SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

PRESS RELEASE

March 22, 2025

The Chief Justice of India has constituted a three member Committee consisting of Mr. Justice Sheel Nagu, Chief Justice of the High Court of Punjab & Haryana, Mr. Justice G.S. Sandhawalia, Chief Justice of the High Court of Himachal Pradesh, and Ms. Justice Anu Sivaraman, Judge of the High Court of Karnataka, for conducting an inquiry into the allegations against Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma, a sitting Judge of the High Court of Delhi.

The Chief Justice of the High Court of Delhi for the time being has been asked not to assign any judicial work to Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma.

The Report submitted by the Chief Justice of the High Court of Delhi, response of Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma, and other documents, are annexed.

Note: To maintain confidentiality, etc., some portions and names have been redacted.

21st March, 2025

Respected Chief Justice of India,

An incident of fire at one of the rooms within the premises of the bungalow occupied by Justice Yashwant Varma was reported to me by Mr. Sanjay Arora, Commissioner of Police, Delhi. I deem it appropriate to report the same to your goodself.

On 15.3.2025, while I was at Lucknow on account of Holi vacations, at around 4.50 pm, I got a call from Mr. Sanjay Arora, Commissioner of Police, Delhi, informing about an incident of fire which broke out on 14.3.2025 at about 11.30 pm in a store room near the office at 30, Tughlak Crescent, New Delhi, which has been allotted to Justice Yashwant Varma.

On receiving the said information from the Commissioner of Police, I spoke to your goodself on 15.3.2025 in the evening itself and on your instructions, I requested the

Commissioner of Police, Delhi to find out as to from which source the PCR call was made. I also called for certain other informations from him, in response whereof the Commissioner of Police informed me on 16.3.2025 that PCR call was made by Personal Secretary to Justice Yashwant Varma from mobile number registered in the name of the High Court of Delhi and that the Personal Secretary to Justice Yashwant Varma was informed about the fire by one of the servants placed at the residence of the Hon'ble Judge. It has also been informed that the fire service was not informed separately, though once PCR was contacted the information relating to fire was automatically sent to the Delhi Fire Service. The Commissioner of Police has also informed that the store room is adjacent to the Guard Room where Central Reserve Police Force (Battalion 70F) is posted and that the store room used to be kept locked. I have also been informed that as per the Security Guard posted at the residence of the Hon'ble Judge, some debris and half burnt articles were removed in the morning of 15.3.2025.

On receiving the information from the Commissioner of Police, Delhi, I instructed Registrarcum-Secretary attached with me, to visit the spot. accordingly, visited the residence of Justice Yashwant Varma and on reaching there, he called Private Secretary to Justice Yashwant Varma to come out of the bungalow. came out and took to Justice Yashwant Varma who was sitting in his office. Yashwant Varma, visited the room where the fire had taken place, which is adjacent to the office. Maccordingly, prepared a report and submitted the same to me. As per the said report, was informed that the room was being used as a store room to keep useless articles of household and remain accessible to all and was not kept locked. In his report, that on reaching the spot, he found out that it was complete dark inside the room and the walls had developed cracks. The report further mentions that with the help of mobile phones torch and Justice Yashwant Varma had a look inside the room and it was found that all the walls had gone black on account of fire and some material was hanging from the roof

and half burnt articles were lying there, and further that burnt articles/debris were lying on the floor. spent about 8-10 minutes in the room and thereafter came out.

On reaching Delhi in the evening of 16.3.2025, I immediately went to see your goodself and apprised you of all that was reported to me. On being instructed by your goodself, I contacted Justice Verma who met me on 17.3.2025 in the morning at around 8.30 am at Delhi High Court Guest House where I am residing presently. Justice Verma responded by saying that in the room where the fire had broken out, only unusable household articles like some furniture and mattresses etc. were kept. He also told that the room was accessible to the servants, the gardeners and sometimes even to the CPWD personnels. He also informed me that at the time of the incident, he was in Bhopal and got the information from his daughter. Justice Verma further told me that at the moment, black burnt material (soot) is lying in the room. I thereafter showed him the photographs and the video on my WhatsApp which were shared with me by the Commissioner of Police. He then expressed some apprehension about some conspiracy against him.

