Fast Track Courts

Fast the Past!
20th State Gathering - Tamilnadu

Congratulations
Are you willing?

“Help a Child of a Prisoner
Prevent a Potential
Criminal”

80% of the children of prisoners are potential
criminals unless somebody
takes care of them. Prison
Ministry India has begun
a scheme to educate 1000
children of prisoners, by
giving
Rs. 3,000/- per child in a
year. Your contribution is a
help to mend a life.
Please send your valuable
contribution.
Day and night falls fast, but my life remains the same’, said a prisoner at prison. Ours is a world which has moved quickly from travelling by cycle to travelling by plane. Gone are the days people used to walk from village to village, meeting relatives and friends on the way, finally sighing happily when they reach their destination. Now, people get onto flights not knowing who all are going to travel with them, with fear in their hearts till they reach their destination, as we read about a lot of air crashes. The changes in the outside world are fairly quick, but in the case of prisoners, things do not seem to be moving faster. The possible reasons, the means and fast track courts are dealt with in this issue.

Fast Track Courts (FTCs) are special courts for speedy trials. They deal with speedy disposal of cases to make the judiciary more effective and to impart justice as fast as possible. Fast Track Courts were meant to expeditiously clear large-scale pendency in district and subordinate courts under a time-bound programme. A laudable objective of this five-year experimental scheme was to take up on top priority, cases involving undertrials. Under the government’s action plan, the FTCs would take up as their next priority, cases pending for two years or more, particularly those in which the accused persons had been on bail.

FTCs are special courts for speedy trials not only in India but in foreign countries as well. FTCs were established in Indian in the year 2000 with the aim to clear long pending sessions and other lower judicial cases. We need fast judgements in our country, where there are thousands of pending cases in the court. A fast track court gives a decree based on quick and instant evidence. The judgement is pronounced and the case is closed within six months of filing it.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru observed the fact that a criminal is largely created by social conditions and instead of being punished, has to be treated, as one is required to be treated for a disease. Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation also expressed the idea that “Crime is the outcome of a diseased mind and Prison must have an environment of hospital for treatment and care.” But today the condition of this hospital for people who have committed crime is like the worst place to live in. The physical condition of prisons is described by words like

(i) Overcrowding and congestion
(ii) Unhygienic conditions
(iii) Lack of other basic amenities.

Regarding this, keeping in mind the welfare of everyone, cases need to be processed faster. At times, people are punished more than they deserve. If the cases proceed fast, prison conditions would improve. The innocent brethren could have their justice sooner and those who failed in life would have a chance to renew and reform their lives if they can get to the fresh outside air quicker.
The possibilities open to each one of us are enormous. It is very evident in the simple things in our lives. I would like to mention an experience that I had in my washroom. There would be an array of small ants in my bathroom every day. I would feel uneasy seeing them. I was planning to spray some insecticide to remove them from the bathroom. Then I had another idea—to bind these ants so that they would not come in a line to my room. I uttered the binding prayer and commanded the ants not to come to my bathroom and disturb me. Thereafter, I have not seen any line of ants or any ants at all on any part of my bathroom. I was surprised at this simple miracle wrought for me. Though it may be a slight matter to others, my faith has taken a long leap.

There was another incident that happened during a house visit. I was new to the parish and was visiting a family there. As we were talking to the parents, they shared the sorrow that their son was not finding a suitable marriage alliance. Though he was very fair, they were still failing to find someone. After the house blessing, I told them to recite any verse from the Bible and repeat it a number of times throughout the day for this intention. “Your son will get a good alliance,” I promised them. As usual I forgot the promise given to them. Exactly after 21 days, the mother and son came to meet me. In fact, I had forgotten even the family, since I had visited many families on the same day and the following days. They started like this, “You had told us to recite any verse from the Bible many times during the day and I did it for many days. Now we want to express our joy that our son’s marriage is fixed. It is due to the power of the Word of God in the Bible. It is a miracle since we had been worried about the marriage of our son for the past few years.” I felt very happy to hear about the power of the Word of God. As we are in the ministry of souls, we should be aware of these powerful instruments in our hands, such as the binding prayer and the power of the Word of God. We may have to face many challenges in the Prison Ministry, but we have the strong arms of God to fight against any evil forces in our lives. We have many challenges and still more may come. Let us not limit our challenges but we should challenge our limits!
My name is Jude. I was born on 14th November 1980 in a Christian family. I did my schooling and graduation in Bhopal. But I lived like a hypocrite; praising God with my mouth, but my heart was deceitful (Jer.17: 9,10). Since my childhood I have enjoyed a worldly life.

I came to Bangalore in 2004. I used to attend church, making confession to God of my sinfulness every Sunday and taking part in the communion, not realizing that I was steeped in great sin. I became a drunkard too and spoilt my life in prodigal living.

Before 2004, I had attempted to commit suicide numerous times—when I met with failure in my education and in my love relationship with a Muslim girl. When permission for marriage with the girl I wanted was refused by my parents, I waited till the age of 29, hoping that they would grant it. When I came to know that the parents of the girl were marrying her off to another boy of their choice, I lost all hope and came to Bangalore with a heavy heart.

Then I asked my parents to find a girl for me. In 2010 I met the girl who would be my bride. I reluctantly agreed to marry the girl of my parent’s choice. On 24th April 2010 my marriage took place. From that day onwards my wife started nagging me, saying that her parents had forced her to agree to the marriage and she did not love me. I was so upset that I hit her violently, and it resulted in choking her windpipe leading to her death. In desperation I slashed my forearm and I was bleeding profusely. Though I lost a lot of blood, I was saved by the grace of God. I am alive today because the Lord has shed His blood on the cross to save me and to give me eternal life. He saved my life so that I may repent and take a new turn in my life.

I was arrested and brought to the Central Prison Bangalore. In the prison, the place where I found solace was the prison church. There I came to know Sr. Adele who helped me to turn to the Lord. Knowing that I am a Christian, she gave me two verses from the Holy Bible.

- “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool” (Isaiah 1:18). I came to understand that our God is a forgiving God, and when we are really sorry for our sins and come before the Lord in repentance, he will cleanse us and accept us as his sons. Thus, I felt consoled.

- “For surely, I know the plans I have for you, for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope” (Jeremiah 29:11). Reflecting on these words I regained my peace and was able to accept my situation of being imprisoned.

Eventually the Holy Spirit filled me and helped me confess my sins to the Lord. Since that day and till now, I have lived a reformed life as a convicted prisoner. My Lord and my Saviour changed my life for good, to be a testimony to the Lord and his people (Lk.2:52).

Sr. Adele gave me a prayer on 5/8/2011 which goes like this:

“I wish whatever you wish, I wish it because you wish it, I wish it in the way you wish it, I wish it as long as you wish it.”

