

Kangaroo Court

July 29, 2022

In news— Chief Justice of India N V Ramana Saturday has recently said that “rising number of media trials” are proving to be hurdles towards doing justice, and “kangaroo courts” run by the media are causing harm to the health of the democracy.

What is a kangaroo court?

- **Oxford Dictionary defines it as “an unofficial court held by a group of people in order to try someone regarded, especially without good evidence, as guilty of a crime or misdemeanour”.**
- **In a less literal sense, it is used to refer to proceedings or activities where a judgement is made in a manner that is unfair, biased, and lacks legitimacy.**
- A kangaroo court is an unauthorized, unofficial court, the sole purpose of which is to provide the image of a fair legal process.
- In actuality, the fate of the accused is actually decided in advance, with no consideration being made as to the fairness of the situation.
- Kangaroo courts are typically associated with groups that practice their own brand of justice, which is outside of the formal judicial process.
- **The origin of the phrase is not clearly known, but it is believed to have been used from the 19th Century onwards.** Why the word ‘kangaroo’ is used is also not clear, but there are several theories.
- Some dictionaries say the **association with the animal could have a relation to Australians, though the term probably originated in America.**
- The Collins Dictionary argues that it could be to evoke a sense that **“justice progresses by leaps and bounds”** in case of kangaroo court verdicts.
- There are other historical theories, too. **As per an**

article in the Sydney Morning Herald, the term popped up first in California, around 1849-1850. At that stage, there were some 800-1,000 Aussie prospectors digging for fortune. Locals soon gleaned that (our forebears) would occasionally decide things in an unofficial kind of way.