

V-17013/50/2023-PR
Government of India
Ministry of Home Affairs

Women Safety Division, 2nd Floor,
Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium,
India Gate Circle, New Delhi-110001

November 20, 2023

To

1. **The ACS/Principal Secretary (Home/Jails) of all States and UTs**
2. **DG/IG (Prisons) of all States/UTs**

Sub: Use of technology in Prisons for strengthening effective Prisons Administration

Sir/Madam,

As part of its constant endeavour to strengthen and support efficient prison administration in the jails of the country, the Ministry of Home Affairs has been reaching out to the Prison authorities of all States and Union Territories and has been providing them assistance both in terms of Grant-in-aid for certain technology driven projects as well as sharing contemporary international best practices, guiding principles and recommendations of various Committees, etc. on varied issues relating to prison reforms. The idea behind this is to ensure that no State or Union Territory is left behind in technologically upgrading its security infrastructure and at the same time gets exposure to the latest developments in efficient prison administration so as to achieve the common objective of keeping the criminals in secure custody and also reform and re-skill the prisoners to enable them to become better citizens of the country through various schemes of the Government of India.

2. The Ministry has also been engaging various agencies at national and transnational level and endeavours to identify issues which may be beneficial for the prison authorities in strengthening prison administrations in their respective jurisdictions. Sharing the Model Prison Manual 2016, the Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act, 2023, Special Remission Scheme, Scheme on support to poor prisoners, guidelines on effective phone jamming solutions, modernisation of prisons scheme, etc. with the States and UTs and issue of various advisories covering varied aspects of prison management have been some steps in this direction.

3. Technology has proved to be a significant tool in modern day life as it not only brings in efficiency in the system but also ensures transparency in operations. Therefore, **as part of the sustained endeavour to share guidance on important issues relating to prison management**, the following advice is shared with the State/UT Prison authorities, which they may adopt in their jurisdictions for efficient prison management:

Court hearing/trial of inmates through video conference

To bring about uniformity and standardization in the conduct of Video Conferencing/virtual hearing, an overarching order (Suo Motu Writ (Civil) No. 5/2020) was passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India on 6th April 2020 which provided legal sanctity and validity to the court hearings through Video Conferencing. Video Conferencing rules were framed by a 5-judge committee which was circulated to all High Courts for adoption after local contextualization.

Following are some of the advantages of virtual hearing:

- There is considerable saving of time and money thus helping under privileged litigants
- The lawyers can attend hearings at multiple locations at short notice.
- Production of witnesses becomes easy as they can be at their own safe locations.
- Movement of prisoners can be done very economically and conveniently.

One video conference equipment each has been provided to all Court Complexes including taluk level courts. VC facilities have also been enabled between 3240 court complexes and corresponding 1272 jails. Funds for 2506 VC cabins and VC equipment for 14,443 courtrooms have also been released by the Department of Justice. 1500 VC licenses have been procured to promote virtual hearings. to coordinate and collaborate with the administrative officers of Trial Courts as well as the Registrar of their respective High Courts for encouraging and promoting the hearings of the Court through video conference and increase this to the highest possible usage.

Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs has launched the Modernisation of Prisons project for technologically upgrading the prisons of the country. One of the components of this project is procurement of video conference equipments. In case the prison authorities need to augment the VC infrastructure in their jails, they can make use of the funds made available through this project.

State and UTs are requested to engage with concerned authorities of the District/ Trial Courts and Registrar of High Courts **for maximising the virtual hearing of the cases** of prison inmates as such an exercise would not only prove to be cost effective but will also save time and resources and would avoid movement of prisoners, thus ensuring their safety and security.

Biometric verification of inmates

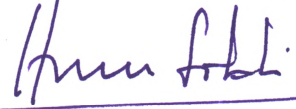
For daily counting of prisoners in jails, **jail authorities may adopt Biometric verification** system along with physical counting, as the same is likely to prove useful in having an error-free attendance and counting of prisoners and would also obviate the possibility of impersonation and other allied imprecisions in such matters.

Short films on the lives of reformed prisoners

It may be useful if short films of two to three minutes are prepared on the lives of reformed prisoners, which can be broadly based on - their feeling of regret and remorse after committing the crime - how their thought process changed over a period of time - how they are now leading a reformed life - the skills gained by them and the positive message which they would like to share with other inmates, etc. **Such films can act as a source of inspiration to other inmates and can be shown to the prisoners in jails across the country** so that they can relate with the experience and make efforts to lead a reformed life and become good citizens of the country.

3. It is expected that the States and UTs will make use of the above technology driven advice/ guidance for effective prison administration in their jurisdictions. Action taken in the matter may please be apprised to this Ministry.

Yours sincerely,



(Arun Sobti)

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