“May the Lord give you the disposition for a total surrender to the Lord’s holy will.” These words have changed my disposition and led me to surrender my life wholeheartedly to the Lord and to his service. I did turn my life around, and I am determined to walk a new path with God for the rest of my life.
Dear Friends,

Jesus was in a way a prisoner. He was falsely accused, appeared before Pilate in court, ridiculed, mocked, tortured, condemned unjustly, and had to carry His cross. Most of the prisoners go through similar experiences and our Lord knows the pain and struggle they endure. Jesus was blameless like some of those who are unjustly behind bars, but He was still made a criminal and crucified to death. Yet He did not lose hope, rose from the dead and conquered all suffering at His resurrection.

We are an Easter people and we need to hope like Jesus. Some prisoners are guilty, while some are blameless of the crimes they are accused of. Despite this, we still need to have hope in the judicial system, we need to hope in presidential pardon, we need to hope in just verdicts. Finally, though we are incarcerated, we need to have a reason to live. This will help us survive being imprisoned. We need to live for our loved ones and for our ideology.

May you all be filled with hope and the peace of the Resurrected Christ!

Bishop Allwyn D’Silva
Auxiliary Bishop of Bombay
Chairperson, Prison Ministry India

5 May 2019
The serious delay in criminal and civil matters is affecting people today

Fast Track Courts were established in India in the year 2000 with the aim to clear pending sessions and other lower judicial cases across India. The Constitution of India, in Article 21, gives the right to free legal aid and speedy trial.

Whether the courts have really executed speedy trials is a still unanswered question despite spending ₹3000 crores from 2016 to 2019. The true purpose of FTCs is to support speedy trials to dispose of long pending cases.

All undertrial prisoners are not given court dates on time due to several factors which needs serious attention from the regulatory bodies. The serious delay in criminal and civil matters is affecting people today. FTCs have been instituted to perform procedures different from how normal courts work. The crucial issue of FTCs and their underperformance depends on several factors. The prime factor is that there are lags in the system regarding resources deployed, which are insufficient and procedures exercised are under used. Proper resources have to be deployed and they have to be thoroughly trained on exercising swift executions of decisions required for speedy trial.

FTCs need to be target-oriented along with a time limit on finalising cases. With a little additional help from technology, FTCs can function way beyond expectations.

With the number of cases increasing day-by-day, the methodology exercised by the courts has to include other available and acceptable processes and procedures like artificial intelligence, insight driven citations and knowledge-based jobs with wisdom-based decisions. The justice system has to be overhauled from the micro level which will pave way to a new judicial system that will handle dispersals way better than the current system.

**Key Factors**

Inclusion of technology in various hierarchies empowers the judicial system in advancing and adhering to current demands and situations. Technology inclusion eradicates the issues of case application, and case allotments, while simultaneously providing value-driven insights for applicants, behaviour-based predictions, categorisation of offences, and probability of decree. Beyond everything technology offers the true meaning for FTCs which can be set as an example for many nations. FTCs will be truly served based on the delivery of decree and disposal of cases in an effective manner based on their severity and importance.

Justice delivery system is slow and justice identification system is quick. The courts have to identify this system of identification before admitting the cases for trial or appeal. Thus, clearance of the same need not go on for several years. The current scenario which is happening in the high courts and supreme courts can be absolutely considered as JUSTICE DELAYED IS JUSTICE DENIED.

**Thought for realization**

If the new appeal in civil nature is admitted, the courts need to first and foremost check whether the appeal has valid grounds to

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be admitted and also refer to the trial court orders so that the decree holder do not wait for years together to enjoy the fruits of the decree.

Present scope of Appellate Courts

In the current system, especially in appellate courts, fresh cases will be taken after several years but stating that old cases are to be cleared first. But they should look into the fresh cases as well, so that these are disposed of quickly. If any decree holder case is stayed in the appellate court for several years, then what is the use of suing? And it is again JUSTICE DELAYED IS JUSTICE DENIED. Regarding clearing old cases in appellate courts, some other way will have to be taken into consideration. However, it should be the responsibility of the appellate courts because holding up so many cases without clearing the same is the result of inefficient functioning. The appellate court has to understand the petitioner or respondent situation because it is not just a case but a question of life and death for either parties or both. Because of this inordinate delay people lose confidence in the courts, stop suing and start illegal activities to get their legal right on property, etc.

Conclusion

The system of clearing pending cases before disposing fresh cases which are eligible for disposal has to be fairly considered by the authorities which would bring down the burden on the judicial system.

Award fair sentence!

Fast Track Courts have really impacted the speed with which cases have been resolved. In some way or the other FTCs try to dispose of long pending cases. Speedy trials are very important as they reduce the time taken away from each one of us who is directly and indirectly involved in the cases and it protects our interest. One of the advantages is that FTCs protect our rights which are safeguarded.

Justice is delayed and justice is denied at times, but justice is also meted out at the right time sometimes, and these occasions should be appreciated and we should do our best to help the judicial system. Tension prevails when justice is delayed, and the involved parties get impatient. They tend to use and rely on sources which destroys their rights.

FTCs play a vital role in supporting the judicial system by giving judgements on time. In the matter of speedy trials, there needs to be a support system that makes things go smooth. Today, the number of pending cases has reduced, but there is still a large number of case backlog. FTCs have been working well from 2009 to 2019, and they have made tremendous efforts to speed up trails and award fair sentence.

Undertrial cases have been pending for years in courts. Speedy trial helps the needy ones, especially the prisoners who are facing charges and have no clue as to what is happening with regards to their case. Spending several years in the prison, the prisoners get frustrated and lose hope in the judicial system. In such situations Fast Track Courts should help the prisoners.

With proper guidance and support it becomes easy to deal with such pending cases.
In the year 2000 the Indian Fast Track Courts (FTCs) were established with the aim to clear the over 3 crore cases pending in sessions and other lower judicial cases for speedy disposal of justice to the undertrial prisoners. The right to a speedy trial is first mentioned in the landmark document of English law, the Magna Carta. The first fast track court in Delhi was inaugurated on 2/1/2013 by the Chief Justice of India (CJI) Altamas Kabir to deal with cases of crime against women. In order to establish FTCs as a Non Plan expenditure, the 11th Finance Commission recommended a scheme for a period of 5 years for creation of 1734 FTCs in India and the Ministry of Finance sanctioned an amount of ₹502.90 crore for judicial administration. Since then the FTCs are getting funds and extension by the Government of India on the recommendation of the 14th Finance Commission and the Supreme Court of India not to discontinue the FTCs. As on 31/12/2018, 699 FTCs are functional across the country dealing with cases pertaining to heinous crimes and cases related to women, children, senior citizens, disabled and litigants affected with terminal ailments etc. and civil natured cases pertaining to property disputes that are 5 years old.

