujarat High Court has reaffirmed that an individual's freedom to marry a partner of their choice is a fundamental aspect of the right to life and personal liberty guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution. The ruling came while dismissing a plea that sought disciplinary action against police authorities for allegedly failing to register an FIR concerning an interfaith marriage.

Justice H.D. Suthar declined to entertain the petition filed by a 49-year-old resident of Anand district, who claimed that his adult daughter had been forcibly converted and married after leaving home. The Court noted that the woman had neither challenged the conversion nor raised any objection to the marriage, which had been duly registered before the appropriate authority.

The Court explained that, under the Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act, a criminal offence is made out only when religious conversion occurs through coercion, inducement, or fraudulent means. In the absence of any complaint from the woman concerned, the Court held that directing the registration of an FIR was unwarranted.

Emphasising constitutional protections, the High Court observed that unwarranted interference in a consensual marriage between adults violates their fundamental rights. However, it clarified that the petitioner remains free to seek remedies under the law if any cognizable offence emerges in the future.

Wild Life

SAVED, BUT SQUEEZED

Tigers Outgrow Their Forests

INDIA'S tiger recovery under Project Tiger has been achieved, yet it has generated a new ecological and social strain. More than 3,600 tigers have been recorded, with about 1,100 reported to have moved beyond protected areas due to habitat saturation, territorial pressure, and prey competition. Large-ranging male tigers have been observed crossing reserve boundaries, while females have followed dispersal routes into human landscapes. Frequent movements have been documented across multiple states, with several reserves said to be near carrying capacity. Rising encounters with villages have led to school closures, livestock losses, and community anxiety. Authorities have implemented monitoring, compensation, and limited translocation, but experts have argued that durable solutions require stronger corridors, habitat restoration, and conservation beyond reserve limits.





THE DAILY DOSE OF
riteBOL

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Important Points: 1. **Satirical Analysis:** The witty analysis provided in *Ritebol* is meant to entertain and provoke thought. It is not intended to undermine the seriousness of court decisions or legal proceedings. 2. **Educational Purpose:** We aim to educate our readers about legal concepts, landmark judgments, and the intricacies of the legal system. However, *Ritebol* should not be considered a substitute for professional legal advice. 3. **No Offense Intended:** Our satirical commentary is in good spirit and should not be taken personally. We respect the judiciary, legal professionals, and all stakeholders involved in the legal process. 4. **Accuracy and Authenticity:** While we strive for accuracy, *Ritebol* may occasionally exaggerate or fictionalize aspects of court decisions for comedic effect. Readers are encouraged to verify information independently. 5. **Open Dialogue:** We welcome feedback, differing opinions, and lively discussions. Feel free to engage with us, but always maintain a respectful tone. Remember, *Ritebol* is a delightful blend of law and levity. Enjoy the ride, and let's keep the legal world colorful!

courtroom updates

COURT FLAGS MULTIPLEX OVERPRICING

The Supreme Court raised concerns over high ticket and food prices in multiplexes, observing that excessive costs discourage moviegoers. The court warned that unless rates are reasonably fixed, cinemas may remain empty, affecting the film industry and public access to entertainment.

HINDI VIDEOS BOOST JUSTICE

National Law University, Jodhpur launched a new Hindi video series, "Jagriti – Women and Access to Justice," aimed at simplifying complex legal, constitutional and social issues for the general public.

JUDGES WARN ON AI

Judges at the South Zone Regional Judicial Conference warned that fabricated citations could damage credibility. While accepting AI as a research aid, they stressed it cannot replace human judgment or constitutional values. They urged expanding e-courts to reduce the digital divide.

DEGREES DON'T CANCEL DUES

The Allahabad High Court held that maintenance under Section 125 CrPC cannot be denied merely because a wife is educated or employable. Setting aside a Bulandshahr family court order, it distinguished earning capacity from actual employment and directed reconsideration of maintenance for the wife and minor son.

MAPS DON'T MATCH

Legal experts and environmentalists questioned forest department "distance certificates" issued to 35 commercial units near Nahargarh Wildlife Sanctuary, alleging they conflicted with notified boundaries. Critics warned certificates could become invalid if revised ESZ limits include excluded areas. An internal inquiry reportedly found earlier incorrect submissions to the NGT; the department declined comment.

COPY-PASTE WITNESSES

when the process of law itself becomes suspect



Six familiar faces were repeatedly produced as government witnesses across hundreds of cases, raising questions about coincidence, credibility and creative policing

A striking pattern has been detected in Madhya Pradesh's Maugani district, where the same six individuals have been listed as government witnesses in hundreds of criminal cases. Their names have been recorded in raids, seizures, and arrests conducted far apart, sometimes simultaneously, raising doubts about the authenticity of their presence.

