

Criminal Law Judgments

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Title and Case details	Case Brief
Supreme Court: Collective failure of criminal justice system led to 22-Year wrongful incarceration Arjun Jani @ Tuntun Vs. State of Orissa MANU/SC/0792/2026; 2026 INSC 802	The Supreme Court has overturned the life imprisonment of a man convicted in the 2004 triple murder case and acquitted him after finding that he had been wrongfully incarcerated for 22 years. The Court expressed serious concern over the collective failure of the criminal justice system, observing that the trial court failed to properly evaluate the evidence while the High Court remained a mute spectator. It held that the conviction rested on unreliable evidence, while the accused was subjected to third-degree torture in custody to extract a confession based solely on suspicion. Directing his rehabilitation, the Court remarked that these institutional lapses had erased 22 years of a person's life without reliable evidence
Supreme Court: Explains four-step test to quash criminal cases using defence material Rahul Vs. State Of Uttar Pradesh and Another MANU/SC/0842/2026; 2026 INSC 825	The Supreme Court has observed that criminal proceedings may be quashed at the pre-trial stage in exceptional cases based on unimpeachable defence material or official records showing that continuing the prosecution would amount to an abuse of the court's process. The Court laid down a four-step test: first, the defence material must be reliable and of sterling or impeccable quality; second, it must effectively disprove or rule out the allegations against the accused; third, the material must remain uncontroverted by the prosecution or complainant; and fourth, allowing the trial to continue despite such material must amount to an abuse of the process of court and serve no purpose in the interests of justice.

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Supreme Court: Acquits man in minor rape case, flags HC's medical evidence lapses Ram Singh Vs. The State Of Himachal Pradesh MANU/SC/0839/2026; 2026 INSC 830	The Supreme Court has restored Ram Singh's acquittal in the case involving allegations of rape of a five-year-old girl, setting aside the Himachal Pradesh High Court's contrary judgment after finding that it had failed to properly consider the medical and forensic evidence on record.
Supreme Court: Caste abuse in private space without public presence is not SC/ST Act offence Ramkrishna Chauhan Vs. State of U.P. & Anr. MANU/SC/0920/2026; 2026 INSC 895	The Supreme Court has quashed proceedings against a school manager under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, holding that alleged caste-based abuses made inside a closed room, inaccessible to the public, did not meet the requirement of being uttered "within public view."
Supreme Court: UP Gangsters Act creates no offence, perpetuates violence against citizens Shiv Pratap Singh Alias Chinu Vs. State of U.P & Ors. MANU/SC/0924/2026; 2026 INSC 894	The Supreme Court of India addressed the validity of proceedings under the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act, 1986, involving Shiv Pratap Singh and the State of U.P. The court found that the Act did not create a specific offence, thus violating the principle of "nulla poena sine lege" (no punishment without law). The court quashed the charges against the appellants, emphasizing that the Act's reliance on a Gang Chart for determining criminal status was inadequate and unconstitutional. The appeals were allowed, and the appellants were ordered to be released if not required in other cases.