The purpose of setting up FTCs is to expeditiously clear the large scale of pendency in the district and subordinate courts under a time-bound programme. The cases involving undertrials was to be taken up which is a laudable objective.

Section 25 of the Code of Civil Procedure enables the Supreme Court to transfer any case, appeal or other proceedings from a high court or other civil court in one state to a high court or other civil court in any other state. This power may be exercised by the Supreme Court if it is satisfied that an order under this Section is expedient for the ends of justice. Hence wide powers are given to the Supreme Court to order a transfer if it feels that the ends of justice so require this.

The idea was to establish an average of 5 FTCs in each district, with priority accorded to those states & districts with large pendency. The scheme envisaged the appointment of ad hoc judges from among retired sessions judges, judges promoted on ad hoc basis etc. Selection of judges was to be done by the high courts. As per the plan, the FTCs were required to dispose of 14 trial cases and/or 20 to 25 criminal/civil cases every month. FTCs has made the judiciary more effective and imparts justice as fast as possible, but the goal sought to be achieved is yet a far-off peak.

Article 21 declares that “No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty
except according to the procedure laid by law.” Justice Krishna Iyer while dealing with the bail petition in Babu Singh v. State of UP, remarked, “Our justice system even in grave cases, suffers from slow motion syndrome which is lethal to ‘fair trial’ whatever the ultimate decision. Speedy justice is a component of social justice since the community, as a whole, is concerned in the criminal being condignly and finally punished within a reasonable time and the innocent being absolved from the inordinate ordeal of criminal proceedings.”

In Sheela Barse v. Union of India, the court reaffirmed speedy trial to be a Fundamental Right. Right to speedy trial is a concept gaining recognition and importance day-by-day. There are 3 pillars of social restrain and order in India:

(1) legislature
(2) executive
(3) judiciary

The Supreme Court made it clear that “Speedy trial is of essence to criminal justice and there can be no doubt that the delay in trial by itself constitutes denial of justice.” The SC Bench said, “The right to speedy trial begins with the actual restraint imposed by arrest and consequent incarceration and continues at all stages, namely, the stage of investigation, inquiry, trial, appeal and revision so that any possible prejudice that may result from impermissible and avoidable delay from the time of the commission of the offence till it consummates into a finality can be averted.”

How to ensure speedy trial:

1. Prison Courts (Lok Adalats):
Holding of Lok Adalats in the prison is another step towards speedy disposal of cases of undertrials involving petty offences like theft, retaining stolen property, breach of peace and like minor offences. For holding the Lok Adalat, the Superintendent of Prison is required to identify petty offences of undertrials in such cases where no progress has been made towards conclusion of trial involving sentence less than two years or so. He then contacts the district and session judge who in turn deputes judicial officers to hold courts and dispose of cases by passing appropriate orders. Such courts result in release of undertrials from prison.

ii. Fast Track Courts:
This is an initiative of the Department of Justice to cut short delays in courts. The 11th Finance Commission of India recommended a scheme for creation of 1734 additional courts in the country for disposal of long pending sessions and other cases. The services of retired judges were availed to man these courts. The scheme is extended further to expedite disposal of pending trial cases.

iii. Alternatives to imprisonment
Probation service in India is one method of not confining offenders to an institution but releasing them on good behaviour on the conditions prescribed by the courts under the guidance of the Probation Officer. It imposes conditions and retains the authority of the sentencing court to
modify the conditions of sentence of incarceration of the offender if he violates such imposed conditions. Probation is used for first time offenders and is an effective alternative to imprisonment. Community Service Scheme has also been started in one state i.e. Gujarat and it is an alternative punishment for offences under the Bombay Prohibition Act. Another state i.e. Andhra Pradesh has also amended the Penal Code and introduced Community Service as a punishment. This legislation is now pending with the Union.

So, these are a few ways in which the right to speedy trial can be ensured. And further more ways can be made out in which this important fundamental right can be ensured.

Litigation resolved through courts is one way of settling disputes. There are alternative dispute resolution mechanisms as well such as negotiations, conciliation and mediation which brings about a satisfactory end to the litigants and nobody is the loser. There is a need for trained mediators and conciliators. Judicial officers and lawyers need to be trained in mediation and conciliation. The government being the biggest litigant need to be fully involved in the process and its officers should take the lead in this cause. The right to speedy trial is a “Constitutional Reality”. The emotional, physical, and financial closure to the trauma suffered by the undertrials will end through the FTCs which can avoid repeated delays. Such delays in prosecution can also limit the ability of victims to receive justice when their memories, or those of other witnesses, fade with the passage of time or when the victim’s health deteriorates. Though there are no specific provisions for speedy trial, by judicial interpretation, the Supreme Court has held Article 21 of the Constitution confers the right on the accused. It is in the interest of all the concerned that the case is disposed of quickly and justice is seen to prevail.

Source: From the Internet on FTCs.
The aim of right to speedy trial is to inculcate justice in society

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Fundamental rights, the basic and civil liberties of the people, are protected under the charter of rights contained in Part III (Article 12 to 35) of the Constitution of India. Fundamental rights apply universally to all citizens, irrespective of race, place of birth, religion, caste or gender. “The right to speedy trial in all criminal prosecutions is an inalienable right under Article 21 of the Constitution. This right is applicable not only to the actual proceedings in court but also includes within its sweep the preceding police investigations as well.”

Right to speedy trial is a concept which deals with disposal of cases as soon as possible so as to make the judiciary more efficient and trustworthy. The main aim of right to speedy trial is to inculcate justice in society. Being in a civilized society organized with law and a system as such, it is essential to ensure for every citizen a reasonably dignified life. The right to a speedy trial is first mentioned in that landmark document of English law, the Magna Carta. Article 21 declares, “No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to the procedure laid by law.”

Justice Krishna Iyer, while dealing with the bail petition in Babu Singh v. State of UP, remarked, “Our justice system even in grave cases, suffers from slow motion syndrome which is lethal to ‘fair trial’ whatever the ultimate decision. Speedy justice is a component of social justice since the community, as a whole, is concerned in the criminal being condignly and finally punished within a reasonable time and the innocent being absolved from the inordinate ordeal of criminal proceedings.”

Speedy trial is a fundamental right implicit in the guarantee of life and personal liberty enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution and any accused who is denied this right of speedy trial is entitled to approach the Supreme Court under Article 32 for the purpose of enforcing such right. The constitutional guarantee of speedy trial is an important safeguard to prevent undue and oppressive incarceration prior to trial; to minimize concern accompanying public accusation and to limit the possibilities that long delays will impair the ability of an accused to defend himself.

