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ROBODOG SCANDAL: GALGOTIAS UNIVERSITY'S AI MIRAGE COULD LEAD TO LEGAL CONSEQUENCES FOR FORGERY AND FRAUD

AUTHORED BY - OWAIZ AHMED KHAN SHIRANI, AND
CO-AUTHOR DIKSHIKA YADAV
OF ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE OF LAW.

ABSTRACT

At the India AI Impact Summit 2026 in Delhi, Galgotias University displayed a Chinese GO2 robodog, renamed "Orion," along with a Korean drone soccer arena. They falsely claimed these were homegrown innovations from their "Centre of Excellence." Prof. Neha Singh confidently demonstrated the technology to crowds, asserting it was developed in-house. Outrage spread online when it was revealed to be off-the-shelf imports. Authorities from MeitY evicted the university from the event, stating they had spread misinformation. Galgotias later apologized, blaming Singh's "ill-informed enthusiasm," but faced demands in the UP assembly to revoke their UGC recognition.

This misrepresentation could lead to serious legal consequences under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) 2023. BNS Section 318, concerning cheating, applies if attendees were misled by dishonest claims for prestige, leading to wrongful gain (such as event slots or reputation) and loss (public trust). Offenders can face up to 7 years in prison and a fine. Section 336, related to forgery, applies to the false stall materials and deceptive claims made with intent to cheat. This can lead to up to 2 years of rigorous imprisonment, a fine, or both.

Regulatory investigations are underway, with UGC and AICTE looking into ethical breaches under Article 51A (h). Possible outcomes include fines, probation, or derecognition. While there is no FIR yet, political pressure is increasing scrutiny on the situation.

The scandal raises concerns about integrity in AI events amidst India's push for innovation, damaging Galgotias' reputation. Even though defenses like negligence might lessen liability, proven intent could result in penalties, event blacklists, and lawsuits. This highlights the dangers of prioritizing hype over honesty in tech academia.

The following are three key sections relevant to the Galgotias University Dog Scandal:

BNS Section 318: Cheating

Anyone who cheats, causing someone to deliver property, consent to its retention, or act in a way that results in wrongful gain or loss, commits cheating. This is punishable by up to 7 years in prison and a fine, similar to IPC 420. In this case, misrepresenting foreign technology as indigenous tricked attendees and organizers for prestige.

BNS Section 336: Forgery

Anyone who creates false documents or documents that resemble genuine ones with the intent to cause harm, support false claims, or commit fraud or cheating, commits forgery. This is punishable by up to 2 years of rigorous imprisonment, a fine, or both, similar to IPC 465. This applies if stall materials falsely branded the Unitree GO2 "Orion" as Galgotias' invention.

BNS Section 316: Cheating (General)

This covers broader dishonest deception that does not involve property delivery, punishable by up to 3 years imprisonment, a fine, or both, similar to IPC 415-417. This could apply to the initial false claims made before the eviction from the event.

Incident Overview:

The Galgotias University robodog scandal broke at the India AI Impact Summit 2026, held in Delhi in mid-February. The university's stall featured a Unitree GO2 robodog, a commercially available Chinese quadruped robot priced around \$1,600, rebranded as "Orion" and marketed as an indigenous creation from their "Centre of Excellence in Robotics." Additionally, there was a drone soccer arena identified later as Korean technology. Prof. Neha Singh, representing the university, conducted live demonstrations, confidently asserting to attendees that these were Galgotias' breakthroughs in AI and robotics. Videos shared on social media quickly went viral, revealing the foreign origins based on model numbers and specifications that matched Unitree's catalog. MeitY officials shut down the stall during the event for spreading misinformation. Galgotias issued apologies, attributing the situation to Singh's "ill-informed enthusiasm," but the backlash intensified, leading to UP assembly discussions demanding derecognition.

This incident reveals tensions in the Atmanirbhar Bharat movement, where events like the AI Summit emphasize homegrown innovation in a competitive global landscape.

Background on Galgotias University:

Founded in 2011 in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, Galgotias University is a private institution recognized by UGC and AICTE, serving over 20,000 students in engineering, management, and sciences. The university actively promotes its programs in AI, robotics, and placements, maintaining connections with industry through centers of excellence. Previous controversies include a 2019 advertising dispute and a 2024 domain triumph, but nothing criminal. Participation in the AI Summit aimed to enhance the university's profile, aligning with PM Modi's vision for India as an AI hub by 2026. Rebranding foreign technology as proprietary reflects a trend in some Indian academia, risking credibility when revealed.

The Misrepresentation Unfolds:

On day one of the summit, Singh's stall attracted large crowds. She described Orion's "autonomous navigation" and "AI vision," omitting any acknowledgment of Unitree. Banners touted "Galgotias Innovation," with no foreign branding present. Attendees, including startups and officials, hailed it as Indian innovation. By evening, users on X (formerly Twitter) noticed similarities to Unitree's technology, such as identical movements, sensors, and battery life. The drone arena was traced back to Korean firm Dr. Drone. Clips went viral, garnering millions of views and tagging MeitY and UGC. Organizers confronted the team; Galgotias claimed it was a "learning project," but evidence showed these were unmodified imports. The eviction followed with a warning for exhibitors against promoting misinformation.

The university later clarified that Singh was not suspended but under review; some students defended her online, calling it a "display error."

