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The Continued Custody in Delhi Riots Cases is an Injustice

Context

- The Supreme Court of India's January 5, 2026 order in the Delhi Riots larger conspiracy case, which granted bail to five accused but denied it to **Umar Khalid** and **Sharjeel Imam**, has renewed debate on the interaction between criminal procedure, **personal liberty**, and state power.
- The controversy arises from the prolonged detention of seven students and activists arrested during the 2020 protests against the **Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA)** under provisions of the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)**, despite the absence of a completed trial.

Right to Speedy Trial and Reason Behind Delayed Trial

• Right to Speedy Trial

- More than five years have elapsed since the arrests, with the trial still pending commencement.
- Indian constitutional jurisprudence locates the **right to speedy trial** within Article 21, making procedural delay a direct infringement of liberty.
- When pre-trial incarceration approaches half a decade, detention becomes indistinguishable from punishment and undermines the presumption of **innocence**.
- The Supreme Court has previously stated that if the state cannot ensure trial within a reasonable period, its opposition to bail lacks legitimacy.
- In this case, the Court concluded that delay justified bail for five accused but not for Khalid and Imam.
- This distinction rested on the assertion that the latter two allegedly conceptualised the disturbances, placing them on a different footing.
- Yet such differentiation relies on unproven allegations and grants excessive weight to prosecutorial assertion.
- Liberty cannot be contingent upon the **gravity of accusation** alone, for this would empower the state to curtail freedom simply by escalating charges.

• Reason Behind the Delay

- The Court also observed that delay was partly attributable to the accused, but the pace of proceedings remains fundamentally under judicial control.

- Judges can refuse adjournments and streamline hearings. The presence of hundreds of witnesses suggests the trial is unlikely to conclude swiftly, creating the risk of **prolonged incarceration** without adjudication.
- The Court's suggestion that bail may be reconsidered after another year implies that five-and-a-half years have not yet crossed a constitutional threshold, raising the spectre of detention spanning a decade or more without verdict.

Terrorism, the UAPA, and Expansive Interpretation

- The order also raises structural concerns regarding the interpretation of **Section 15** of the UAPA, which defines terrorism.
- Alongside explicit elements involving weapons or violence, the statute includes the residual phrase by any other means.
- Criminal law traditionally requires narrow construction of ambiguous provisions to safeguard individuals against state overreach.
- Instead, the Court adopted a **broad** reading that could encompass non-violent protest actions such as **chakka jams**, vastly expanding the statute's scope.
- Such interpretation vests wide discretion in the **executive**, enabling it to classify forms of civil disobedience under anti-terror law rather than under ordinary criminal provisions.
- The broader the definition, the greater the risk of suppressing dissent and discouraging democratic mobilisation.
- Moreover, the interpretation directly affects bail due to **Section 43D (5)**, which bars bail if a prima facie case exists based solely on prosecution material.
- A wider definition of terrorism makes it easier to satisfy the prima facie threshold, thereby entrenching pre-trial detention and shifting power from judiciary to prosecution.
- Across legal systems, stringent statutes demand cautious judicial construction. Departing from this principle accelerates the collapse of procedural safeguards and normalises **preventive detention** over judicial adjudication.

Deference, Evidence, and the Language of Conspiracy

- The factual assessment within the order reflects a deferential approach toward prosecutorial narratives.
- The available evidence indicates organisational efforts surrounding anti-CAA protests, including coordination of demonstrations and chakka jams.
- These activities fall within the constitutional **right to protest**, even when disruptive. In the absence of direct evidence linking the accused to violence, the prosecution invoked a theory of **conspiracy**, alleging managerial responsibility for the riots.
- Conspiracy theories often operate as substitutes for evidentiary gaps. Throughout history, from political trials in colonial contexts to episodes like the **Dreyfus Affair**, conspiracy has served as a legal framework for incarcerating individuals without concrete proof.
- When liberty is at stake and trial delays are acute, judicial scrutiny should intensify rather than retreat.

- Accepting speculative inferences without robust evidence risks turning accusation into pretext and **detention** into indefinite punishment.

