

Outlook

THE NEWS SCROLL

Journalists, rights activists remember Stan Swamy as "stoic and courageous man"

Mumbai, Jul 5 (PTI) Eminent lawyers, journalists and human rights defenders on Monday evening paid tributes to Jesuit priest and activist Stan Swamy, who had once told his colleagues that if "working for the tribals, the marginalised was a crime," he was ready to face the consequences. "I am ready to go to prison. My bag is packed," the 84-year-old priest, an undertrial in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, had said at the time of his arrest last year from Ranchi, his colleagues and associates said. Stanislaus Lourdusamy, or "Stan Swamy" as he was known, died on Monday afternoon at a private hospital in Mumbai, where he was undergoing treatment for multiple ailments, and had applied for medical bail in the Bombay High Court. His colleagues and associates, along with several eminent lawyers, journalists, former judges, authors and human rights activists from across the world, took part in an online condolence meet organised for Swamy. Lawyer Henri Tiphagne, Executive Director, People's Watch, a human rights organisation, remembered Swamy as a "stoic" man, who had dedicated his life to working for the marginalised and was targeted by the government for the same. Justice Madan Lokur, a former Supreme Court judge, said though he did not know Swamy personally, he had been following the Elgar Parishad case and all court orders since the time of the late priest's arrest in October 2020. "I have been hugely disappointed by most of the court orders in the case, starting from the time he (Swamy) wanted a sipper. What did the special NIA court do? It gave four weeks to the NIA to respond (to Swamy's request for the sipper)," Justice Lokur said. He said that for the last two years, citizens across the country had been witnessing attacks on human rights. "All of us are Indian citizens, we love our country. Just because someone disagrees doesn't mean he is a terrorist," Justice Lokur said. Veteran journalist N Ram said Swamy's death was a loss for the country. He said he had known the tribal rights activist for years and remembered him as a "stoic and courageous man." Ram said he agreed with Justice Lokur's view on all forms of dissent being targeted in the country. "Anyone dissenting in this country is targeted. I have seen this in the last several years. The special court and higher judiciary, too, have disappointed us on several occasions," Ram said. The eminent

editor said one must remember that 15 others, including lawyer Sudha Bharadwaj, had been arrested in the Elgar Parishad case and were currently languishing in prison. Senior advocate Mihir Desai, who was Swamy's counsel in the High Court, said t the priest had been "implicated in a totally false case." "We have lost him (Swamy) and we have failed him. But we must continue this fight. We must work for all that father Swamy believed in," Desai said. Author Nayantara Sehgal, singer-activist TM Krishna, human rights activist Alice Mogwe and several others who were part of the condolence meet said Swamy's death was a loss for the entire nation. They said today was a "dark day" for India. Swamy was arrested under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in connection with the Elgar Parishad case. He had remained in Navi Mumbai's Taloja prison hospital since his arrest due to multiple illnesses. The octogenarian was shifted to the state-run JJ hospital in Mumbai on two occasions and sent to the private Holy Family Hospital in suburban Bandra in May following HC's orders. Swamy died following a cardiac arrest he suffered on Sunday (July 4). As per the hospital, Swamy had been put on ventilator support after the cardiac arrest but he never regained consciousness. He was declared dead around 1.25 pm on Monday, the hospital authorities said. PTI AYA RSY RSY

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