Yesterday, i.e., 20.3.2025, as required by your goodself, I had sent the photographs, the video and two messages to you in the morning.

I received a communication from your goodself yesterday evening intimating the proposal to repatriate Justice Yashwant Varma to the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad. I immediately responded yesterday evening itself and expressed my view that since the proposal is in the interest of better administration of justice, I will go with the same.

On examining the incident reported, the material available and the response of Justice Yashwant Varma, what I find is that the Commissioner of Police in his report dated 16.3.2025 has reported that as per the guard posted at the residence of Justice Yashwant Varma, the debris and other partially burnt articles were removed from the room where the fire had broken out in the morning of 15.3.2025. The enquiry conducted by me, prima facie, does not reveal possibility of entry or access to the room by any person other than those

residing in the bungalow, the servants, the gardeners and CPWD personnels, if any. Accordingly, I am of the prima faice opinion that the entire matter warrants a deeper probe.

With warm regards,

Yours sincerely,
(Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya)

Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sanjiv Khanna Chief Justice of India 7, Krishna Menon Marg New Delhi – 110 011

Encl:

- 1. Report submitted by the Commissioner of Police, Delhi to which was shared with me on 15.3.2025 on my WhatsApp.
- 2. A pen drive containing three photographs and a video shared with me by the Commissioner of Police, Delhi on 15.3.2025 on my WhatsApp.
- 3. Report dated 16.3.2025 of Registrar-cum-Secretary attached with me.
- 4. Another report shared with me by the Commissioner of Police, Delhi on 16.3.2025 on my WhatsApp.

महोदय.

दिनांक 14/03/25 को रात्रि 11:43 बजे एक पीसीआर कॉल के माध्यम से सूचना मिली कि 30 तुगलाक़ क्रेसेंट कोठी के अंदर आग लगी है। ये कोठी माननीय उच्च न्यायालय, दिल्ली के न्यायमूर्ति, श्री यशवंत वर्मा को आवंटित है।

इसमें तुरंत दमकल की दो गाड़ियों को मौके पर बुलाया गया। आग कोठी के एक कोने में चारदिवारी से लगे हुए कुछ कमरे हैं, उनमे लगी थी। इन कमरों का इस्तेमाल स्टोर के रूप में किया जाता था। इन्हीं में से एक कमरे में कोठी पर तैनात कुछ सुरक्षाकर्मी भी रहते हैं। आग पे तुरंत काबू किया गया। प्रथम दृष्ट्या आग लगने का कारण शार्ट सर्किट बताया जा रहा है।

उक्त कमरे में, आग के काबू में आने के बाद, 4-5 अधजली बोरियां मिली हैं, जिनके अंदर भारतीय मुद्रा भरे होने के अवशेष मिले हैं।

सूचनार्थ प्रेषित,

सादर।

महोदय,

- 1. आग लगने की पीसीआर कॉल किया किया किया निजी सचिव द्वारा मोबाइल नंबर से की गई थी, जो 'हाई कोर्ट ऑफ दिल्ली' के नाम से पंजीकृत है। उन्हें घर के एक नौकर ने आग लगने की सूचना दी थी।
- 2. अग्निशमन विभाग को अलग से कोई कॉल नहीं की गई थी। सूचना स्वचालित रूप से डीएफएस को चली गई थी।
- 3. स्टोर रूम घर के सुरक्षा गार्ड, जो सी॰आर॰पी॰एफ॰ (F कंपनी 70वीं वाहिनी) की है, के लिए बनाए गए गार्ड रूम से सटा हुआ है। इसे ताला लगाकर रखा जाता है।
- 4. घर के सुरक्षा गार्ड के अनुसार, कल सुबह कमरे से मलबा और अन्य आंशिक रूप से जले हुए सामान को हटा दिया गया था।

सादर सूचनार्थ प्रेषित है।

REPORT

Under directions of Hon'ble the Chief Justice, I visited the official residence of Hon'ble Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma at 30, Tughlak Crescent, New Delhi on 15.3.2025 at around 9.10 pm. On reaching there, I called Private Secretary to the Hon'ble Judge, who was requested by me to come to the bungalow. He came out and took me to the Hon'ble Judge who was sitting in his office. Thereafter, the Hon'ble Judge, and I visited the room, which is adjacent to the office, where the fire incident took place on 14.3.2025. It was informed to me by the Private Secretary that the room was being used as a store room to keep useless articles of the household and remained accessible to all as it was not kept locked. On reaching there, I found out that it was complete dark inside the room and the walls had developed cracks. We all took out our mobile phones and switched on the torch to have a look inside the room. We saw all the walls were blacked out due to fire and some material was hanging from the roof and half burnt articles were lying there and burnt articles/debris were lying on the floor. After spending 8-10 minutes in the room, we all came out.