The irregularity has been exposed after a review of digital records in the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS), which showed that these six names had been repeatedly inserted in FIRs registered at

Laur and Naigadhi police stations.It has been alleged that these witnesses were routinely used to validate police action, complete paperwork, and present cases as procedurally sound, even when such claims defied practical logic.

Serious allegations have been directed at former station in-charge Jagdish Singh Thakur, under whose tenure more than 150 questionable FIRs have been filed. One witness, Amit Kushwaha, has reportedly accompanied him during transfers.

The issue was first flagged by RTI activist Kunj Bihari Tiwari in 2022, followed by a detailed complaint in December 2025. Investigations have now been initiated.

GIFTS GIVEN, GIFTS RETURNED

Divorce ends a marriage, not a woman's financial rights

THE Supreme Court affirmed that a divorced Muslim woman can reclaim cash, gold, and gifts given by her parents at marriage. Interpreting the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986, the Court stressed dignity and economic security over technical disputes. Setting aside a Calcutta High Court order, it held that marriage gifts remain the woman's absolute property. The judgment reinforces constitutional values and strengthens financial protection for divorced Muslim women.

When Romeo-Juliet Meets POCSO



TAKING note of the widespread misuse of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, the Supreme Court has urged the Centre to consider corrective measures, including introducing a "Romeo-Juliet" clause to exclude genuine consensual adolescent relationships from the law's harsh application. The observations were made while setting aside an Allahabad High Court order, with the court holding that High Courts lack the power to mandate medical age determination of survivors at the bail stage in POCSO cases.

The bench noted that repeated judicial notice has been taken of misuse of the statute, particularly where adolescents close in age are involved in consensual relationships. A copy of the judgment was directed to be sent to the Law Secretary for examining suitable remedial steps. The court said a Romeo-Juliet clause could prevent disproportionate prosecution under criminal law.

IF RATS EAT EVIDENCE

Who Guards Justice?

From Jharkhand to Texas, missing ganja blamed on rodents has turned law enforcement into unintended satire.

A peculiar explanation was once again placed on record when rats were blamed for the disappearance of seized narcotics, raising serious questions about evidence handling and institutional accountability. In Jharkhand, rodents were cited as having allegedly consumed nearly 200 kilograms of ganja that formed part of the evidence in a drugs case, leading a court to acquit the accused.

The court observed that such an explanation cast doubt on the very seizure and its custodial handling by the police. The incident was not without precedent. In Mathura in 2022, rats were reported to have destroyed over 500 kilograms of confiscated cannabis. Similar claims surfaced internationally, including in Houston, Texas,

where authorities admitted in 2024 that stored marijuana had been consumed—allegedly by rats. Experts were quoted describing the rodents as "drug-addicted" and difficult to control, adding to the surreal nature of the justification. However, it was noted that before treating rodents as a criminal menace, facts must be firmly established.

While dogs chewing homework notebooks and citizens invoking dead grandmothers as excuses are familiar tropes, the repeated invocation of rats devouring official evidence has increasingly resembled a fable rather than a credible defence. Whether these claims reflect negligence, misconduct, or mere convenience remains a question the justice system cannot afford to ignore.

SC FLAGS RISKY LIQUOR PACKAGING

THE Supreme Court has voiced strong reservations about the sale of whiskey in tetra pack packaging, highlighting potential risks to public safety. The court observed that such packs closely resemble juice cartons, making it difficult for parents, teachers, and even children to distinguish between non-alcoholic beverages and liquor. This similarity, the court noted, could lead to accidental consumption, particularly by minors.

The remarks were made by a bench comprising Justice Surya Kant, the Chief Justice-designate, and Justice Joymalya Bagchi during proceedings related to a trademark dispute between Allied Blenders and Distillers, which produces 'Officer's Choice', and John Distillers, the maker of 'Original Choice' whiskey. The judges questioned why state authorities allow liquor sales in packaging that may be misleading.

During the hearing, it was revealed that tetra packs form a substantial share of liquor sales in several regions, with Karnataka accounting for nearly 65 percent. Emphasizing that public safety should override commercial interests, the court urged greater responsibility in alcohol packaging and marketing practices.



The Supreme Court has raised serious concerns that such packaging resembles juice cartons and poses safety risks, especially to children

Want to Start Your OWN STARTUP?

Know the Complete Process and Avoid Hassles



 **LAUNCHING** a business begins with a clear, practical, and scalable idea, supported by a well-structured business plan. Equally crucial is choosing the right legal framework—such as sole proprietorship, LLP, or private limited company—before proceeding further. Once decided, formal registration must be completed through the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) portal. Thorough market analysis and secured funding are key pillars that determine a startup's long-term success.

STEP ONE: Concept Development and Validation

1. Business Idea: Identify real gaps in the market and design a product or service that genuinely solves a problem. A strong business idea should be need-based, realistic, and adaptable to change.

