

DAILY PT POINTERS

24 September, 2024



The Hindu-Governance(GSII)-Page 1

Watching 'child sex abuse' material is an offence: SC

Court advocates using the term 'Child Sexual Exploitative and Abuse Material' instead of 'child pornography' to avoid trivialisation of the crime, calls for suitable amendment to POCSO Act

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday held that viewing in private, downloading, storing, possessing, distributing or displaying pornographic acts involving children attract criminal liability under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the Information Technology Act.

The verdict was based on an appeal filed by Just Right for Children Alliance, a non-governmental organisation, against a Madras High Court decision that mere possession or storage of any pornographic material was not an offence under the Act. The High Court had concluded that watching or down-

Any visual depiction of a sexually explicit act which any ordinary person of a prudent mind would reasonably believe to *prima facie* depict a child or appear to involve a child, would be deemed as 'child pornography' for the purposes of the POCSO

SUPREME COURT



loading pornographic acts involving children in private domains was not a crime.

A three-judge Bench, headed by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, said the sexual act was only the beginning of a child's victimisation. "It continues through its recording, and perpetuates as photographs and videos that float through cyberspace, freely accessible to anyone

who has the ability to surf the Internet... The knowledge that their abuse is being watched by countless strangers, sometimes years after the actual event, exacerbates the psychological wounds on top of the trauma that was already induced by the act in the first place. This perpetuating violation deprives the victim of any remaining hope or chance to heal, recover from the abuse and find

closure," Justice J.B. Pardiwala, who authored the 200-page judgment termed as groundbreaking by the Chief Justice, observed.

The Supreme Court urged Parliament to "seriously consider" amending the POCSO Act to substitute the term "child pornography" with "Child Sexual Exploitative and Abuse Material" or CSEAM.

The court said the government must promulgate an ordinance in the meantime to bring about the suggested amendment. It directed courts across the country to replace 'child pornography' with CSEAM in their judgments and orders.

CONTINUED ON

» PAGE 12

- The Supreme Court affirmed that actions such as viewing, downloading, storing, possessing, distributing, or displaying child pornography are criminal offenses under the POCSO Act and the Information Technology Act.
- The term "child pornography" was deemed a misnomer that fails to convey the reality of the abuse involved, as it implies consensual acts rather than exploitation.
- The Supreme Court criticized the High Court for overlooking Section 15 of the POCSO Act, which criminalizes the possession of child pornography.
- Courts nationwide were directed to use the term "Child Sexual Exploitative and Abuse Material" (CSEAM) in their judgments and orders instead of child pornography.
- The ruling highlighted Section 67B of the IT Act, which penalizes various actions related to obscene materials, including browsing and possession.

The Hindu –Governance(GSII)-Page 4

Odisha all set to join Ayushman Bharat health coverage scheme

Bindu Shajan
Perappadan
NEW DELHI

Odisha is all set to join the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri - Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY), which aims to provide health cover of ₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation. Confirming this, a senior Health Ministry official on Monday said

“Odisha has not yet haven’t posted their audit report from 2019-2020 onwards, are also being engaged with. Bihar has joined recently, and we are seeing many enrolments from the State,” said a Health Ministry official on Monday.

He added that while 18 States have converged their State-specific schemes with AB PM-JAY, and Uttar Pradesh, Harya-

na, and West Bengal, including 12,696 private ones, have been empanelled under the scheme. It is being implemented in 33 States and Union Territories currently excluding Delhi, Odisha, and West Bengal.

“Forty-nine percent of the Ayushman cards are issued to women and out of 7.79 crore hospital admissions, about 3.61 crore are utilised by women. Under the public-private utilisa-

- Odisha is all set to join the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri - Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY), which aims to provide health cover of ₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation. Confirming this, a senior Health Ministry official on Monday said “some technical issues are being ironed out with the State” before its implementation.
- “Odisha is running its own health scheme, which will now run alongside this Central scheme
- as on September 1, a total of 29,648 hospitals, including 12,696 private ones, have been empanelled under the scheme. It is being implemented in 33 States and Union Territories currently excluding Delhi, Odisha, and West Bengal.

