

**VISIT NOTE TO KURSEONG SUB DIVISIONAL CORRECTIONAL HOME
ON OCTOBER 1, 2022.**

Myself visited Kurseong Sub-Divisional Correctional Home on October 1, 2022. Shri G. Das is the Controller of this Correctional Home. Apart from him this Correctional Home has 2 Head Warders, 8 Warders, 6 Female Warders, 1 Pharmacist, 1 Data Entry Operator, 1 Driver, 1 Clerk and 1 sweeper. There is no medical officer. With some local arrangement one doctor visits the Correctional Home twice a week. The total capacity of the Correctional Home is 22 which includes 20 male and 2 females. However, the present population on date of visit was 36 – all Males and all UTPs. Certain deficiencies were noticed which are enumerated below along with recommendations against each of them.

- (a) Muskets (3) are of very old vintage. They are not being cleaned periodically. Using such weapons are very hazardous. Moreover, it was informed that no firing practice has been done by the warders for several years. They are, thus, lacking in such skills. It is recommended that Correctional Home authorities should get in touch with S.P., Darjeeling for cleaning (oiling) of weapons as well as firing practice (known as Musketry).
- (b) Visited the kitchen. Inmates were cooking their food. Cooking was being carried out in DIESEL FIRED STOVES which is a health hazard. There were no EXHAUST FANS located in the kitchen. As a result, smoke congestion was occurring. Moreover, the kitchen needs to be cleaned with disinfectants regularly, specially the utensils used for cooking. It is thus recommended that LPG be used for cooking, Exhaust Fans / or Chimney be installed and proper cleaning as well as maintenance of utensils should be carried out regularly.
- (c) There are two wards – one slightly smaller in space than the other. One ward can at least accommodate 16 persons while the other 14 persons each. However, these wards appeared to be over crowded currently. Prisoners sleep on floor with a blanket as protection in the winter season, with no heating; it is a trying

situation for prison inmates. Kurseong being a cold place, it is recommended that 3 tier beds/cots (BUNK type as in Railway Compartments) be provided. Also arrangements for heating the wards be made so that in winter inmates do not suffer and are comfortable. It will be helpful in preventing diseases like TB; chest infections, common cold and other LUNG related diseases.

- (d) Facilities be provided for indoor games like LUDO, Carom, Cards. Also newspapers, T.V. and book (by way of opening a library) should be done. This will help in keeping up the morale of the inmates as well as provide entertainment during free hours.

A large open courtyard is located at the centre of the prison / Correctional Home campus. This courtyard could be utilized for purpose of games like volley ball, basket basket-ball, football and badminton.

- (e) Medical facilities are very poor in the Correctional Home. There is no regular doctor with some local arrangements. One doctor comes twice a week for some time for medical checkups of inmates. Rest is handled by Pharmacists who is not trained for Medical duties. There is fairly adequate supply of medicines for the inmates.

Due to lack of Medical Officer when new inmates are being inducted into the Correctional Home no medical checkups could possibly be done. Thus, the Correctional Home authorities are unable to know nature of any pre-existing disease of the inmate or injuries suffered during police custody. Overall, medical history remains incomplete which is a big gap for treating or preventing diseases subsequent to his admission into the Correctional Home. It is strongly recommended that one Medical Officer be posted or else taking on contractual basis who would attend to inmates on a regular day to day basis.

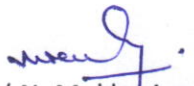
- (f) As a welfare measure it is recommended that pay telephone be installed for inmates so that they could communicate with their families. Regular communication by means of post be permitted by setting up a Post Office letter box inside the prisons premises. The feasibility of opening a sub-post office be

considered which would immensely help inmates and also extend to them banking facilities.

- (g) With active cooperation of Darjeeling BODISATTVA FOUNDATION, an NGO path-breaking welfare measures are being undertaken in this Correctional Home. Activities like YOGA, READING, WRITING, Making of Pickles, KNITTING,, DARNING etc. are taught regularly. The inmates are also taught to play some indoor games. The NGO has given note-books to the inmates who write their EMOTIONS in such note-books. This emotional outlet makes them happy and relieve them from their daily burden and drudgery. It is strongly recommended that such NGO activities should be REPLICATED in other Correctional Homes for inmates. This would help in both skill development as well as keep prisoners engaged and happy.
- (h) It is recommended for communication with family members and inmates be made by way of pay phones, postal letters etc.

Joint Secretary, West Bengal Human Rights Commission is directed to send authenticated copy of this visit report / recommendation to Principal Secretary, Department of Correctional Administration, I.G., Directorate of Correctional Services, District Magistrate, Darjeeling and Controller, Kurseong Subsidiary Correctional Home.

Ld. Registrar will please upload the report in West Bengal Human Rights Commission Website.


(N. Mukherjee)
12/10/2022
Member

West Bengal Human Rights Commission

Encl : Chart showing details of inmates lodged in Kurseong Sub Divisional Correctional Home as on October 1, 2022.