2. Market Research: Study customer behavior, evaluate competitor strategies, and assess demand patterns. This helps determine whether the idea is commercially viable and sustainable in the long run.

3. Business Plan: Define short-term and long-term objectives, outline operational strategies, and prepare financial projections. A solid plan serves as a roadmap for execution and decision-making.

4. Funding: Estimate capital requirements, review personal savings, and explore external financing options. Entrepreneurs should consider schemes like Mudra Yojana and Startup India for financial and policy support.

STEP TWO: Legal and Registration Process

1. Name Selection and Approval: Choose a unique and relevant business name, verify its availability on the MCA website, and proceed with registration accordingly.

2. Company Incorporation: File the Memorandum of

A clear idea, solid planning, and strict legal compliance form the real backbone of entrepreneurship everything else is execution

Association (MOA) and Articles of Association (AOA) with the Registrar of Companies through online submission to complete incorporation.

3. Mandatory Licences and Registrations: Obtain PAN, TAN, and GST as applicable. MSME registration should also be completed to avail benefits meant for small and medium enterprises.

4. Business Bank Account: Open a dedicated bank account in the company's name to maintain transparent financial records and ease accounting procedures.

STEP THREE: Launch and Growth Strategy

1. Team and Vendors: Recruit capable employees and build partnerships with reliable suppliers to ensure smooth operations.

2. Brand Development: Create a strong brand identity that reflects credibility, quality, and trustworthiness in the market.

3. Digital Presence: Develop a professional website, engage actively on social media platforms, and use digital marketing to reach target customers.

4. Startup India Registration: Eligible startups should register on the Startup India portal to access tax benefits, simplified compliance procedures, and government recognition.

Building a business becomes far more manageable when approached in a structured and systematic manner. With proper planning, legal compliance, and disciplined execution, entrepreneurs can reduce risks, avoid unnecessary hurdles, and focus on sustainable long-term growth.

SOCIAL MEDIA



LAUGHING STOCK OR LEGAL TROUBLE?

THE rapid expansion of social media and digital platforms has reshaped how people communicate in India. Memes, GIFs, and short-form humorous videos have become part of everyday online interaction. While much of this content is created and shared for amusement, it does not always remain harmless. Legal concerns arise when a person's photograph, video, or personal details are used in a way that infringes upon their reputation, dignity, or privacy. What may be dismissed as humour by some can amount to a legally actionable wrong under law.

Legal professionals consistently stress that using an individual's image or video without consent—particularly in derogatory or intrusive memes is not merely unethical conduct. Such misuse can invite both criminal prosecution and civil liability. The degree of legal exposure depends on factors such as the creator's intent, the nature of the content, and the harm caused to the affected individual.

offender. Based on the complaint, authorities may register a First Information Report (FIR). If police action is not forthcoming, the aggrieved person may approach a magistrate directly by filing a private complaint under Section 227 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.

In cases involving reputational damage, emotional distress, or financial loss, civil remedies may also be pursued before competent civil courts. Additionally, social media intermediaries are legally obligated to act on user complaints and remove unlawful content under the grievance redressal framework established by the Information Technology Act, 2000.

- CIVIL REMEDIES AVAILABLE TO VICTIMS**
- Apart from criminal prosecution, civil law provides independent grounds for relief:
- **Right to Privacy:** The unauthorised use of a person's image or video, particularly when it results in reputational harm, violates the fundamental right to privacy protected under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.
 - **Right of Publicity:** Individuals retain the right to control the commercial exploitation of their identity, including their name, likeness, or photograph. Creating or monetising memes without consent may infringe this right.
 - **Civil Defamation:** Defamation also constitutes a civil wrong under tort law. Victims may claim monetary compensation for damage to reputation, mental anguish, or social humiliation caused by offensive online content.

DISTINGUISHING HUMOUR FROM HARM

Indian law draws a clear boundary between innocent humour and conduct that infringes personal rights. Memes, viral videos, or GIFs cannot be used as instruments to defame, demean, or violate an individual's privacy. The legal framework—through both criminal and civil remedies—aims to prevent digital platforms from becoming tools of harassment, coercion, or public shaming.

As digital engagement continues to grow, awareness of these legal safeguards has become essential. Online expression carries real-world consequences, and content shared under the guise of humour does not enjoy immunity from legal scrutiny. Indian law provides multiple avenues—through courts, law enforcement, and platform-level grievance mechanisms—to protect individuals from digital misuse.

Ultimately, entertainment cannot be justified at the cost of someone's dignity, reputation, or privacy. Responsible online behaviour and legal awareness are critical to ensuring that humour remains harmless and that victims of digital abuse have effective remedies at their disposal.

Memes may promise laughs, but when humour hijacks someone's face, privacy, or reputation, the joke collapses. Indian law doesn't find defamation funny online "banter" can land creators in serious legal trouble



GOVERNORS CAN'T SIT ON BILLS FOREVER

The Supreme Court clarified that Governors cannot indefinitely withhold assent to legislation, rejecting the notion of an absolute or "pocket veto" and reinforcing constitutional responsibility in Centre-State relations.