In Hussainara Khatoon v. State of Bihar which formed the basis of the concept of the speedy trial, it was held that where undertrial prisoners have been in jail for duration longer than prescribed, if convicted, their detention in jail is totally unjustified and in violation to fundamental rights under article 21. Inordinate delays violate article 21 of the Constitution. The Apex Court in the case also observed that if a person is deprived of his liberty under a procedure which is not ‘reasonable, fair and just’, he would be entitled to enforce such Fundamental Right and secure his release.

Similarly, in another landmark case of Sheela Barse vs. Union of India, the Supreme Court observed that where the court comes to a conclusion that the right to speedy trial of an accused has been infringed, the charge or conviction,
as the case may be must be quashed. Accordingly, the Apex Court directed the state governments to take steps for completing an investigation within three months in cases lodged against children.

Another noteworthy judgment which further firmly establishes right to speedy trial as a Constitutional mandate is the case of **Supreme Court Legal Aid Committee Representing Undertrial Prisoners vs. Union of India.** In this verdict, the Supreme Court laid down certain conditions for release of undertrial prisoners on bail where trial was not completed within a specified period of time.

There are about 20 million pending cases in the trial courts, to be disposed by about 15,000-16,000 trial court judges. About 30% of the cases take between 2-5 years and another 30% of the cases take over five years. Additionally, there is a backlog (i.e. the difference between the cases initiated in a given year and the number of cases disposed in a given year) that has only grown year by year. Justice delayed is justice denied, and the most urgent and important reform area is to target judicial efficiency and eliminate judicial delay.

In the post-independence state of affairs, several recommendations were made. It was in 1979, a 4-membered law commission suggested resolving the problem of decreasing the "prison population". Again in 1983, the Mulla Committee devoted a time of 3 years of empirical study in understanding the problems of undertrials. In 1993, the NHRC (National Human Rights Commission) issued several directives for ensuring that all the undertrial prisoners were treated in a humane manner. The 18th Law Commission was constituted to suggest judicial reforms.

To resolve the issue of undertrials and hence in a way to achieve the path of speedy justice, the following proposals may be followed:

The number of judges in the courts must be increased so as to decrease and minimize the burden of resolving the cases on every judge.

The courtroom process has to be enhanced technically so as to make the court room, a sound space to resolve the disputes with no difficulty.

The police must be encouraged to accelerate the investigation procedure.

Criminal cases must be continued in no time when the hearing judge is transferred in between the trial.

Promoting the government with unnecessary adjournments in the hands of the judiciary must be stopped.

Bail opportunities for less grave offences must be increased. And,

Undertrial prisoners must be separated from the ones who have already been convicted by the court and hence must be treated softly since they are still considered innocent in the eyes of the law.

Dr Justice A.R. Lakshmanan, Chairman of the 18th Law Commission, while concluding his report writes, "Things I know are easier written, than done and for all these reforms, what is required is a lot of discipline and introspection and a realization that without these reforms, the present system is under threat. Both, judges and lawyers, have to change their mindsets. Unless our mental barriers to reforms are mellowed, all doses of external remedies are bound to fail. We must remember what Gandhiji said: ‘If you want to change anything, you be the change’.”

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4 (1994)6 SCC 731
How long can a case be pending?

The Indian judicial system is in urgent need of reforms if we are to continue to strengthen our society that lives within a framework of fair justice for all. India has the dubious distinction of having the world’s largest number of pending cases, which by some estimates, exceeds 30 million. The sheer time taken in bringing closure to a case often results in an accused spending a significant part of his/her life in jail. The issue is not whether s/he is ultimately found guilty or not, but the time taken to pronounce the final verdict often amounts to denying justice to both the victim and the accused.

Here are some famous cases that have seen extended periods of trial where the victims have felt a strong sense of denial of justice.

**Uphaar Cinema Fire Case**: The most glaring and recent example is the Uphaar cinema verdict that came after 18 years! On 13 June 1997, 59 persons lost their lives and over 100 were injured in a fire that broke out in the cinema hall during a film screening.

**Bhopal Gas Tragedy Case**: The case dragged on for several years. The Chairman of Union Carbide was never prosecuted, 7 employees of the company were sentenced to 2 years in jail and the company itself got away with paying $470 million compensation. Several victims have not been paid any compensation after all these years.

**1984 Anti-Sikh Riots Case**: After all these years, most of the accused remain free, victims are still to get justice and many are yet to receive compensation.

These are just a few high-profile cases. But what about the millions who are still going through the grind and cost of the backbreaking judicial system with very little hope for justice? Why is the Indian judicial system not able to keep pace with the dramatic increase in the number of litigations?

What happened to the 7 innocent Christians of Kandhamal, branded as murderers and who are languishing in jail for the last 10 years? Not only these, there are a number of innocent victims waiting for justice and a faster finalization of their cases.

**Fast Track Courts** (FTCs) were established in India in the year 2000 with the aim to clear the long pending sessions and other lower judicial cases. According to estimates, more than 3 crore cases are pending across all the courts in the country. A total of 1734 FTCs were approved in 2000 following the report of the 11th Finance Commission. Out of this, only 1562 were functional by 2005, the year when this experimental scheme was supposed to end. The central government in 2005, decided to continue its support to the 1562 functional FTCs for the next 6 years (till 2011). By the end of 2011, only 1192 FTCs were functional. The 16 December 2012, gang-rape and subsequent death of a young physiotherapy student changed everything. It gave FTCs a new lease of life. The central government extended the deadline to March 2015 and even offered ₹80 crore to pay for the judges’ salaries. An order was passed to set up 6 fast-track courts in Delhi that would deal exclusively with cases of sexual assault. The deadline for the completion of trial in all rape cases will be 2 months, officials said. A 6-month time limit for the disposal of appeals in rape cases has also been prescribed.
Fast track courts are not new in India - have they worked?

How long can a case be pending? If the police submitted a case, but it was rejected for lack of sufficient evidence, the statute of limitations determines how long the prosecution has to file charges. In general, for most felonies, the statute of limitations is 3 years.

The problem of pending cases in Indian courts: How to tackle these?

Below are the approximate number of cases pending in the Supreme Court, high courts, district courts and subordinate courts in India.

- Around 60,000 cases are pending in the Supreme Court.
- Around 42 lakh cases are pending in different high courts.
- Around 2.7 crore cases are pending in district and sub-ordinate courts.

Consequences of pending cases in Indian courts

- The common man’s faith in the justice system is at an all-time low.
- Denies the poor man and undertrial prisoners their due of justice.
- Economic reforms remain only on paper without speedy justice system.
- Foreign investors are increasingly doubtful about the timely delivery of justice, which affects the success of programs like ‘Make in India’.
- Judiciary is unable to handle the ‘avalanche’ of litigation. Judiciary becomes overworked and loses its efficiency. Justice delayed is justice denied and Justice hurried is justice buried.

