

HIGH-POWERED COMMITTEE
for
Reform and Governance of Open Correctional Institutions (OCIs)

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING, DATED MAY 26TH, 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 Ravi Joseph Lokku, IPS, Additional 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 (Research & 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	Secretary (Home)
Assam	Animesh Talukdar, ACS, Home
Bihar	
Delhi	NCT Delhi, Special Secretary (Home)
Haryana	Deputy Secretary, Home
Himachal Pradesh	
Jammu & Kashmir	Suhail Muzaffar, Special Secy, Home

Jharkhand	ACS, Home
Karnataka	AIG, Prison HQ
Ladakh	Smt. Tashi Dolma, Special Secretary, Home Department
Madhya Pradesh	Shri Varun Kapoor, IPS, DG Prisons & Correctional Services, Madhya Pradesh, <i>nominated as a member directly by the Executive Chairperson</i>
Rajasthan	Secretary, Home (Law)
Sikkim	
Tripura	Additional Secretary (Home)
Uttar Pradesh	Mr. Annavidinesh Kumar, Special Secretary (Home)
West Bengal	Secretary, Home & Hill Affairs Department
Goa	IGP Prisons
Tamil Nadu	IG Prisons Tamil Nadu
Maharashtra	Smt. Radhika Rastogi, I.A.S., Additional Chief Secretary, Home Department, Shri Suhas Warke, IPS, ADG of Police & IG of Prisons, Maharashtra, <i>nominated as a member directly by the Executive Chairperson.</i>
Mizoram	Additional Secretary, Home Department
Nagaland	Special Secretary (Home)

SPECIAL INVITEE

(In-Person)

Ms. V. Vidyavathi, Secretary, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment,

Ms. Ipsita Mitra, Deputy Secretary, DEPwD, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment,

(Virtual)

Shri Vijay Shanker Pandey, Deputy Secretary, Women Welfare Division, Ministry of Women and Child Development.

OFFICERS/OFFICIALS OF NALSA (IN-PERSON)

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

Ms. Richa Upadhyay, OSD, NALSA,

Shri Roshan Oinam, OSD (IT), NALSA,

Ms. Pallavi Diwakar, Law Researcher, NALSA.

LAW RESEARCHERS, HIGH-POWERED COMMITTEE

(In-Person)

Shri Digvijay Ganpati, Law Researcher, NALSA & HPC,

Ms Raji Gururaj, Law Researcher, HPC,

(Virtual)

Shri Anuj Kapoor, Law Researcher, HPC.

The **Ld. Member Secretary**, HPC welcomed the Executive Chairperson and all the respected members present at the meeting and 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**, HPC welcomed all the members present at the meeting and invited them to proceed with the agenda of the meeting.

The Committee proceeded to discuss the agenda points-wise –

Agenda Item 1: Follow-up Action on the directions in the First Meeting

a. Budgetary Allocation

The Member Secretary apprised the Committee of the budgetary position –

The Member Secretary informed the Committee that the matter of budgetary allocation is still pending with the Department of Home, and that without the release of funds, the High-Powered Committee would not be able to function effectively, including recruitment of staff and arrangement of visits for further research.

The Chairperson emphasised that confirmation was necessary so that the functioning of the Committee could proceed without delay.

Shri Ravi Joseph Lokku, IPS, Additional Director General, Bureau of Police Research and Development stated that a decision would be taken within two or three days, and a confirmation would be communicated **by the end of the week**.

b. State Nominations

The Member Secretary apprised that nominations had not been received from 7 States and 1 Union Territories.

An Interlocutory Application was filed before the Hon'ble Supreme Court, pursuant to which, by order dated 25.05.2026, the Hon'ble Court directed all remaining States and Union Territories to submit their nominations within one week. The **Executive Chairperson directed** the Member Secretary to issue a reminder letter to all the concerned States and Union Territories at the earliest.

Furthermore, the Committee clarified that, as per the judgment dated 26.02.2026, **nomination from the State Home Department is required**, since the matter involves policy-making decisions. The committee observed that such policies cannot be addressed by the Prison Department alone, and the participation of the Home Department are necessary, as it has overall charge of law and order and of related issues extending beyond prisons.

