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Lockup stripping is inhuman: Plea

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Mumbai: A PIL before the Bombay high court has drawn attention to the plight of accused who are stripped to their undergarments in lockups during interrogation by the police.

Hearing the PIL filed by city advocate Rahul Thakur on the "inhuman" practice, the division bench of chief justice Dalveer Bhandari has sought a reply from director general of police, P S Pasricha to the allegations. Pasricha has been given four weeks to file his reply.

The court has also set up a five-member committee to be headed by principal sessions judge R Vachcha to look into facilities in police lock-ups in the state. The other members of the committee are the district and session judges of Thane, Pune, Kolhapur and Jalgaon. The committee has to file its report in four weeks.

Thakur claimed it was common practice to keep accused in lock-ups in their undergarments. "It is a violation of their fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution as well as basic human dignity," said Thakur. "In lock-ups, even persons who are not chargesheeted are deprived of their clothes."

The state government told the court that it would inquire into the allegations. "If such practices exist, they are indeed inhuman and should be stopped," said Pradeep Patil, additional government pleader.

Thakur told the court that he first came across the practice on a visit to the Vashi police station. On inquiring with advocates who handled criminal cases, he was told that it was common practice. Police justified it by saying that it was intended to prevent the accused from committing suicide in lockups, he said.

Thakur also informed the court about the deplorable conditions within the lock-ups. "There is no water or toilet facilities. The accused are lodged in the most unhygienic conditions," he said.