The Hindu-Health(GSII)-Page 6

Kerala reports case of Clade 1b Mpox strain

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

India has reported its first case of the Clade 1b strain of Mpox which, according to Health Ministry sources, has been confirmed in a 38-year-old man who landed in Kerala last week from the United Arab Emirates.

The man was admitted to the Government Medical College Hospital in Mappuram district of the State last week after he de-

veloped symptoms of the disease.

The WHO declared Mpox a global public health emergency again in August this year due to the spread of a new and deadlier strain of the virus, Clade 1b. The earlier case of Mpox that emerged in Delhi was of a 26-year-old resident of Haryana's Hisar district who had tested positive for the previous West African Clade 2 strain earlier this month.

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- The monkeypox virus was discovered in Denmark (1958) in monkeys kept for research and the first reported human case of mpox was a nine-month-old boy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, 1970)

The Hindu-Art and Culture(GSI)-Page 6

A collective for young artists to learn nuances of different Koodiyattom styles

Dhinesh Kallungal
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Cholliyattom, a collective of young Koodiyattom artists in Kerala, which was launched on a modest note during the COVID-19 pandemic, has now evolved into a platform where artistes following different styles come together to preserve the art form and also to impart knowledge about techniques followed by different Koodiyattom schools in the State.

The collective recently conducted the second edition of Natya Yauvanam-2024, a Koodiyattom festival, at Ammannur Gurukulam in Irinjalakuda in association with Dr. K.N .Pisharody Smaraka Katha-



A scene from Natya Yauvanam-2024. SPECIAL ARRANGMENT

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Ammannur Madhav Chakkar, president of the collective, says *Cholliyattom* is an attempt to bring younger generation of artists trained in different styles on a common platform so as to give them a hands-on experience on different

art form.

It is also an attempt to ensure that various Koodiyattom traditions are passed on to future generations, he says.

There are different styles or traditions in Koodiyattom, chiefly Kalamandalam or Painkulam style,

ni Gurukulam style. The audience may find it difficult to grasp the art form if not familiar with the art's intricacies, including its vocabulary, says Nepathya Sreehari Chakkar, an artist and member of *Cholliyattom*. Though there is no big difference in costumes, there are slight changes in sign languages and deviations in acting styles in some Koodiyattom traditions, he says.

The art form was earlier confined to the temple precincts in Kerala. As part of an outreach programme among the younger generation of Koodiyattom artistes, the collective helps artists from different social backgrounds to come together and strive for a com-

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- Koodiyattom, a pan-Indian Sanskrit theatre tradition practiced for over two thousand years, received worldwide attention in 2001 when UNESCO announced it a 'masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage of humanity'. However, the art form is yet to evolve as a traditional theatre like Kathakali that attracts the masses in Kerala.

The Hindu-Governance(GSII)-Page12

Centre, State set to review scope of AFSPA in Manipur

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

As ethnic violence continues, the Centre and the Manipur government are set to review the scope of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act in the north-eastern State. The six-month extension of the AFSPA in Manipur comes to an end on September 30.

The Union government and the State have differing views on the inclusion of more areas under the AFSPA. While the “disturbed area” status continues in all hill districts, the Act was gradually withdrawn from

visions of the Act were withdrawn from the Imphal municipal area in 2004.

A senior Union government official told *The Hindu* that a huge increase in the number of armed men in the State was a cause of concern and the rising cases of extortion and abductions were also being taken into consideration.

While the presence of armed men or village volunteers is prevalent in both valley and hill districts, the absence of the AFSPA in the valley districts makes it difficult for the armed forces to oper-



Keeping watch: Security personnel conduct a search operation in the vulnerable areas of hill and valley districts in Manipur. ANI

what existed in the 1990s. Extortion and abductions are there, but we are also controlling the situation. The police are active and

been killed since ethnic violence between the tribal Kuki-Zo and the Meitei people erupted in the State on May 3, 2023. The valley

According to data from the Union Home Ministry, 136 security-related incidents and 57 abductions were reported in Manipur from January 1 to July 31 this year, while 205 “extremists” were arrested. The ethnic violence is said to have helped insurgent groups gain a foothold in the region. The groups, mostly operating from Myanmar, advocate secession of Manipur.

