

Presidents rejected 70% of mercy pleas since '47

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NEW DELHI: Seven out of 10 mercy petitions filed with the President since 1947 have been rejected, a study released by a human rights group on Friday said, calling for the setting up of a panel of eminent citizens to vet the home ministry's advice to the President.

The study said death row convicts had filed 5,106 mercy petitions with the President between 1947 and 2015. Out of them, 3,534 mercy petitions or 69% were rejected and the plea commuted to life imprisonment in 1,572 cases. The statistics compiled by the Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) are higher than figures estimated by the government in the past.

In 2013, the Centre told the Supreme Court that over 300 mercy petitions were filed before the President between 1960 and 2009. Seven years earlier, the home ministry had told the Rajya Sabha that the President disposed of 1,261 petitions between 1965 and 2006. Another estimate put the number of petitions filed with the President between 1947 and



● President Pranab Mukherjee

1964 at 3,796.

ACHR's Suhas Chakma said the high rejection rate indicated that there was a need to review the functioning of this mechanism.

The instructions for dealing with mercy petitions issued by the Government of India are inherently against the death row convicts such as one week time to file mercy pleas following the Supreme Court judgement and are routinely violated.

Chakma – who is also the coordinator for the National Campaign for Abolition of Death Penalty in India – has come up with a ten-point action plan that includes establishing a panel of eminent citizens to vet the home ministry's recommendation to the President.