



Dera Chief Seeks Parole Ahead of Haryana Polls

Why in News?

Recently, Dera Sacha Sauda chief has sought a 20-day [parole](#) ahead of the Haryana Assembly elections, sparking questions due to the electoral context.

Key Points

- **Parole Request:**
 - Dera Sacha Sauda chief, serving a 20-year sentence for the rape of two female disciples, has requested a **20-day parole ahead** of the Haryana Assembly elections scheduled for **5th October, 2024**.
 - The Dera chief was granted a 21-day [furlough](#) on 13th August, 2024, to stay at his Dera in Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh.
 - His request has been forwarded by the state government to the [Chief Electoral Officer \(CEO\)](#) for consultation, as the model code of conduct is in effect for the elections.
 - The CEO has asked the Haryana government to provide emergent and compelling circumstances justifying the parole request during the election period.
 - [Election Commission](#) guidelines do not mandate approval for parole but require consultation with the CEO in exceptional cases during the election period.
- **Previous High Court Challenges:**
 - The Dera chief's repeated paroles and furloughs have been challenged in the Punjab and Haryana High Court.
 - In August 2024, his release on furlough was contested by the [Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee \(SGPC\)](#), but the court dismissed the plea, leaving the decision to the Haryana prisons department.
 - The High Court emphasized the need for decisions on such matters to be made without "arbitrariness or favouritism."

Parole and Furlough

- **Parole:**
 - It is a system of releasing a prisoner with suspension of the sentence.
 - The **release is conditional**, usually subject to behavior, and requires periodic reporting to the authorities for a set period of time
 - Parole is **not a right, and is given to a prisoner for a specific reason**, such as a death in the family or a wedding of a blood relative
 - It may be denied to a prisoner even when he makes out a sufficient case, if the competent authority is satisfied that releasing the convict would not be in the interest of society.
- **Furlough:**
 - It is similar to parole, but with some significant differences. It is given in cases of long-term imprisonment.
 - The period of **furlough granted to a prisoner is treated as remission of his sentence**.
 - Unlike parole, furlough is **seen as a matter of right for a prisoner**, to be granted periodically irrespective of any reason, and merely to enable the prisoner to retain family and social ties, and to counter the ill-effects of prolonged time spent in prison.

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