The Kuki-Zo militant groups are in a suspension of operations pact with the Home Ministry. Eight Meitei insurgent groups have been banned by the Minis-

based armed group, signed a peace agreement with the Home Ministry and the Manipur government.

The National Investigation Agency registered a *suo motu* case on July 19 last year to investigate transnational conspiracy by the Myanmar-based leadership of terror outfits to wage a war against the government by “exploiting the current ethnic unrest.”

On August 8, Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh told the Assembly that after May 2023, he was under pressure from Central agencies to impose the AFSPA in the valley areas

- As ethnic violence persists in Manipur, both the central and state governments are reviewing the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) ahead of its six-month extension expiring on September 30.
- While the Union government is concerned about the increase in armed groups and rising extortion and abduction cases, the Manipur government believes the situation has improved since the 1990s, highlighting recent police actions that led to 533 arrests in the past 16 months.
- The AFSPA gives unbridled power to the armed forces and the Central Armed Police Forces deployed in “disturbed areas” as specified under the Act to kill anyone acting in contravention of law, arrest and search any premises without a warrant and ensures protection from prosecution and legal suits without the Central government’s sanction. Both the State and Union government can issue notification regarding the AFSPA

The Hindu-Defence(GSIII)-Page14

Robotic mules 'join' Army; drones, high-altitude tents under evaluation

Dinakar Peri
LEH

The Army has procured and inducted 100 robotic mules in forward areas, while logistics drones are undergoing trials which will significantly streamline support and movement to forward areas, especially in high altitude. A new tent for high-altitude areas is under evaluation for deployment at temperatures up to minus-40 degrees Celsius.

All of these were on display last week at the Himtech symposium organised at Leh, specifically showcasing high-altitude technologies. "The Army has procured and has inducted 100 robotic mules under the fourth tranche of emergency procurements (EP)," a defence source said.

The fourth round of EPs was undertaken in the year to September 2023.



A robotic mule is a high-endurance, agile and durable all-weather ground robot for use in defence applications. DINAKAR PERI

Contracts up to ₹300 crore can be placed under EP, and deliveries have to be concluded within one year. Since the 2020 stand-off with China in Eastern Ladakh, the Army has been looking for a series of technological innovations especially for high altitudes for a range of functions.

The robotic mule is a high-endurance, agile and

durable all-weather ground robot for use in a broad range of unstructured urban and natural environments for defence applications.

"He is able to walk up to three years. He is able to counter all kinds of obstacles... He can go inside water and cross rivers... He has the ability to recognise objects around as there are electro-optics, infrared..."

Arjun Aggarwal, managing director and CEO of AeroArc, said while speaking at Himtech. The mule can climb stairs, steep hills and other hurdles and can operate in extreme temperatures, ranging from minus-40 to a hot 55 degrees Celsius and carry 15 kg of payload.

Extreme high-altitude clothing and habitat is a critical requirement for the Indian Army which is deployed in the world's highest battlefield of Siachen and also other super high-altitude locations. At Himtech, DTECH 360 Innovations announced the field launch of its Peak Pods, a high-altitude habitat (tent) designed for sub-zero temperature regions.

The product has been under evaluation at three high altitude locations: Leh (11,500 feet), Daulat Beg Oldie (16,700 feet) and Durbuk (12,500 feet).

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Indian Express-Environment(GSIII)-Page 12

Drought, deforestation, climate change: Why South America is burning

ALIND CHAUHAN
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 23

SOUTH AMERICA is witnessing its worst forest fire season in nearly two decades, breaking a previous record for the number of blazes seen in a year (till September 11).

Satellite data analysed by Brazil's space research agency INPE has spotted 346,112 fire hotspots so far this year in all 13 countries of South America, surpassing the previous record of 345,322 hotspots in 2007, Reuters reported.

**EXPLAINED
CLIMATE**

How bad is the situation?