The Executive Chairperson directed the Member Secretary to issue a reminder letter to all States and Union Territories clarifying the same.

NEED FOR THE FORMATION OF STATE MONITORING COMMITTEE

The Executive Chairperson clarified that in terms of the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, the constitution of committees for union territories is to be made by the Central Government. At the same time, there is wide disparity in the union territories; Delhi and Pondicherry have sizeable prison populations, whereas smaller union territories have less prison populations.

Therefore, the Committee is of the opinion that all Union Territories should have separate state-level committees as a matter of principle, irrespective of whether the UT has a legislature or whether responsibility rests with the Union of India. For all Union Territories, therefore, regardless of whether they are under Union administration (including Ladakh), the UT administration will be consulted by the Central Government to finalise and notify the committee to HPC.

Further, it was noted that State Level Committees (*Monitoring Committee, IX. Operative Directions, F (ii) in Suhas Chakma v. Union of India & Others, WRIT PETITION (C) NO(S). 1082 OF 2020*) must also be constituted by every State within the Supreme Court directed timeframe. These Committees shall forward their reports both to the High-Powered Committee and to the concerned High Court.

The **Executive Chairperson directed** the Member Secretary that letters should be issued directly to the Registrars of all High Courts to place the matter before the Hon'ble Chief Justices, and that the Supreme Court judgment should be cited in the communication.

MONITORING COMMITTEE IN UNION TERRITORIES

The representative from Ladakh sought clarification whether UTs without a legislature (specifically Ladakh, where responsibility is vested in the Union of India) are required to constitute the state-level committee mandated by the Supreme Court direction.

The **Executive Chairperson clarified** that, because the High-Powered Committee (HPC) is charged with reforms applicable nationwide, UTs should be included as a matter of principle irrespective of size or administrative arrangement.

All Union Territories will constitute state-level committees under the Supreme Court direction, as a matter of principle, irrespective of whether the UT has a legislature or whether responsibility rests with the Union of India. For UTs under Union administration (including Ladakh), the UT administration will consult the Central Government to finalise and notify the committee to HPC.

c. Procedural Modalities

The Member Secretary apprised that the concise written proposals on procedural modalities of the High-Powered Committee for further functioning, as requested in the 1st meeting, had not been received from the members.

Ms. Hena Usman, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, placed a copy of the written proposal before the Committee and stated that a formal written communication would be sent to the Office subsequently.

The **Executive Chairperson directed** all the members that written proposals on procedural modalities should be sent **within one week**.

The **Executive Chairperson directed** the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities for granular, disaggregated data, including data on the nature and extent of disabilities and age-wise details, for proper planning and implementation.

d. Prison Data of HPC

The Member Secretary apprised the committee that a reminder letter dated 14.05.2026 was sent to all the remaining states that had not furnished the required data but as of the dated of meeting only 16 States and 5 Union Territories had responded. The following states and Union Territories had not submitted data: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh; Jammu and Kashmir, Lakshadweep, Puducherry.

The **Executive Chairperson directed** the Member Secretary to issue letters to the remaining States for submission of the data at the earliest, and further directed BPR&D to follow up the matter so that compliance may be ensured effectively.

Agenda Item 2: Compliance with Sathyan Naravoor Case

The Member Secretary apprised the committee that in compliance with the Hon'ble Supreme Court judgment dated 21.04.2026 in ***Sathyan Naravoor v. Union of India & Ors*** [WRIT PETITION (CIVIL) NO(S). 182 OF 2025, **Para 7(A)**], a letter dated 13.05.2026 was issued to the Secretary, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, requesting participation or appropriate action to ensure the active participation of an officer not below the rank of Additional Secretary in the proceedings of the HPC.

The Committee welcomed the in-person presence of **Ms. V. Vidyavathi**, Secretary, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, at the meeting. She further informed the Committee that an officer *not below the rank of Additional Secretary* from the Department would be nominated to participate in the future proceedings of the HPC.

Participation of Ministry of Women & Child Development in HPC

The Member Secretary apprised the Committee that in the first meeting of HPC on 06.05.2026, it was observed that the ***participation of the Women Welfare Division, Ministry of Women & Child Development***, Government of India,

would strengthen the work of the High-Powered Committee, especially in view of the presence of female inmates.

