5 get life term in

BY DEEPAL TRIVEDI

June 20: In a much awaited judg-
ment, five persons were sentenced to
life imprisonment in the Gujarat date
rape case. Bijal Joshi was gangraped
and tortured by her boyfriend and four of his friends on Christmas Eve five years ago.
The case had gripped national atten-tion after accusations were made about the girl's character. She was branded a woman with "loose morals" after she registered a gan-grape complaint. Her boyfriend, a married Delhi-based businessman, along with four other local Gujarat boys, tried their best to persuade her

to withdraw the complaint.
Bijal's character assassination saw her family being socially ostracised with an organised media frenzy blaming Bijal for having a relation-
ship with the married man.
Exactly after a week after she was gangraped, Bijal, who could not tol-erate the ostracism and character assassination, committed suicide. Her sister Vaishali waged a battle, created awareness and fought relent-lessly with her limited resources against the influential rapists.
In a judgment delivered by Ms Jyot-
sna Yagnik, Bijal's boyfriend Sajal Jain was sentenced to life imprison-ment. His four friends, Chandan and Mandan Jaiswal, Sugam Jaiswal and

JUSTICE FINALLY: Vaishali Joshi, sister of Bijal Joshi (left), and Sajal Jain, the main accused in the rape and murder case, at the sessions court in Ahmedabad on Friday. PHOTO: Mayur Bhatt, PTI

Bijal gangrape

Dharmendra Jain, have also been sen-tenced to life imprisonment. Seven others have been acquitted following lack of evidence.
Bijal, a middle-class girl, was going
steady with Delhi-based Sajal Jain. According to Bijal's first complaint after the gangrape, when she first met Sajal and dated him, she did not know he was married. Later on when she came to know, she said she tried to keep herself away from him but she loved him too much. The young 24-year-old went to various hotels to spend time with her boyfriend who flew down regularly to Ahmedabad.
On the night of December 31, 2003, Bijal went to see Sajal at the Hotel Ashok Palace. The hotel was owned

by Chandan and Mandan Jaiswal, two brothers who were the couple's friends. They partied and got drunk. She was gangraped by five people, including her boyfriend. They even put cigarette stabs on her personal parts and tortured her. Early morning, the rapists called up her sister and told her to pick up Bijal as she was not feeling well. Bijal's sister, who was partying elsewhere, met midway where she was shocked to see Bijal in such a distraught condition. The guys dropped her midway in their car. The sisters directly went to a police sta-tion but were turned away. There is prohibition in Gujarat and since Bijal was also drunk she was discouraged to file a complaint by the police.

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