

Shankar pleaded.

The Bench agreed that cases involving such heinous crimes would have to be fast tracked irrespective of the status of the

and all states last week on a PIL that has sought a comprehensive security mechanism for protecting women against gender-based crimes.

RAISING THE PITCH: JNU students raise slogans demanding justice for the rape victim at Connaught Place in New Delhi on Friday. Tribune photo: Manas Ranjan Bhui

Just 5% hospitals can handle forensics in rape cases

3 million pending cases 25 state, 4 Central Govt forensic labs 25 DNA experts

ADITI TANDON/TNS

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Less than 5 per cent medical institutes in the country are equipped to conduct forensic examination on the victims of sexual assault.

Infrastructure for advanced forensic evidence examination involving DNA profiling and identification is even lesser with only 4 Central Government laboratories equipped to handle such cases.

Given the dismal scenario of medical evidence collection and analysis, top forensic science and forensic medicine specialists from the country today wrote to the JS Verma Committee about what needed to be

done to speed up trial in rape cases.

"It is high time the government created a dedicated cadre of forensic experts to deal with cases of sexual assault.

Today 75 to 80 per cent medico-legal work is being performed by MBBS doctors, who are not well trained in forensic aspects.

They do not have the specific training in the collection and analysis of evidence," said Dr Adarsh Kumar, General Secretary of the Indian Academy of Forensic Medicine.

Medico-Legal Expert for the NHRC and Associate

Professor in Forensic Medicine and Toxicology at AIIMS Adarsh Kumar says India is way behind the West in treating forensics as pivotal to rape investigations.



The academy has demanded a post of District Medico-Legal Expert to handle sexual assault investigations.

"There is a need to have clinical forensic medicine units at every medical college and hospital along with separate rooms for examining rape victims, trained forensic nursing personnel and supportive staff," the academy repre-

sentation to Verma panel says. The panel has fixed January 5 as the last date for receipt of petitions on the anti-rape law debate.

In over 60 per cent cases of sexual assault, delay in trials is attributed to delay in the submission of medical and forensic examination reports.

Law Minister Ashwani Kumar admitted that the lack of infrastructure for medical investigations was a huge challenge hampering investigations. "We have just about three labs for DNA profiling. This area needs a lot of attention," he said.

For over 3 million pending court cases, India has only 25 state and four Central Government

forensic science labs; about 25 DNA experts; 300 medico-legal experts and 5,000 forensic experts, including forensic medicine specialists.

Experts have called for development of medico-legal institutes and centres in every state where deployment of various categories of forensic medicine specialists and toxicologists and scientists is assured.

"Delay is attributed to the receipt of reports from forensic science laboratories, but attention must be paid to how well equipped are these labs to deliver. Inadequacy of forensic infrastructure is a gap the government can't ignore in the ongoing debate on justice for victims of sexual assault," says Dr Adarsh.

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