Solutions to the problem of pending cases in Indian courts

- The government needs to double the number of judges and create an all India Judicial Service. The number of judges (vacancies) should be immediately raised to at least 50,000 from the current 21,000.
- Fix the NJAC controversy at the earliest and start appointing judges in the Supreme Court and high courts.
- More courts – Fast Track Courts, Lok Adalats, and Gram Nyayalayas.

When talking about the problems of judiciary, we have to think about our Constitution as the solution. But this is a lengthy process and each solution should have a way of taking into consideration every petition and complaint filed by the common people. It is all about attitude and political will. We need a balanced reform that caters to different groups. We need to do the needful to follow Article 375 of the Constitution by the constitutional authority, without delay and without excuse.

No need of any reforms.

Absolutely law is same in all countries. Where people are honest and educated, legal system is working. Also people respect the law, abide by the law. Judges are honest. India has same law for everyone. We find dishonest people in all places—judges, police, politicians etc. ruining the life of many. Here are some of the major problem areas:

Inadequate number of judges

Till 2013, India had one judge per one million; now compare this with 125 judges per one million in the United States. This reflects how overburdened the legal system is in India. The government needs to fast track judicial reforms and the process of appointing judges needs to be sped up on priority.

More Fast Track Courts needed

There is an urgent need to expand the number of FTCs and extend these to the district level. There are a large number of cases that can be resolved quickly provided they are addressed in a short period. By disposing of cases faster, the regular courts will be relieved of pressure to a large extent, as many of these block other more complex cases from early resolution.

Another feature needed is the expansion of mobile courts. This will help take the process of law into the interiors and to people’s doorsteps. Today, poor people from rural areas have to travel to the district or state capital to attend their ongoing legal cases. The extensive use of mobile courts will go a long way in easing people’s burden.
More Lok Adalats needed
The concept of a Lok Adalat has been welcomed by a large section of litigants who were caught up in the long and complex judicial process. Lok Adalats have been a very successful model in resolving civil cases especially those falling under the Negotiable Instruments Acts.

Remove archaic laws and plug loopholes in existing ones
The present government has taken up this issue by revisiting several laws that have lost their relevance in contemporary India. Many of these were laid out under the British rule and continue to be a reason for misuse. Another aspect that needs urgent attention is to plug loopholes in existing laws that are used to the fullest by successful and highly-paid lawyers to defend the rich. A large section of people does not have access to this and often end up poorer and remain denied of justice. Several high-profile cases involving celebrities in drinking and driving cases are a good example of this, where their lawyers have used every trick in the legal book and have taken full advantage of shoddy investigation by a poorly trained police force and further compounded by below par legal services.

Use of technology to improve transparency and reduce corruption
There is endemic corruption, especially in the lower courts where money changes hands at every level of the judicial process. Most of this can be addressed through the use of technology and making most of the system transparent. Unfortunately, most of our courts operate in silos and are not connected to the state or national grid. If this were to be implemented, people from various parts of a state could get visibility and a lot of services and information could be availed without having to travel great distances to access information.

Also, through extensive use of video conferencing, the judicial process can be sped up significantly and result in significant savings for the exchequer. The recent killing of 2 undertrials by 5 other undertrials during transit to the courts could well have been avoided with the use of video conferencing.

Better training of support staff and investigating agencies
The quality of support staff, especially in lower courts, needs to be improved through better training. This has to be accompanied by superior training of investigating agencies like the police on how the legal system works. Most people suffer from unfair judgements on account of shoddy investigation by the police. Most of the police personnel are neither aware nor properly trained on investigation process and evidence gathering that can stand up in the courts. These are fully exploited by lawyers to get their guilty clients off the hook.

Educating people on their fundamental rights and the legal system
With high illiteracy still plaguing India, lack of awareness of one’s fundamental rights is one of the major reasons people are still getting exploited. This is further compounded by the complete lack of knowledge on how our legal system works. A large portion of cases involve people from rural areas who lack information on their basic rights as also legal procedures. Unfortunately, this lack of knowledge is exploited by corrupt lawyers and contributes to extended periods of trial and ultimately poor delivery of justice.

With technology and multimedia, it is now possible to educate people on their rights and on where and how to seek good legal advice. In fact, a lot of legal advice can be made available online so that a large section of people can take informed decisions on legal action.

It is high time the lawmakers introduce the use of ‘simple English’ in legal application and pronouncements. The current use of complicated and outdated British English must be done away with immediately. It is ironical that the U.K. today has simplified its English in the legal system, but India continues to use a large part of the legacy language.

An effective and fair legal system will result in a stronger India
As the population continues to grow and pace of development increases, so will the number of litigations. The judicial system has to respond rapidly to ensure justice is delivered quickly and fairly to all, as ‘Justice delayed is Justice denied’.
The constitutional guarantee of speedy trial is an important safeguard. It prevents undue and oppressive incarceration prior to trial and limits the possibilities that long delays will impair the ability of an accused to defend himself/herself.

Recently, Delhi witnessed large scale protests by various groups demanding stricter punishments and speedier trials in cases of sexual assault against women. In light of the protests, the central government has constituted a commission headed by Justice Verma to suggest possible amendments in the criminal law to ensure speedier disposal of cases relating to sexual assault. Though the Supreme Court, in 1986, had recognised speedy trial to be a fundamental right, India continues to have a high number of pending cases. In 2012, the net pendency in high courts and subordinate courts decreased by over 6 lakh cases. However, there is still a substantial backlog of cases across various courts in the country. After the recent gang-rape of a 23-year-old girl, the Delhi High Court directed the state government to establish five Fast Track Courts (FTCs) for the expeditious adjudication of cases relating to sexual assault. Other states such as Maharashtra and Tamilnadu have also begun the process of establishing FTCs for rape cases.

The 11th Finance Commission had recommended a scheme for the establishment of 1734 FTCs for the expeditious disposal of cases pending in the lower courts. In this regard, the Commission had allocated ₹500 crore. FTCs were to be established by the state governments in consultation with the respective high courts. An average of five FTCs was to be established in each district of the country. The judges for these FTCs were appointed on an ad hoc basis. The judges were selected by the high courts of the respective states. There are primarily three sources of recruitment. First, by promoting members from amongst the eligible judicial officers; second, by appointing retired high court judges; and third, from amongst members of the Bar of the respective state.

FTCs were initially established for a period of five years (2000-2005). However, in 2005, the Supreme Court directed the central government to continue with the FTC scheme, which was extended until 2010-2011. The government discontinued the FTC scheme in March 2011. Though the central government stopped giving financial assistance to the states for establishing FTCs, the state governments could establish FTCs from their own funds. The decision of the central government not to finance the FTCs beyond 2011 was challenged in the Supreme Court. In 2012, the Court upheld the decision of the central government. It held that the state governments have the liberty to decide whether they want to continue with the scheme or not. However, if they decide to continue, then the FTCs have to be made a permanent feature. As of September 3, 2012, some states such as Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu and Kerala decided to continue with the FTC scheme. The Centre has stopped funding the establishment of FTCs.
Fast track court is for speedy disbursement of pending cases. If any matter is of utmost importance and it is convincing that the accused will destroy the evidence, or harass the other party, then the government can hand over the case to any fast track court.

