

HIGH-POWERED COMMITTEE

for

Reform and Governance of Open Correctional Institutions (OCIs)

MINUTES OF THE FIRST MEETING, DATED MAY 06TH, 2026 CHAIRED BY HON'BLE EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON, HIGH-POWERED COMMITTEE IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM, B-BLOCK, ADDITIONAL BUILDING COMPLEX, SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

Hon'ble Mr. Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, Judge (Retd.), Supreme Court of India & Executive Chairperson, High-Powered Committee, chaired the meeting.

The following Members of High-Powered Committee (“HPC”) and the Officials of NALSA were present –

MEMBERS OF HPC

ATTENDEES (IN-PERSON)

Ms. Shikha Srivastava, Ld. Officer on Special Duty, NALSA & Member Secretary, High-Powered Committee,

Shri Alok Ranjan, Director General, Bureau of Police Research and Development,

Ms. Hena Usman, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship,

Ms. Pratima Gupta, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment,

Ms. Nitasha Guria, Deputy Inspector General (Correctional Administration Division, Bureau of Police Research and Development.

ATTENDEES (VIRTUAL)

Home Secretaries, DGs of Prisons, and designated nominees from various States and Union Territories –

Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Shri Neeraj Bharti, Secretary (Home)
	IG Prisons
Bihar	Shri Sanjeev Jamuar, Add. Secretary-cum-Director (Admn.), Home Department, Prisons
Chandigarh	Shri Amit Kumar, DANICS, Additional Secretary, (Home)
Delhi	Shri Swami Ketu Mishra, NCT Delhi, Special Secretary (Home)

Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu	Shri Ashish Mohan, IAS, Special Secretary – cum – Director (Home)
Gujarat	Ms. Nipuna Torawane, Principal Secretary (Home)
Himachal Pradesh	Shri Dalip Kr. Negi, IAS, Special Secretary (Home)
Ladakh	Smt. Tashi Dolma, Special Secretary, Home Department
Madhya Pradesh	Ms. Manisha Sentia, Home Secretary Madhya Pradesh
	Shri Varun Kapoor, IPS, DG Prisons & Correctional Services, Madhya Pradesh, <i>nominated as a member directly by the Executive Chairperson</i>
Punjab	Shri Ankurjeet Singh, IAS, Additional Secretary, Home Department
Sikkim	Shri Kalkon, Home Secretary
Tripura	Shri Tarit Chakma, Additional Secretary (Home)
Uttarakhand	Additional Secretary, (Home)
Uttar Pradesh	Smt. Manju Lata Singh, Special Secretary (Home)
West Bengal	Ms. Smaraki Mahapatra, Secretary Correctional Administration
Jharkhand	Additional Chief Secretary (Home)
Goa	Keshav Chaurasia, IG Prisons Goa
Odisha	DG Prisons
Tamil Nadu	DG Prisons Tamil Nadu
Maharashtra	Shri Suhas Warke, IPS, ADG of Police & IG of Prisons, Maharashtra, <i>nominated as a member directly by the Executive Chairperson.</i>

OFFICERS/OFFICIALS OF NALSA (IN-PERSON)

Ms. Amandeep H.S. Sibia, OSD, NALSA,

Ms. Richa Upadhyay, OSD, NALSA,

Shri Roshan Oinam, OSD (IT), NALSA,

Shri Pratul Joshi, Registrar-cum-Nodal Officer, High-Powered Committee & Under Secretary – II, NALSA,

Shri Digvijay Ganpati, Law Researcher, NALSA,

Ms. Pallavi Diwakar, Law Researcher, NALSA.

The **Ld. Member Secretary**, HPC welcomed the Executive Chairperson and all the respected members present at the meeting and presented a detailed brief on the Hon'ble Supreme Court's judgment in *Suhas Chakma vs. Union of India*, covering the facts of the case, the issues framed by the Court, the operative directions, the constitution and **mandate** of this High-Powered Committee. The mandates of HPC emphasised in the meeting are as follows –

- a. Formulate **uniform standards for OCI governance**, including living conditions, wages, healthcare, and education;
- b. **Harmonize state practices** with constitutional mandates, court jurisprudence, and international best practices;
- c. **Identify systemic gaps** in existing frameworks and recommend legislative or administrative reforms;
- d. Develop **eligibility protocols based on “reformative potential”** and social readiness rather than fixed periods of incarceration;
- e. Create enforceable, **gender-sensitive guidelines** to ensure access for women, transgender people, and vulnerable groups;
- f. Suggest institutional arrangements for the **training and capacity-building** of prison officials;
- g. Establish **mechanisms for periodic monitoring**, data collection, and auditing of rehabilitative outcomes;
- h. Recommend **measures to improve coordination** between prison departments, legal services, and social welfare agencies.

