

**In the Supreme Court of India****Inherent Jurisdiction****Suo Moto Writ Petition (Criminal) No. 6/2026****IN RE: RECENT RAPE INCIDENTS IN DELHI NCR****ORDER**

1. Pursuant to this Court taking suo moto cognisance of the present matter on 28.09.2026, it has come up for hearing for the first time today.
2. We heard Ms. Liz Mathew, the learned *Amicus*, with regard to the manner in which she proposes to assist the Court in the present matter. At the outset, Ms. Mathew submitted that there is a palpable and immediate need for enhanced beat patrolling across the NCT of Delhi. In this regard, she drew our attention to the **Circular No. 15/2025** dated 08.03.2025 issued by the Office of the Commissioner of Police, Delhi, which constituted district-wise dedicated anti-eve teasing squads, called *Shishtachar Squads*. She further referred to the **Standing Order No. L&O/25/2024** titled “**Action Against Sexual Offences in Public**”, whereby the Delhi Police had

sought to undertake various initiatives to curb crimes against women, including eve-teasing, molestation, and other forms of harassment, with the objective of fostering a safer public environment. She further drew our attention to Rule 21.34, Rule 28.13 & Rule 28.17 of the Punjab Police Rules, 1934, respectively, which continue to apply to the NCT of Delhi, as well as other Standing Orders issued by the Delhi Police, governing the regulation of beat duties and crime prevention in public places.

3. Ms. Mathew submitted that while an accurate assessment of the *Shishtachar Squads* requires comprehensive data from the Delhi Police, the immediate need remains that of enhanced beat patrolling. However, with the enhanced beat patrolling comes the related issue of adequacy of police personnel. In this regard, Ms. Mathew pointed out that the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, in its Report no. 15 of 2020, highlighted a shortage of around 39% in police staff across active duties like beat patrol and investigation, upon an audit of six out of fifteen police districts and seventy-two police stations in Delhi. An updated report on this aspect would provide a clearer picture of the current strength of the police

force deployed for such duties.

4. On the aspect of grievance redressal and citizen participation in reporting of deficiencies in public-safety infrastructure, including inadequate lighting, CCTV coverage and other related concerns, Ms. Mathew submitted that, as per the information available in the public domain, multiple mechanisms are presently available for lodging complaints, such as the (i) the CM *Jan Sunwai* Portal; (ii) the Public Grievance Monitoring System of CMO, Delhi; (iii) MCD-311 Mobile Application; (iv) BSES Street Light Complaint Portal; (v) PWD Seva 2.0 Mobile Application; (vi) NDMC-311 Mobile Application; (vii) Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System for DDA; and (viii) Delhi Police 112 Helpline. However, she submitted that the multiplicity of such platforms gives rise to confusion among illiterate/lay persons as to the appropriate jurisdictional authority before whom a particular grievance ought to be raised. Moreover, a significant portion of the populace may not have ready access to smartphones, or may not possess the requisite digital literacy to be able to operate the aforesaid applications and portals. The learned *Amicus* has urged that further information may be

sought from the respondents with regard to the response mechanisms presently in place for addressing complaints raised through these platforms, including the stipulated timelines, if any, for such grievance redressal. She has also put forward a suggestion with respect to the use of QR codes for monitoring police patrolling, whereby automated time-stamping and geo-mapping/geo-fencing could assist in ensuring accountability of the police personnel deployed for the respective patrolling duties.

5. She added that once the status reports based on the information sought by this Court in the last order dated 28.09.2026 are placed on record, she would undertake a more detailed analysis of the said data and submit further relevant recommendations.
6. We also heard Mr. Tushar Mehta, the learned Solicitor General of India, assisted by Ms. Archana Pathak Dave, the learned ASG, who submitted that the concerned senior officials of the Government of NCT of Delhi and the Delhi Police, along with officials from the DDA, MCD, NDMC, Ministry of Women & Child Development have commenced joint deliberations on the concerns raised by this Court *vide* the order dated 28.09.2026,

and are taking all necessary steps towards prompt compliance with the interim directions issued therein.

- 7.** Having heard the learned counsel, we once again wish to impress upon the fact that the principal endeavour in the present proceedings is two-fold. *One*, to ensure that the deficiencies in the existing mechanisms for crime prevention and emergency response are identified and addressed immediately, and *two*, to ask the respondents to identify and address any vacuum/gap in policy and/or their implementation thereof.
- 8.** In our last Order dated 28.09.2026, we have sought comprehensive status reports addressing the aspects set out at paragraph nos. 9-10 thereof. We also directed immediate interim measures including enhanced police patrolling, vulnerability mapping, lighting & CCTV audits, and infrastructure repairs on an expedited basis. These measures, though seemingly distinct in their nature, are directed towards the common object of ensuring that public spaces remain adequately monitored, illuminated, regulated and responsive to the concerns of the citizens.