A special court is one which deals with special types of cases in a simplified and shortened procedure. There are over 25 special courts set up through various central and state legislations in our country. In a special court, there is no pressure to adjudicate the matter within a fixed time and there are chances that the special court may take longer time. Special courts are for uncommon cases involving international disputes, money laundering, hawala, POSCO, militant cases of national importance, etc.

Both the courts mentioned here are trial courts and their judgements are appealable in the high courts and Supreme Court of India. The judiciary needs to clearly define the purpose of these courts and enable the society at large to use them in an appropriate manner and the powers of these courts should be exercised rightfully by the concerned authorities in a manner that is true and just.

Prisoners are the broken feathers of society

Sr. Justina Xavier ( SJC)
National Team Member

My experience with the prisoners has inspired me tremendously. I was able to touch their soul and bring inner healing. Working with the brethren behind the bars, especially my service at the Central Jail, Parappana Agrahara, Bangalore had many cherishing moments. I found that the brethren behind the bars long for love, care, forgiveness and hope. We, all of us, need to love them, understand them, accept them, and above all, never judge them. The moment you judge they keep their distance from you. I firmly believe, when we accept them, we begin to see them as new beings who are willing to change and are open to realities.

I was teaching value education to the young boys in Bangalore Central Jail, Bangalore and to my astonishment, the boys were keen to listen to me. Moreover, they used to wait for my arrival for each day’s class which showed their openness to begin a new life, even if they had failures in life previously. I had always taught them to surrender their being to God, for in surrender life begins. God can work only if you surrender your being to Him. He can touch you only if you permit yourself to be touched by Him. I had counselled many of them, inspired them to see the value of life. Many a times I had visited the prisoners’ family, families of victims, and tried to explain the need for forgiveness and acceptance. During my ministry with them, I realized that just helping them towards release was not enough, rather there is the constant need to do follow-up.

This is a noble mission through which I could bring many souls to God. For me, these brethren behind the bars were the lost sheep and my only goal was that none of them should be lost. Many of them find
the living God in prisons. Outside, the world had provided them with all that they were in need of materially. But inside, once they realize their spiritual core, they experience the power of the living God. Prison Ministry is a unique mission which is entrusted to us by Jesus; for He said ‘when I was in prison you visited me’ (Mt 25:36). He was in prison and He experienced all that the prisoners go through today and all our brethren can look up to Him without any hesitation. Many of our innocent brethren also languish behind the bars. Even if they had committed a mistake, our God is ever willing to forgive. As Jesus said to the thief from the Cross, “Today you will be in paradise” (Lk 23:42-43). When anyone repents, His paradise is open to them. And this is the message which I was communicating throughout my visit while reaching out to them. Prisoners are the broken feathers of society and as volunteers it is our bounden duty to fetch them, reunite them back with society, and make them feel that they are also important in society. We, the volunteers, need to be grounded in God, for only God can teach us to love the unlovable, forgive the unforgivable and reach the unreachable. Our joy is not complete unless we do good to others. We are called to live for others in our selfless service without expecting anything in return and that’s the beauty of our life. Let us be a ray of hope for them to change for the best, to live in love and to live with human dignity.

Thanks to Fr. Sebastian Vadakumpadan, the National Coordinator for all his guidance to me during my past years in the Prison Ministry. Special thanks to my Provincial, Sr. Narcissa Sequra, for her support and all my Sisters for their encouragement. Thanks to the National Office team for their accompaniment. Special thanks to Sr. Lini Sheeja MSC, the Chief Editor of Prison Voice for providing me with this opportunity to put down my experience as these years were a blessing to me as a whole.

God bless you all!

GOOD SHEPHERD PARISH IN PUNE JOINS THE PMI FAMILY

Nancy Misquith, PMI Pune

The inauguration of the first parish unit in the Good Shepherd Parish of Pune was a feather in its cap for the Prison Ministry of India. When Rev. Fr. Wilfred Fernandes, Central Region and Maharashtra State Coordinator of PMI, approached Rev. Fr. Colin Henriques, the parish priest with the idea of opening its first unit, he was met with overwhelming enthusiasm and approval.

After a brief meeting with the new volunteers, in preparation for the event, the Induction Ceremony took place on Divine Mercy Sunday, 28th April 2019 at a grand co-celebrated mass. What a befitting day to merge Jesus’ Divine Mercy with our own grief-stricken brethren - the least and the lost. To formalize their commissioning, the PMI volunteers of Good Shepherd parish took their PMI pledge before the entire congregation. Filled with the Holy Spirit, they vowed to commit themselves to the release, reformation & rehabilitation of prisoners and their families.

The newly inducted volunteers are now charged to begin their maiden voyage with the gifts and charisms that they have been blessed with. May they receive the grace to stay committed to the cause!
Letters to the Editor

Dear Sr. Lini, Greetings! With immense joy I thank the Prison Ministry India coordinator, staff and the volunteers for their committed service for the good of the brethren behind the bar. I do thank all the editorial board for bringing out the Prison Voice magazine steeped in social awareness. I am a regular reader of Prison Voice. Prison Ministry has become the fastest ministry in India. In fact, Prison Voice is one of the best sources to know about and to spread the prison ministry. There are many ways this happens like, now we know about the prisons in different parts of India, the activities of the Prison Ministry India, value of human life, etc. In fact, Prison Voice removes negative ideas that we have about the brethren behind the bars. Society has decreed that all those who are in prison are criminals. Prison Voice has banished these blind ideas even from me. In fact, every individual should read this beautiful magazine and can learn a lot in their life. I thank God for this beautiful ministry and the magazine. Special thanks to you Sr. Lini Sheeja MSC, the Chief Editor for the interview conducted by you every month, which moves all our hearts to reach out to the brethren behind the bars.

Sr. Shanthi Pulickal SCC
Berhampur

Dear Sr. Lini Sheeja MSC, Greetings! Prison Voice is the only magazine in India that deals solely with matters associated with prisons. I enjoy reading it as it gives a comprehensive view of the Prison Ministry, its vision, mission, spirituality, objectives, activities, and so on. I read the whole magazine, but my preferred articles are the editorial, interview with prisoners, personal experience of some of the volunteers in this ministry and reports of the various activities conducted in prisons. Prison Voice is a powerful tool of Prison ministry. It enhances the enthusiasm of the volunteers, creates awareness in society about the need for accepting, loving and supporting the prisoners as our own brothers and sisters, and not as mere criminals. The magazine is improving in quality and depth each month. Congratulations to you, the Chief Editor, Sr. Lini in making the magazine an inspirational one and sending it on-time every month.

