

MINUTES OF THE VC MEETING OF THE HIGH POWER COMMITTEE HELD ON 26/05/2021

The High Power Committee (HPC) headed by Hon'ble Mr. Justice S. Serto & Executive Chairman, Nagaland State Legal Services Authority, with Shri. R. Ramakrishnan, IAS, Principal Secretary (Home), Nagaland and Shri. Renchamo P. Kikon, IPS, Addl DG (Prison), Nagaland as members, constituted vide Govt. of Nagaland Notification No. Home/JL-3/COVID-19/2020 in pursuance of the directions of Hon'ble Supreme Court, passed in Suo Motu Writ Petition (C) 1/2020, in the wake of outbreak of pandemic Corona Virus, held its third meeting of 2021 on 26th May 2021 at 3:00 pm through Video Conferencing.

2. In compliance to the HPC resolution dated 13th May 2021 on the issue of hygienic environment in jails, the District and Session Judges and the Chief Judicial Magistrates visited the jails under its jurisdiction and submitted their report on the hygienic conditions of jails and the medical facilities available. HPC deliberated on the reports and the following observations were made.

(i) Central Jail, Dimapur: The HPC noted that a Medical Officer, vide Directorate of Health & Family Welfare Order No. DHFW-1/329/2006/Pt-1/7262-68 Dated Kohima, the 6th May 2021, was designated for both Central Jail and District Jail Dimapur to attend to the health issues of the prisoners. However, as per report, the Medical Officer is not visiting the jails due to Covid-19 duty. In this regard, the HPC reiterated its earlier resolutions that medical doctors and medical facilities should be made available in the Jails, especially during Covid-19 pandemic. The HPC also observed that since Central Jail, Dimapur have inmates who are Covid-19 positive, it is all the more necessary that the Medical Doctor should be attached to the jail. The Committee therefore entrusted the Principal Secy (Home), to take up the matter with the Health and Family Welfare Department to ensure the posting of doctors in the Central Jail.

(ii) District Jail, Dimapur: On the reported water scarcity issue in District Jail Dimapur, the Addl DG (Prison) apprised the HPC members that though there is a well in each of the Male, Female and Sentry wards, water is a problem especially during the lean seasons. The members were further informed that to mitigate the problem of water scarcity, another deep bore-well is on the verge of completion and is expected to be commissioned within one week which will meet the water requirements of the jail. On the issue of sanitation, the HPC instructed that a least 3 (three) additional toilets and 2 (two) bathrooms should be constructed in the District Jail, Dimapur as soon as possible and that running water should be made available in all the barracks.

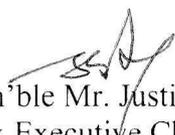
(iii) District Jail, Kohima: As per report received, the Medical Doctor in District Jail, Kohima was withdrawn since April, 2020 due to Covid-19 pandemic and that only 1 (one) pharmacist of the Prison department is posted. In this regard, the HPC reiterated that medical facilities should be made available in all jails and maintained that a doctor should be posted in District Jail, Kohima also. However, the HPC members, taking into consideration, the shortage of medical staff in the State due to a surge in Covid-19 positive cases, HPC desires the Health & Family Welfare department to ensure regular visitation in the jail in case regular posting of a doctor is not possible and requested the Principal Secy (Home) to take follow up action.

(iv) District Jail, Mon: Of the various issues on hygiene and infrastructure such as repair and renovation of jail kitchen, proper washing area facility, drinking water storage, food/ration storage and other minor works in District Jail, Mon, the HPC directed the Addl DG (Prisons) to ensure hygienic environment in the jail and undertake necessary repair and renovation works as highlighted in the report as soon as possible and also ensure that additional beds for the prisoners are made available. On matters of security of the jail, the Addl DG (Prison) informed the HPC members that in certain portion of the perimeter security fencing where the height of the prison wall appears to be low due to the topography, additional layer of concertina wire will be placed to augment the security feature. A mesh wire fencing with additional gate and a sentry post for the security of the prisoners shall also be taken up by the Prison Department as directed.

(v) District Jail, Mokokchung: On the issue of the roof leakage in certain wards in District Jail, Mokokchung, the Addl DG (Prison) informed the HPC members that though repairing of the roofing was done on earlier occasions, wear and tear continues and assured the members that CGI roofing shall be provided over such wards to prevent further leakages.

(vi) District Jail, Tuensang: As was noted in the report submitted to the HPC, the Addl DG (Prison) informed that since there is no space for constructing a new ward, existing structure in Tuensang jail is earmarked for keeping Covid-19 positive inmates in addition to a quarantine ward where newly arrested persons are kept on being forwarded to judicial custody. On the report that there is no UTP Ward in the District Hospital, Tuensang, the HPC requested the Principal Secy (Home) to take up the matter with the Health and Family Welfare Department to ensure that UTP Wards are made available not only in Tuensang but also in all the Districts Hospital across the State to address the health issues of inmates requiring hospitalisation.

3. The Chairman noted that the hygiene and sanitation conditions in the jails are by and large satisfactory as per reports received but at the same time impressed upon the Principal Secy (Home) and the Addl DG (Prison) to take all possible measures to ensure that hygienic environment is ensured in all the jails at all times especially in view of Covid-19 pandemic.
4. The HPC while reviewing the medical facilities being provided to the prisoners as directed by the Supreme Court observed that the common issue faced in all the jails was the absence of Medical Doctors. While appreciating the shortage of doctors in the State due to a surge in Covid-19 positive cases, the HPC reiterated its earlier resolutions that medical facilities and doctor should be made available in all jails especially in Central Jail, Dimapur where there are inmates who tested positive for Covid-19. The HPC requested the Principal Secy (Home) to take up the matter with the Health and Family Welfare Department in this regard.
5. The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair.


Hon'ble Mr. Justice S. Serto
& Executive Chairman,
Nagaland State Legal Services Authority


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Nagaland, Kohima


Renchamo P. Kikon
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