The **Ld. Member Secretary** requested Hon'ble Mr. Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, Judge (Retd.), Supreme Court of India, and Executive Chairperson of the High-Powered Committee, to kindly preside over the meeting and guide the Committee through the agenda items.

The **Executive Chairperson**, High-Powered Committee, welcome all the members present in the meeting and emphasised the need for practical, tangible, and implementable solutions over merely academic ideas.

The Committee proceeded to discuss the following agenda points –

Agenda Item 1: Budgetary Allocation

The Member Secretary apprised the Committee of the budgetary position –

The Member Secretary informed the Committee that, in principle, MHA had accepted the budget proposed by NALSA for the functioning of the HPC, but no written confirmation or actual transfer of funds had yet been received.

It was explained that technical glitches relating to routing of funds through the Treasury Single Account (TSA) system and the inability to credit the funds directly into NALSA's existing account were delaying the process, and that creation of a separate commercial bank account had been suggested by NALSA's Accounts Officer.

The Executive Chairperson observed that issues of TDS could arise particularly in relation to contractual staff and non-government experts to be engaged by the Committee, and shared his experience from another committee where the Supreme Court had directed that TDS liability be fastened on the recipient, suggesting that a similar order could be sought to simplify implementation.

After discussion, it was agreed that NALSA and MHA should jointly work at the earliest to resolve technical and accounting issues relating to fund flow and disbursement modalities.

Agenda Item 2: State Nominations

The Member Secretary apprised the Committee that nominations from only 20 States & Union Territories had been received. Several major States had not formally nominated their representatives to the HPC despite repeated reminders.

The Executive Chairperson conducted a roll-call of all States and UTs. During the roll-call, it was observed that in some jurisdictions only prison officials had been nominated without a corresponding representative from the Home Department.

It was clarified that in States or Union Territories where the Home Department and the Prisons Department function as separate administrative units, **nomination of a senior officer specifically representing the Home Department is mandatory**, in terms of the mandate contained in the Judgment of the Hon'ble Court. Such nomination is required to be of an officer **not below the rank of Additional Secretary**. This would enable the Committee to effectively address systemic gaps and issues relating to inter-departmental coordination, as envisaged by the Hon'ble Court.

As per the judgement of Hon'ble Supreme Court in *Suhas Chakma vs. Union of India*, dated 20.02.2026, every State and Union Territory is directed to constitute a **Monitoring Committee for the Management of OCIs**, to be headed by the Executive Chairman of the State Legal Services Authority or his nominee (including a former Judge of the High Court) and **both** the Home Secretary of the State/Union Territory (not below the rank of Additional Secretary) and A senior officer of the Prisons Department (not below the rank of Deputy Inspector General), should be nominated as member of State Monitoring Committee.

Whereas, at the central level, **in the High-Powered Committee** nomination of a senior officer, not below the rank of Additional Secretary, specifically representing the Home Department, is mandatory, in terms of the directions contained in the judgment of the Hon'ble Court.

The **Executive Chairperson directed** to the Member Secretary that a letter in this regard should be sent to all States and Union Territories.

The **Executive Chairperson directed** the Member Secretary to approach the Hon'ble Supreme Court, through the Advocate-on-Record representing the National Legal Services Authority, for appropriate directions to ensure completion of all nominations from the States and Union Territories.

Agenda Item 3: Nomination of Joint Secretary

The agenda point regarding the nomination of a Joint Secretary was noted as already addressed, as the concerned officer had participated in proceedings. No further action required.

Agenda Item 4: Procedural Modalities

The Executive Chairperson invited inputs & suggestions from all members on evolving the Committee's procedural framework for conducting meetings, stakeholder consultations and data audits, emphasising that the framework must be practical, workable and aligned with the Supreme Court's judgment.

All the members were requested to submit **within the next two weeks** concise written proposals (around three pages) outlining suggested procedures on aspects such as frequency and format of meetings (physical/virtual/hybrid), categories of stakeholders to be consulted (including NGOs, former prison officials, legal experts, academics with field experience, judicial officers tasked with prison monitoring, and jail-visiting lawyers), and modalities for data collection and audit at national and State levels.

The Member Secretary was requested to circulate a brief reminder summarising the expected contents of these procedural notes and to share a compiled draft procedure for consideration in the next meeting.

The **Executive Chairperson directed** that all inputs and documents must be submitted in **both Word and PDF formats** to facilitate data compilation.

Agenda Item 5: Prison Data of HPC

The Member Secretary apprised the Committee that, vide letter dated 09.04.2026 (**annexed as ANNEXURE "A"**) addressed to the Director Generals of Prisons of all States and Union Territories, a detailed proforma had been circulated seeking information, inter alia, on prison infrastructure, existing OCIs/open barracks, inmate demographics, staffing patterns, and rehabilitative measures; (**annexed as ANNEXURE "B"**) however, only 10 States and 2 Union Territories had submitted their responses till the date of the meeting.

