

62 percent of the country's prison population is made up of undertrial prisoners: Supreme Court



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62 percent of India's prison population comprises of undertrial prisoners, against the world average of 18-20 percent, the Supreme Court said yesterday in a case concerning speedy trial of undertrial prisoners.

The Bench of Justices **Madan B Lokur** and **Deepak Gupta** also witnessed some sharp remarks by the Bench against the Centre's alleged indifference towards conditions in jails across the country.

"Your officials have never been there. Tell them to get up from their seats and go have a look at the conditions in jails. Not whitewashed for years, taps are leaking, clogged sewage, toilets not working.

That is why two judges of this court got agitated when they went to visit a prison. They saw exactly what was happening", Justice Madan B Lokur told Additional Solicitor General **Aman Lekhi**.

The Court also pointed out that Central Forensic Science Laboratories had a large number of vacancies.

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ASG Lekhi said that some communications were sent to the States/Union Territories, but only 19 of them responded.

Lekhi also submitted that he will request the concerned officers in the Government of India to communicate with the States/Union Territories so that the rights of prisoners are recognized and given effect to and their living conditions are improved.

Further, the ASG also said that he will find out whether video conferencing facilities and equipment can be made available to all Juvenile Justice Boards across the country and if so, the time within which the needful can be done.

The Court proceeded to record the same in its order and posted the case for hearing on November 29.

Interestingly, the Bench in the same case also referred to certain newspaper reports regarding certain prisoners enjoying luxuries in jails.

The Bench singled out a report pertaining to Tihar jail, with Lokur J demanding,

“What is going on in Tihar? People are enjoying TVs, Sofas. What is the government’s answer? Will you say you are the Centre and it is a State issue?”

ASG Lekhi said that he will look into the same as well.

“I am with Your Lordships. This has to be tackled“, he said.

The said issue will also be taken during the next hearing when the Centre is expected to respond.



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