

Supreme Court directs Centre to install CCTVs in offices of CBI, ED, & NIA

December 8, 2020

In news

Recently, the Supreme Court of India asked the Centre to Install CCTV cameras in Offices of CBI, ED, NIA and all Agencies which arrest, interrogate

What are the key directions/orders of the apex court?

Agencies to have CCTVs: A three-judge Bench led by Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman specifically ordered the Centre to have CCTVs and recording equipment installed in the offices of the CBI, NIA, Enforcement Directorate, Narcotics Control Bureau(NCB), Department of Revenue Intelligence(DRI), Serious Fraud Investigation Office and “any other agency which carries out interrogations and has the power of arrest”.

CCTVs be compulsorily installed in all interrogating offices: The apex court, which had earlier ordered installation of CCTV cameras in police stations(2018) to check human rights abuses, said that as most of the probe agencies including NCB, DRI and Serious Fraud Investigation Office carry out interrogation in their offices, CCTVs be compulsorily installed in all offices where such questioning takes place and holding of accused takes place in the same manner as it would in a police station

Protecting fundamental rights: The Court also said that the CCTVs and recording equipment would be used as a measure to protect the fundamental right to dignity and life.

Night vision and audio as well as video footage: The Court also said that the CCTV systems must be equipped with night

vision and have audio as well as video footage and it shall be mandatory for the Centre, states and UTs to purchase such system which allows storage of data for maximum period possible, and in any case not below one year.

Constitute Oversight Committees: Further, the Court directed that the oversight Committees to monitor the installation, use, functioning, budgetary requirements and repair of the CCTV cameras should be constituted at State and district levels, the apex court ordered.

Awareness poster: Large posters informing people about the CCTV coverage should be prominently placed at the offices of these central agencies and police stations.

Right to complain about human rights violations: These posters would clearly mention “that a person has a right to complain about human rights violations to the National/State Human Rights Commission, Human Rights Court or the Superintendent of Police or any other authority empowered to take cognizance of an offence”.

Right to secure the CCTV footage: They would also highlight that CCTV footage would be preserved for a certain minimum time period not less than six months. A victim of human rights within the precincts of these offices has the right to secure the footage.

A firm action plan: The court ordered that the Principal Secretary/Cabinet Secretary/Home Secretary of each State/ Union Territory should give it a “firm action plan with exact timelines for compliance” within the next six weeks.