Since the beginning of this year, fires have ravaged the Amazon rainforest, engulfing parts of Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, and other countries. Millions of acres of forest are currently burning across South America.

The worst hit is Brazil, the largest country in the continent and home to 60% of all

the currently burning fires in the region. Data from Mapbiomas, a Brazilian NGO, show that fires have burned more than 11 million hectares of land between January and August this year, an area roughly twice the size of Uttarakhand. Three of the six vast ecosystems – the Amazon, the Cerrado (the world's most biodiverse savanna), and the Pantanal wetlands – have been severely affected, according to a report by *Crist* magazine.

After Brazil, Bolivia witnessed the highest number of fires this month, according to INPE data. More than 3.8 million hectares of the country's

forests and grasslands have been damaged as of September 13. Bolivia is followed by Peru, Argentina, and Paraguay.

Smoke billowing from these wildfires has filled the skies over multiple countries, with toxic clouds spanning 10 million square kilometres – an area larger than the entire United States, according to a report by *Live Science*.

Natalia Gil, an atmospheric science expert and member of the Air Quality and Emissions Department at the Technological Laboratory of Uruguay, told *Live Science* that "there has been a progressive decline in air



A firefighter in front a wildfire in Brasilia, Brazil earlier this month. Reuters

quality in cities across southern Brazil, northern Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and northeastern Uruguay."

Residents in cities such as Montevideo, Uruguay's capital, experienced poor visibility for several days due to the dense smoke cloud and black rain – precipitation that turns dark because of the mixture of ash and soot, the report said. At least 11 provinces of Argentina reported something similar taking place.

Karla Longo, an air quality researcher at INPE, told Reuters that "exposure to the smoke will drive up the number of people seeking hospital treatment for respiratory issues and may cause thousands of premature deaths". Inhaling wildfire smoke contributes to an average of 12,000 early deaths a year in South America, according to a 2023 study.

Why is this happening?

Every year, South America witnesses a high number of blazes between August and October, which is the continent's wildfire season. During this time, farmers intention-

ally burn their lands to cultivate them and most often, fires escape into the forests. However, this year's season has been particularly bad due to several reasons.

For instance, the continent is currently experiencing one of its worst droughts on record with Brazil, Peru, and Bolivia being worst affected. In Brazil, about 59% of the country is facing drought conditions and Amazon basin rivers are flowing at historic lows, according to *Crist*. These extreme dry conditions fueled by the El Niño event (it ended earlier this year) have propelled fires to spread across the region.

High levels of deforestation, especially in the Amazon, have also played a role in exacerbating wildfires – clearing the land creates more opportunities for blazes to spread. "Evidence suggests that deforestation itself is responsible for regional changes in weather patterns that have resulted in larger and more severe droughts that make forests more susceptible to fire," according to a report by the World Resources Institute.

The crisis has been made worse by global warming. A recent study by World

Weather Attribution, an international group of scientists, showed that climate change is the main culprit behind the ongoing drought in South America. It said rising temperatures made the drought 30 times more likely, drove extreme high temperatures, and contributed to lower rainfall.

What happens next?

It remains unclear if the number of wildfires in South America will further rise this year. Typically, rainfall comes in the region during October but there is no certainty. Ane Alencar, director of science at the Amazon Environmental Research Institute, told *Crist*: "We don't know if rain is going to come."

Notably, the ongoing intense wildfires in the continent are not a surprise to climate scientists, who say this is exactly what climate models have been predicting for 20 years or more. Extreme weather events such as drought, wildfires, and floods are expected to get much worse in the following years as global temperatures continue to rise.

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Indian Express-Health(GSII)-Page12

Why dengue cases have surged this year

The 12.06 million cases reported globally in 2024 are more than twice the number recorded all of last year

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 23

AS CITIES across India report a surge in dengue cases, a record number of cases have been reported around the world this year with Brazil and other South American countries worst affected. Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) show that the number of dengue cases have been increasing year-on-year (see Graphic).

