

Indian rapist murderer of doctor sentenced to life in prison

AFP- The rapist and murderer of an Indian doctor was sentenced to life in prison Monday for a gruesome crime that sparked nationwide protests and widespread hospital strikes last year.

The family of the 31-year-old medic broke into tears saying they were “shocked” at the sentence and had hoped her murderer would be hanged, for a case that highlighted the chronic issue of violence against women in the world’s most populous country.

But Judge Anirban Das said the case did not deserve the death penalty as it was not “the rarest of the rare cases”, and ordered that Sanjoy Roy must spend his life behind bars.

The discovery of the trainee doctor’s bloodied body at a government hospital in the eastern city of Kolkata in August 2024 sparked outrage.

The murder led to demands by doctors at government hospitals for additional security, with thousands of citizens in Kolkata and elsewhere in India joining doctors’ protests in solidarity.

Roy, 33, the lone accused in the case, who had been a civic volunteer in the hospital, was arrested a day after the victim’s body was discovered.

India’s Supreme Court last year ordered a national task force to examine how to bolster security for healthcare workers, saying the brutality of the killing had “shocked the conscience of the nation”.

The victim’s mother and father, who were seated close to Roy

in court on Monday, have said they wanted Roy to be executed.

“We are shocked by the verdict”, the victim’s father told AFP, tears running down his face.

“We will continue our fight, and won’t let investigations stop... Come what may, we will fight for justice.”

Family members cannot be identified in keeping with Indian law around the reporting of sexual violence cases.

– ‘Diabolical crime’ –

The gruesome nature of the attack drew comparisons with the 2012 gang rape and murder of a young woman on a Delhi bus, which also sparked weeks of nationwide protests.

India imposes the death penalty, although it is rarely carried out in practice.

The last executions in India were in March 2020 – of four men convicted of the 2012 Delhi bus attack.

The trial of Roy, who pleaded not guilty, was fast-tracked through India’s normally glacial legal system.

Before the sentencing, Roy on Monday again insisted he was innocent and that he had been “framed”.

Roy’s lawyer, Kabita Sarkar, said he was “not mentally stable” and that they would appeal.

Police stopped several processions from reaching the court, but thousands gathered nearby with many chanting: “Hang him, hang him.”

Rimjhim Sinha, 34, who helped organise multiple mass rallies demanding justice and better protection for women before the trial, said she was “profoundly disappointed” at the sentence.

“It was a diabolical crime, an extreme case of depravity”,

Sinha said, part of the "Reclaim the Night" movement.

"It is high time that India stem the ever-swelling tide of rape and murder".

Aniket Mahato, a medic and spokesman for the junior doctors who carried out weeks of strikes last year demanding better security for healthcare workers, said that he felt the "justice was not delivered".

AFP