

Special Court to hear Sanjay Dutt's plea Tuesday

A special court, which had convicted actor Sanjay Dutt of possessing illegal arms in the 1993 [Mumbai](#) blasts trial, will Tuesday hear arguments on his bail plea seeking probation for good conduct.

The 48-year-old actor had urged for leniency under the Probation of Offenders Act before the special Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Preventive) Act (TADA) court that convicted him in November 2006 for possessing illegal arms but absolved him of terror conspiracy.

On Feb 8, special judge Promod Kode had granted Dutt extension of time to surrender until further orders. He will hear arguments of the defence and the prosecution on an application moved by Dutt under Section 4 of the Probation of Offenders Act.

'Under the Act, the court has the discretion to release a convict on a bond of 'good' conduct instead of sentencing him to jail for a period not extending three years and during this tenure it can call and give him punishment,' said Dutt's senior counsel V.K. Manohar.

Opposing the actor's plea, special public prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam had earlier said that Dutt was a habitual offender who, despite possessing a licensed pistol, had illegally acquired a 9 mm pistol and an AK-56 rifle purportedly for self-protection and the security of his family.

'Sanjay Dutt was given the AK-56 rifle and ammunition by co-accused Abu Salem and Baba Chowan at the behest of the prime accused in the blasts and mobster Dawood Ibrahim's brother Anees Ibrahim,' Nikam had told the court.

'Dutt was already in possession of four firearms, before receiving the AK-56 and other deadly weapons, which were sufficient for his self defence and that of his family. There was no need for him to keep the AK-56 rifle,' Nikam had added.

Meanwhile, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had asked the special court Feb 15 to award maximum sentence to the actor along with the other 100 guilty.

Under the Arms Act, Dutt faces punishment ranging from five to 10 years. Dutt, who already possessed licensed pistols, had acquired an AK-56 allegedly from mobster Abu Salem's aide Ibrahim Mussa in January 1993 as he thought he needed self-protection.

He was arrested in April that year, a month after the blasts rocked Mumbai. Dutt has spent nearly 16 months in jail in two stretches since then.

The March 12, 1993 serial blasts killed 257 people injured hundreds and destroyed properties worth Rs.300 million.

After a long-drawn trial, which started in January 1994, the TADA court started pronouncing verdicts since Sep 12, 2006. It held 100 of the 123 accused guilty and acquitted 23.

The court is likely to hand out the quantum of sentences after it hears the argument of the defence from Feb 23.

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