SECRET RECORDINGS BETWEEN SPOUSES DEEMED ADMISSIBLE

The Court held that covertly recorded conversations between spouses may be relied upon in matrimonial disputes when relevant, without granting absolute protection to marital privacy.

DELAYS OPEN TO REVIEW DESPITE NO FIXED TIMELINES

While courts declined to prescribe rigid deadlines for assent by Governors or the President, they affirmed that unjustified or bad-faith delays remain subject to judicial examination.

NITHARI CASE ENDS WITH ACQUITTAL

Acquitting Surendra Koli in the remaining Nithari case, the Supreme Court cited evidentiary weaknesses and procedural failures, bringing an end to a long-running criminal saga.



Waqf LAW AMENDMENTS

Interim reliefs were granted in petitions questioning the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, raising concerns related to federalism, minority rights, and administration of religious properties.

ELECTORAL REFORM LITIGATION RAISES FEDERAL CONCERNS

Petitions challenging electoral procedures and revision processes brought into focus the balance between legislative authority, state powers, and the Election Commission's mandate.

AADHAAR ACCEPTED TO PREVENT VOTER EXCLUSION

To avoid erroneous removal of voters, the Supreme Court directed that Aadhaar and other valid documents be accepted during the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls.



STRICTER SCRUTINY OF LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIP CLAIMS

Courts heightened evidentiary standards for establishing live-in relationships to prevent abuse of legal protections intended for genuine domestic arrangements.



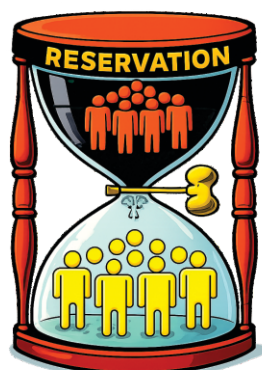
JUDICIAL OVERSIGHT OF VOTER ROLL REVISIONS

Public interest cases across states influenced electoral roll revision practices, emphasizing transparency, fairness, and protection against arbitrary voter deletions.



RESERVATION BENEFITS AND OPEN CATEGORY POSTS CLARIFIED

The Court ruled that candidates availing age relaxation under reservation policies cannot claim unreserved posts unless expressly permitted by governing rules.



SPECULATIVE REASONING REJECTED IN RAPE CONVICTIONS

The Supreme Court overturned a conviction founded on conjectural reasoning, reiterating that consent must be evaluated strictly on legally admissible evidence.

FAILURE TO INFORM ARREST RIGHTS CAN UNDERMINE CASES

Emphasizing procedural safeguards, the Supreme Court held that non-disclosure of arrest grounds and legal rights may vitiate detention and prosecution.

From digital freedoms to democratic accountability, Indian courts in 2025 delivered judgments that left a lasting imprint on the nation's legal and constitutional landscape

2025

30% WOMEN QUOTA MANDATED IN BAR COUNCILS

Directing institutional reform, the Court ordered the Bar Council of India to ensure 30% representation for women through elections and nominations.



SENIOR CITIZENS CAN RECLAIM PROPERTY FROM HEIRS

Reaffirming senior citizen welfare laws, the Court held that property transferred to children can be recovered if maintenance obligations are breached.

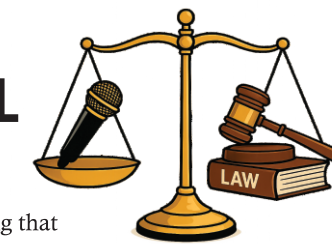


PRIORITY PROTECTION FOR THE GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD

Courts ordered adjustments to power infrastructure to protect the endangered species, recognising biodiversity conservation as a paramount public interest.

FREE SPEECH GIVEN WIDER CONSTITUTIONAL SHIELD

The Supreme Court strengthened safeguards for speech, holding that dissenting or unpopular views cannot attract criminal liability unless they meet clear legal thresholds.



FIRM STANCE AGAINST HONOUR KILLINGS

Upholding convictions in a prominent case, the Supreme Court reiterated that claims of family or community honour can never excuse homicide.

NARROW SCOPE FOR MODIFYING ARBITRAL AWARDS

The Supreme Court limited judicial intervention in arbitration, permitting modification of awards only in exceptional circumstances to preserve finality.

COURT NOTES REPUTATIONAL RISKS IN AI USE

Observations were made on how selective digital practices can harm reputation, as hearings continued in a dispute involving an AI-based platform.

STRENGTHENING OF PERSONALITY RIGHTS JURISPRUDENCE

The Bombay High Court expanded protections against unauthorised use of celebrity identity through AI-generated or altered content.