The Member Secretary further informed the Committee that the above matter, along with the email dated 30.04.2026 received from the Ministry of Women & Child Development requesting its inclusion in the High-Powered Committee, was placed before the Executive Chairman of the High-Powered Committee for consideration. The Executive Chairman was pleased to approve the participation of an officer not below the rank of Joint Secretary in the proceedings of the HPC.

The Committee acknowledged the virtual presence of Shri Vijay Shanker Pandey, Deputy Secretary, Women Welfare Division, Ministry of Women and Child Development, at the meeting.

The Member Secretary requested that the Ministry of Women and Child Development may kindly send the nomination to the Committee at the earliest as per HPC letter dated 20.05.2026.

Agenda Item 3: Draft questionnaire on PwD inmates in prison

Thereafter, the Committee discussed the ***draft questionnaire prepared for collecting data regarding inmates*** with disabilities in prisons.

The Executive Chairperson emphasised that the questionnaire must be more detailed and should include specific information on healthcare, disability-related requirements, accessibility, and other institutional support measures. For instance, going beyond a generic question on healthcare to capture specific facilities available for different categories of disability (orthopaedic, visual, hearing, mental health, cardiac, etc.).

The Committee agreed that the questionnaire should be circulated to all stakeholders, for comments and improvement before finalisation. It was also suggested that consultations be held with professionals and organizations working in the disability sector, as well as health professionals and lawyers, to ensure that the questionnaire is comprehensive.

The Executive Chairperson emphasised the need to study open prisons in a more structured way, including their design, purpose, occupations permitted, monitoring mechanisms, capacity, and wages. It was observed that the concept of open prisons varies across States, and that a broader research-based understanding is needed. The Chairperson also noted the need to examine wage-related issues in open prisons, including the question of whether prisoners engaged in work should receive wages comparable to others.

In this regard, the **Executive Chairperson directed** the Member Secretary to coordinate with BPR&D for comprehensive research, and further directed the Law Researchers of the High-Powered Committee to schedule a physical meeting with the BPR&D research team.

Agenda Item 4: Any other item with permission of the Chair

a. Discussion on Open Prison

Ms. V. Vidyavathi, Secretary, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, highlighted that existing legal and policy frameworks already include accessibility provisions, including MHA rules and guidelines, and the Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act, 2023, which addresses accessible infrastructure, non-discrimination, screening at admission, and appropriate healthcare and rehabilitation.

The Executive Chairperson noted that although guidelines and legal instruments exist, the challenge is to assess how effectively they are being implemented in the States and whether they require strengthening or modification. It was also emphasized that accessibility standards must address varied disabilities, including orthopaedic, hearing, and visual disabilities, and must cover practical features such as door width, ramp angle, lift access, tactile pathways, and toilets.

Ms. V. Vidyavathi, the Secretary, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, stated that her department would draw upon previous experience, and in consultation with stakeholders, including NGOs and other agencies working in the field of disability, suggest the nature and content of questions to be prepared in this regard.

Ms. Nitasha Guria, Deputy Inspector General (Research & Correctional Administration Division), Bureau of Police Research and Development, sought the Committee's suggestions on any area that may be comprehensively researched, noting that BPR&D is engaged in research activities.

The Executive Chairperson suggested that research be undertaken on the uniform design of open prisons, as their structure and functioning vary from State to State.

b. Need for In-Person Participation

Ms. V. Vidyavathi, suggested that given the importance and time-bound nature of the matter of HPC, departments such as BPRD, Home, Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, and Women and Child Development should participate in person rather than through virtual mode.

The Executive Chairperson concurred and directed that a strong communication would be issued to all the members based in Delhi requesting physical participation in future meetings of HPC.

c. BPR&D Consultation with Directors General of Prisons

Ms. Nitasha Guria, Deputy Inspector General (Research & Correctional Administration Division), Bureau of Police Research and Development, suggested that BPR&D would convene a consultation with the Directors General of Prisons of all

States and Union Territories in relation to research on open correctional institutions and HPC may provide valuable suggestions in this regard.

The meeting concluded with the permission of the Executive Chairperson.

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