



THE HINDU

'Formulate policy for premature release of convicts'

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Human rights activists have demanded that the State government formulate a policy for the premature release of life convicts in the wake of the release of two associates of forest brigand Veerappan, K. Peumal and T. Andiappan, who spent about 32 years behind the bars in a case related to the murder of a forest range officer in 1987.

Advocate S. Balamurugan from the People's Union for Civil Liberties said multiple representations made by human rights forums and activists for the release of the trio were ignored for several years and Mathaiyan died as a prisoner.

While Section 433A of The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, states that remission or commutation of sentence could be taken up only after a lifetime convict served 14 years of imprisonment, the trio served over 30 years in prison, having denied human rights and right to live, he pointed out.

"The Supreme Court judgment in *Maru Ram Etc. Etc vs Union Of India* states that: Penal humanitarianism and rehabilitative desideratum warrant liberal paroles, subject to security safeguards, and other humanising strategies for inmates so that the dignity and worth of the human person are not desecrated by making mass jails anthropoid zoos.

"Human rights awareness must infuse institutional reform and search for alternatives. The government should formu-

late a policy for the remission of life convicts on these grounds and not based on the crime they are accused of being involved.

The apex court in a recent order had also stressed the need to implement a policy for premature release of life convicts in objective and transparent manner," Mr. Balamurugan said.

Executive director of People's Watch and human rights activist Henri Tiphagne said the government should tell why they were incarcerated for so long. For 32 years, there was no reason why they should have been incarcerated, he said.

Activists including Mr. Balamurugan, Mr. Tiphagne and V.P. Gunasekaran of the Tamil Nadu Tribal People Association had represented the case of Perumal, Andiappan and Mathaiyan to M.K. Stalin in 2021 before he was elected as the Chief Minister.

U.A. Anburaj, an alleged associate of Veerappan who served 20 years in prison in two cases from the age of 17, also welcomed the release of the duo, besides pointing out the long delay. He also wanted the government to formulate a policy for remission.

"Three of them were not directly involved in the murder. Mathaiyan told me before his death that he had lost trust in the government and other systems, pained by the long delay. He told me he was arrested for merely being Veerappan's brother," said Mr. Anburaj who now works for the Tamil Nadu Tribal People Association.