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1st in India: AP passes bill awarding death to rapists

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Amaravati: The Andhra Pradesh assembly passed on Friday the Disha Bill, which prescribes death penalty for rape convicts, putting it on course to become the first state in the country to have the death penalty for rape.

The Andhra Pradesh Disha Bill-Criminal Law (Andhra Pradesh Amendment) Bill 2019 says that all cases regarding offences against women shall be investigated and tried expeditiously with provisions for the death penalty.

The assembly also passed the Andhra Pradesh Disha Bill-Andhra Pradesh Special Court for Specified Offences Against Women and Children Bill, 2019, which enables the state government to set up exclusive special courts for speedy trial of specified offences against women and children.

The bill reduces the judgment period to 21 working days with investigation being completed in seven days and



Andhra Pradesh chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy

trial closing in 14 days. It prescribes life imprisonment for other sexual offences against children and includes Section 354 F and 354 G of the IPC.

Speaking in the assembly, chief minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy said the Disha Bill will be sent to the president for his assent as criminal law is in the Concurrent List which can be considered by both the state and the Centre. He added that this will attract national attention through debate and discussion. According to him, the two bills will stand as an

answer to a system that needs to expedite cases where there is conclusive evidence.

"The Nirbhaya case is an example where the culprits could not be punished notwithstanding the nationwide uproar," said the CM. He added that the public response in the recent case was taken into consideration before drafting the bills. In cases of harassment of women through social or digital media, the bill prescribes two years' imprisonment for the first offence and four years for the second and subsequent offences.

The CM said the government would set up special courts in all 13 districts. These will deal with offences against women and children, acid attacks, stalking, voyeurism, social media harassment of women, sexual harassment and all cases under the PocsO Act. He said they would also employ special public prosecutors and a special police force dedicated to fighting such crimes.