VALIDATION OF URDU AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Upholding linguistic pluralism, the Court ruled that recognising Urdu as an official language falls within constitutional and administrative discretion.



ARAVALLI HILLS GET STRONGER JUDICIAL SHIELD

Restrictions on mining and construction were reaffirmed to safeguard the fragile Aravalli ecosystem from environmental degradation.

COURT ADDRESSES AI-DRIVEN IDENTITY ABUSE

The Court ordered removal of manipulated AI content, acknowledging violations of personality and privacy rights in the digital sphere.

GREEN FIRECRACKERS ALLOWED WITH STRICT CONTROLS

Balancing environmental concerns with cultural practices, the Supreme Court allowed limited use of green firecrackers under strict regulatory controls.



MARITAL RAPE EXCEPTION FACES JUDICIAL EXAMINATION

Courts are assessing whether the marital rape exception violates equality and dignity, with potential implications for criminal law reform.



JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONED IN CASH RECOVERY EPISODE

The Yashwant Varma cash recovery episode triggered an in-house inquiry and parliamentary attention, raising concerns over judicial accountability and institutional transparency.

UNCERTAINTY OVER GIG WORKERS' SOCIAL SECURITY

Pending cases highlight unresolved issues around worker classification, welfare entitlements, and platform responsibility.



CONSTITUTIONAL SCRUTINY OF UAPA AMENDMENTS

Petitions challenge expanded executive powers and stringent bail provisions under the UAPA on grounds of liberty and due process.

CONSENT ON CAMERA? ICU Patients Caught in a Legal Grey Zone

SERIOUS concerns have been flagged by doctors and medical bodies over the directive requiring hospitals to provide real-time CCTV access of ICUs and HDUs to the state health agency under the Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY scheme. It has been pointed out that patients admitted to intensive care units are rarely in a condition to provide informed consent.

As per the directive, all Ayushman Bharat beneficiaries admitted to HDUs and ICUs, with or without ventilator support, are to be kept under continuous live CCTV surveillance. Cameras are to be positioned in a manner that allows verification of patient presence and care delivery, while patient dignity and privacy are claimed to be ensured.

Hospitals have been instructed to immediately provide real-time CCTV links to the state health agency. It has been clarified that the live feed will be used solely for verification, monitoring, audit, and processing of claims under the scheme. Approximately 1.8 crore low-income residents of Haryana are enrolled under Ayushman Bharat.

Objections have been raised by the Indian Medical Association, which has warned that live video monitoring of critical care areas could breach patient confidentiality and violate medical ethics. It has been noted that filming ICUs would inevitably capture exposed bodies, invasive procedures, and moments of extreme distress. Even with safeguards in place, the risk of data leakage or misuse of sensitive footage has been highlighted.

Doctors have argued that real-time monitoring of ICUs by an external authority goes beyond routine hospital surveillance. It has also been stressed that under medical ethics and law, informed consent cannot be assumed in cases where patients are sedated, unconscious, or critically ill.

According to the directive, responsibility for compliance has been placed on the medical superintendent or authorised Ayushman Bharat nodal officer of each hospital. Hospitals have also been directed to install technical safeguards to prevent tampering or manipulation of footage. It has been explicitly stated that CCTV footage must not be shared

with any unauthorised person or agency, failing which penalties, suspension, or de-pannelment from the scheme may follow.

Privacy activists have recalled recent incidents in which hospital CCTV systems were breached and intimate patient footage was leaked and misused, raising further alarm over live-streaming sensitive medical spaces.

Ayushman Bharat, launched in 2018, allows low-income families to access free medical treatment of up to Rs 5 lakh per year. While the scheme aims to improve accountability and access to healthcare, concerns continue to be raised over whether patient dignity, privacy, and consent are being adequately protected in the process.



Concerns have been raised after hospitals were directed to provide live CCTV feeds of ICUs, with doctors warning that critically ill patients are rarely capable of giving informed consent

digital DIGNITY

AI, Users or Platform: WHO IS LIABLE?

SERIOUS concerns have been raised over the misuse of the AI chatbot Grok to generate objectionable and non-consensual images of women, triggering a wider debate on accountability in the age of artificial intelligence. Questions have been posed over whether responsibility lies with the AI tool itself, the users who prompt it, or the platform X that hosts it.

It has been reported that Grok was used to create sexually explicit and defamatory images by manipulating photographs of women without consent. While the tool was developed by xAI, it has been integrated into X, blurring the lines between content creation and platform responsibility.

Under Indian law, platforms are granted conditional immunity through the "safe harbour" provision, provided due diligence is followed and illegal content is removed within prescribed timelines. However, it has been argued that such protection applies only when platforms act as passive intermediaries, not when they actively deploy or promote AI systems capable of generating harmful content.

