

CENTRE TO ISSUE WARNINGS ON LYNCHINGS

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The Centre on Monday assured the Supreme Court that the Union and State governments would, within a week, start broadcasting on radio and TV a stern message that mob lynchings and violence would invite the “wrath of law”. The Centre’s promise came in response to a query by a Bench led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra on whether the court’s directions on the matter had been complied with.

On July 17, the Supreme Court had directed the Centre and the State governments to disseminate using radio, television and other media platforms, including the official websites of the Home Department and through State police, the message that “lynching and mob violence of any kind shall invite serious consequences under the law”.

On Monday, senior advocate Indira Jaising, appearing for activist Tehseen Poonawala, drew the court’s attention to its more than two-month-old direction.

The gravity of the acts

In her submission, Ms. Jaising said that nothing appeared to have been done on the ground. She said that people must be made to realise the gravity of their acts, and for this, they ought to dread the long arm of the law.

When the court sought a response from Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal and Additional Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, they replied that “the same shall be done, if not already done, within a week”. Mr. Venugopal informed the Bench that an empowered Group of Ministers was considering a specific law against lynchings.

“It has to be borne in mind that the said direction was issued so that people would realise the gravity of their act and the effect on the law and order situation,” Chief Justice Misra observed in Monday’s order for the Bench, also comprising Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and D.Y. Chandrachud. “The said purpose has to be put on a high pedestal and people must realise that involving in such kind of activities will invite the wrath of law.”

The court also directed the State governments to not lag in compliance and follow the direction “absolutely religiously within a week from today”. The court noted that eight States and Union Territories were yet to file reports indicating their compliance with the July 17 verdict. It asked them to file it in three days.

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