The report is, accordingly, submitted for kind perusal of Hon'ble the Chief

Justice.

Registrar-cum-Secretary to Hon'ble the Chief Justice 16.3.2025

HON'BLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE

Dear Justice Upadhyaya,

I have received a report today, which refers to oral queries raised and answers given by Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma, a sitting Judge of the High Court of Delhi, in terms of the In-House Procedure.

It may be appropriate if you can highlight the facts recorded and found in the report and ask Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma to give his response thereto in writing on or before 12:00 noon tomorrow, i.e. March 22, 2025.

In addition, Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma may be asked to provide the following information:

- (a) How does he account for the presence of money/cash in the room located in his premises?
- (b) Explain the source of money/cash which was found in the said room.
- (c) Who is the person who had removed the burnt money/cash from the room in the morning of March 15, 2025?

Please also ascertain the details of the official staff of the High Court Registry, the personal security officers and the security guards who are posted at the residence of Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma during the last six months. Request letter may be sent to the Mobile Service Provider(s) for providing call record details of the official or other mobile phone number(s) of Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma for the last six months.

Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma may be requested to not dispose of his mobile phone(s) or delete or modify any conversation, messages or data from his mobile phone(s).

The reply submitted by Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma, along with your comments, may be furnished to me immediately for further action.

Sincerely,
(Sanjiv Khanna)

Hon'ble Mr. Justice D.K. Upadhyaya Chief Justice High Court of Delhi Sher Shah Road New Delhi.

22nd March, 2025

Respected Chief Justice of India,

As desired by your goodself vide your dated 21st March, 2025, I requested Mr.

Justice Yashwant Varma to furnish his response, in writing, vide my letter dated 21st March, 2025 (copy of which is enclosed).

In response, Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma has submitted his reply vide his letter dated 22nd March, 2025, which is being forwarded to your goodself along with this letter.

The details of the staff of the High Court registry deputed with Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma is also enclosed herewith.

A request letter was sent to the Commissioner of Police, Delhi for obtaining call details record and IPDR of Justice Yashwant Varma's mobile phone number for the last six months, i.e., from 1.9.2024 till date. The call details record has been received and is being forwarded in a pen drive along with this letter. As regards IPDR, the same shall be furnished to you as soon as it is received from the Commissioner of Police, Delhi/mobile service provider. A copy of request letter is enclosed herewith.

As regards the details of the Personal Security Officers and the Security Guards posted at the residence of Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma during the last six months, i.e., from 1.9.2024 till date, a request has been made to the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Security) for providing the same. Such details will also be submitted once they are received. A copy of request letter is enclosed herewith.

I may also inform that Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma has also been requested vide my letter dated 21st March, 2025 not to dispose of his mobile phone(s) and further not to delete or modify any conversation, messages, or data from his mobile phone(s).

With warm regards,

Yours sincerely,
(Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya)

Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sanjiv Khanna Chief Justice of India 7, Krishna Menon Marg New Delhi – 110 011

Encl:

- Copy of my dated 21st March, 2025 sent to Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma.
- 2. Letter, in original, dated 22nd March, 2025 of Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma.
- 3. Copy of the State of March, 2025 sent to the Commissioner of Police, Delhi for providing/obtaining call details record and IPDR of mobile number of Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma.
- 4. Copy of dated 22nd March, 2025 sent to Mr. Shri Sukant Ballabh, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Security), Bapu Dham, Sardar Patel Marg, New Delhi for providing details of PSOs and Security Guard posted at the residence of Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma.