9. It is in this context that we find it apposite to refer to the *Broken Windows* theory propounded by Prof. James Q. Wilson and Mr. George L. Kelling, which has often found relevance in discussions around policing and public safety. The theory, in essence, proceeds on the premise that visible and unattended signs of disorder or civic neglect may signal that an area is inadequately monitored or that deviant behaviour may go unchecked. Such visible manifestations of civic neglect may, in turn, contribute to a heightened perception of insecurity amongst citizens and result in their withdrawal from public spaces, which in turn would provide a safe haven for undesirables, anti-socials and depraved minds, to whom an unsuspecting citizen, who unknowingly steps in, will fall prey to. This may create a self-reinforcing cycle in which reduced public presence and diminished confidence in the ability of the authorities to maintain law and order provide greater scope for further disorder and crimes. Applied to the present context, a broken or inadequate streetlight, a non-functional CCTV camera, an unmonitored dark stretch, or an unaddressed public complaint may individually appear as minor administrative or infrastructural lapses. However, when such

deficiencies remain visible and unattended over a period of time, they collectively convey a perception of neglect and diminished vigilance.

10. Public safety, therefore, cannot be viewed solely through the prism of a response to a crime after it has occurred. The manner in which public spaces are maintained, the visibility of police patrolling and surveillance, and the promptness with which reported deficiencies are addressed are equally relevant to crime prevention. These would simultaneously instil confidence amongst citizens and fear amongst potential perpetrators that public spaces all across the city are being effectively watched and monitored.

11. It is this preventive dimension, which, in our view, warrants particular emphasis in the present proceedings. Deficiencies which are capable of being identified and remedied ought not to be left unattended until they manifest themselves in an actual incident of crime. The objective must be to intervene at the stage at which signs of neglect or vulnerability first emerge, so that public spaces, by reason of avoidable deficiencies in lighting, surveillance and patrolling, do not create conditions conducive to disorder or facilitate the commission of crimes.

12. Although solving a crime and ensuring expeditious prosecution with commensurate punishment is imperative, yet crime detection and prevention are equally important. Detection and prevention can be achieved only through constant surveillance and quick response, educating every single police personnel having jurisdiction over an area about its significance, incentivising effective policing and, ensuring accountability. It is in furtherance of this objective that we underscore the importance of effective real-time monitoring of police patrolling and CCTV infrastructure, through **dedicated control-room command centres or “war rooms”**. The information gathered through these control room command centres must feed into an effective field-level response mechanism, so as to facilitate timely deployment or intervention, as soon as a vulnerability, incident or deficiency requiring attention is detected. Therefore, the Commissioner of Police, Delhi and the Chief Secretary, Government of NCT of Delhi are hereby directed to furnish a joint report on (i) whether dedicated control-room command centres of this nature currently exist within the NCT of Delhi and, if so, their exact number and the corresponding areas of coverage, and (ii) the protocols presently in place for

real-time coordination, communication and deployment of emergency intervention once information is received by the command centres.

- 13.** Equally important to effective crime prevention is meaningful citizen participation. Citizens are often the first to notice recurring disorderly conduct, poorly lit stretches, unauthorised establishments, abandoned vehicles, dilapidated buildings or other conditions which may affect the safety of an area. It is, therefore, necessary to encourage citizens to communicate their grievances and to share information concerning criminal or delinquent activity in their neighbourhoods, more particularly in and around educational institutions and paying-guest accommodations housing young women and girls. Such citizen-centric mechanisms must inspire confidence amongst the public that the information furnished by them will be received sensitively, acted upon promptly, and where appropriate, kept confidential. Hence, the police and the local administration shall consider instituting regular citizen-engagement meetings, under the supervision of an officer to be designated for the purpose, so that grievances may be received directly and their follow-up monitored

efficiently. Such a mechanism would also facilitate in fixing accountability where grievances remain unaddressed.