Legal Framework: Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023

Effective July 1, 2024, BNS updates criminal law, replacing IPC with victim-focused provisions. Sections 316, 318, and 336 target deception central to the scandal. Courts interpret these cases based on legal precedents, emphasizing intent (*mens rea*). Prosecution must prove more than negligence; deliberate falsity is necessary for gain. As of February 21, 2026, there has been no FIR, but complaints could prompt police action.

BNS Section 316: General Cheating Defined

Section 316(1) states, "Whoever cheats, intending to cause wrongful gain to himself or loss to another, shall be punished with imprisonment for up to three years, or a fine, or both." Cheating involves deception that enables action or omission. This is similar to old IPC 415-417 and

covers non-property fraud.

Elements:

- Deception: False claims about indigenous technology misled over 1,000 visitors.
- Dishonest Intent: Prestige and event slots as gains; public misconceptions as losses.
- Inducement: Attendees built networks, believing in Galgotias' capabilities.
- Application: Initial pitches qualify before the eviction. Defense: Puffery is not a crime. Penalties are mild, given it is a first offense.

BNS Section 318: Cheating with Property and Wrongful Gain

A more severe provision: Section 318(4) states, "Cheating that induces the delivery of property or consent to its retention, with knowledge of deception, can lead to up to seven years in prison and a fine." This mirrors IPC 420.

Key aspects:

- Property Delivery: The summit space served as a benefit; partnerships may have been influenced.
- Wrongful Gain/Loss: Reputation boost (gain); loss in public trust regarding Indian AI.
- Knowledge: Singh's confident demonstration suggests awareness; university branding indicates planning.

In this case, organizers were misled into allocating prime space. If sponsors approached, it would strengthen the case. Precedents like the Satyam fraud confirm corporate deception liability. The university could face vicarious liability under Section 318(2) if someone authorized it.

BNS Section 336: Forgery Explained

Section 336(1) states: "Creating false documents or electronic records with intent to cause damage, injury, support false claims, or commit fraud or cheating can lead to up to two years of rigorous imprisonment, a fine, or both." This replaces IPC 463-465.

Core components:

- False Document: Banners and brochures falsely claimed "Galgotias-built Orion."
- Intent to Cheat: This was not an accident—branding was aimed at gaining acclaim.
- Resemblance to Genuine: Mimicked innovation displays.
- Relevance: Stall materials count as "documents." Viral photos provide evidence of falsity.

Digital posters count as "electronic records." Penalties apply to non-violent fraud.

Potential Criminal Proceedings

While an FIR seems unlikely without a complainant, the agitation of UP politicians might prompt one. The process involves:

- Complaint: A victim (MeitY or attendees) files under CrPC 2023 (equivalent to BNSS).
- Investigation: Police might seize stall items and question Singh and the university.
- Charge Sheet: If evidence appears solid, the court will issue a summons.
- Trial: Intent would have to be proven through emails and prepared documents.

Bail would likely be granted; fines would be primary penalties. Conviction is rare without severe harm, but precedent influences future cases.

Regulatory and Civil Ramifications Beyond BNS:

UGC/AICTE: Article 51A(h) violations can lead to inquiries, potential probation, fines (₹10-50 lakh), or derecognition. Prior cases in 2025 revoked recognition for two colleges due to falsified data.

MeitY Blacklist: If blacklisted, Galgotias cannot participate in future government events, impacting funding.

Consumer Protection Act 2019: Partners deceived may file passing off suits, seeking damages up to ₹50 lakh.

Universities Act: An internal investigation is likely, and Singh's dismissal is probable.

Reputation is at stake: Historically, scandals have led to enrollment drops of 20-30%.

University Response and Defenses:

Galgotias issued a statement claiming it was an "enthusiasm error," stating the technology was meant for student learning. They do not admit intent. Strategies include:

- Negligence: The university may argue Sections 316 and 336 require knowledge of wrongdoing.
- No Gain/Loss: They may assert that prestige is intangible.
- First Offense: They might pursue a plea bargain under BNS Chapter XXII.
- Apology tour: They could issue press releases and encourage student defense efforts. Long-term, they may call for compliance audits.

Conclusion: Lessons from the Robodog Fallout

The Galgotias University robodog scandal at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 serves as a powerful warning for academia in India's race for innovation. By rebranding a Chinese Unitree

GO2 as the homegrown "Orion," the university violated potential BNS provisions—Section 316 for general cheating through deception, Section 318 for inducing wrongful gain in prestige, and Section 336 for using false promotional materials. Penalties could include fines and imprisonment.

As of February 21, 2026, no FIR has been filed, but UGC and MeitY are likely to scrutinize the situation, along with potential civil risks under the Consumer Protection Act. Political pressures in the UP assembly increase the chance of derecognition, reminiscent of previous academic scandals. While Galgotias' claims of mere "enthusiasm" might offer temporary relief, the reputational damage persists, diminishing student trust and event credibility.

Wider lessons call for strict ethical guidelines: mandatory disclosures at tech summits, vendor audits for universities, and compliance with Article 51A(h) regarding scientific guidance. This "AI mirage" illustrates how promoting hype over honesty undermines the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. Genuine innovation succeeds with transparency, not shortcuts. Galgotias must change course to recover, or it risks becoming a mere footnote in India's AI journey.