The **Executive Chairperson directed** that follow-up on this should be done and individual states may be called upon to expedite the process.

Shri Alok Ranjan, Director General, Bureau of Police Research and Development informed the Committee that national-level data on prisons are also compiled annually by the National Crime Records Bureau in the publication titled “Prison Statistics India”, and that these data could assist in developing an overall framework.

The Executive Chairperson, emphasised the need for more granular and updated State-specific data, particularly on the open prisons or open barracks, staff vacancies and local practices, beyond what is available in national compilations.

The Chairperson directed that states to share all their reports and research, any studies conducted from on this subject which state has commissioned or the prison itself has observed and prepared reports **within two weeks**.

The Member Secretary informed the Committee that, during the Supreme Court proceedings relating to this judgment, a comprehensive questionnaire comprising 55 questions had been circulated to the States; it was agreed that **the Member Secretary would obtain that questionnaire**, identify the relevant items, and align the HPC’s data-collection formats with it.

The Executive Chairperson noted that one of the specific areas earmarked by the Hon’ble Supreme Court is the staffing pattern in prisons and Open Correctional Institutions (OCIs). Accordingly, all **States and Union Territories are directed to furnish, for each category of prison and correctional staff**, the sanctioned strength, existing vacancies, and a concrete plan to fill such vacancies, with the reference date taken as May 01, 2026, **within a period of two weeks**.

Agenda Item 6: Modality and procedure of HPC for conducting research

Shri Alok Ranjan, DG, BPR&D, informed the Committee that BPR&D has already conducted several research studies on prisons, particularly on rehabilitation-related issues, and offered to collate and share these as a starting framework for the HPC’s research work.

The Executive Chairperson welcomed this suggestion and requested BPR&D to prepare a draft research framework identifying key thematic areas such as eligibility criteria and risk assessment for OCIs, standards for living conditions and wages, gender-sensitive practices, mechanisms for grievance redressal, and monitoring of rehabilitative outcomes for circulation among members.

Agenda Item 7: Feedback questionnaire and stakeholder consultations

It was agreed that stakeholders should include followings– general public; jail authorities; police officials involved in prison administration; inmates currently in prison; released prisoners or persons released on bail; family members and visitors of inmates; jail-visiting advocates and judges; as well as legal services panel and pro bono lawyers operating prison legal aid clinics.

The Member Secretary informed the Committee that a dedicated email ID had already been created for the HPC and that work was underway to develop a separate

webpage linked to NALSA's website for the Committee, initially in NALSA's domain, which could host the feedback questionnaire and related material.

Shri Roshan Oinam, OSD (IT), NALSA, explained that the existing NALSA website infrastructure could be leveraged, but that if the volume of responses is expected to be large, it would be necessary to coordinate with the National Informatics Centre (NIC) and possibly procure dedicated server resources.

The Executive Chairperson suggested that the portal must be **multilingual** at minimum Hindi and English, with a target of 12 regional languages to ensure inclusive participation. **Anonymity and privacy of respondents** must be ensured; no names should be recorded.

The Committee Members noted that merely hosting the questionnaire on the NALSA website would not be sufficient and that an active outreach strategy was required to invite adequate responses from all stakeholder groups.

The Executive Chairperson suggested that a **wider public awareness campaign** may be undertaken through DAVP and other media such as radio and allied channels, and the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting/DAVP would be approached with a proposal for a focused publicity campaign on the OCI questionnaire.

The Members Secretary suggested that through the SLSAs and DLSAs, including PLVs & Prison Legal Aid Clinics (PLACs), will actively publicise the Committee's online feedback questionnaire and facilitate responses from inmates.

The Executive Chairperson directed that the Member Secretary should **coordinate with the NIC** team regarding this as the feedback questionnaire will receive large number of responses from respondents.

The abovementioned suggestions were agreed by the Committee members.

Agenda Item 8: Any other item with permission of the Chair

A. Ms. Hena Usman, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, informed the Committee that the Ministry, through its flagship schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) and Jan Shikshan Sansthan, had previously supported small pilot programmes for capacity building and skill development in prisons (e.g., in Nari Bandi Niketan and Varanasi prison) and expressed willingness to support a more organically designed program for prison and OCI inmates.

It was suggested that BPR&D may obtain from States a review of existing skill-development activities in prisons and their requirements for future job roles, compile this information, and forward a consolidated proposal to the Ministry, which would consider sanctioning pilot projects in selected prisons.

The Committee agreed to this approach and requested distinguished members from BPR&D to coordinate with State prison authorities and to share a draft

framework of job roles, including beyond the traditional food and bakery activities, to cover more futuristic skills for literate inmates.