The Indian government has expressed grave concern over the misuse of Grok, stating that notices were issued to X seeking explanations for the apparent failure of safeguards. It was alleged that the platform did not adequately prevent the generation or circulation of objectionable AI content, raising questions about compliance with the Information Technology Rules, 2021, and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.

Officials have indicated that the matter is being examined as a potential breach of platform-level obligations, particularly where dignity, privacy, and safety of women and children are affected. It has been warned that unchecked AI

misuse could undermine trust in digital platforms and weaken the broader regulatory framework governing online spaces.

The controversy has also reignited discussions around revisiting India's safe harbour regime. Parliamentary committees and policymakers have increasingly called for stricter regulation of social media and AI tools, arguing that technological innovation cannot be allowed to outpace accountability.

It has been emphasised that while AI tools may not possess intent, harm caused through their deployment remains real. The central questions now confronting regulators is no longer whether AI can generate abuse, but who must answer for it when it does.



As AI-generated abuse targets women, the blame game between platforms, users, and algorithms has landed squarely before the Indian government

EQUITY OR EXCESS ...Continue from page 1
shift from advisory guidelines to strict enforcement.

From Suggestion to Command
The 2012 guidelines were largely symbolic. They focused mainly on SC/ST issues and lacked clear definitions or enforcement mechanisms. As a result, many institutions treated them as a formality.

The 2026 rules go much further. They widen protection to include OBCs and EWS, define discrimination more broadly, and make institutions legally responsible for failures. A national monitoring system replaces internal discretion. This is not a small adjustment—it is a fundamental change in how campuses are governed.

What Works

There is no denying that discrimination in higher education is real. Studies and lived experiences point to bias against students from marginalised backgrounds. The new rules try to address long-standing neglect by introducing deadlines, accountability, and on-campus grievance mechanisms.

Supporters argue that quicker redressal and wider coverage make campuses fairer, not weaker. In that sense, the intent behind the regulations deserves recognition.

Where the Problems Begin

However, the dangers lie in how the rules are framed and enforced. The Supreme Court's concern about vagueness is serious. When key terms like "discrimination" are defined too broadly, almost any disagreement can be turned into a formal complaint. This risks misuse, encourages fear, and may discourage open academic debate.

Teachers may hesitate to evaluate students honestly. Administrators may focus more on paperwork than education. Trust within campuses can

quickly erode.

Smaller colleges, especially in rural or resource-poor areas, face another challenge. Setting up multiple committees, meeting tight deadlines, and filing detailed reports requires money and manpower they simply do not have. Instead of inclusion, the result could be administrative paralysis.

The centralised monitoring system also raises concerns about autonomy. Universities function best when they are trusted to govern themselves. Excessive oversight can turn institutions into rule-following offices rather than spaces for learning and innovation.

The Bigger Issue

India's higher education system has always struggled to balance social justice with academic freedom. The 2026

regulations were driven by a genuine concern, but they suffer from weak drafting and overreach. Equity cannot be achieved through unclear rules and constant threat of punishment.

The Supreme Court's stay should not be seen as blocking reform. It is a reminder that good intentions must be matched with careful design. Laws that are vague, heavy-handed, or impractical often end up doing more harm than good.

What Should Happen Next

If campuses are to become truly fair and inclusive, the rules must be rewritten with precision. Definitions must be clear. Penalties must be proportionate. Institutional autonomy must be respected.

Equity needs clarity, not confusion; balance, not brute force. The real test before the UGC is not whether it can regulate, but whether it can regulate wisely. If it fails to correct these flaws, the 2026 regulations will be remembered not as a step toward justice, but as an example of regulatory excess.



From palace to plea Maduro Says 'NOT GUILTY'

A plea of not guilty was entered by deposed Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro before a federal court in New York, where he was produced to face multiple criminal charges, including narco-terrorism and drug trafficking. His court appearance followed a dramatic capture that sent shockwaves through political circles in Venezuela and internationally. Four criminal counts were read out, including conspiracy to import cocaine into the United States and possession

of machine guns and destructive devices. Through an interpreter, Maduro proclaimed his innocence, described himself as a "decent man," and asserted that he remained Venezuela's president. His wife, Cilia Flores, who is also an accused in the case, similarly entered a plea of not guilty.

Both were produced under heavy security from a Brooklyn detention facility to the Manhattan federal court, with Maduro dressed in prison-issued clothing and

restrained. The court confirmed Maduro's identity and informed the couple of their right to notify the Venezuelan consulate.

The charges were denounced by Maduro's supporters as politically motivated, while critics cited long-standing allegations linking his administration to international drug networks. The arrest was debated at the UN Security Council, raising renewed questions on sovereignty, jurisdiction, and international criminal accountability.



