‘SC/ST Act ruling is causing damage’

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“The entire judgment is vitiated,” the government contended. It said the court’s guidelines like banning immediate arrest and ordering preliminary enquiry amounted to an amendment of the Atrocities Act and not just filling up of gaps.

On April 3, a Bench of Justices A.K. Goel and U.U. Lalit refused to suspend their judgment, observing that the March 20 verdict was meant to protect innocents from arbitrary arrest and not an affront to Dalit rights.

“An innocent should not be punished. There should not be terror in the society... We do not want any member of the SC/ST to be deprived of his rights. We only want an innocent not to be punished,” Justice Goel had observed. Justice Goel, who authored the verdict, said the judgment, in fact, fortified the Dalit protection law.

At one point, the Bench even confronted the government for shifting its stand in court by first agreeing that there is abuse of the Atrocities Act and now filing a review petition against the March 20 judgment.