

Video justice for juveniles

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The right to fair trial is the cornerstone of a just society; more so when the accused is a minor.

No wonder a training module for empanelled lawyers of the juvenile justice system, which was organised in Ranchi on Monday, felt the urgent need of video-conferencing privilege for delinquents in observation homes.

Jharkhand High Court judge Justice Patel, who addressed the programme, underscored that children in conflict with the law ought to be given a fair chance to talk to their lawyers. "Kids of five districts are lodged at the observation home in Ranchi, which makes it difficult to follow up their cases with their legal representatives," he said.

Mooting the idea of video-conferencing, Justice Patel said: "The role of lawyers is crucial to bring a case to its logical end. It is necessary for a lawyer to interact with his juvenile client, an issue that can only be addressed through video-conference," he said, adding that the proposal would soon be placed before the National Legal Services Authority.

Monday's programme was also attended by executive

chairman of Jharkhand Legal Services Authority (Jhalsa) D.N. Patel, its secretary Navneet Kumar and Ranchi judicial commissioner A.R. Singh among others.

Singh, while highlighting the need to train panel lawyers dealing with juvenile cases, maintained that rehabilitation of young accused was important. "In almost all cases, the rehabilitation package goes missing. Rehab is the bottom line of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act," he said.

Ranchi district social officer N.N. Verma, who was also present, said juvenile delinquents regarded a lawyer as their saviour and ticket out of an observation home. "In the absence of proper and timely interaction, they tend to become frustrated with the system and often turn rebellious."

Verma, speaking on social investigation reports, also suggested use of para-legal volunteers. "Para-legal volunteers have deeper infiltration and can access information better than probation officers," he said.

Jhalsa secretary Kumar said the training module was being prepared for advocates of the Juvenile Justice Board. "The objective is to bring out a package that will help deliver express justice," he summed up.