21st March, 2025

Dear Justice Varma,

The following is brought to your notice for your response:

vacations, I got a call from Mr. Sanjay Arora, Commissioner of Police, Delhi at around 4.50 pm informing me about an incident of fire which broke out on 14.3.2025 at about 11.30 pm in a store room
near the office at your bungalow.
The
Commissioner of Police also shared with me certain photographs
and a video of the site.
On receiving the said information, I instructed
Registrar-cum-Secretary attached with me, to visit the
spot. He, accordingly, visited your residence and also the room
where the fire had broken out, accompanied by you and
your Private Secretary.
accordingly, prepared a report which has been submitted to me and
as per the said report, was informed by least that the
room was being used as a store room to keep useless articles of
household and the room remained accessible to all and was not kept
locked. I also mentions in his report that on reaching the
sport, he found out that there was complete dark inside the room and
the walls had developed cracks and that with the help of mobile
phone torch, he along with you and had a look inside the
room and it was found that all the walls had gone black on account
TOOM and it was found that an the wans had gone black on account

of fire and some material was hanging from the roof, and half burnt articles were lying there and further that burnt articles/debris were lying on the floor. According to the spent 8-10 minutes in the room and thereafter came out.

On a further query, the Commissioner of Police reported to me on 16.3.2025 that PCR call was made by your Private Secretary from mobile number which is registered in the name of High Court of Delhi, and that he was informed about the fire by one of the servants placed at your residence. He also informed me that the store room is adjacent to the guard room where Central Reserve Police Force (Battalion 70F) is posted and that the store room used to be kept locked.

The Commissioner of Police also informed me that as per the Security Guard posted at your residence, some debris and half burnt articles were removed in the morning of 15.3.2025.

You met me on 17.3.2025 in the morning at around 8.30 pm in the Delhi High Court Guest House where I am residing presently. In my interaction with you, you told me that in the room where the fire had broken out, only unusable household articles like some furniture and mattresses etc. were kept, and that the room was accessible to the servants, gardeners and sometimes even to the CPWD personnels. I came to know from you in the said meeting that at the time of the incident, you were in Bhopal and got information about the fire from your daughter and that at the moment, black burnt material (soot) is lying in the room. I also showed you the photographs and the video on my WhatsApp which was shared with me by the Commissioner of Police. Watching that, you responded by expressing some apprehension of some conspiracy. You may note that the Commissioner of Police in his report dated 16.3.2025 has reported that as per the guard posted at your residence, the debris and other partially burnt articles were removed from the room in which the fire had broken out, in the morning of 15.3.2025.

The reported incident is very disturbing and, therefore, you are requested to give your response, in writing, on or before 1200 hrs tomorrow, i.e., 22.3.2025.

You are also required to submit the following information:

(a) How do you account for the presence of money/cash in the room located in your bungalow;

- (b) Explain the source of money/cash which was found in the said room; and
- (c) Who is the person who had removed the burnt currency from the room in the morning of 15.3.2025.

I also request you not to dispose of your mobile phone(s), and not to delete or modify any conversation, messages, or data from your mobile phone(s).

You are again requested to furnish your response, in writing, on or before 1200 hrs tomorrow, i.e., 22.3.2025.

Regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya)

Hon'ble Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma Judge, High Cour of Delhi 30, Tughlak Crescent New Delhi – 110 011

Encl:

- 1. Report submitted by the Commissioner of Police, Delhi which was shared with me on 15.3.2025 on my WhatsApp.
- 2. A pen drive containing three photographs and a video shared with me by the Commissioner of Police, Delhi on 15.3.2025 on my WhatsApp.
- 3. Report dated 16.3.2025 of Registrar-cum-Secretary attached with me.
- 4. Another report shared with me by the Commissioner of Police, Delhi on 16.3.2025 on my WhatsApp.

The Hon'ble Chief Justice Delhi High Court

22 March 2025

Dear Chief Justice,

Attached is my response to your communication of 21 March 2025. Despite the limited timeline, I appreciate the imperative of urgency and submit my reply as under.

A fire broke out in the storeroom situated near the staff quarters of my official residence on the intervening night of 14/15 March 2025. This room was generally utilised by all and sundry to store articles such as unused furniture, bottles, crockery, mattresses, used carpets, old speakers, garden implements as well as CPWD material. This room is unlocked and accessible both from the official front gate as well as the backdoor of the staff quarters. It is disconnected from the main residence and is surely not a room in my house as has been portrayed and suggested in the article which appeared in the Times of India and certain other news reports.