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Supreme Court: Police can register FIR despite Magistrate rejecting S.156(3) CrPC application Pramod Kumar Shukla Vs. State Of Uttar Pradesh And Others MANU/SC/0917/2026; 2026 INSC 887	The Supreme Court has observed that “an order passed under Section 156(3) of the Cr.PC is confined to directing, or declining to direct, the exercise of the statutory power of investigation under Chapter XII of the Code. Such an order neither entails an adjudication on the merits of the allegations nor determines any right or liability of the proposed accused. Applying the same principle, the rejection of an application under Section 156(3) of the Cr.PC, being an order rendered at the threshold without any adjudication on the merits after trial, cannot be accorded such finality as would attract the doctrine of res judicata so as to bar the subsequent registration of an FIR or the continuation of criminal proceedings founded upon the same or substantially similar allegations.”
Supreme Court: Bribe recovery alone cannot prove guilt without proof of demand under PC Act, 1988 Rafikmiya Ahmedmiya Malek Vs. State of Gujarat MANU/SC/0917/2026; 2026 INSC 890	The Supreme Court has acquitted a former Talati-cum-Mantri and Gram Panchayat Peon in a corruption case under PC Act, 1988 holding that the prosecution failed to prove the initial bribe demand beyond reasonable doubt. Mere recovery of currency from a co-accused was insufficient for conviction
Supreme Court rejects plea to abolish hanging, says center can explore alternative methods Rishi Malhotra & Anr. Vs. Union of India MANU/SC/0903/2026; 2026 INSC 873	The Supreme Court of India addressed the constitutional validity of Section 354(5) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which prescribes hanging as the sole method of execution, challenged by Rishi Malhotra against the Union of India. The Court upheld the existing legal framework, citing the precedent set in Deena v. Union of India (MANU/SC/0094/1983) which found hanging constitutional when properly administered. The Court found no compelling new evidence to reconsider this decision, dismissing the petition but leaving room for future review should new scientific or empirical evidence arise.

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Supreme Court: Sentences with life imprisonment must run concurrently, not consecutively Gopi @ Sahaya Puruna Vs. The State MANU/SC/0907/2026; 2026 INSC 880	The Supreme Court, while modifying a Madras High Court order, reiterated that "in cases where the convict is awarded multiple sentences for multiple offences and one of the sentences awarded is life imprisonment, the sentences must only run concurrently and not consecutively."
Supreme Court: Speedy trial is victim's right; Gangsters Act case cannot stall other trials Keshvendra Singh Vs. Shankar Singh and Anr. MANU/SC/0894/2026; 2026 INSC 866	The Supreme Court has observed that the right to a speedy trial is not only that of the accused but also a valuable right of the victim. It set aside the Allahabad High Court's order staying in a murder trial merely because proceedings under the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters And Anti-social Activities (prevention) Act, 1986 were pending.
Delhi High Court sets aside cases over alleged lead contamination in maggi noodles Dharmendra Hansraj Kotak & Ors. Vs. State Of Delhi & Anr. MANU/DE/5528/2026; 2026:DHC:6343	The High Court of Delhi, while addressing petitions filed against State of Delhi and others, seeking to quash criminal complaints related to MAGGI Noodles under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 stated that, core issue was whether the prosecution based on Food Analyst reports, which declared the noodles unsafe due to excess lead, should continue given subsequent judicial findings. The court noted that the Bombay High Court and the Supreme Court had invalidated the original reports and directed fresh testing, which found the product safe. Citing these developments and similar judgments from other High Courts, the Delhi High Court concluded that continuing the prosecution would be an abuse of process and quashed the complaints and related proceedings.

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Delhi High Court clarifies applicability of prior sanction under amended Prevention of Corruption Act Court On Its Own Motion Vs. State MANU/DE/5529/2026; 2026:DHC:6342-DB	The Delhi High Court has observed that the 2018 amendment to Section 19 of the Prevention of Corruption Act 1988 applies retrospectively only to the extent of extending the benefit of prior sanction to offences committed before the amendment, provided the court had not taken cognizance before 26 July 2018. The Court clarified that where cognizance had already been taken before the amendment came into force, there is no requirement to obtain fresh sanction, and such proceedings cannot be reopened.
Bombay High Court: ‘Perfect Victim’ is a myth; women respond differently to rape trauma The State of Goa Vs. Tarunjit Tejpal MANU/MH/5514/2026; 2026:BHC-GOA:1562 DB	The Bombay High Court, while convicting accused in the 2013 rape case, rejected the notion that victims must behave in a particular way to be credible. The Court observed that "The ‘perfect victim’ concept, more formally known as an ‘ideal victim’, describes an unspoken cultural archetype where a person is fully believed, sympathized with and granted legitimacy only if they exhibit absolute vulnerability, complete innocence and total passivity. When a survivor does not fit in this mold, such as delaying a report, knowing the attacker or being under the influence of alcohol, their trauma is normally devalued. Expecting a survivor to be constantly miserable, meek, or visibly broken, the Trial Court has ignored the reality of human coping mechanisms. However, these concepts of a perfect victim are a myth. Credibility must be evaluated on facts, not on whether a survivor fits a narrow cultural mold."
Bombay High Court: Minor’s inability to describe sexual act no ground to reject her testimony The State of Maharashtra vs. Anil Shridhar Gaikwad MANU/MH/5516/2026; 2026:BHC-AUG:34854-DB	The Bombay High Court has observed that a minor rape victim’s testimony cannot be rejected merely because she could not properly describe the sexual act. It reversed the trial court’s acquittal of the accused and convicted him in the 2012 case involving the six-year-old victim.

