

Indian court sentences journalist to 10 years for rape of colleague

Agence France-Presse

Mumbai

A court yesterday jailed the former editor of a news magazine for raping a junior colleague, overturning his acquittal in a case that gripped India.

Tarun Tejpal, 63, committed the sexual assault in the lift of a five-star hotel in the western coastal state of Goa during an event in November 2013. He was arrested and spent seven months in jail until the supreme court granted him bail.

In 2021, a court in Goa acquitted Tejpal of a series of charges that included rape, sexual harassment and wrongful restraint.

But the government of Goa challenged the acquittal at the high

court in Mumbai, which yesterday set aside the lower court's verdict.

"He has been convicted to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment. He has been given two weeks to surrender," said Sunita Sawant, the police investigator who led the case.

The high court also ordered Tejpal, who founded the investigative magazine *Tehelka* in 2000, to pay a £3,900 penalty.

Tejpal said he would challenge the conviction in the supreme court.

He had initially blamed the assault on "a lapse of judgment" but later alleged the case against him was part of a vendetta by the Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) government in Goa.

"For the past 13 years, they have been pursuing me as a part of a political vendetta," he claimed. But

Sawant told reporters: "This is a sentence where a girl has stood up for her rights ... so this judgment is very important for women who are working in any sector."

The case emerged at a time when sexual assault cases were under intense scrutiny after the gang-rape and murder of a student on a Delhi bus in December 2012.

That attack triggered nationwide protests and international outrage, and prompted the government to strengthen the country's rape laws.

Tejpal's case severely damaged the authority and credibility of *Tehelka*, which has championed women's rights and social justice.

The news magazine is operating under new leadership but has failed to regain the influence it enjoyed before the 2013 rape case.

Rape Crisis offers support on 0808 500 2222 in England and Wales, 0808 801 0302 in Scotland, or 0800 0246 991 in Northern Ireland