



The

METAMORPHOSIS

A bulletin on the changing lives in the Correctional Homes of West Bengal

Issue:30

From the Editor's Desk :



Dear readers,
Hope you all are well. After a long gap of one year, we have a chance to communicate to you again through publication of this issue of the newsletter. This issue is all about measures taken for preventing the pandemic "COVID-19" by enforcing strict discipline and implementing health care measures within the Correctional Home premises for

almost last nine months within our limited resources. It also tells about resistance against the onslaught of super cyclone "Amphan". And there are the stories of generating awareness, continued developmental and cultural activities even under restrictions. Preventing pandemic in Correctional Homes is inevitably the biggest challenge of the last few decades. While the Corona infections was mushrooming everywhere and growing day by day in the society outside, it could be easily presumed what might be the situation within the four walls environ. Hence, fears loomed large in and around Correctional Homes, primarily due to dormitory-style lodging pattern in Correctional Homes and the inability of people, often with underlying health issues, to practice social distancing. Moreover, there are regular flows of prisoners, visitors, staff etc. Health officials too agree that incarcerated individuals and correctional staff are at high risk of contagion due to crowded set up. We knew that corona virus spreads quickly in closed premises like prisons and a good number of people who are incarcerated there have also chronic health conditions, like diabetes, TB, HIV etc., which makes them vulnerable to severe forms of COVID-19. Inevitably, we had to impose some strict restrictions. On top of all these, there were the barriers of intolerant defendants somewhere in enforcing discipline and restrictions. In the wake of the announcement of pandemic and complete safety restriction measures, some misdemeanors were incited at the Dum Dum Central Correctional Home which had to be cracked down before spurring elsewhere. The resulting death of some prisoners is extremely tragic. However, our challenge was to protect the prisoners' rights and interests within the imposed restrictions so far as practicable.

Controlling the movement of ground level officers and staff and keeping them at station day after day was another big challenge. No compliment is enough for the way the Correctional Services personnel handled the situation and that too being away from their families for such a long period. Officers and staff of all the correctional facilities have set a significant example in keeping the prison under extreme control in collaboration with the Directorate of Health Services, local Police authorities, Corporation and

Municipal authorities etc. Many officers and workers have been infected while performing their duties. We lost two of our colleagues, Late Gouri Shankar Banik, Superintendent of Jhargram Special Correctional Home and Late Sumangal Biswas, Warden of Dum Dum Central Correctional Home. Words are not enough to express empathy towards their families. It is needless to mention that preventing COVID-19 outbreak in prisons is a challenging but essential task for Correctional Home authorities, and at the end of the year it appears, that they have performed their duties well.

Hon'ble Supreme Court had timely issued several instructions with regard to prison and prisoners in the wake of COVID-19 that helped us a lot for decongestion of prisons. The role of High Powered Committee, State Legal Services Authority and its District units strengthen our hands in the process of exercising interim bail and parole towards prisoners. Regular visits by Judiciary and Health Officials during the pandemic have served as an extra vigilance.

Not only controlling pandemic but also in taking timely action in the face of super cyclone 'Amphan', Correctional Services personnel have been able to keep the Correctional Home and its inmates safe and rebuild quickly on the aftermath.

Despite all adverse conditions, the developmental activities of the Correctional Homes went on unhindered. Prisoners joined their hands in making the facilities self sufficient through production of face masks, mini PPE etc. at their own tailoring units during the pandemic. It can be said that this newsletter will serve as a written document for the interested people in future. Hope we can overcome the misery and would be able to concentrate on constructive works in the New Year.

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ADG & IG, Correctional Services, WB



Certification of COVID Warrior