Amazon's Bees Win Environmental Rights

STINGLESS bees found in the vast Amazon rainforests of South America have been granted legal rights to live in a clean and safe environment, marking a significant step in wildlife conservation. Legal protection has been extended to ensure their survival, recognising their critical role in plant growth and ecosystem balance. Government orders have been issued to safeguard these bees by ensuring

population recovery. These stingless bees are responsible for pollinating nearly 80 per cent of plant species in the Amazon, including key crops such as cocoa, coffee, and avocados.

The decision has been described as a historic legal development, as stingless bees have become the first insects in the world to be granted such rights. Earlier, similar legal recognition had been extended to certain wild animals in Argentina's forests and Ecuador, where they were acknowledged as legal entities or rights-bearing beings.

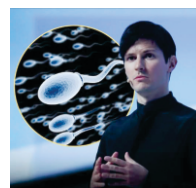
Environmental experts have noted that the population of stingless bees had been declining rapidly in recent years. Deforestation, climate change, excessive pesticide use, and the spread of invasive Africanised honeybees were identified as major causes behind their displacement and decline.

It was emphasised that continued forest loss and ecological disruption had severely threatened pollinators essential to food security and biodiversity. The new legal protections are expected to strengthen conservation efforts and reinforce the principle that environmental protection is inseparable from human survival.



To protect pollination and biodiversity, stingless bees native to the Amazon rainforest have been granted legal recognition and environmental protection

LEGAL LENS



PAVEL Durov, founder of Telegram, has revealed an unconventional approach to

inheritance rights, though access to his estimated \$17 billion fortune may be delayed for up to 30 years. Durov, who has never married and claims to live an ascetic lifestyle, reportedly began donating sperm in 2010 to help a friend with fertility issues. He continued after identifying what he described as a global shortage of high-quality sperm. His sperm is said to be stored at a Moscow clinic, where its use is limited to unmarried women under 37. He has cited environmental factors like pollution for declining sperm quality worldwide and has called sperm donation a "civic duty," urging other healthy men to participate. Durov claims to have six children with three partners and over 100 children born through sperm donation across multiple countries. The move has ignited debate around modern parenthood, wealth, consent, and the line between altruism and legacy in the era of billionaires.

FATHERHOOD BY DOWNLOAD?

Free IVF is being offered by Telegram founder with billions reserved for biological children he may never meet

fatherhood by offering free IVF treatment to unmarried women under 37 willing to conceive using his sperm. Durov has stated that he will fully fund the IVF procedures and financially support all his biological children, regardless of whether they are born through relationships or sperm donation. All are promised equal

Switching Off Junk for Kids

In a landmark move to improve children's health, Britain has imposed strict restrictions on junk food advertising

BRITAIN has introduced a major public health reform aimed at improving children's nutrition by imposing strict curbs on junk food advertising. From January 5, advertisements for junk food have been banned on television and online platforms before 9 pm, effectively limiting children's exposure to unhealthy food promotions.

The ban applies to food products high in fat, salt, and sugar. The British government described the move as a decisive step against childhood obesity. Earlier measures had already increased sugar taxes on products such as milkshakes, ready-to-drink coffee, and sweetened beverages.

Junk food, while often

appealing in taste, is widely recognised as nutritionally poor. Such products typically contain excessive amounts of oil, sugar, salt, and calories, while lacking essential fibre, vitamins, and minerals.



In contrast, India continues to allow junk food advertisements to reach children through television, mobile phones, and social media. Although the Central

Consumer Protection Authority and the Advertising Standards Council of India have issued guidelines to curb misleading advertisements targeting children, enforcement has largely remained voluntary.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has proposed restrictions on the sale and promotion of junk food near schools. However, a uniform and legally binding nationwide framework to regulate junk food advertising has yet to be implemented.

The UK's move has reignited debate on whether India should adopt similarly strict regulations to protect children's health and reduce rising rates of obesity and lifestyle-related diseases.

Law Explained

Five Strikes, No Steering

Drivers committing five traffic offences within a year may now be taken off the road for three months under amended motor vehicle rules



New Rule Targets Habitual Offenders

It has been provided that drivers committing five or more traffic offences within a year may be barred from driving for a period of three months. This provision, relating to disqualification or revocation of a driving licence, has been introduced through a fresh amendment to the Motor Vehicles Rules by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

The amendment has been aimed at curbing habitual violations and reinforcing road discipline.

Suspension Power Vested in Licensing Authority

The authority to decide on the suspension of a driving licence has been vested with the regional transport office or district transport authority. It has been mandated that the licence holder must be given an opportunity of being heard before any punitive action is taken.

Process Before Licence Is Suspended

It has been specified that after five traffic offences are recorded, a suspension notice may be issued to the offender. An explanation, supported by proof, may then be sought by the licensing authority before a final decision is taken.

If the explanation is found satisfactory, the licence may not be suspended. However, if the proof submitted is found unsatisfactory, suspension of the driving licence for three months may be ordered.