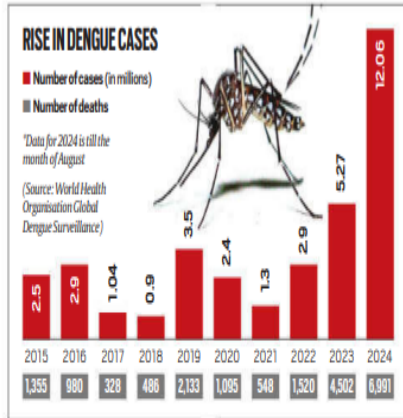
What is dengue?

Dengue is a viral infection which is transmitted by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. Most people with the infection report mild symptoms, but the disease is known to cause fever, severe headache, muscle and joint pains, nausea and vomiting, pain behind the eyes, and rashes. In severe cases, however, the infection can lead to internal bleeding, and if not managed properly, even death.

Over the past two decades, there has been a "tenfold increase in reported cases" an editorial by *The Lancet* said, adding that "even this figure is likely an underestimate". This makes dengue the "only infectious disease for which annual mortality is rising".

How many people have been infected this year?

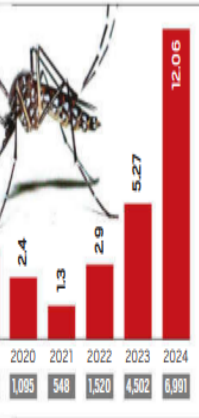
More than 12 million cases and 6,991 deaths have been recorded globally till August this year, according to data from the WHO's global dengue surveillance. This is more than double the 5.27 million cases recorded in all of last year, which itself was a record. Prior to last year, over the past decade,



dengue cases over the past two months. More than 32,000 cases and 32 deaths attributable to dengue were reported till June end, according to the latest available data from the National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme.

This number is likely to have shot up in the last two months. Union Health Secretary Apurva Chandra, in early August, had said that India had seen an almost 50% rise in the number of dengue cases reported this year, as compared to the same period in 2023.

Notably, India is also witnessing an increase in the geography of the infection. The disease spread from only eight states and Union Territories in 2001 to every single state



movement of people and goods has, in general, led to a greater spread of infections that these people carry with them. However, better testing and reporting might also add to the "increase", Sunil said.

Apart from dengue, other infections such as chikungunya and zika, which are also transmitted by the same vector, have also been on the rise. Zika was first reported in India in 2016 but there have been several outbreaks since then.

"There is a need to study whether getting one of the infections reduces the immunity of the vector mosquitoes and makes them more susceptible to get the other two. If this were to be the case, there could be an increase in the transmission of all three infections," Sunil said.

How can dengue be prevented?

First, individuals have to ensure that mosquitoes do not breed at their homes, or in their neighbourhoods. Collection of water in pots, planters, bird baths, etc. need to be prevented.

Second, people need to protect themselves against mosquito bites. The *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes bite during the day – wearing clothes which cover the entire body especially during the monsoons, can prevent bites.

Third, public health systems have to focus on surveillance, and prediction of outbreaks. This will ultimately help reduce the number of cases, and consequently deaths due to the infection.

Are there any vaccines against dengue?

Yes. The WHO recommends two vaccines: Sanofi's Dengvaxia and Takeda's QDenga. However, these have not received

- AS CITIES across India report a surge in dengue cases, a record number of cases have been reported around the world this year with Brazil and other South American countries worst affected. Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) show that the number of dengue cases have been increasing year-on-year.
- Dengue virus is primarily transmitted to humans by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. While many cases are asymptomatic or mild, severe dengue can lead to shock, severe bleeding, or organ impairment.

EXPLAINED
HEALTH

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

Air-Governance(GSII)

10th CPA India Region Conference Begins In New Delhi



- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has emphasized on the use of technology to improve the efficiency and functioning of legislatures. He stated this while addressing the two-day 10th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) India Region Conference which began in New Delhi.
- The CPA India Region was created in 2004 from the erstwhile CPA Asia Region as one of the nine Regions of the CPA. Currently, it has 31 Member Branches, including the Parliament of India and 30 State and Union Territories Legislatures. This is the second occasion the CPA India Region Conference is being held in New Delhi.