Conclusion

- The continued imprisonment of Khalid and Imam exemplifies the dangers posed by expansive statutory interpretation, prosecutorial discretion, and judicial deference.
- When protest merges with terrorism and delay merges with punishment, constitutional commitments to liberty, dissent, and due process erode.
- Correcting this imbalance is a matter of democratic principle and requires judicial willingness to prioritise liberty over speculative narratives of **national security**.

The Continued Custody in Delhi Riots Cases is an Injustice FAQs

Q1. What central issue does the Supreme Court's January 2026 order highlight?

Ans. The order highlights the tension between prolonged pre-trial detention and the constitutional right to personal liberty.

Q2. Why was the denial of bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam considered controversial?

Ans. It was considered controversial because the denial relied on unproven allegations and ignored the excessive delay in commencing the trial.

Q3. How did the Court interpret Section 15 of the UAPA?

Ans. The Court adopted a broad interpretation that could include non-violent protest actions such as chakka jams within the definition of terrorism.

Q4. What impact does Section 43D(5) of the UAPA have on bail decisions?

Ans. Section 43D(5) makes bail difficult by allowing denial when a prima facie case exists based solely on prosecution material.

Q5. What does the analysis suggest about judicial scrutiny in cases involving conspiracy allegations?

Ans. It suggests that judicial scrutiny should deepen rather than weaken, especially when liberty is at stake and direct evidence is lacking.

Source: **The Hindu**

An Exploration of India's Minerals Diplomacy

Context

- India's clean energy transition is increasingly dependent on imported critical minerals and rare earths, making external **supply chains** vital, especially as China tightens export controls.
- Like other countries, India is seeking to diversify mineral trade partnerships, encourage responsible production, and build standards-based markets.

- To address both immediate needs and long-term resilience, India has adopted a **two-pronged approach**—securing overseas access while strengthening domestic capabilities.
- Over the past five years, New Delhi has pursued numerous bilateral and multilateral partnerships alongside domestic policy reforms, raising questions about their effectiveness and the need for recalibration.

Uneven Progress Across Critical Mineral Partnerships

- India's critical mineral partnerships have delivered mixed outcomes, with some countries emerging as more reliable and strategically aligned than others.
- **Australia: A Reliable Anchor Partner**
 - Australia stands out due to political stability, large mineral reserves, and strategic clarity.
 - Cooperation has progressed through long-term supply talks, joint research, and investments.
 - Under the **2022 India-Australia Critical Minerals Investment Partnership**, five lithium and cobalt projects were identified for potential investment.
- **Japan: A Model for Long-Term Resilience**
 - Japan offers a template for resilience built on diversification, stockpiling, recycling, and sustained R&D—lessons drawn after China restricted rare earth exports a decade ago.
 - Beyond ties with Indian Rare Earths Limited, cooperation now includes joint extraction, processing, and stockpiling, bilaterally and in third countries.
- **Africa: Opportunity with a Long-Term Lens**
 - African nations present strong opportunities, combining mineral abundance with growing expectations of local value addition.
 - India's agreements with Namibia (lithium, rare earths, uranium) and asset talks in Zambia (copper, cobalt) signal intent.
 - Success will depend on a long-term industrial approach to compete with more coordinated players.
- **United States: Strategic Potential, Policy Volatility**
 - Despite "friend-shoring" rhetoric, cooperation with the United States has struggled to move beyond dialogue.
 - Tariffs, shifting trade rules, and Inflation Reduction Act incentives add uncertainty.
 - Initiatives like TRUST and the Strategic Minerals Recovery Initiative offer frameworks, but policy volatility limits reliability.
- **European Union: Standards-Driven Synergy**
 - The European Union demonstrates how regulation and industrial strategy can align through the **Critical Raw Materials Act** and the **European Battery Alliance**.
 - Progress for India requires alignment with EU transparency, lifecycle, and environmental standards.

- **West Asia: Midstream Potential, Limited Depth**

- United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are investing in battery materials, refining, and green hydrogen, acquiring mining stakes globally.
- The region could serve India as a midstream processing hub, though institutional frameworks remain thin.

- **Russia: A Hedge, Not a Foundation**

- Russia holds substantial reserves and has longstanding scientific ties with India.
- However, sanctions, financing constraints, and logistical risks limit reliability—making Russia a supplementary hedge rather than a core pillar.