- B.** The Executive Chairperson raised concern about children of female prisoners and types of programmes available for them. Members raised concerns about the developmental impact on children who remain within prison environments, especially beyond the age of five years.

Ms. Ms. Pratima Gupta, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, suggested that children may be sent to day time Anganwadi type centres or creches outside prison boundary walls, where children could mingle with other children and return to prison in the evening.

The representative from **Maharashtra, ADG Prisons**, shared that in that State creches have been established outside the main prison walls, where children of women prisoners stay from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. with children from the general public and then return to the prison thereafter,

Shri Alok Ranjan, DG, BPR&D, highlighted the huge issue of under-utilization of women prison. If the women prison is far from inmates' home, then the relatives can't come due to travelling costs, and other considerations, therefore will not be able to interact with the child.

Ms. Pratima Gupta, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, drew attention to challenges relating to drug addiction and substance abuse among inmates, noting that de-addiction services would be an essential component of healthcare in OCIs.

It was agreed among the Committee Members that States would provide information on their existing arrangements and any studies or reports on children of women prisoners, and BPR&D indicated that it could consider funding a focused study on this issue if a proposal is received from appropriate prison authorities or researchers.

Additionally, States were requested to share details of their existing de-addiction facilities and practices in prisons so that the Committee can take these into account while formulating minimum standards for OCI healthcare.

The meeting concluded with directions to all State nominees/Members of the HPC to submit their respective reports within two weeks, so that the mandate of the Hon'ble Supreme Court is implemented in an effective and time-bound manner.

With the consensus of the Members, the Executive Chairperson proposed that the next meeting of the High-Powered Committee be fixed for **May 27, 2026 (Wednesday)**, to review the material and inputs and to finalise the Committee's procedural framework and work plan.

The Ld. Member Secretary expressed gratitude to the Chair and all the members present in the meeting.

ANNEXURE "A"



राष्ट्रीय विधिक सेवा प्राधिकरण
NATIONAL LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY
(Constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987)

शिखा श्रीवास्तव
SHIKHA SRIVASTAVA
Addl. District & Sessions Judge
विशेष कार्य अधिकारी
OFFICER ON SPECIAL DUTY

B-Block, Ground Floor,
Administrative Buildings Complex,
Supreme Court of India, New Delhi-110001

Ground Floor, Double Storey,
Jaisalmer House, 26, Mansingh Road,
New Delhi-110011

F. No.NALSA-CM/05/2024 1159/J
Dated: 09.04.2026

To
The Director General of Prisons
All States and Union Territories

Subject: Furnishing of information relating to prison administration and correctional reforms

Respected Sir/Madam,

Pursuant to the mandate of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in *Writ Petition (Civil) No. 1082 of 2020, Suhas Chakma v. Union of India & Others*, Dated 26th February 2026 (copy enclosed) regarding the Reform and Governance of Open Correctional Institutions (OCIs), a **High-Powered Committee** has been constituted to oversee these reforms.

To comply with the judgement of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in letter & spirit, and as a preparatory step for the operationalisation of its mandate, certain information is required to be obtained. In this regard, it was directed that relevant information be obtained from the prison administrations of all States and Union Territories to assist the Committee in its deliberations.

Accordingly, you are requested to kindly furnish the information in respect of your State/UT in the enclosed Proforma attached herewith.

The information in the prescribed format may kindly be furnished to this office by 27.04.2026, so that the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court may be complied with in the **time bound manner**.

Your cooperation in this matter is deeply appreciated.

Regards

Yours faithfully,

Shikha
(Shikha Srivastava)
9/4/2026

Member Secretary, High-Powered Committee

Encl.: As mentioned

ANNEXURE “B”

Proforma

Information relating to Prison Administration and Correctional Reforms

S. No.	Section	Details to be Provided	Format/Notes
1.	Jail Manual/ Rules/ Regulations	Copy of the State Jail Manual/Rules/Regulations	Attach PDF/official document (latest version)
2.	Existing Prison Infrastructure	- Number of prisons (Central, District, Sub-jails, Women’s jails, Open Correctional Institutions, etc.) - Capacity vs. actual inmate population - Staff strength (sanctioned vs. actual) - Budget allocation for prisons	Provide data in tabular form with year-wise figures in Word/ or any other Editable Format (last 5 years, if available)
3.	Reformatory & Rehabilitative Measures	- Educational programs - Vocational training - Skill development initiatives - Psychological counseling & mental health support - Reintegration programs (post-release support)	Provide brief descriptions, along with quantitative data in Word/ or any other Editable Format (number of beneficiaries, duration, outcomes)
4.	Best Practices in Prison Administration	- Innovative correctional reforms - Community engagement initiatives - Partnerships with NGOs/academic institutions - Use of technology in prison management - Successful rehabilitation case studies	Provide narrative descriptions with supporting documents in Word/ or any other Editable Format , if available