

UP GOVERNOR REJECTS COUPLE'S MERCY PETITION

MEERUT/MUMBAI: A woman on death row for murdering seven members of her family moved a step closer to the gallows when the Uttar Pradesh governor rejected her mercy plea on Wednesday and she could become only the second woman to be executed in independent India.

A court in the state's Amroha district handed Shabnam and her lover, Salim, the death sentence five years ago after she drugged the victims, including an infant, and he hacked them to death in 2008 as their relationship had met with stiff resistance from the family. While governor Ram Naik threw out their clemency petitions, President Pranab Mukherjee is yet to decide on a similar plea from Shabnam, a former teacher, seeking pardon to take care of her son born in jail.

"It makes little sense to continue the death sentence in homicide offences. India should strictly implement the recent recommendations of the Law Commission of India to abolish death in all cases, except terror crimes," said Suhaz Chakma, director of the Asian Centre for Human Rights. **HTC**