

MINUTES OF THE VC MEETING OF THE HIGH POWERED COMMITTEE HELD ON 13/05/2021

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 second meeting of 2021 on 13th May 2021 at 10:00 am through Video Conferencing.

2. The HPC reviewed the existing Covid-19 situation in jails and discussed on the need to vaccinate all inmates of Jails in the State. The Addl DG (Prisons) informed the members that he had written to the Home Department vide letter No. PRI/HQ/SUO MOTO WP(C)NO-1/2020(PT)/100 Dated 27th April 2021 requesting the State Government to make arrangements for administering vaccine to the prisoners, numbering 429 (four hundred twenty nine) as on 26.04.2021 across all jails in Nagaland. The Principal Secy (Home) informed that vaccination drive in the State for citizens above the age of 45 years are being carried out and that he would take up the matter of vaccinating the prisoners with the H&FW Department. The HPC members however observed that prisoners should be given priority as they are living in a confined environment and though segregation is enforced, the virus may spread very fast in the jails once any of the inmates is infected. Hence, the Committee is of the view that universal vaccination should be made available and age differentiation or age criteria should not apply for the prisoners. The members further are of the view that in the event of preventive measures not being taken and the inmates and prisoners not being vaccinated, infection of the prisoners with the virus will put more strain on the medical infrastructures of the State. Therefore, the Principal Secy (Home) and the Principal Secy (H&FW), Nagaland are requested to take up the issue of vaccination of the prisoners on priority. On being apprised that Prison staffs, both in the Directorate and the Districts are being vaccinated, the Committee is of the view that the vaccination of the jail staff should be carried out earnestly as they are Frontline Workers with high level of exposure to Covid-19 virus. Therefore the Committee entrusts the Principal Secy (Home) to liaise with the Principal Secy (H&FW) to ensure vaccination of the jail staff on priority and at the earliest.

3. The HPC reiterated its earlier decisions on mandatory Covid-19 testing of all arrested persons before being forwarded to courts for either police custody or judicial custody and strict adherence to Covid SOPs and guidelines to contain the spread of the virus. Further in pursuance of the Supreme Court order, the HPC directed that regular testing of Covid-19 should be undertaken by the State Health and Family Welfare Department for both prisoners and Prison staff to ensure that the pandemic is not spread in jails.

4. On the issue of decongestion of prisons, the Committee is of the view that as per reports received from the Prison Department and District Judicial officials, there is no over-crowding of jails in Nagaland since the district UTRC are meeting regularly and implementing the HPC resolutions passed on 1st April 2020 wherein criteria were laid down to release UTPs on interim bail/ parole as per the order of the Supreme Court to decongest jails in view of Covid-19 pandemic.

5. The HPC also reviewed the medical facilities being provided to the prisoners as directed by the Supreme Court in its order dated 07.05.2021 (Para 14). The HPC was informed that a dedicated Medical Officer has been posted in Central Jail Dimapur by the Chief Medical Officer, Dimapur. However, in the other District Jails, the Medical officer and staff are available only on-call. The HPC re-iterated its earlier meeting resolutions that medical facilities should be in place and Doctors should be made available to attend to any medical situation in jails across the State in view of Covid-19 pandemic. The Committee therefore resolved that the Principal Secy (H&FW) Nagaland should ensure availability of dedicated medical facilities in all jails at all times.

6. In pursuance of the Supreme Court order on the issue of hygienic environment in jails, the HPC entrusts the Principal Secy (Home) and the Addl DG (Prison) to ensure that hygienic environment is maintained at all times in all the jails in Nagaland. To this end, the HPC resolved that District and Session Judges or the Chief Judicial Magistrates in the absence of the former, shall visit jails every fortnight and submit report to the HPC. In addition, they shall also report on the medical facilities made available in the jails.

7. The matter on appropriate steps to be taken for transportation of prisoners released during lockdown and curfew period as per Supreme Court order Dated 07.05.2021 (Para 14) was also discussed. The HPC in this regard directed that concerned jail authority shall tie up with the District Police for transportation of UTP/s released during lockdown. The concerned District Police will facilitate and provide all possible assistance sought by the jail authority for the transportation of the inmates/ UTPs released during lockdown or curfew period.

8. In compliance to the Hon'ble Supreme Court's order Dated 07.05.2021 passed in connection with Suo Motu Writ Petition (C) No. 1/2020 (Para 13), all resolutions and decisions taken by the High Powered Committee shall be henceforth published in public domain by the State Home Department, the High Court registry and the same shall also be uploaded in the Websites of the State Prison Department, the High Court and the Nagaland State Legal Services Authority in order to enable effective dissemination of information.

9. On the issue of network connectivity for virtual production of UTPs by the jails and the courts, the feasibility of the e-Committee, Supreme Court funding the same was also discussed. As entrusted in the last HPC meeting dated 07.04.2021, the High Court Registry, Kohima communicated the view that it is not possible for the e-Committee to fund the network connectivity. The HPC therefore entrusted the Principal Secy (Home) to take up with the State government to find ways and means for funding the project of connecting the jails through Video Conferencing. The High Court Registry shall share the network connectivity feasibility report and cost estimate submitted by the BSNL with the Principal Secy (Home), Nagaland.

10. The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair.


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


R. Ramakrishnan
Principal Secretary (Home)
Nagaland, Kohima


Renchamo P. Kikon
Additional Director General (Prison)
Nagaland, Kohima