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## Execution by hanging to continue: SC

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NEW DELHI: Hanging by the neck till death would continue to be the mode of execution of condemned prisoners, SC said on Monday refusing to entertain a PIL seeking replacement of the 'cruel and painful' method with the 'lethal injection', a method practised in the US.

"How do you know that hanging causes pain? And how do you know that injecting the condemned prisoner with a lethal drug would not cause pain?" asked a bench comprising Chief Justice K G Balakrishnan and Justice P Sathasivam.

PIL petitioner Ashok Kumar Walia probably thought that the bench was mistaking his plea and tried to impress upon the court by arguing that he was not seeking abolition of death penalty but only a change in the manner of execution of prisoners on the death row.

But, it appeared that the bench understood the implications of the plea and said it has been opined that hanging, which involved dropping the prisoner with the noose around the neck several feet down so as to dislocate his neck and sever the spinal cord, also caused instant death.

The CJI said: "Many countries, still practising death penalty, have various methods of execution — death squad which guns down a condemned prisoner from close range, hanging by the neck, electric chair and by injecting a lethal drug."

"In India, we have a very, very liberal sentencing system based on a humane law. The courts in rarest of the rare cases award death sentence," the bench said. Before dismissing the PIL, the court told the petitioner to create public opinion for the abolition of capital punishment.

India last carried out the death sentence in 2004 when Dhananjay Chatterjee was hanged to death for rape and murder of 14-year-old school student Hetal Parekh in 1990.

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