

Indian police volunteer given life sentence for doctor's rape and murder

Reuters

Kolkata

An Indian police volunteer was sentenced to life in prison yesterday for the rape and murder of a junior doctor at the hospital where she worked in Kolkata, a crime that sparked nationwide protests and widespread hospital strikes last year.

The judge rejected demands for the death penalty, saying it was not a "rarest-of-rare" crime.

The woman's body was found in a classroom at the state-run RG Kar medical college and hospital on 9 August. Other doctors had stayed off work for weeks to demand justice for her and better security at public hospitals.

Sanjay Roy, 33, had been convicted by Judge Anirban Das on Saturday. Das said circumstantial evidence had proved the charges against him. Roy had claimed he was innocent and had been framed, and sought clemency.

The federal police said the crime belonged to the "rarest-of-rare" category and Roy, therefore, deserved the death penalty.

"I do not consider it as a rarest-of-rare crime," Das said as he sentenced Roy to life in jail on the counts of rape and murder. The judge said he had come to the conclusion after considering all the evidence and the circumstances linked to it. He said Roy could appeal to a higher court.

The sentence was announced in a packed courtroom as the judge allowed the public to witness proceedings. The fast-tracked trial had not been open to the public. Security was stepped up with dozens of police officers deployed at the court.

The victim's parents had said they were not satisfied with the investigation and suspected more people had been involved in the crime. Their lawyer, Amartya Dey, said they had sought the death penalty for Roy and demanded those involved in what they called the "larger conspiracy" be brought to justice.

Protesting doctors had said that demonstrations would continue until justice was done.

Police have also charged the officer heading the local police station and the head of the college at the time of the crime with destruction of the crime scene and tampering with evidence.



▲ A police van takes Sanjay Roy to court for sentencing yesterday