On that date, my wife and I were not in Delhi and travelling in Madhya Pradesh and it was only my daughter and aged mother who were at home. I returned to Delhi only on the evening of 15 March 2025 from Bhopal travelling on an Indigo flight with my wife.

When the fire broke out around midnight, the Fire Service was alerted by my daughter and my Private Secretary and whose calls would be duly recorded. During the exercise to douse the fire, all staff and the members of my household were asked to move away from the scene of the incident in view of safety concerns. After the

fire was doused and when they went back to the scene of the incident, they saw no cash or currency on site.

I state unequivocally that no cash was ever placed in that storeroom either by me or any of my family members and strongly denounce the suggestion that the alleged cash belonged to us. The very idea or suggestion that this cash was kept or stored by us is totally preposterous. The suggestion that one would store cash in an open, freely accessible and commonly used storeroom near the staff quarters or in an outhouse verges on the incredible and incredulous. It is a room which is completely disassociated from my living areas and a boundary wall demarcates my living area from that outhouse. I only wish that the media had conducted some enquiry before I came to be indicted and defamed in the press.

As stated above, I returned to New Delhi on the evening of 15 March 2025 when I was apprised of the entire incident. I vividly recollect your first phone call to me on that evening when you apprised me of having received information of an incident of arson at my residence. I expressed shock and complete disbelief since till that time I was led to believe that it was merely a fire caused by a short circuit. I recall my apprising you of the nature of the premises and the articles which are usually put away for storage in that room. You had thereafter requested for the PPS to be permitted to visit the site and to which I had readily agreed. The PPS arrived later that night and when I, my PS along with the PPS inspected the gutted room, no currency was either found nor was any cash in any state seen present on site. This also stands corroborated from the report of which has been provided to me. Post that inspection and on your instructions, the gutted room remains in that state even today.

We had then agreed to meet the next day before commencement of Court. It was during our meeting at the High Court Guesthouse that I was first shown the video and other photographs which had been shared with you by the Commissioner of Police. I was totally shocked to see the contents of the video since that depicted something which was not found on site as I had seen it. It was this which prompted me to observe that this clearly appeared to be a conspiracy to frame and malign me. It also lends credence to my firm belief that the entire incident is part of a sequence of events which occurred in the recent past including the unfounded allegations that circulated on social media in December 2024 [which too I had apprised you about during the course of our meeting] and your first reaction of the incident being that of arson. It was the lack of knowledge or connection with the purported discovery of currency is what prompted my reaction in our first interaction in respect of this episode and when I had alluded to a conspiracy to frame me.

At the cost of repetition, I unequivocally state that neither I nor any of my family members had stored or kept any cash or currency in that storeroom at any point of time. Our cash withdrawals, made from time to time, are all documented and always through regular banking channels, the use of UPI applications and cards. Insofar as the allegation of the recovery of cash, I once again make it clear that no one from my house ever reported seeing any currency in burnt form in the room. In fact, this gets further corroborated from there being no cash or currency which we saw when the site was restored to us after the fire personnel and the police had left the scene quite apart from we being not apprised of any recovery or seizure which was made on the spot. This may also be viewed in light of the statement of the Chief of the Fire Service which I have gathered from news reports.

We have, since that fateful night, been continuously trying to find an explanation for the allegations which are being levelled and with us being required to prove an allegation which is premised on cash being discovered and the same presumed to belong to me or my family members. That presumption requires me to not only furnish an explanation with respect to the existence of an article allegedly present in a commonly used outhouse and general storeroom which was freely accessible but also requires me to 'account' for the same.

That takes me to the video clip which has been shared with me. Assuming without admitting that the video was taken immediately at the time of the incident at the site, none of it appears to have been recovered or seized. The second aspect which I need to underscore is that none of the staff was shown any remnants of cash or currency that may have been present on site. I have made my own enquiries from the staff present who have also stated that there was no 'removal' of currency which was allegedly found at the site or removed from the premises. The only thing which was cleared was debris and what they considered to be salvageable. That is still present in the house and can be seen kept apart in one part of the residence.