- 14.** Such community participation must be complemented by a visible and adequately enhanced police presence. Joint patrolling in identified vulnerable areas, particularly during hours of heightened vulnerability, shall be strengthened. Senior police officers exercising jurisdiction over such areas shall hold regular meetings with beat patrol officers and field personnel to review local vulnerabilities, emerging patterns of delinquency and the effectiveness of patrolling arrangements. The existing protocols governing beat patrolling, including the deployment and halting of Police Control Room vans (PCR vans), should be reviewed and suitably strengthened.
- 15.** Preventive policing must, however, become an institutional practice and not remain dependent upon individual initiative. Training in preventive policing should accordingly form part of the induction of police personnel and be reinforced through periodic training at regular intervals thereafter. The existing mechanisms of police training and capacity-building, including those associated with the Bureau of Police Research and Development, must be suitably examined for this purpose.

Officers entrusted with particular jurisdictions must be sensitised to take ownership of their areas, identify emerging vulnerabilities and address them before they translate into criminal activity. Accountability must necessarily accompany such responsibility.

16. In addition to the measures already directed by us in our Order dated 28.09.2026, we consider it appropriate to direct that the following measures be undertaken immediately by the Delhi Police, the local administration and the Transport Department, GNCTD, wherever applicable:

- i.** There shall be enhanced beat patrolling on an immediate basis, across the NCT of Delhi, more particularly around educational institutions (including schools, colleges, universities and coaching institutions) and other zones which get flagged under the vulnerability mapping exercise, directed under paragraph 12 of our previous Order dated 28.09.2026.
- ii.** There shall be strict verification of drivers and assistants engaged in public transport vehicles like (a) government operated buses and private buses, and (b) cabs, taxis,

rickshaws, etc., which are linked to app-based vehicle-aggregator services like Ola, Uber, Rapido, etc., as well as the cabs, taxis and auto-rickshaws that operate privately. Only duly registered and verified persons shall be permitted to operate such vehicles. All such vehicles shall display, in an area visible to the passenger, the names and photographs of the verified driver(s) and assistant(s) associated with such vehicle so that the passenger may immediately identify and report when unauthorised persons are involved. It shall be the responsibility of the Road Transport Officer of the concerned jurisdiction to ensure that all vehicles display such information. A dedicated avenue for the registration of such complaints must be provided, especially for government operated buses, private buses, and other cabs/taxis/rickshaws not registered with app-based services. To that effect, uniforms or other visible means of identification must be prescribed for all such drivers and assistants, and where such prescriptions already exist, it must be ensured that the same is used every day. Any substitution or sub-letting

shall be strictly subject to prior registration and verification, and unauthorised sub-letting to an unverified driver must be prohibited. Vehicle checkpoints shall be meaningfully utilised for such verification, including through periodic and surprise checks. Any finding of non-compliance or violation by any driver or assistant must invite prompt regulatory action, including but not limited to suspension/dismissal from service of the driver/assistant and seizure of the concerned vehicle, as the case may be, with immediate effect.

- iii.** The concerned authorities shall examine the effective implementation of the directions issued by this Court in its Order dated 13.05.2026, in ***S. Rajaseekaran v. Union of India & Ors. [Writ Petition (Civil) No. 295/2012]***, whereby a slew of directions have been issued regarding Vehicle Tracking System Devices. The concerned authorities shall evaluate the manner in which such monitoring is integrated with the police emergency response system. Such mechanisms shall be subjected to periodic and surprise checks to ensure that

they remain functional.

- iv.** Appropriate awareness measures shall be undertaken to inform passengers about the manner of activation of SOS mechanisms, the response protocol and the expected response time. The objective of such awareness drives shall be to clearly communicate to the public, the precise nature of intervention and immediate assistance that a complainant would receive once the SOS button is pressed. Unless one is adequately informed of what assistance will follow upon pressing such SOS button, there may be hesitation in using it, particularly in a distress situation where the offender also becomes simultaneously aware that the victim is trying to seeking help. The concerned authorities shall, therefore, place on record the existing protocol for responding to SOS alerts, the designated personnel/unit responsible for such response, the prescribed turnaround time, if any, and the mechanism for monitoring compliance with such response timelines.
- v.** The concerned authorities shall identify trucks, heavy vehicles and other vehicles which are habitually

unlawfully parked at locations where they obstruct visibility, create blind spots or harbour unauthorised personnel, and shall take appropriate steps for their removal from that area.

- vi.** Unauthorised liquor shops and establishments operating without requisite permissions shall be identified and dealt with in accordance with law. Particular attention shall be given to eateries and other establishments where liquor is being supplied unlawfully. Beat officers shall remain vigilant in this regard and bring such instances to the notice of their superior officers. Furthermore, beat officers shall ensure that any loitering, crowding or assembly of persons around liquor shops is promptly dispersed, to prevent harassment and ensure unhindered safe movement for pedestrians.