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Delhi HC: Affirms Teacher's POCSO Conviction, Urges Schools to Encourage Children to Speak Up Netram Kumar Vs. The State of NCT of Delhi MANU/DE/5750/2026; 2026:DHC:6553	The High Court of Delhi addressed the appeal against conviction of accused for committing sexual offenses under Sections 354 and 354A of the IPC and Section 10 of the POCSO Act, based on allegations by a minor student. The court upheld the trial court's decision, finding the prosecutrix's testimony credible and corroborated by other evidence, despite minor discrepancies. The court dismissed the appeal, affirming the five-year sentence and fine, and emphasized the importance of trust in the teacher-student relationship. The judgment referenced the statutory presumption under Section 29 of the POCSO Act and the Supreme Court's stance on the reliability of a prosecutrix's testimony.
Delhi High Court: UAPA default bail triggered after 180 Days, not 90 under BNSS Jasir Bilal Wani @ Danish Vs. National Investigation Agency MANU/DE/5936/2026; 2026:DHC:6814-DB	The Delhi High Court has observed that the default bail period under the UAPA remains 180 days, not 90 days, even after the BNSS came into force. Default bail is granted when the investigating agency fails to file a chargesheet within the prescribed period.
Delhi High Court: False marriage promise invalidates consent only if it taints consent Vimal Vs. State NCT Of Delhi (MANU/DE/5933/2026; 2026:DHC:6823)	The Delhi High Court observed that a false promise of marriage makes consensual sex an offence only when it induced the sexual relationship. The Court clarified that merely consensual sexual relations between adults do not constitute the offence unless the consent was “tainted” by such an assurance.

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Delhi High Court: POCSO allows child witness cross-examination but bars aggressive questioning Shankar Singh Vs. State of NCT of Delhi MANU/DE/5890/2026; 2026:DHC:6705	The Delhi High Court while upholding trial court's judgment of conviction and sentence, referencing the case of Moidu K. vs. State of Kerala (MANU/KE/0397/2009) regarding procedural compliance of accused has clarified that POCSO does not prohibit cross-examination of child witnesses, but requires safeguards against aggressive questioning and character assassination, ensuring the child's dignity is protected throughout the trial.
Allahabad High Court: Further investigation permissible even after final report is accepted Anurag Dubey @ Dabban Vs. State of U.P. and Another MANU/UP/1992/2026; 2026:AHC:166252	The Allahabad High Court held that acceptance of a final report does not bar further investigation under Section 173(8) CrPC. It also clarified that an accused has no right to be heard during investigation or challenge how police conduct further investigation.
Allahabad HC: Trial courts cannot examine witnesses to generate fresh evidence before cognizance Randhir & Ors. Vs. State of U.P. and another MANU/UP/1858/2026; Criminal Appeal No. 237 of 2026	The Allahabad High Court has observed that trial courts cannot examine witnesses to generate fresh evidence before taking cognizance under Section 190 CrPC. It said courts must decide on the material already on record, as collecting additional evidence is the investigating agency's role.