Latin America: Emerging Opportunities and Intense Competition

- Latin America is emerging as a new frontier for India's critical minerals strategy, with growing engagement in **Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Brazil**.
- These countries are increasingly central to global copper, nickel, and rare-earth supply chains.
- Indian public and private firms have begun investing in the region, including a ₹200 crore exploration and development agreement signed by **Khanij Bidesh India Limited with Argentina**.
- However, competition is intense and engagement remains nascent, underscoring the need for value-chain partnerships and local processing beyond extraction.

Canada: Potential Partner Amid Diplomatic Reset

- With diplomatic ties restored, Canada re-emerges as a promising minerals partner for India.
- Canada's reserves of nickel, cobalt, copper, and rare earths, alongside a recently signed trilateral agreement with Australia and India, position it well for cooperation.
- Sustained progress, however, will depend on political stability and consistent bilateral engagement.

From Ore Access to Value-Chain Resilience

- Across regions, a clear lesson emerges: securing mineral ore alone is insufficient. The real vulnerability lies in processing.
- Without domestic refining and midstream capacity, India remains exposed to supply-chain disruptions.

- **Building Integrated, End-to-End Partnerships**

- India needs integrated partnerships across the value chain:
 - **Upstream ore extraction:** Africa, Australia, Canada, Latin America
 - **Midstream processing of the mineral ores:** West Asia (the Gulf) and Japan
 - **Downstream technologies creation:** European Union and United States (batteries, recycling)
 - **Diversification hedge:** Russia
- Technology, innovation, and on-ground project execution matter more than announcements.

- **Strategic Focus Before Expansion**

- While cooperation with additional partners like South Korea and Indonesia is valuable, India must first sharpen a coherent strategy for existing partnerships to ensure results.

- **Strengthening the Domestic Foundation**

- None of these efforts will succeed without a robust domestic framework for responsible mining.
- Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) standards, transparency, and regulatory certainty are increasingly decisive in international partnerships.

The Way Forward

- India has built an extensive network of critical mineral partnerships. The next step is to deepen what works, recalibrate what doesn't, and anchor the strategy in processing capacity, technology leadership, and long-term certainty.

An Exploration of India's Minerals Diplomacy FAQs

Q1. Why are critical minerals central to India's clean energy transition?

Ans. Critical minerals and rare earths are essential for batteries, renewables, and electronics, making secure and diversified supply chains vital for India's clean energy goals.

Q2. Why has Australia emerged as a key minerals partner for India?

Ans. Australia offers political stability, large reserves, and strategic clarity, with cooperation advancing through investments, joint research, and identified lithium and cobalt projects.

Q3. What lessons does Japan offer in critical mineral resilience?

Ans. Japan demonstrates long-term resilience through diversification, stockpiling, recycling, and sustained R&D, especially after facing Chinese export restrictions on rare earths.

Q4. Why is processing a major vulnerability in India's minerals strategy?

Ans. Without domestic refining and midstream processing capacity, India remains exposed to supply disruptions even if it secures upstream mineral extraction abroad.

Q5. What is the key priority for India's minerals diplomacy going forward?

Ans. India must deepen effective partnerships, strengthen domestic ESG frameworks, and focus on integrated value-chain development covering extraction, processing, and downstream technologies.

Source: **TH**

Kashi-Tamil Sangamam - Celebrating India's Living Civilisational Unity

Context

- The Kashi-Tamil Sangamam, a flagship cultural initiative under the spirit of “Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat”, highlights India’s **civilisational continuity, cultural unity** and people-to-people bonds.
- The Somnath Swabhimani Parv (1026–2026), marking 1,000 years since the first attack on Somnath, puts the Sangamam within India’s broader historical and cultural consciousness.

Background – Idea of Sangamam

- Sangam in Indian ethos symbolises **confluence**, integration and unity amid diversity.
- The Kashi-Tamil Sangamam represents the **living unity** of India’s traditions while respecting regional uniqueness.
- **Kashi** (Varanasi), a civilisational and spiritual anchor for millennia, where people from all over have come in search of knowledge, meaning and Moksha, is a natural venue for such cultural integration.

