

Minutes of the meeting dated 21.05.2020 of the High Powered Committee (HPC) under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Kumari Justice Sanju Panda, Judge, Orissa High Court and Executive Chairperson, Odisha State Legal Services Authority with regard to release of prisoners for decongestion of jails in view of spreading of COVID-19 disease over telephonic conversation.

1. The meeting is convened through telephonic conversation on 21.05.2020 by the following dignitaries :

- (i) **Hon'ble Kumari Justice Sanju Panda, Judge, Orissa High Court and Executive Chairperson, Odisha State Legal Services Authority.**
- (ii) **Shri Sanjeev Chopra, IAS, Principal Secretary, Home Department, Government of Odisha.**
- (iii) **Shri Santosh Kumar Upadhyay, IPS, Director General of Prisons, Odisha.**

2. The Member Secretary, OSLSA apprised the HPC that the District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs) are conducting the Under Trial Review Committee weekly meeting to review of status of prisoners in conformity with direction of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in **Suo Motu Writ Petition No. 01/2020**. She placed the following information, as received and collated from all 30 under trial review committees regarding release of prisoners from 14.05.20 to 20.05.20 :-

- (i) **No. of UTPs identified for release on interim bail : 507**
- (ii) **No. of UTPs released on interim bail : 310**
- (iii) **No. of Convicts identified for release on Parole/Furlough/other grounds : 88**

- (iv) No. of Convicts released on Parole /Furlough/
Special Remission : NIL/34/NIL
- (v) Whether quarantine wards are available in all
the Jails of the State of not - Available in all the
jails of the State
- (vi) No. of prisoners kept in quarantine wards : 1408
- (vii) No. of prisoners found to be affected by COVID- 19 : 01

3. After one prisoner in the District Jail, Puri was identified as COVID positive, the HPC had called for a report vide **L. No. 1974 and L. No. 1976 (29) dated 18.05.20** from the Chairman DLSAs-cum-District Judge(s) of all the districts. **The report received from Puri district was dealt in an emergency meeting of the HPC dated 19.05.20.** And the reports of the rest 29 districts regarding the measures being taken up in all the Central Jails/District Jails/Sub-Jails of the State to prevent the spread of COVID-19 infection as received from the Chairman DLSAs-cum-District Judge(s) regarding health and hygiene condition of prisoners is placed as below:

I. Quarantine wards:

As per the reports received from all the districts it is apparent that Quarantine wards have been made functional in all the jails of the State. All the newly inducted accused persons on reaching the jails are being first kept in the quarantine wards maintaining isolation from other inmates and on being tested COVID negative are being allowed to move to general wards.

However, at Badamba Sub-Jail of Cuttack District, as no quarantine wards or doctors were available, all the inmates (UTPs and Convicts) have been shifted to Narsinghpur Sub-Jail and Choudwar Circle Jail respectively as per the earlier guidelines of the HPC dated 16.04.20.

II. Cleanliness and Hygiene:

As per the guidelines issued by the State Govt and HPC all the Jails have taken measures to maintain cleanliness and hygiene inside the wards, have ensured regular cleaning of wash rooms, kitchen area, main

entrance gate etc. and the inmates are being regularly provided with soaps, sanitizers, hand wash, masks.

Steps are also being taken for sanitization of the whole jail premises by help of the State authorities on regular basis and white washing of the walls has also been done. **However, as per report of DLSAs, in District Jail, Keonjhar & Sub-Jails at Subarnapur, Birmaharajpur and Barbil white washing work of the walls has not been done.**

III. Social distancing:

Following the guidelines, the jails have implemented social distancing norms between the jail inmates. The inmates are being kept away from each other (preferably six feet) to strictly adhere to the norms of social distancing.

As per the reports, in Circle Jail, Jharpada at Bhubaneswar & Sub-Jails at Aska and Banpur social distancing between the jail inmates is not being maintained owing to space issues and overcrowding issues.

IV. Medical facilities:

It emerges that round-the-clock medical assistance is being ensured by the doctors and paramedics available in each jail of the State and the medical condition of all the inmates is being monitored on regular basis. Thermal screening through infrared thermometers is being done. Sensitisation of the inmates regarding personal hygiene is being carried out on regular basis.

However, as per reports infrared thermometers are not available with the jail authorities in District Jail, Keonjhar to constantly conduct thermal screening of the inmates. It is reported in Bhadrak district jail, some of the UTPs of Special Sub-Jail are found to be way above 60 years who are more likely to get sick and vulnerable to viral infections.

V. E-Mulakat:

In order to maintain social distancing amongst the inmates and their relatives & lawyers e-Mulakat has been introduced in all the jails of the State. Interaction between the inmates and their relatives & lawyers is being done on camera/telephone without physical visit.

However, at the Sub-Jails in Rairangpur, Karanjia, Udala infrastructure for arranging e-Mulakat for the inmates is not available and as such the jail visiting of relatives and lawyers has

been suitably postponed. At Sub-Jails in Champua, Anandapur & Barbil of Keonjhar district also e-mulakat facility for the inmates has not yet been made operational.

VI. District level monitoring by UTRCs

As per the guidelines issued by the HPC all the 30 DLSAs of the State are constantly monitoring the health and safety of prisoners in all the jails of the State through their weekly UTRC meetings.

DLSAs are also taking up programmes for creating COVID- 19 prevention awareness in the jails to prevent the spread of COVID infection in co-ordination with the State authorities & are constantly providing up-to-date data regarding the status of the prisoners in the jails through weekly meeting of UTRCs for consideration of HPC.

4. On consideration of the reports of Chairman DLSAs-cum-District Judge(s) of 29 districts regarding safety in prisons for prevention of COVID- 19 infection, the Committee directs the DG, Prisons & DCS, Govt. of Odisha to kindly ensure the following issues are resolved :

- i. Sanitisation and white washing of all the jails especially in District Jail, Keonjhar and Sub- Jails of Subarnapur, Birmaharajpur & Barbil and maintaining of Social distancing between the jail inmates especially in Circle Jail, Jharpada at Bhubaneswar and Sub-Jails at Aska and Banpur.*
- ii. Availability of infrared thermometers with the jail authorities for thermal screening of the jail inmates especially in Keonjhar district.*
- iii. Health and safety of the UTPs who are old & sick and more vulnerable to viral infections especially in Special Sub-Jail of Bhadrak district.*
- iv. In the jails where infrastructure for e-Mulakat is not available the jail authorities may consider video calling or web calling through electronic means.*

- v. *E-mulakat facility for the jail inmates especially at Sub-Jails in Rairangpur, Karanjia, Udala, Champua, Anandapur & Barbil.*
- vi. *All prisons in the State must always be in state of preparedness to prevent the spread of COVID- 19 infections as per the guidelines issued by the Govt. as well as HPC.*

Further, the DG, Prisons & DCS is requested to submit a report regarding action taken as directed above to the HPC at the earliest.

By order
Sd/-
Member Secretary
OSLSA