

Left MP sent to jail for rape

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, May 12

A DAY after the impressive victory of the Left in the West Bengal Assembly polls, there was bad news for party leaders. Bir Singh Mahato, a Forward Bloc sitting MP from Purulia, was on Friday sentenced to 10 years in jail in connection with a 24-year-old rape case in Parshidi village of the district.

The additional sessions judge, Purulia, S.C. Chatterjee, also convicted Tipu Kamar, Dhansingh Murmu and Budhu Murmu. They were sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 5,000 each was imposed on them. They were found guilty of gangrape.

The Forward Bloc, aware of the loss of face for the party and the Left as a whole, defended Mahato saying he had been falsely implicated. The party would appeal to the high court and apply for bail, general secretary Debabrata Biswas said. Biswas said Mahato had been leading a farmers' struggle at Baghmundi in Purulia and the landlords implicated him in the case.

The case dates back to November 20, 1982. Mahato and his associates allegedly raped a woman in front of her mother-in-law. Police later registered a case against the four.

On September 10, 2005, public prosecutor Rabinathanath Chattaraj said the victim's mother-in-law had identified Mahato as one of the men who had committed the crime. "The victim's mother-in-law was gagged and tied up by Mahato's men. The accused then took the victim to another room and raped her one by one," the public prosecutor said.

The four convicts were sent to Purulia district correctional home amidst tight security. Earlier, Haimi Murmu, an accused, died as the trial was going on.



Bir Singh Mahato

■ Five-time Forward Bloc MP from Purulia.

■ Was a member of Parliament's standing committee on food and civil supplies

■ Was a member of the consultative committee, ministry of communications

■ Was a member of the consultative committee, ministry of railways

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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MP jailed for rape

Statesman News Service

PURULIA/KOLKATA, May 12: Bir Singh Mahato, Purulia's Forward Bloc member of Parliament, was today sentenced, along with three other persons, to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment for raping a woman on 20 November, 1982.

Mr Subhas Chatterjee, judge of Purulia's Fast Track Court, also imposed a fine of Rs 5,000 on each of the quartet. If it is not paid, the prison term will be extended by six months. The other convicted people are Tipu Karmakar, Dhan Singh Mura and Budha Singh Mura.

The incident took place in Parsidih village of the Bagmundi area. The case was filed on 22 November, 1982. Ghasu Singh Mura, one of the accused, died later on. The MP's lawyer,



Bir Singh Mahato

Mr Biswanath Chatterjee, and the FB spoke of taking the matter to Calcutta High Court.

The verdict, scheduled for Saturday, was delayed as the MP was campaigning ahead of elections in North Bengal, the judge allowing him a brief respite.

Saying Mahato had been "framed," Mr Debabrata Biswas, FB general secretary, promised attempts to have him freed on bail.

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THE STATESMAN

Charge-sheeted Ministers: issue for statute Bench

Supreme Court notice to Centre

Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI: A five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court will examine the question whether a person with a criminal background or charge-sheeted in criminal cases can be appointed as a Minister in the Union or State Government.

Considering the fact that important issues of public importance — good governance, moral turpitude, purity of system and public perception — were involved, a Bench, comprising Chief Justice Y.K. Sabharwal and Justice C.K. Thakker, referred to a Constitution Bench a public interest petition filed by Manoj Narulla challenging the induction of certain tainted persons in the Union Council of Ministers.

The Bench said that "having regard to the magnitude of the problem besides its vital importance, it is proper that the writ petition be heard by a Constitution Bench."

It issued notice to the Centre, the Attorney General and Advocates General of all the States seeking their response in four weeks. Since the Bench felt that individuals need not be made re-

spondents in the petition, it ordered the deletion of the names of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Union Ministers Lalu Prasad, Mohammed Taslimuddin and M.A.A. Fatimi.

Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, amicus curiae in the case, said the issue was important since the induction of a person with criminal background as a Minister was not good for democracy. Solicitor General G.E. Vahanvati appearing for the Centre agreed that it was a matter of great public importance.

Presumption of innocence

Additional Solicitor General Gopal Subramanian appearing on behalf of the Attorney General said the question of maintainability of the petition should be considered. He said the concept of presumption of innocence before the guilt was proved in court had to be considered.

However, the Bench said that here it was a question of a person not having the right to be a Minister. The matter should be considered in the context of good governance, purity of system, equality and public perception, both internally and internationally.

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THE HINDU

Mulayam returns portfolio to Raja Bhaiyya

ATIQ KHAN
LUCKNOW 1 JANUARY 21

KUNDA MLA Kunwar Raghuraj Pratap Singh alias Raja Bhaiyya was today re-inducted in the Mulayam Singh Yadav cabinet. The minister, who is on bail and is facing trial in a POTA case imposed upon him by former chief minister Mayawati, returned to the Sachivalaya after two months.

The minister has not only been handed back the Food and Civil Supplies portfolio, he has also been allotted the same ministerial chamber in Sachivalaya which was vacated by him in November.

The Opposition BJP slammed Mulayam for his decision to include the con-

Mulayam with Raja Bhaiyya after the swearing-in ceremony



YSKAL SRIVASTAVA

Amar defence: Look at Union Cabinet

► LUCKNOW: The Samajwadi Party on Saturday defended the re-induction of controversial independent MLA and POTA accused Raghuraj Pratap Singh alias Raja Bhaiyya in the state cabinet saying that there were several ministers at the Centre with similar antecedents.

"We are only following on the footsteps of honourable Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who had ministers like Laloo Prasad Yadav, Shibu Soren and Taslimuddin," SP general secretary Amar Singh said. — P71

Bhaiyya has to report to the police often during the trial period. Now, it will look odd for a cabinet minister to report to a police station in Madhya Pradesh," he said.

However, the minister played down the controversy. Talking to reporters after the oath-taking ceremony, Raja Bhaiyya denied that the trial proceedings would be affected following his re-induction. "I was on bail when I was a minister. Since the bail had been cancelled I went to jail," he said.

Raja Bhaiyya resigned on November 10, 2005 following the Supreme Court's ruling that the trial in the case should be held in another state. He was bailed out by a designated POTA court in Jabalpur on December 19, 2005.

Minister should have been more discreet and waited for the court verdict as Raja

pathi said whether Raja Bhaiyya is guilty or not guilty for the offence is for the court to decide, but the CM has shown haste in re-inducting him. "The Chief