Civilisational Linkages Between Kashi and Tamil Nadu

- **Spiritual and cultural bonds – Kashi-Rameswaram axis**
 - Baba Vishwanath (Kashi) and Rameswaram (Tamil Nadu) are key spiritual centres. Tenkasi in Tamil Nadu is known as Dakshin Kashi.
 - Saint Kumaraguruparar Swamikal strengthened spiritual and institutional ties between Kashi and Tamil Nadu.
- **Intellectual and nationalist connections**
 - Mahakavi Subramania Bharati found in Kashi a space for intellectual growth, spiritual awakening, and deepening nationalism and vision of a united India.

Evolution of the Kashi-Tamil Sangamam

- **First edition (2022):** Participation of scholars, artisans, students, farmers, writers and professionals, who travelled to Kashi, Prayagraj and Ayodhya.
- **Second edition (2023):** Greater use of technology to overcome language barriers. The aim was to introduce innovative formats and deeper engagement, so that the Sangamam continued to evolve while remaining rooted in its core spirit.
- **Third edition:** The focus was on Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), expanding academic discussions, exhibitions and cultural interactions.
- **Fourth edition (2025):**
 - **Theme:** Tamil Karkalam (Learn Tamil)
 - Teachers from Tamil Nadu taught Tamil to students in Kashi, emphasising linguistic integration and cultural learning.

Key Highlights of the Fourth Edition

- **Translation:** Of Tholkappiyam (ancient Tamil literary classic) into 4 Indian languages, and 6 foreign languages.
- **Sage Agastya Vehicle Expedition (SAVE):** From Tenkasi to Kashi, it included activities like eye camps, health awareness, digital literacy camps. Tribute to King Adi Veera Parakrama Pandiyan, symbol of cultural oneness
- **Other highlights:** Academic sessions at Banaras Hindu University (BHU), cultural exhibitions at Namoh Ghat, and high participation of Yuva Shakti (youth).

Role of Institutions and Governance

- **Indian Railways** operated special trains for participants.
- Warm hospitality by people of Kashi and Uttar Pradesh.
- Strong administrative coordination ensuring a seamless experience.
- Valedictory function held at Rameswaram, attended by the Vice President of India, highlighting spiritual unity and national integration.

Challenges and Way Ahead

- **Sustaining long-term engagement:** Linking cultural exchanges with education, tourism and local economies.
- **Ensuring deeper grassroots participation:** Institutionalising Sangamam-type platforms across regions.
- **Avoiding symbolic tokenism:** Greater academic, youth and digital integration.
- **Bridging linguistic and regional gaps:** Using technology for inclusive participation. Expanding translations and documentation of classical texts.

Conclusion

- The Kashi-Tamil Sangamam exemplifies India's living civilisational unity, where diversity is not erased but harmonised.
- By fostering cultural understanding, academic exchange and youth participation, it strengthens the foundations of national integration.
- Alongside India's shared festivals like Pongal, Sankranti, Magh Bihu and Uttarayan, such initiatives reinforce harmony, collective heritage and the timeless idea of **One India, Many Traditions**.

Kashi-Tamil Sangamam FAQs

Q1. How does the Kashi-Tamil Sangamam contribute to the idea of "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat"?

Ans. It promotes cultural integration, linguistic understanding and people-to-people exchanges, reinforcing India's unity amid diversity.

Q2. What is the civilisational significance of Kashi in fostering pan-Indian cultural linkages?

Ans. Kashi has historically functioned as a spiritual and intellectual hub connecting diverse regions.

Q3. What is the role of cultural initiatives like Kashi-Tamil Sangamam in strengthening national integration?

Ans. Such initiatives deepen cultural understanding, youth participation and shared civilisational consciousness across regions.

Q4. Why is the translation of classical texts like Tholkappiyam important from a cultural integration perspective?

Ans. It democratises access to ancient knowledge and promotes inter-regional and global appreciation of India's linguistic heritage.

Q5. What is the significance of youth participation in cultural programmes such as the Kashi-Tamil Sangamam?

Ans. Youth engagement ensures continuity of cultural values and strengthens long-term national unity through informed participation.

Source: IE

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