IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
CIVIL ORIGINAL JURISDICTION

WRIT PETITION (CIVIL) NO.(S.) 1082 OF 2020

SUHAS CHAKMA ....PETITIONER(S)

VERSUS

UNION OF INDIA AND OTHERS ....RESPONDENT(S)

WITH

WRIT PETITION (CIVIL) NO.(S.) 182 OF 2025

O R D E R

1. This Court having considered the various issues arising in relation to the functioning, governance and management of Open Correctional Institutions[1] ("OCIs"), and having also taken into consideration the reports submitted by the learned

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Reason:

1 For short, "OCIs".

Amicus Curiae in this regard, *vide* its judgment dated 26th February, 2026 in ***Suhas Chakma v. Union of India***[2]**,** proceeded to issue exhaustive directions with a view to giving meaningful effect to the reformative and rehabilitative objectives underlying the establishment of OCIs, including directions concerning their effective functioning, uniformity in standards, expansion of infrastructure and continued monitoring and compliance. In particular, noticing the absence of uniformity in the governance, eligibility norms, rehabilitative facilities and management of OCIs across the States and Union Territories, this Court, directed the constitution of a **High-Powered Committee for Reform and Governance of Open Correctional Institutions**[3], with Hon'ble Mr. Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, Judge (Retd.), Supreme Court of India, as its Executive Chairperson.

2. The High-Powered Committee was entrusted with, *inter alia*, the task of formulating Common Minimum Standards for the governance,

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2 Writ Petition (Civil) No. 1082 of 2020.

3 Hereinafter, being referred to as "High-Powered Committee".

administration and management of OCIs; harmonising correctional practices across the States and Union Territories; identifying systemic gaps in the existing legal and administrative frameworks; recommending standardized eligibility assessment protocols; and formulating enforceable guidelines to ensure gender-sensitive, inclusive and non-discriminatory access to OCIs. The High-Powered Committee was further required to recommend measures concerning capacity-building of prison officials, periodic monitoring, data collection, evaluation and audit of OCIs, as well as inter-agency coordination amongst the concerned authorities. This Court directed the High-Powered Committee to submit a comprehensive report containing its recommendations, along with the draft Common Minimum Standards, preferably within six months from the date of its first meeting.

3. Subsequently, by judgment dated 21st April, 2026 in ***Sathyan Naravoor v. Union of India***[4]**,** this Court directed the High-Powered Committee to further examine compliance by all States and Union

4 Writ Petition (Civil) No. 182 of 2025.

Territories with the directions issued in ***L. Muruganatham v. State of Tamil Nadu & Ors.***[5], concerning the rights of prisoners with disabilities. The High-Powered Committee was also directed to formulate an action plan for provision of appropriate assistive devices, mobility aids and other necessary support equipment to prisoners with disabilities, tailored to their specific needs and functional requirements.

4. Pursuant to the aforesaid judgments, the High-Powered Committee has submitted a Status Report dated 31st August, 2026, detailing out the steps taken by it towards discharging the mandate entrusted to it by this Court. The report, *inter alia*, records the constitution of the High-Powered Committee, the steps taken for securing the requisite nominations and participation of the concerned authorities from the States and Union Territories, and the convening of its meetings on 6th May, 2026 and 26th May, 2026. The High-Powered Committee has also undertaken the exercise of collecting comprehensive information from the

5 (2025) 10 SCC 401.

States and Union Territories regarding the administration and governance of OCIs, including their infrastructure, rehabilitative and reformative programmes, applicable rules and regulations, and the best practices being followed therein.

5. The High-Powered Committee has, in furtherance of its mandate, also undertaken on-the-ground visits and inspections of OCIs, including the OCI at Devanahalli, Bengaluru; the Karnal Open Air Jail in Haryana; and the Cherlapally Prisoners Agricultural Colony in Telangana, with a view to assessing the prevailing conditions, nature of work, availability of vocational training and educational facilities, wages, healthcare and other rehabilitative measures. The report records, *inter alia*, the need for greater utilisation of OCI facilities; widening of eligibility criteria; strengthening of skill development and educational facilities; rationalisation of wages; and identification of measures for facilitating the inclusion of women prisoners and prisoners with disabilities. Detailed questionnaires have also been prepared and circulated to the concerned stakeholders to obtain granular information on the

administration and governance of OCIs, and the High-Powered Committee proposes to consider these issues and make preliminary recommendations at its meeting scheduled for 8th September, 2026.

