

**Press Release**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**LAUNCH OF  
“THE FRAMEWORK AND SCHEDULE FOR QUARTERLY  
UNDERTRIAL REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETINGS- 2024”**

**New Delhi, 08<sup>th</sup> April, 2024:** Today, Hon’ble Mr. Justice Sanjiv Khanna, Judge, Supreme Court of India and Executive Chairman, NALSA, formally released a framework and schedule for quarterly meetings of Under Trial Review Committees in the year 2024. The meetings are scheduled on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 15<sup>th</sup> July and 16<sup>th</sup> October. This initiative is in furtherance of several directives of the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India for conducting periodic review of detention of all prisoners.

The virtual launch was attended by the Hon’ble Executive Chairpersons and Lt. Member Secretaries of the various State Legal Services Authorities; Lt. Chairpersons and Secretaries of the DLSAs and other members of the UTRCs.

The UTRC is a district-level committee headed by the District & Sessions Judge, with the District Magistrate, Superintendent of Police, Secretary, District Legal Services Authority and Officer-in-charge of Prisons as members. It is mandated to conduct quarterly review of cases of prisoners in their district, and give recommendations for release in appropriate cases. In 2024, these meetings will be conducted across all districts in India as per the schedule launched today.

Hon’ble Mr. Justice Sanjiv Khanna, while highlighting the crucial mandate of UTRCs to prevent long periods of incarceration during pendency of trial, gave a rallying call for further streamlining, strengthening, and reinvigorating the

functioning of the UTRCs in every district across India. He emphasised upon the need to increase awareness among lawyers about the fourteen categories of prisoners eligible for review, timely filing of bail applications, recourse to appellate remedy where bail applications are rejected. He further emphasized the need to undertake confidence building steps with prisoners as well as their families, to boost their trust in legal services.

Ruing the fact that not only has the prison population of India grown substantially in the last decade but there has also been a considerable increase in the percentage and duration of custody of undertrial prisoners, he stated that the UTRCs now have a more pressing role to play.

Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sanjiv Khanna observed that in the last five years, the UTRCs across the country have recommended the release of nearly 2.24 lakh prisoners, resulting in the release of over 1.06 lakh prisoners across India. He also observed that during the two special campaigns of NALSA in the years 2022 and 2023, around 50,000 prisoners were released from the prisons. He stated that these figures were a testament to the seminal role played by the UTRCs. He however, sounded a note of caution here and stated that though on the face of it, the numbers of prisoners released were encouraging, an institutional reflection and analysis of the functioning and efficacy of UTRCs done by NALSA, revealed some gaps, which need to be addressed at the earliest to enhance UTRCs reach and efficacy.

He further stated that if the UTRCs are conducted in a uniform and concerted manner across the country, as is being sought to be done by this “Framework and Quarterly Schedule of UTRC Meetings”, the outcomes are bound to be much better -- every prisoner's case will be reviewed every quarter, which could lead to recommendation and releases in higher number of cases.

On the concluding note, he again stressed on the core aspects of the UTRC Framework – Review, Recommendation, and Release. He stated that with the release of the Quarterly Schedule, the review of cases should now be done by the UTRCs in a regular, thorough and consistent manner and based on the review, recommendations for release ought to be made with due promptitude, so that prompt filing of bail applications can be done and then follow-up of these applications be done diligently.

Ms. Santosh Snehi Mann, Member Secretary, National Legal Services Authority, who convened the launch event, in her address reiterated the need to ‘enhance the reach and impact of UTRCs’, while urging all Legal Services Institutions to ensure systematic functioning of the UTRCs.

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