



## Not safe to let lawyers meet Kasab alone: HC

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The Bombay High Court Wednesday admitted an appeal against 26/11 convict Ajmal Kasab's death sentence but rejected a plea for a private interview between Kasab and his lawyers, saying security and national interest outweigh all other concerns.

Kasab and his lawyers had sought the interview out of earshot of Arthur Road prison guards, but the prosecution had objected citing Kasab's aggressive nature and submitting a video of him assaulting a jail official.

The appeal against the sentence would be heard on a day-to-day basis from October 18. The judges said they would give the matter top priority and try to dispose of it "within a few months". Kasab will depose on video.

Along with his appeal, the court will hear simultaneously the prosecution's plea for confirmation of the sentence, as well as the state's appeal against the acquittal of Fahim Ansari and Sabahuddin Ahmed.

Dismissing the appeal for the private interview, a division bench of Justice Ranjana Desai and Justice R V More said, "The threat perception expressed by the police cannot be questioned."

The bench made it clear, however, that police personnel, particularly those connected with the 26/11 investigation, should not be present during the interview. "The presence of jail staff is a must. Having seen relevant rules and the CCTV footage, we are of the view that the judgments cited by Kasab's lawyer are not applicable here. The applicant can have interviews within the sight and hearing of jail staff," the bench noted.

Kasab's lawyers Amin Solkar and Farhana Shah had argued that enough security had been provided in and around the jail and their client wanted to give them instructions in a free atmosphere and not in the presence of police and jail staff.

PTI quoted one of Kasab's lawyers as saying outside the court, "We are thinking to challenge this order in Supreme Court."

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