

Madras HC issues directions to protect prisoners' rights

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court recently issued directions to prison authorities and District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs) to protect the rights of prisoners.



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Madras High Court. (File photo)

By Express News Service

MADURAI: The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court recently issued directions to prison authorities and District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs) to protect the rights of prisoners. The directions were issued on a petition filed by a man seeking compensation for detaining his son in prison, despite acquittal, for nearly nine months.

The directions, issued by Justice N Sathish Kumar, included instructions to jail superintendents of district and central jails to prepare a list of convicts eligible for premature release every four months, and to immediately communicate to the prisoners the decisions made by the advisory board, on such eligibility, within a week.

The government was also told to make the kiosk machine in prisons (which prisoners can use to know details of their cases) more user-friendly within four months, as it was alleged that only Hindi and English languages were available on the machine.

Justice Sathish Kumar directed the DLSAs to ensure enough eligible legal aid counsels are appointed to visit prisons regularly to help prisoners. Such appointments should be made only after a proper assessment of the advocates' ability, the judge added. He directed the government to file a status report on the implementation of these directions before the next hearing on July 4. The judge said the grievance of the petitioner, K Rathinam, of Theni, relating to the compensation, would be decided later.

The directions were issued based on the recommendations made by Rathinam's counsel, Henri Tiphagne, to avoid such incidents that affect prisoners' liberty. According to Rathinam, his son Chokkar was acquitted in a 2011 murder case in October 2019, but was illegally detained in Madurai Central Prison from October 31, 2019 to July 14, 2020. Though the government told the court it was done inadvertently, and that disciplinary action has been initiated against the then prison superintendent, among others, the judge sought more details.