



**10.10.2018**

## **Press release**

### **People's Watch demands the Raj Bhavan to release the Santhanam Panel report**

People's Watch expresses deep anguish at the total silence of the office of his excellency the Governor of Tamil Nadu subsequent to the report of the panel headed by Mr. Santhanam IAS retd. submitted on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2018 after enquiring into the affairs of Nirmala Devi and others. People's Watch recalls that after a whatsapp message went viral on 15.4.2018 Prof. Nirmala Devi was arrested on 16.4.2018 followed by Prof. Murugan on 23.4.2018 and research scholar Karuppusamy on 25.4.2018. A panel of enquiry headed by Mr. Santhanam IAS retd. and two other women officers was appointed on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2018 and they submitted their report to the Governor of Tamil Nadu on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2018. However, the report was directed to be kept confidential since the charge sheet in said case had not yet been filed. Thereafter, an interim charge sheet running to over 1160 pages was filed on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2018 and followed by the final charge sheet on 7<sup>th</sup> September.

Now the people have a right to know. Their right to information is a part of not only their right to life but also their right to freedom of speech and expression in our Constitution. Therefore, every citizen of this country needs to know the truth behind whatever is carried out by people in public office. No doubt the allegations made against Prof Nirmala Devi, Murugan and Karuppusamy are serious. But what is more serious are the doubts lingering in mind of the people in Tamil Nadu arising out of a complaint registered by Dr.T.Senkottaiyan the Deputy Secretary to the Governor and Comptroller, Tamil Nadu Raj Bhavan Chennai dated 8<sup>th</sup> October addressed to the Commissioner of Police and then forwarded to the SHO Triplicane police station through the Additional Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Police Triplicane District and registered as Cr.No. 212 of 2018 u/s 124 IPC. The Police Commissioner, the Additional Commissioner of Police and the Deputy Commissioner have only served as post offices forwarding the complaint received by Raj Bhavan against Mr. Nakkheeran Gopal and 34 others who were all named. The complaint refers to an

issue of Nakkheeran, dated 20-22 April 2018 and another issue dated 23-25 April and the third issue dated 26-28 September 2018.

This is a very peculiar case where upon orders of the High Court passed at very early stage bail has been consistently refused to the three accused even after the final charge sheet has been filed one month ago. There is no reason in law for a person to be detained and denied his/her personal liberty when the charge sheet has been filed in the case. The same High Court comprising of 10 women High Court judges had not at any point of time chosen to take this case as a suo moto matter and to direct a special investigation team monitored by the court to carry on the investigation. Yet today the accused who have been identified in the charge sheet continue to be in jail while the report of the panel headed by Mr. Santhanam IAS has not been made public. In addition the actions arising out of Raj Bhavan recently raise very serious doubts into the involvement of senior officials of the Madurai Kamaraj University including its Chancellor. Transparency alone can protect the senior officials of the university including its Chancellor from the allegations that linger in the minds of ordinary people. People's Watch therefore calls upon the office of the Governor to take necessary steps to ensure that the Santhanam Panel report is made public by taking necessary action to vacate the stay on the report by the High Court. Now that the charge sheet has been filed, it is time that the three accused are allowed on bail and efforts are taken to ensure that their trial is completed on a time bound basis. The continuous incarceration of Nirmala Devi and two others, with the Santhanam panel report remaining a secret document and the persecution of Nakheeran Gopal and 34 others by the Office of the Governor unfortunately do not reflect well on the state of the rule of law prevailing in Tamil Nadu. Six months of no bail only reflects negatively on our practice of criminal jurisprudence and demands the need for the secrecy around the Santhanam panel report to be unveiled. Let transparency alone clear all our doubts.

With regards,



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