

Family accused of dowry death granted bail

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata: Calcutta High Court on Wednesday granted bail to four members of a family, including two women, sentenced to seven years rigorous imprisonment by a fast track court of Birbhum on March 30, 2005. Their appeal against the trial court's order is pending before the high court.

During the bail hearing, defence counsel Sekhar Basu and Phiroze Edulji pointed to discrepancies in the arguments put forward by the prosecution.

Sitaram Agarwal and his wife Satyabhama were accused of murdering their daughter-in-law Sima. Their son Banti and married daughter Sunita Patwari were the co-accused. Before her death at the Rampurhat sub-divisional hospital, Sima, who was five months pregnant, alleged she had been poisoned. It was also alleged that Sima's husband Ramesh Agarwal and his family had tortured her for dowry.

Based on a complaint lodged by Sima's father, police started a case against the accused and charged them with murder and conspiracy. On March 30, 2005, the additional sessions judge of a fast track court in Rampurhat found the four guilty of torture and murder for dowry and sentenced them to seven years' rigorous imprisonment each.

The defence counsel argued before Justice S.K. Gupta of the high court on Tuesday that the trial court judge had failed to take note of two letters written by Sima's mother to her. In the letters, Sima's mother has admonished her for not behaving properly at her husband's house. The lawyers said there is also no proof that Sima's husband or her in-laws had demanded Rs 50,000 as dowry a few days before her death.

They added the prosecution has failed to establish a link between the activities of the accused and Sima's death. They added that Sima had committed suicide.