**"Protect all daughters or no one?" Indian court's tough Manipur questions**

India government on Monday faced tough questions on Manipur, as the Supreme Court took up the petition of two women paraded naked and sexually assaulted by a mob. What happened in Manipur could not be justified "by saying that this and this happened elsewhere," chief justice DY Chandrachud said, when a lawyer brought up the recent poll violence in Bengal, NDTV reports.

The Chief Justice raised six pointed questions and sought a response within 24 hours by the Centre and Manipur.  
  
"There is no gainsaying the fact that crimes against women are taking place in all parts. The only answer is this. You cannot excuse what is taking place in one part of the country, like Manipur, on the ground that similar crimes are happening in other parts too. The question is, how do we deal with Manipur? Mention that...Are you saying protect all daughters of India or don't protect anyone?" the Chief Justice asked, responding to lawyer Bansuri Swaraj, who spoke about crimes against women in Bengal, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh.

"We are dealing with something which is of unprecedented nature -- violence in a situation of communal and sectarian strife."

On a request from the lawyer for the two victims, who argued that the women should have confidence in the investigation, the government said it had no objection if the Supreme Court monitored the investigation in the case.  
  
"The government doesn't have the data now to tell you how many such cases have been registered. That shows the state of affairs," senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing the two women, said while requesting a Supreme Court-monitored probe.  
  
The court asked the Centre how many of around 6,000 FIRs filed since the violence broke out in Manipur were for crimes against women. The Centre said it did not have a break-up of such cases. The Supreme Court then directed the Centre and the Manipur government to return tomorrow with information on six points:  
  
1.   Break-up of cases  
  
2.   How many zero FIRs  
  
3.   How many transferred to the police station that has jurisdiction  
  
4.   How many arrested so far  
  
5.   Status of legal aid to the arrested accused  
  
6.   How many Section 164 statements (or statements before the nearest magistrate) recorded so far  
  
The Supreme Court termed the offences against women "horrendous", and said it did not want the case to be handled by Manipur police. "Time running out for us, there is great need to have healing touch in the state," it said.  
  
"This is not just one case like Nirbhaya. That is one isolated incident. Here it's a systemic violence perpetrated," the Supreme Court added.  
  
Police were collaborating with the culprits who perpetrated the violence, Mr Sibal alleged earlier during arguments, adding that the women sought protection from the police, but they took them to the crowd instead.  
  
"Incident on May 4. Zero FIR was registered on May 18. Transferred to the concerned police station in June. The video went viral on July 19 and only after this court took cognisance, things progressed in the case. The survivors should have the confidence in the investigation," he said. The Supreme Court also pulled up the Centre, asking what they were doing for 14 days.  
  
The top court was hearing the centre's request to transfer the case of the two women in the horrific Manipur video to a different state, like neighbouring Assam.  
  
The women objected to the transfer of the case to the CBI.  
  
"The survivors are traumatised and terrorised. We are not sure whether the survivors will tell the truth to a CBI team. They should have the confidence to tell the truth," Senior Advocate Indira Jaising said, asking for a high-powered committee of women members from civil society, so these survivors could come forward and share the truth.  
  
"Merely entrusting to CBI or SIT would not be enough. We will have to picture a situation where a 19-year-old woman who has lost her family is in a relief camp. We cannot have her going to magistrate. We have to ensure that the process of justice goes to her doorstep. We will constitute a committee of women judges and members of civil society, who will in turn get the assistance of members of civil societies," the court said.  
  
Attorney-General R Venkataramani then said there were "too many complications", both political and non-political, and proposed a CBI probe.  
  
Chief Justice Chandrachud observed that the video was not the only incident. "What happened to these three women is not an isolated incident," he said, and called for a broader mechanism to take care of violence against women in the northeastern state.  
  
"This is apparent from the Home Secretary's affidavit. As much as we want to give justice to the two women, we want to put in a mechanism where justice is available to all other women. We have to put in a mechanism to ensure complaints are filed, FIRs are lodged," he said.  
  
He then asked the Centre's lawyer how many FIRs had been registered on violence against women.  
  
The two women have filed petitions against the centre and the Manipur government, requesting the Supreme Court's intervention and a fair and impartial inquiry.