Bro. Jack
I write this testimony to proclaim to the world that Jesus Christ is my Saviour and he is my God. He saved me from prison and I believe that He will save me till the end of my life.

An unexpected tragic event took place in my life in Bangalore in 2012. I murdered a person and I was arrested and sent to prison. I myself cannot understand why I committed this murder. I never wanted to commit such a crime. But it happened, I did it.

In the prison I came to my senses... I went through a lot of inner tension.

Some of the inmates, who were Christians, perceived my pain and saw that I was lonely in the room. They told me, “Don’t sit alone here, come with us. They invited me to go along with them and pray in the prison chapel where many were spending time in prayer. As I was a Hindu, I had never gone to a church before coming to the prison. I had never heard about Jesus, who is a forgiving God. Every day I went to the prison chapel just to spend time. Every week they would explain the WORD of God from the Bible. I was deeply touched by the Words of Jesus and I started believing in Jesus as my God.

I believed that Jesus will forgive all my sins, and I trusted in the forgiveness of Jesus. I acknowledged all my sins before the Lord Jesus and started reading the Holy Bible and praying regularly. After spending two years under trial, I was convicted for life imprisonment by the Sessions court. I was puzzled and became very sad because I received this punishment even after praying to Jesus. But I realized slowly that this period of punishment is God’s plan for some greater good and I offered it for the good of the family of the victim who was suffering because of my crime. I continued my prayers trusting in Jesus. I did not lose my faith in Jesus even though I received punishment.

After my conviction, I was allotted work in the prison. So, I did not have much time to pray in the church. But I continued praying in the room with faith and trust in Jesus. I sent an appeal to the High Court. When my case file came up in the High Court, I prayed earnestly to Lord Jesus to release me from prison life and to make me a witness of Jesus to the world.

Jesus heard my earnest prayer and worked a miracle by setting me free. The term of my punishment was reduced to just 7 years instead of life imprisonment. This event has strengthened my faith in the promises of the Lord, “Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you” (Mathew 7:7). Jesus has already made me a witness and inspired me to write this testimony. I know that I am not perfect, but I trust the Lord will help me to begin a new life guided by His Word for the rest of my life.

I write these words with a grateful heart to the Almighty God.
“Start by doing what is necessary; then do what is possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible,” said St. Francis of Assisi.

With this small thought in my heart I started to work for those of our brethren who are behind the bars and who have no one to bring them out, for whom there have been no visitors for years. So began my journey of love for them, and today it has become a real love story, because I feel they belong to me and I belong to them; they wait for me, and I wait to meet them as we are allowed to meet only on Fridays and Saturdays.

My love story goes like this – there was a woman in the district jail. She did not like Christians. She used to laugh at them, harass them and avoid their company. Her own brother was a Christian and she did the same to him. On my first meeting with her, I just had a friendly talk with her. She started sharing about her brother, that he was Christian, “I laughed at him, harassed him. As a result, today I am here.” She acknowledged that she had been against the people of God and that was why she was behind the bars. On my second visit to the jail, she gave me a hundred rupees saying, “Bahanji, please offer this 100 to the church and pray for me that I may be forgiven.” I assured her of my prayers and I continued to pray for her asking the Lord to reveal Himself to her. The next Saturday when I visited her, she handed me another hundred rupees saying, “Bahanji, please pray for my release.” I came back, prayed for her and gave the hundred rupees to Fr. Amal Raj to offer mass for her. Two weeks later when I visited her, she was waiting at the door of the women’s department to convey the good news that she was being released. Once again, she handed a hundred rupees to me and said, “Bahanji, please offer a thanksgiving mass for me.” It was working in the prison ministry that made me realize that God wanted to shower his love on her so he brought her to the prison. She herself acknowledged, “Bahanji, God wanted to fall in love with me, so I am here.” “It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light,” said Aristotle Onassis. Yes, it was during the darkest moment of her life that she could recognize the light, and not only recognize but started loving that light. Today her faith and love for Jesus, her lover, has increased.

“We cannot help everyone, but everyone can help someone,” said Ronald Reagan. This is what I could do for my brethren who are behind the bars. I really feel content and take pleasure in working for them; they have become part of my ministry. I do wait for Saturday, to meet them and spend time with them. They have taught me to remain connected to them and to each other. They feel a belongingness with us and enjoy their time with us. This gives me real pleasure to work for them and provides encouragement to work wholeheartedly for them.
The handle is on the inside!

Once an artist wanted to paint a beautiful portrait of Jesus as a pilgrim holding a lamp in his hand and knocking at the door of a house. After several days of careful and meticulous work, the portrait was finally ready. The artist’s son saw the artwork and liked it, but he had one observation to make to his father. The boy said, “This is really a beautiful work of art! But you have forgotten to fix a handle on the door.” The father replied, “Well my dear son, I have omitted it purposely. The handle is on the inside. Jesus will only knock at the door of your heart. He will never enter without your wanting it. It is up to you to open the door from the inside and let Him in.”

This is the way the resurrected Christ acts. He will not come into our hearts without our cooperation. He will not force himself in. He knocks at our heart’s door. Unless we open the door and allow the resurrected Christ to enter our hearts, nothing is going to happen to us. This is what resurrection means. The Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ came into this world, died for the whole of humanity and he has risen now. That is why the Scripture says, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon” (Lk 24:34).

My dear brothers and sisters in resurrected Christ, if we want to allow the resurrected Christ to enter our hearts, we need to put on the whole armour of God, so that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. At this junction, we need to reflect deeply that once we decide to stand against the wiles of the devil, we really need to leave our old life and enter into a new life. For this, we ought to put away the person that belongs to our former manner of life and is corrupt through deceit and lust, and our minds be renewed in the spirit, and put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph 4:22-24).

Moreover, we must understand that the mystery of the Pascua is new and old, eternal and transient, corruptible and incorruptible, mortal and immortal. It is old according to the law, but new according to the Word. It is transient in its prototype, but eternal in grace. It is corruptible in the immolation of the sheep, but incorruptible in the life of the resurrected Christ. It is mortal because of his burial in the earth, but immortal because of his resurrection from the dead. The law is old, but the Word new; the prototype is transient, but grace is eternal; the sheep is corruptible, the resurrected Christ is incorruptible; he who was sacrificed as a lamb, but rose as God. So, the immolation of the sheep, and the solemn rite of Pascua, and the letter of the law have come to accomplishment in the resurrected Christ.

