

News

Nithari killings: The Supreme Court rules that Surendra Koli's appeal against his conviction in the most recent pending case should be granted



On July 31, the Supreme Court affirmed the Allahabad High Court's ruling to exonerate Koli in further instances pertaining to the Nithari murders.

On Tuesday, the Supreme Court postponed making a ruling on Surendra Koli's appeal against his conviction in a rape and murder case involving the Nithari killings in Noida in 2005–2006.

In February 2011, the Supreme court upheld Koli's conviction for the murder of a 15-year-old girl. He did, however, file a curative plea with the Supreme Court this year after the Allahabad High Court cleared him of the remaining 12 counts against him.

The curative motion was hastily examined in open court today by the bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) BR Gavai, Justice Surya Kant, and Justice Vikram Nath, who noted that it should be granted.

The conviction was based only on a statement and the seizure of a kitchen knife, the court noted. Additionally, it stated that the acquittal in the remaining instances has resulted in an unusual circumstance.

CJI Gavai stated, **"This matter deserves to be allowed in a minute,"** while the Court postponed rendering a decision.

To lighten the mood, CJI Gavai informed Rajkumar Bhaskar Thakare, Additional Solicitor General (ASG),

"As a solicitor, Mr. Thakare, I anticipate that you will serve as a court officer. In Bombay, I had a very positive opinion of you. Don't let Delhi's smog contaminate you.

The Nithari killings occurred in 2005 and 2006. Skeletons found in a sewer close to a home in Nithari village, Noida, in December 2006 brought the issue to the public's notice. The house's owner, Moninder Singh Pandher, and his domestic assistant, Koli, were later identified.

After taking up the inquiry, the Central Bureau of inquiry (CBI) ultimately filed several cases. While Moninder Singh Pandher was charged in one case involving immoral trafficking, Surendra Koli was made an accused in all of the cases on a variety of charges, including murder, kidnapping, rape, and evidence destruction.

Koli was ultimately found guilty of raping and killing several girls, and he received death sentences in over ten of those cases.

The Allahabad High Court found Koli guilty in the 2009 case, but cleared Pandher because there was insufficient evidence linking him to the rape and murder of a 15-year-old girl. In 2011, the Supreme Court denied Koli's appeal against this ruling. In 2014, the Supreme Court rejected Koli's review plea as well.

However, due to an excessive delay in addressing Koli's request for mercy, the High Court commuted the sentence to life in prison on January 28, 2015.

In other cases, the trial court's 2017 death penalties were overturned by the Allahabad High Court in October 2023, which freed **Pandher and Koli**. Both **Pandher and Koli** had previously been convicted of murder and given death sentences, but the High Court cleared them in two of those cases and acquitted Koli in twelve.

As a result, the CBI and the relatives of the victims appealed the High Court's ruling in 14 different cases before the Supreme Court. On July 31, the appeals were dismissed by the highest court. Koli would be free if he were found not guilty of killing the 15-year-old.