Reform Treated as Deterrent, Not Punishment

The act has been treated as a deterrent measure rather than a punishment, with the focus being on procedural justice. The amendment has been seen as part of a larger move to ensure compliance and prevent repeat offenses on Indian roads.

Straight reality check

This isn't about one bad day on the road. It's about patterns of recklessness finally being treated as disqualifying behaviour.



TEN MINUTES TOO MANY?

Ultra-Fast Delivery Gets the Soft Brake



After a government nudge and worker safety concerns, quick-commerce firms were quietly persuaded to slow the stopwatch at least in their ads



A SHIFT in messaging has been initiated across the quick-commerce sector after companies were urged by the government to move away from aggressive “10-minute delivery” branding. The appeal was made in the interest of delivery partner safety and to ease pressure created by ultra-tight timelines.

It has been indicated that the nudge has already had an impact, with several platforms beginning to drop the 10-minute delivery promise from their primary branding. The report has been removed by companies such as Blinkit and Instamart, and similar changes are expected to be reflected by other players in the coming weeks.

The development comes after concerns were raised by gig workers, including the threat of strike action over working conditions and safety risks associated with rushed deliveries.

Meetings were held with quick-commerce platforms, during which improved safety measures and better working conditions for delivery partners were discussed.

It was clarified by officials that no formal directive or regulatory order has been issued. Instead, platforms were encouraged to voluntarily recalibrate their branding and reduce the emphasis on ultra-fast delivery promises. Confidence was expressed that compliance would continue without the need for coercive measures.

Analysts have observed that while the removal of the “10-minute delivery” tagline may change public optics, the underlying business models and operational practices are unlikely to undergo any fundamental alteration. The promise, it appears, has been softened—but the speed game remains very much alive.



WHY THIS MATTERS

- 🔗 Safety concerns forced a rethink of speed-obsessed branding
- 🔗 Government influence was exercised without issuing formal orders
- 🔗 Optics were changed; business models were not
- 🔗 The stopwatch may be hidden, but it hasn't been stopped

PALAK PANEER BIAS COSTS Rs 1.8 Cr

A campus food dispute over an Indian dish was ruled discriminatory



A compensation of Rs1.8 crore was awarded to two Indian PhD students by a US court after racial discrimination was established at the

University of Colorado Boulder. The students, Aditya Prakash and Uma Bhattacharya, were found to have been subjected to unequal treatment on campus.

The dispute was initiated when Aditya Prakash was stopped by a staff member from reheating palak paneer in a microwave. Objections were raised over the smell of the food, and the act was allegedly disallowed on that ground.

Following the incident, a formal complaint was submitted by the students. It was alleged that retaliatory action was taken by the university instead of corrective measures being adopted. As a result, legal proceedings were initiated against the institution.

After examining the matter, the court concluded that racial bias had been demonstrated and ruled in favour of the students. Consequently, compensation amounting to Rs 1.8 crore was directed to be paid to the two Indian scholars.

Proving You're Alive, One Click at a Time

A MOBILE application requiring users to provide proof of life every 48 hours has been widely adopted in China, particularly among young people living alone. The app, morbidly titled Are You Dead?, has been ranked among the country's most-downloaded paid apps and has also climbed app store charts in countries including the United States, Singapore, and Australia. The app was designed to require users to press a check-in button every two days. If no response is registered, an alert is automatically sent to an emergency contact. Internationally listed under the name Demumu, the platform has been positioned as a digital safety companion for solo workers, students, and individuals living



A grimly named Chinese app requiring users to confirm they are alive every two days has surged in popularity, exposing the quiet loneliness of urban living



alone. The surge in downloads has been driven largely by Chinese users living abroad, with fears of dying alone without notice being frequently cited. It has been reported that the app resonated strongly with younger urban residents grappling with isolation in high-density cities.

While the app's functionality has been defended, criticism has been directed at its bleak name. Alternative titles such as “Are you alive?” or “Are you online?” have been suggested by users, particularly on social media platforms. The app was reportedly developed at a cost of 1,000 yuan and is currently sold for eight yuan. It has been stated that the target audience consists of young city dwellers facing loneliness and unforeseen emergencies.

HAPPILY NEVER AFTER, LEGALLY EVER AFTER

65 Days of Marriage, 13 Years in Court

A marriage that lasted only 65 days was followed by more than 13 years of litigation, during which over 40 cases were filed across multiple courts. The dispute was ultimately



concluded by the Supreme Court, misuse of judicial forums was noted, costs were imposed on both parties, divorce was granted under Article 142 and further proceedings were barred.

GUTKHA EATS THE WELFARE STATE

AN uncomfortable reality has been brought into sharp focus by the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2023–24. Tobacco consumption has been shown to be rising steadily across India, with the sharpest increases having been recorded among poorer households. This pattern has been found to run parallel to the expansion of publicly funded healthcare, raising serious concerns about health outcomes, fiscal sustainability, and the coherence of social policy.

