

Aadhaar has more value than civic certificates: HC

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NEWDELHI: The Centre-issued Aadhaar card has equal or more value than certificates issued by municipal bodies and panchayats, the Delhi high court said earlier this week.

The court's ruling comes while it was deciding on an appeal by a person who was sentenced to life imprisonment for sodomising a six-year-old boy.

"The Aadhaar card, being a document issued by the Centre, has equal or more value than certificates issued by a corporation, municipal authority, or panchayat," the bench of Justice SP Garg and Justice C Hari Shankar said.

The bench added that it differed from an earlier Madras high court ruling which had said that the Aadhaar card could not be used as proof of age, as it did not mention the holder's date of birth but the age in years.

Terming it as "distinction without a difference", the court said, "....As such, the document (Aadhaar) is only to be referred to, by way of evidence for ascertaining the age of the person con-

cerned, and the rule does not require, either expressly or by necessary implication, that the date of birth should figure on the body of the said document."

"Indeed, when the document mentions the age itself, no better proof could be sought, for ascertaining the age of the person concerned. We, therefore, regretfully express our inability to subscribe to the view adopted by the high court of Madras in *Paneerselvam* (supra)," the court ruled.

The bench noted that "psycho-social deviancy and aberrant sexual proclivities are writ large on the offence committed by the appellant on a six-year-old boy."

Even though the bench upheld the conviction of the accused, it reduced the sentence to 15 years.

"While, therefore, we are of the view that the minimum punishment imposable for aggravated penetrative sexual assault, under Section 6 of the POCSO Act, i.e. 10 years rigorous imprisonment, would be insufficient in the present case, directing incarceration of the appellant, for life, would certainly be disproportionate to the offence committed by him."