What baffles me is the complete absence of any sacks of allegedly burnt currency which were ever recovered or seized. We categorically assert that neither my daughter, PS nor household staff were shown these so-called sacks of burnt currency. I stand by my consistent position that when they accessed the storeroom, there was no currency, burnt or otherwise, which could be seen. I request you to bear in mind that the storeroom is removed from my residence and is used as a general dump room for disused articles and other sundry household articles. I wonder who would countenance an allegation that currency would be kept in a storeroom in a corner of the house and which is freely accessible from amongst others the back wicker gate also.

I would be seech you to also bear in consideration that no currency was recovered from the premises that we actually occupy and use as a family. That part of the premises is as indicated above removed from the living quarters. It is in the aforesaid background that I urge you to absolve me of these unfounded and baseless allegations.

In the life of a judge, nothing matters more than reputation and character. That has been severely tarnished and irreparably damaged. The baseless allegations that have been levelled against me have proceeded on mere innuendos and an unproven assumption that the cash allegedly seen and found belonged to me.

This incident has scarred my reputation built over more than a decade as a Judge of a High Court, and it has left me with no means to defend myself. I would also beseech you to bear in consideration that in all my years as a Judge of a High Court, no such allegation had ever been made in the past nor any doubt cast on my integrity. In fact, I would be grateful if an enquiry is made with respect to my functioning as a judge and what is the perception of the legal fraternity with regard to my integrity and honesty in the discharge of my judicial functioning.

In these circumstances, my response to the queries are as follows: -

Query (a) As already stated, I was never aware of any money or cash lying in the outhouse storeroom. Neither I nor any of my family members had any knowledge of cash nor does it have any bearing or relation with me or my family. No such cash or currency was shown to my family members or staff who were present on that fateful night.

Query (b) In light of my response above, the question of explaining the source of the currency does not arise.

Query (c) I also strongly deny and outrightly reject the insinuation, if made, that we removed currency from the storeroom. As stated above, we were neither shown nor handed over any sacks of burnt currency. In fact, and as stated above, the limited debris which was sought to be salvaged continues to exist in one part of the residence. As stated above, I and along with my wife returned from Bhopal on Indigo Flight No. 6E 2303 only on the evening of 15 March 2025 Therefore, the question of its alleged removal is not known to us. In any event none of my staff removed any article, currency or cash in any form.

Yours sincerely,

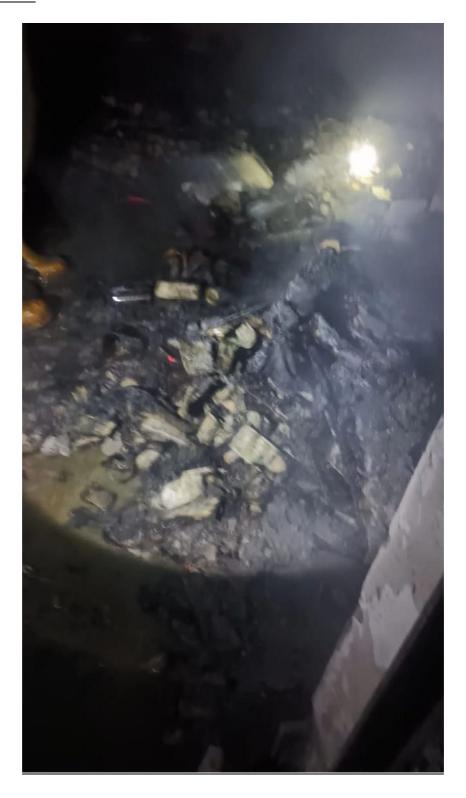
<u>Photographs and video as shared by the Commissioner of Police, Delhi, with the Chief Justice of the High Court of Delhi</u>

Picture 1



Photographs and video as shared by the Commissioner of Police, Delhi, with the Chief Justice of the High Court of Delhi

Picture 2



<u>Photographs and video as shared by the Commissioner of Police, Delhi, with the Chief Justice of the High Court of Delhi</u>

Picture 3



<u>Photographs and video as shared by the Commissioner of Police, Delhi, with the Chief Justice of the High Court of Delhi</u>

<u>Video</u>

To view/download copy/paste the URL -

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/3hrhoplxng3x561nc480t/Video-as-shared-by-the-Commissioner-of-Police-Delhi-with-the-Chief-Justice-of-the-High-Court-of-Delhi.mp4?rlkey=xwj8ygs5pwvv8blk79c1380ah&dl=0