- 17.** We have consciously refrained from treating the aforesaid measures as an entirely novel framework for preventive policing. Indeed, we have paid attention to some of the existing Standing Orders, Circulars, and protocols which already contemplate many of these safeguards. The question before us,

therefore, is not merely whether appropriate directions exist, but whether those directions are translating into sustained, visible and verifiable action on the ground.

18. In this regard, we have perused the ***Standing Order No. L&O/25/2024*** titled ***“Action Against Sexual Offences in Public”*** and the ***Circular No. 15/2025*** dated 08.03.2025 issued by the Office of the Commissioner of Police, Delhi, furnished to us by the learned *Amicus*. By the aforesaid Standing Order and Circular, the Delhi Police has, inter alia, provided for district-wise dedicated anti-eve-teasing squads, known as *Shishtachar Squads*, and prescribed various measures for addressing sexual offences and eve-teasing in public spaces. The existing framework thus already contemplates several measures which, if effectively implemented, are capable of addressing many of the concerns arising in the present proceedings. The purpose of the present proceedings and the directions issued herein is not to multiply protocols or to create another layer of administrative compliance. Rather, it is to ascertain whether the mechanisms already devised by the police are operating as living instruments of preventive policing or have those remained

substantially confined to the realm of mere paperwork. Ultimately, the efficacy of a preventive policing framework must be judged not by the number of Standing Orders issued, but by the extent to which those orders translate into visible police presence, timely intervention, deterrence and a demonstrable sense of safety amongst citizens. The recent incidents which have necessitated these suo moto proceedings, make such an assessment of on-ground implementation imperative. In fact, the recurrence of such incidents, despite the existence of the aforesaid protocols, raises a serious concern as to whether the existing directions are being implemented with the degree of consistency, supervision and accountability contemplated.

- 19.** This aspect assumes particular significance with respect to the *Shishtachar Squads*. The above-mentioned Circular dated 08.03.2025, contemplates a system of weekly diaries recording details such as (i) the name of the police stations, (ii) the specific area in which a drive was undertaken with the date and time, (iii) details of in-charge of *Shishtachar Squad* with mobile no., (iv) the outcome of the drive and action taken report/FIR details, etc. (under section in BNS/DP Act/POCSO

Act/MV Act/Other Acts), (v) details of the persons arrested/detained/counselled, (vi) Criminal antecedents, and their details (if any) and (vii) remarks. These requirements provide a ready mechanism by which the actual functioning of the squads can be assessed and verified. We therefore direct the Commissioner of Police, Delhi, to place on record a copy of these weekly reports which have been submitted during the preceding 3 months, along with a consolidated report analysing the steps which have been undertaken in furtherance of such weekly reports. The report shall be prepared in a manner so as to enable this Court to ascertain not merely whether the *Shishtachar Squads* exist administratively, but the extent to which they have been operational, the areas in which they have actually conducted drives, the frequency and timing of such drives, the nature of action taken, and the follow-up thereto.

20. Moreover, with respect to the ***Standing Order No. L&O/25/2024 titled “Action Against Sexual Offences in Public”***, we direct the Commissioner of Police, Delhi, to furnish a detailed status report regarding the scope and manner of implementation of ***Operation “Nirbheek”*** and the ***“Nazuk”***

Scheme, which are aimed at encouraging college/school going girls to report sexual offences/harassment. The report shall, in particular, clearly indicate the mechanism currently in place to ensure the safety and protection of a complainant upon filing a complaint, the manner in which her identity and confidentiality are safeguarded, and the measures adopted to prevent retaliation, intimidation, harassment or any other form of backlash consequent upon such reporting.

- 21.** At this stage, we also deem it necessary to emphasise that the pursuit of preventive policing cannot become a justification for arbitrary or excessive or disproportionate exercise of police powers. The police must act firmly where the law requires intervention, but such intervention must remain within the bounds of legality, proportionality and accountability. Accountability is integral to effective policing and governance, for the citizens' faith in the system must be gained through effective enforcement, especially when the system is challenged, as is the case with the recent turn of events. A system which seeks to inspire confidence in citizens must necessarily be one in which citizens are protected not only from crime, but equally from unlawful or disproportionate exercise

of State power.

