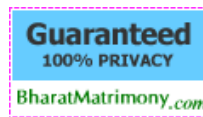




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3-yr-old faces trial for molestation

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PATNA: Raj Kumar is only six. But he is accused of molesting a woman. And unbelievably he committed this "crime" when he was around three years old.

Impossible though it may sound but this is what has been alleged in a case of criminal assault and molestation filed in a local court. The child is one of the accused in the case pertaining to the incident which allegedly took place at Kumhar Toli in Patna in 2003.

The child's father Kedar Prasad, who sells sugarcane juice, and mother Kanti Devi have been running from pillar to post, fighting the legal battle which originated from a family dispute of the complainant with which, they say, they had nothing to do.

"It is just that we lived near the complainant's house," Kedar said. Kedar and Kanti are also accused in the case. "I have not been able to go to school," said a dazed Kumar.

He does not know why he is taken to the court every now and then. Chandrashekhar Prasad, an advocate who has filed the case, is subjected to taunts of women living around the locality.

"I doubt you have a degree in law," taunted a woman. The caustic remarks often lead to quarrels. But Chandrashekhar reiterates his wife was assaulted four years ago by a group of persons.

"But the one who attacked my wife was older and not this child. Perhaps he was the elder brother of the child," he said, adding it is perhaps to save the real culprit that the child is being presented as the named accused in the court.

Kanti Devi swears she has only one son. "Let Chandrashekhar produce my another son," she said, ruing the legal battle is proving costly as she has not been able to put her son into a school.

Vikas Kumar, the lawyer pleading the case for the child and his parents, said the child is facing trial on charges under Sections 323, 324 and 354 of the Indian Penal Code. The accused were granted bail in the case in 2003.

"But it's traumatic for the child to appear in the court," he said. The last hearing of the case was on July 25. According to the boy's father, the judge has ordered a probe to establish the age of the child. The next hearing of the case is scheduled for August 11.



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