

Poll victory and good image do not absolve people of crimes: SC

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has held in a judgment that electoral wins and good public image do not absolve people of criminal prosecution, while belling the cat on the “alarming trend” of influential figures creating significant delays and even obstructing the administration of justice.

A Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Satish Chandra Charma was dealing with a case involving the withdrawal of prosecution against a former Uttar Pradesh MLA in a double murder case pending trial for over three decades.

“Merely because an accused person is elected to the Legislative Assembly cannot be a testament to their image among the general public. Matters of a gruesome crime akin to the double murder in the present case do not warrant withdrawal of prosecution merely on the ground of good public image of an accused named in the chargesheet after thorough investigation,” Justice Nath observed in

the July 15 verdict.

The accused, Chhote Singh, was elected as Member of the Legislative Assembly from the ruling party in Uttar Pradesh in 2007.

The apex court said the criminal charges against Mr. Singh seem to have been wiped out for no reason other than his poll victory.

Justice Nath faulted the trial judge’s reasoning that his electoral victory was a sign of his excellent image among the people. The trial court had concluded that public had shown its trust in Mr. Singh by electing him to the Legislative Assembly.

Taking a contrary view, Justice Nath said the withdrawal of charges against Mr. Singh in the gruesome case should not be allowed in the public’s own interest.

Justice Nath noted how the trial against the remaining nine accused in the case remained frozen over the years. The court said the case was redolent of the “lamentable spectre of political influence” skewing legal proceedings.