

'Attack on dissent strikes at heart of democracy'

Delivering lecture at GNLU, Justice Chandrachud said Constitution envisages pluralism, no individual or institution can claim monopoly over idea of India

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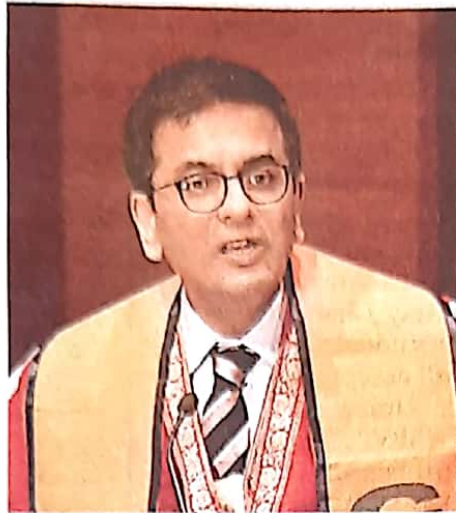
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Calling dissent a "safety valve" of democracy, Supreme Court judge Justice DY Chandrachud on Saturday said "blanket labelling" of dissent as anti-national or anti-democratic strikes at the "heart" of the country's commitment to protect Constitutional values and promote deliberative democracy.

Delivering a lecture at Gujarat National Law University on Saturday, Justice Chandrachud said the use of state machinery to curb dissent, instills fear which violates the rule of law.

"The blanket labelling of dissent as anti-national or anti-democratic strikes at the heart of our commitment to protect constitutional values and the promotion of deliberative democracy," he said, adding: "Protecting dissent is but a reminder that while a democratic-elected government offers us a legitimate tool for development and social coordination, they can never claim a monopoly over values and identities that define our plural society." He was speaking on the topic 'The Hues That Make India: From Plurality to Pluralism' as part of the 15th Justice PD Desai Memorial Lecture organised here.

"Employment of state machinery to curb dissent instills fear and creates a chilling atmosphere on free peace which violates the rule of law and distracts from the constitutional vision



Justice D Y Chandrachud

of pluralist society," he added.

Justice Chandrachud's comments came at a time when the passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act and the proposed National Register of Citizens has triggered massive protests in many parts of the country. "The destruction of spaces for questioning and dissent destroys the basis of all growth--political, economic, cultural and social. In this sense, dissent is a safety valve of democracy," he said.

Justice Chandrachud also stated that silencing of dissent and the generation of fear in the minds of people go beyond the violation of personal liberties and a commitment to constitutional value. Notably, Justice Chandrachud was part of a bench that had in January sought response of the Uttar Pradesh government on a plea seeking quashing of notices sent to alleged protesters by the district administration for recovering losses caused by da-

10th convocation held

Gujarat National Law University held its 10th convocation on Saturday. A total of 218 students were conferred degrees. This included 158 students of the five-year Integrated UG programme in Law, 50 students of the PG programme in Law, 9 students of MBA programme, and one student of the doctoral programme. Officials said 26 gold medals were awarded to 16 students for their scholastic performance in various subjects. Of these, 22 medals were bagged by 12 female students. Sanskriti Sanghi (UG Programme in Law) receiving as many as eight gold medals.



mage to public properties during anti-CAA agitations in the state. "The attack on dissent strikes at the heart of a dialogue-based democratic society and hence, a state is required to ensure that it deploys its machinery to protect the freedom of speech and expression within the bounds of law, and dismantle any attempt to instill fear or curb free speech," he opined.