

## Coming soon: Separate courts for rape victims

Rape victims coming to a court to depose will not have to sit along with criminals facing trials as the Delhi High Court has proposed to set up separate courts for them.

During a hearing on a rape case, a division bench comprising Chief Justice Ajit Prakash Shah and Justice S. Muralidhar said Wednesday, 'We are proposing to have separate courts for rape victims and initially nine such courts will be set up and the district judge will look after it.'

The court was responding to the query of counsel of the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) who said, 'Rape victims are forced to sit with other undertrials during the lunch hour or when the court is hearing some other matter, and that creates another mental trauma for the victim who had already faced one.'

'We will ensure that the rape victims will no longer have to sit in the judicial lock-up and proper arrangements will be made for them to record their statements in the court. Till the proposal of separate courts gets approval, we will direct the judges to allow such victims to sit inside the court rooms,' the bench said.

The bench also added that security of prosecution witnesses will also be ensured while finalising special courts for rape victims.

Delhi Police counsel Mukta Gupta informed the court that all hospitals in the capital are now equipped with sexual forensic evidence kits.

Gupta also informed the court that the Delhi Judicial Academy is running an orientation programme for sensitisation of members of the Child Welfare Committee, which deals with incest crime cases.

Appreciating the steps taken by police, the court asked them to conduct such programmes on regular basis and to submit a status report by Dec 9, the next date of hearing.

The court had in an earlier order directed Delhi Police and the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) to start a 'crisis intervention centre' to help out victims of incest crimes.

Submitting the status report to the bench, Aparna Bhatt, counsel for the DCW, said that most of the guidelines issued by the court are being followed.

The court had passed a set of guidelines for investigators of incest crimes to sensitise them to the emotional trauma of the victims.

This followed complaints that investigators and prosecutors of such crimes, whose incidence has gone up sharply in recent times, often acted insensitively, particularly when dealing with children.

*Kanu Sarda* ( © IANS / India eNews)