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## Nine Sentenced to Life in India's First 'Digital Arrest' Fraud Case

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– Categories: Crime



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In a first-of-its-kind ruling in India, a special court in West Bengal has sentenced nine individuals to life imprisonment for orchestrating a high-value cyber fraud through a scheme known as a “digital arrest.” The case marks the country’s first conviction based entirely on digital evidence, with no eyewitness accounts or physical arrests.

The convicts – Md Imtiyaz Ansari, Shahid Ali Shaikh, Shahrukh Rafik Shaikh, Jatin Anup Ladwal, Rohit Singh, Rupesh Yadav, Sahil Singh, Pathan Sumaiya Banu, and Faldu Ashoke – were found guilty of defrauding a retired agricultural scientist of approximately ₹1 crore. Among them, four are from Maharashtra, three from Haryana, and two from Gujarat.

The fraud was initiated in October 2024, when the victim, Partha Kumar Mukhopadhyay, received a video call on WhatsApp from an individual pretending to be a Mumbai Police officer. The caller falsely accused the victim of involvement in a money laundering case and coerced him into transferring large sums of money under threat of arrest. Forged documents and threatening calls were used to intensify the pressure.

An investigation by local police and cybercrime experts revealed that the operation was run by a syndicate using SIM cards registered in India, with calls originating from Cambodia. Authorities tracked down the accused through digital footprints, including IP addresses, call records, WhatsApp logs, and bank transaction trails.

The Kalyani court reviewed over 2,600 pages of digital evidence. The charges included cheating, criminal conspiracy, forgery, identity theft, and impersonation, under sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Information Technology Act.

Special Public Prosecutor Bivas Chatterjee, who led the prosecution, stated, “This is the first conviction and sentencing ever in any digital arrest case in the country.” The court process, from investigation to sentencing, was completed within eight months.

No physical witnesses were produced during the trial. The case stands out as a major step forward in prosecuting cybercrime using only digital records. All nine individuals are currently in custody. Legal analysts believe this ruling could set a precedent for future cyber fraud prosecutions in India.