6. When the matter was taken up for consideration on 3rd September, 2026, the learned *Amicus Curiae* pointed out that, having regard to the mandate entrusted to the High-Powered Committee and the steps required to be undertaken by it, certain procedural and administrative directions would be necessary to facilitate its smooth and effective functioning. The necessary directions are contained in paragraph 47 of the Status Report submitted by the High-Powered Committee and, *inter alia*, relate to ensuring effective representation of the Secretaries of the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment/Department of Social Welfare of all States and Union Territories, or their nominees not below the rank of Additional Secretary, before the High-Powered Committee; filing of compliance affidavits by the concerned States and Union Territories in respect of the rights of prisoners with disabilities, in terms of the

directions contained in the judgment dated 21st April, 2026 in ***Sathyan Naravoor v. Union of India***; and nomination of an officer of the Ministry of Home Affairs to attend to the administrative requirements of the High-Powered Committee and participate in its ongoing meetings.

7. The learned *Amicus Curiae* further pointed out that the High-Powered Committee is scheduled to consider, at its meeting to be held on 8th September, 2026, various issues falling within its mandate, including widening of the eligibility criteria for transfer to OCIs, measures for optimum utilisation of existing OCI capacity, increase in the scale of wages payable to prisoners, skill development and employability measures, and measures for inclusion of women prisoners. It was submitted that the High-Powered Committee proposes to make preliminary recommendations on these aspects following the said meeting. The learned *Amicus Curiae*, therefore, submitted that the matter may be deferred beyond two weeks, so that the recommendations of the High-Powered Committee may be placed before this Court for its consideration.

8. Having considered the Status Report dated 31st August, 2026 submitted by the High-Powered Committee, as well as the submissions advanced by the learned *Amicus Curiae*, we are of the considered view that, at this stage, the following directions are necessary to facilitate the effective and smooth functioning of the High-Powered Committee and to further the objectives underlying the directions issued by this Court:

A. The States of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura and West Bengal, and the Union Territories of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Delhi, Ladakh, Lakshadweep, Jammu & Kashmir and Puducherry, shall ensure effective representation through the Secretaries of the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment/Department of Social Welfare, as the case may be, or its nominee

not below the rank of Additional Secretary, before the High-Powered Committee, in terms of **Direction 7(B)** contained in the judgment dated 21st April, 2026 in ***Sathyan Naravoor v. Union of India***, Writ Petition (Civil) No. 182 of 2025. Any instance of non-compliance will be viewed seriously.

B. The States of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal, and the Union Territories of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Lakshadweep, Ladakh and Puducherry, shall file the requisite compliance affidavits before the High-Powered Committee in respect of the rights of prisoners with disabilities, in terms of **Direction 7(C)** contained in the judgment dated 21st April, 2026 in ***Sathyan Naravoor v. Union of India***, Writ Petition (Civil) No. 182 of 2025 within two weeks.

C. The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, shall nominate an officer not below the rank of Joint Secretary to attend to the administrative requirements of the High-Powered Committee and to participate in the ongoing meetings of the High-Powered Committee.

9. The Registry is directed to transmit a copy of this order to the Chief Secretaries of the States of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal, and to the Chief Secretaries/Administrators of the Union Territories of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Lakshadweep Islands and Puducherry, for necessary compliance with the directions contained in paragraphs 8(A) and 8(B) hereinabove. A copy of this order shall also be transmitted to the Home Secretary, Ministry of

Home Affairs, Government of India, for necessary action in terms of direction contained in paragraph 8(C) hereinabove.

10. List on 29th September, 2026 for consideration of the further status report to be submitted by the High-Powered Committee, indicating the progress made and the recommendations, if any, formulated by it in furtherance of the mandate entrusted to it *vide* judgment dated 26th February, 2026 in ***Suhas Chakma v. Union of India*** and order dated 21st April, 2026 in ***Sathyan Naravoor v. Union of India***.

.....J.
(VIKRAM NATH)

.....J.
(SANDEEP MEHTA)

NEW DELHI;
SEPTEMBER 03, 2026.