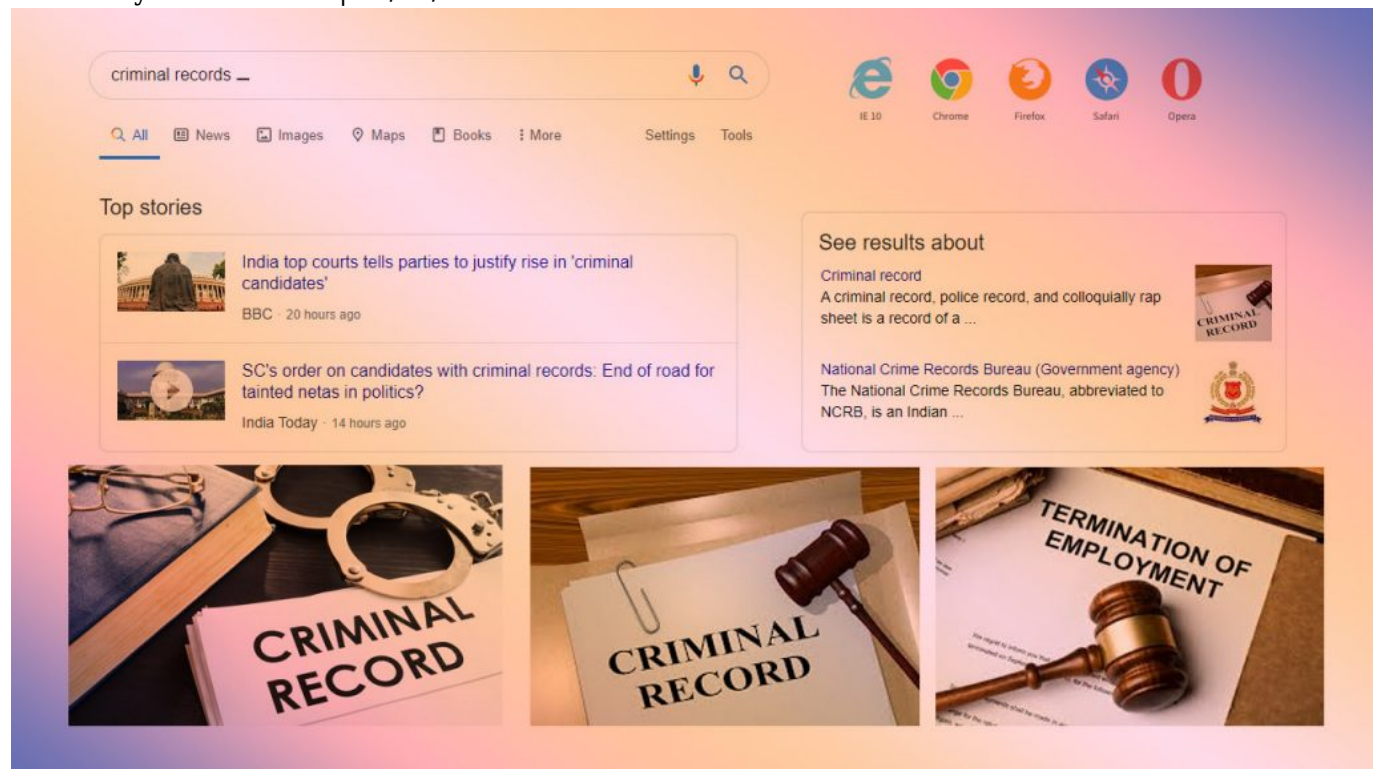


SC directs political parties to list candidates' criminal records on websites

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Political parties that field candidates with criminal records must from now on tell the public why they have chosen tainted candidates over those with clean records, the Supreme Court ruled on Thursday as it handed down a series of directions aimed at checking the criminalization of politics.

The court ruled that it shall be mandatory for political parties during central and state elections to put out detailed information about candidates with criminal cases pending against them, including the nature of the offences. Parties must also list the reasons for selecting such candidates and state why others without criminal antecedents were not selected.

The court was passing orders on a contempt petition that raised the issue of criminalization of politics claiming that directions given by the court in a 2018 order on disclosure of criminal antecedents by candidates are not being followed.

Details

The court noted that there has been an alarming increase in the number of candidates with criminal records entering politics.

- In 2004, 24% of members of Parliament (MPs) had

criminal cases pending against them. In 2009, that went up to 30%, in 2014 to 34%, and in 2019 as many as 43% of MPs had criminal cases pending against them.

- The information should be published in one local vernacular newspaper, a national newspaper, and on the official social media platforms of the political party, including Facebook and Twitter.
- The directions are likely to have key political fallout given that the two biggest and politically crucial states, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, go to polls over the next two years.
- The bench headed by Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman also directed that these details are to be published within 48 hours of the selection of the candidate.

SOURCE: *The Hindu, Livemint*