My dear brothers and sisters in resurrected Christ, when all these things happen in the Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ, then what about us? Cannot we allow the risen Lord to enter our hearts during this Easter season? Let us now make a strong resolution to welcome and allow the resurrected Christ to enter our hearts. Thus, we too may become an ardent follower of God to our fellow human beings in this world and proclaim the risen Lord to the ends of the earth like the apostles.

Bro. Allam Sagar Manoj Kumar
Guntur Diocese.
Prison Ministry India, Tamilnadu: 20th State Gathering

“We are worthless servants” (Lk 17:10)

Prison Ministry India, Tamilnadu volunteers – 180 members from 16 dioceses, except Ooty and Vellore, consisting of 3 bishops, 12 priests and 65 nuns met at the Vianney Pastoral Centre, Sivagangai for the 20th State Gathering on 25-26 April 2019.

On 25 April 2019 at 9.00 am the volunteers registered for the meeting. As we had decided that there will be no registration fee, it was not collected from the volunteers.

At 9.30 am we had a co-celebrated mass by the Most Rev. Soosaimanickam, Bishop of Sivagangai with 12 other priests. The bishop in his sermon mentioned that this ministry was very old and he was reminded of his own ministry experience in the Central Prison, Trichy. When one of the men awarded capital punishment wanted to be baptised, he was the godfather, the bishop recalled.

At 10.30 am we moved on to the inaugural session. The presence of the Lord Almighty was invoked by lighting the lamp by the dignitaries. There was also a Welcome dance by the girls from the parish. Mr. A. Jesu Raja, the Secretary, welcomed the gathering. Fr. G.J. Anthonysamy, the State coordinator, explained the theme of the gathering, “We are worthless servants” (Lk 17:10), i.e. we have only done our duties that were given to us. Mr. Jayakanthan IAS, the Sivagangai District Collector, congratulated all the volunteers that were doing selfless service. He quoted, “Service to Mankind is service to God.” He also said that all those who were doing this ministry were serving God directly. He also assured his support for the ministry.

Most Rev. Soosaimanickam, Bishop of Sivagangai, in his message informed that even though there was no central prison in our dioceses we were doing the ministry in whatever way possible. He also told that he was happy to welcome all the participants to one end of the state. Most Rev. George Antonymsamy, Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore and the President of Prison Ministry India, Tamilnadu, in his presidential address said that even though we were unworthy servants we were called to do a worthy ministry. Mr. Joseph, the Treasurer of Sivagangai PMI unit, thanked all the dignitaries.

After tea break, we had discussions on the topic of ‘Prison Department and the Prison Ministry.’ Mr. Prabaharan, Ramnad district Jail Superintendent and Mr. Sivakumar, Sivagangai Sub-jail Superintendent shared their views on the topic and clarified the doubts of the participants. The Honourable Vadivel, sub-judge explained about free legal aid and answered questions raised by the participants. After lunch break at 2.45 pm, we had report presentation from all the dioceses under the chairmanship of the Archbishop.

After the evening tea break, we had the Executive meeting at 5.15 pm. And at 6.30 pm, we had the Released Prisoners’ Forum. Fr. Amalanathan from Dharmapuri shared
his prison experiences. Mr. Murugan from Madurai Central Prison, and Mr. Nagarajan from Trichy Central Prison shared their experiences. Mr. George from Sivagangai moderated the session. With the blessings of the Archbishop, the session came to an end at 8.30 pm. Since the meetings had delayed and the participants were tired, the cultural program was cancelled. After supper everyone went to rest.

The next day, 26 April at 5.00 am, we had the Eucharistic Adoration. There were 20 volunteers who started the silent adoration. More people joined later. At 7.00 am we had the morning prayer led by Sr. Fathima from Sivagangai.

At 7.30 am we had an emergency Executive meeting. After breakfast at 8.30 am, Sr. Rajathi from Sivagangai read out the previous day’s report. At 8.45 am, Mr. Ethish Fernando from Coimbatore explained about counselling techniques to the participants. The participants felt inspired and requested to be given more time for such sessions.

At 9.30 am we had the group discussions. Participants were divided by the place where they did their ministry.

- Central prisons
- Special prisons for women and sub-jail for women
- District jail and open-air jails
- Sub-jails

After coffee break, we had the General body meeting at 11.00 am. Most Rev. George Antonsamy, President of the PMI Tamilnadu, congratulated all the volunteers on their dedicated service and asked them to be more vigilant in the ministry. He also informed everyone that to strengthen the state team, Rev. Sr. Josephine DHM was appointed as the new State Treasurer for the PMI Tamilnadu. Mr. R. Dominic from Chengalpattu diocese and Mr. G. Gaspar from Palayamkottai diocese were appointed as the joint-secretaries of the Tamilnadu state team. They would work along with the state team. The meeting came to an end with the vote-of-thanks given by Fr. Maria Arputham from Dindigul.

Around 12.00 noon we had the concluding session. Due to his busy schedule Mr. Jayachandran IPS, Superintendent of Police, Sivagangai came around 12.30 and participated in the meeting. He was very happy to know about the ministry. He also assured us that the ministry would have his full cooperation. Fr. Arockiasamy from Sivagangai thanked all the participants. The meeting came to an end at 1.00 pm.

After lunch we visited the open-air jail at Purasadamrppu. We were given a warm welcome by the prison staff. At 5.30 pm we reached Oryur shrine. Most Rev. Jude Paulraj, Bishop Emeritus of Palayamkottai celebrated the Holy Eucharist for us. He reminded each one of the volunteers that charity began at home. Many of the people who dedicate their services to the ministry were taking care of their families also. He added that this ministry was to be done with the heart of Jesus who had said that we were unworthy servants, we had done only our duty.

The Jesuit community of Oryur Shrine was happy to welcome us. With the blessings of Martyr John De Britto each one of the volunteers felt spiritually enriched and mentally prepared to do the ministry in a more systematic way. The meeting came to an end with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.
At the launch of first parish cell at Good Shepherd Parish, PMI Pune.

With Gratitude and Appreciation

Sr. Justina SJC
Sr. Niveditha

We the National Team, together with Kolbe Home children and staff express our profound gratitude for all your selfless service rendered to the brethren behind the bars, in particular to the National Office and Kolbe Home. Million thanks to both of you and assured of our humble prayers for your future endeavors.
We miss you dear sisters!!!
An ethnic bungalow adjacent to prison ministry providence Home, (6500 sqft built-up in 2 floors & Land measuring 7800 sqft) built and fully furnished in traditional Kerala style with center courtyard, 10 bed rooms attached toilet, big prayer hall, palatial living, European kitchen/dinning, greenhouse, open garden, covered car park, servant quarters, power backup, wifi connectivity etc., in a purely Christian dominated area.

Walkable distance to Carmelaram bus stop, railway station, hospital, church, theology college, 46 religious institutions, 10 International schools etc... in 6 km radius. Proximity to market and malls on Sarjapur Road.