22. We further direct that the modules prescribed for the specialised training programme for the *Shishtachar Squads* be placed on record. The Research and Development Branch of the Delhi Police shall undertake an assessment of the existing training module, including whether it adequately equips the personnel concerned for preventive intervention, identification of vulnerable situations and effective engagement with victims, witnesses and the public. The Branch shall also examine whether any deficiencies in training, supervision or implementation may have contributed to the apparent gap between the safeguards contemplated on paper and their perceived effectiveness on the ground and place its assessment before this Court.

23. The concerned authorities shall place on record, **within a period of four weeks** from the date of this Order and, in any event, on or before **06.11.2026**, a consolidated status report setting out the steps taken towards compliance with the **immediate measures directed in paragraph 12** of our previous Order dated 28.09.2026, as well as the **reports sought in paragraphs 9 to 11** thereof. The reports shall also

specifically indicate the action taken and progress made in respect of **the measures directed in the present order**. The reports shall be comprehensive and, wherever applicable, be district-wise, and shall clearly indicate the measures implemented, those remaining pending and the reasons for such pendency.

- 24.** All the information, data and status reports sought from the Administration and the Police respectively, shall be compiled and placed on record by way of two affidavits, wherein the Chief Secretary, Government of NCT of Delhi and the Commissioner of Police, Delhi shall be the deponents, respectively. We make it clear that, throughout the course of this matter, these two officers shall remain the deponents of all affidavits furnishing additional information and/or reporting compliance on behalf of the Administration and the Police respectively, unless specifically indicated otherwise. If at any stage, we find that our directions are not being complied with, implemented or accorded the seriousness which is warranted, these two officers shall be made personally answerable.

- 25.** For the avoidance of doubt, we clarify that the compliance with

the directions contained in our Order dated 28.09.2026 and the present Order shall be undertaken by the respective authorities as follows:

i. Chief Secretary, Government of NCT of Delhi and the Commissioner of Police, Delhi, jointly:

- a) The comprehensive status reports sought under paragraph nos. 9 (i), 9(iv), 9(v)(a)-(c) & (e), and 9(vi) of the Order dated 28.09.2026, and paragraph no. 12 of the present Order;
- b) The compliance affidavit in respect of the directions given in paragraph nos. 12 (v) & 12(vi) of the Order dated 28.09.2026, and paragraph no. 16 of the present Order;
- c) A report on the feasibility of the QR Code model suggested by the learned *Amicus* for police patrolling with time-stamping and geo-mapping/geo-fencing;

ii. The Chief Secretary, Government of NCT of Delhi:

- a) The compliance affidavit in respect of the

directions given in paragraph no. 12 (iv) of the Order dated 28.09.2026;

iii. The Commissioner of Police, Delhi:

- a) The comprehensive status reports sought in paragraph no. 9 (ii), 9 (iii) & 9(v)(d) of the Order dated 28.09.2026, and paragraph nos. 19, 20 & 22 of the present Order.
- b) The compliance affidavit in respect of the directions given in paragraph nos. 12 (i)-(iii), & 12(vii) of the Order dated 28.09.2026;
- c) An updated report on police staffing, addressing the observations made by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India in the aforementioned Report no. 15 of 2020;

26. We further clarify that, while undertaking the audit directed under paragraph no. 12 (iv) of the Order dated 28.09.2026, the concerned authorities shall assess the adequacy of lighting, independently of any illumination or coverage provided by

billboards, private buildings or other privately owned structures. Moreover, while addressing the direction mentioned at paragraph no. 12(v) & (vi) of the Order dated 28.09.2026, they shall address the concern raised by the learned *Amicus* with respect to the multiplicity of grievance redressal portals and the limitations faced by individuals who lack the requisite literacy to operate such portals.

27. The Registrar General of the High Court of Delhi is also directed to place on record, on or before **06.11.2026**, the information sought for in **paragraphs 13 and 14** of our Order dated 28.09.2026.

28. Further, we direct that Jt CP Southern Range Sh. Vijay Kumar, Jt CP Central Range Sh. Madhur Verma and Jt CP Crime Sh. Surender Kumar, Officers of Delhi Police, who were personally present in Court today, shall remain present on the next date of hearing as well.

29. We treat this matter as part-heard.

30. List the matter on 16.11.2026.

31. Let notice also be issued to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Union

of India, through the Principal Secretary, and the Transport Department, Government of NCT of Delhi, through its Secretary-cum-Commissioner, returnable on 16.11.2026.

..... J.
(J.B. Pardiwala)

..... J.
(K. Vinod Chandran)

**New Delhi;
5th October, 2026.**