

Ensure State panels for women are set up: SC

The Supreme Court has asked the Centre if state commissions for women (SCW) actually exist.

The top court raised the question as it dealt with the issue of precarious conditions faced by destitute widows living in Vrindavan and other places across the country.

The court, which is hearing a matter pertaining to the condition of such widows, told the Centre that if SCWs did not exist in the States, then the State governments concerned should be asked to ensure setting up of such panels. "The Solicitor General should also inform us whether the SCW is actually existing in all the States and if not, then a communication to the State governments must be sent to ensure that these SCWs are in place in accordance with the statute," a Bench headed by Justice M.B. Lokur said.

The Centre told the Bench, which also comprised Justices S. Abdul Nazeer and Deepak Gupta, that it would furnish an affidavit on the agreed action plan, which contains several steps required to be taken to improve the situation of the destitute widows.

The court asked the Centre to do the needful within six weeks and fixed the matter for hearing on December 6.

'No access to justice'

In August, the top court had said that the ostracised destitute widows belong to the "socially disadvantaged class" of society and were not treated with the dignity they deserve in the shelter homes in Vrindavan and elsewhere. It had equated them with socially underprivileged groups who have no real access to justice, are voiceless and needed to be empowered.

END

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