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# There has never been a woman CJI, says A-G

## 'Women judges improve gender sensitivity'

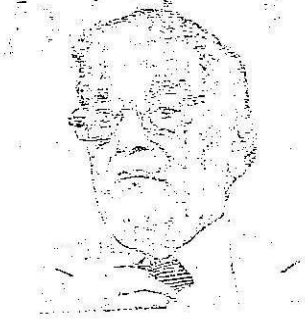
LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Attorney-General (A-G) K.K. Venugopal on Wednesday took the Supreme Court's invitation to suggest ways to gender-sensitise judges as an opportunity to tell the court it has never had a woman Chief Justice.

He told the Supreme Court that more women judges in constitutional courts would certainly improve gender sensitivity in the judiciary.

"Improving the representation of women could also go a long way towards a more balanced and empathetic approach in cases involving sexual violence. For instance, this court has only two women judges as against a sanctioned strength of 34 judges. There has never been a female Chief Justice. This figure is consistently low across the higher judiciary. There are only 80 women judges out of the sanctioned strength of 1,113 judges in the High Courts and the Supreme Court," he said.

Only two of these 80 women judges are in the Supreme Court and the other 78 are in various High Courts, comprising only 7.2% of the number of judges. There are six High Courts - Manipur, Meghalaya, Patna, Tripura, Telangana, and Uttarakhand - where there are no sitting women judges, he pointed out.



K.K. Venugopal

The top law officer was responding to a request from the court to assist it in a case from the Madhya Pradesh High Court. This court had recently passed an order granting bail to an alleged sexual molester. The conditions for grant of bail included visiting his victim at her home, tying a rakhi on her hand and giving money and sweets to her and her son.

Eight women lawyers of the Supreme Court had brought this order to the attention of the top court. They had challenged the High Court's 'trivialisation' of the victim's trauma.

Mr. Venugopal, in his written submissions, said judges need to be trained to place themselves in the shoes of the victim of sexual violence while passing orders.

He pointed to the dearth of compulsory courses on gender sensitisation in law schools.

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