

**HIGH COURT OF TRIPURA
AGARTALA**

WP(C)(PIL) No.03 of 2024

Court on its own motion

Versus

The Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and others

.....Respondent(s)

For Court on its own motion :Mr. Sankar Lodh, Amicus Curiae.

For Respondent(s) :Mr. S. M. Chakraborty, Advocate General,
Mr. Bidyut Majumder, Deputy SGI,
Mr. Dipankar Sarma, Addl. G.A.

**HON'BLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE MR. APARESH KUMAR SINGH
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE BISWAJIT PALIT**

Order

20/02/2025

A brief progress note has been submitted by Mr. Bidyut Majumder, learned Deputy S.G.I. on behalf of the respondent No.2, pursuant to our previous order. According to it, the numbers of persons who know their HIV status has increased from 64% in march, 2024 to 72% in December, 2024. Analysis of reported data of HIV testing and positive detections in the State shows that the HIV positivity rate was around 1.2% in March, 2024 and is 0.6% in January, 2025. The National Aids Control Organization (NACO, for short) has allocated resources through Grant-in-aid in the current Financial Year to the Tripura State AIDS Control Society (TSACS, for short) which has undertaken various steps to increase awareness, HIV detections and management of HIV positive cases. Some recent activities to combat HIV epidemic in the State include intensified IEC Campaign undertaken during August-October, 2024 for sensitization of District Level Officers, Agartala Municipal Council and Zilla Parishad members of West Tripura District to increase detection of HIV

positive cases in the vulnerable groups. Activities done in the current financial year included index testing campaign, integrated health campaign etc. Consultation for combating injecting drug use and HIV in Tripura was convened by TSACS, with participation of senior Government officers of various States and other stakeholders in December, 2024. The major recommendations for the State were to focus on strengthening NCORD platform, and enhancing youth engagement for drug-demand reduction and rehabilitation, specifically in districts with high IDU load. Apart from that, it states that three new satellite-OST centres have been made functional after September, 2024, to enhance harm reduction strategies for IDU in Tripura. Staff of all facilities under Government health system are being trained to provide 'opioid substitution therapy'. NACO has granted approval for establishment of two new facility integrated ART centres at Khowai and Gomati Districts, and one new District Monitoring Unit to cover both Gomati and South Districts. According to them, the impact of short-term interventions for prevention and control of a chronic (life-long) illness like HIV, cannot be measured in 4/5 months. It would be reflected in quantifiable indicators over a period of time. Dr. Chinmoyee Das, Public Health Specialist, Grade-I, NACO, MoHFW is present through virtual mode and has reiterated what has been submitted through this brief progress note.

On behalf of the State, Mr. S. M. Chakraborty, learned Advocate General, has produced an affidavit which encloses the progress report of the Tripura State AIDS Control Society in the Financial Year 2024-2025. The following are its highlights:

“That during the period April, 24 to January, 25 Tripura SACS has conducted different activities to increase awareness and to combat the epidemic of HIV in the State which are as follows:

i) Under IEC component District level Sensitization programme on HIV/AIDS have been conducted involving all the Principal/Headmaster/Headmistress of 220 schools where Injecting Drug practice have been identified in the State.

ii) Intensified IEC Campaign for 3 months from August-October, 24 has been conducted throughout the State (Individual covered 1556689, Villages covered - 663, Schools covered 401, Colleges covered 36, Flok performance-140) to generate comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS among the general population in the State.

iii) Sensitization programme on HIV/AIDS and Injecting Drug abuse among the Corporator of Agartala Municipal Council and Zilla Parisad Members under West Tripura District.

iv) Message Related to HIV/AIDS and Injecting Drug abuse have been displayed at 21 nos of LED screens under ICA Department throughout the State for creating mass awareness in the month of January, 25.

v) Conducted Index testing campaign to increase the HIV testing and identification of hidden HIV Positive cases to achieve the first 95 of NACP

vi) Launched the Integrated Health Campaign in West Tripura District to test and identify the HIV/HepB/HepC/Syphilis cases in the vulnerable groups.

vii) Conducted Multi-stakeholder Consultation meeting involving all the State/District level high officials and representatives from Government of India, Government of Punjab, Assam, Nagaland and Mizoram for combating Injecting Drug User and HIV Prevalence in Tripura in the month of December,24

viii) Three new Satellite OST Centres have been made functional in the month of September, 24 to January, 25 at Dhalai and South District.

ix) In the West District total 18 nos of PHC/CHC/UPHCs are approved to be converted as OST Centres as per OAAT model from Punjab. Staffs from all the Health Institutions have been trained already. Implementation under process.”

Learned Advocate General has also submitted an Action Taken Report of the last NCORD meeting held on 06.12.2024 furnished by the office of Deputy Inspector General of Police (Crime & Int.), Tripura vide letter

No.71/SP/AN/CS/2025, dated 19.02.2025. The Action Taken Report of 9th State Level NCORD Committee Meeting held on 06.12.2024 is furnished in a tabular chart which is also extracted hereunder:

Sl No.	Actionable points	Action taken
1	All the Stakeholders of the State Level NCORD Committee may nominate & intimate name of one Officer to the ANTF Head for coordination to arrange regular awareness campaigns in the State.	Two nominations have been received from Education and Forest Department. Further, intimation has been given to other departments for providing the name of representative of their concerned department.
2	A calendar of co-ordinated activities by Social Welfare, Health, Education Deptt, Police and NCB is required for arranging joint awareness campaign.	A calendar of coordinate activities has been received from the Education Department on 20.01.2025. (copy enclosed) Accordingly, the calendar of the activities proposed by Education Deptt. has been circulated to all the district SsP for taking necessary action from their end. In addition, Anti Narcotics Unit, Tripura Police Crime Branch has conducted awareness programs in various Colleges in and around Agartala city.
3	Supply of standard reference materials to FSL, release of funds for infrastructure, contractual manpower etc	The proposal of the Director-in-charge of SFSL, as received through the Under Secretary, Government of Tripura has been forwarded to the Director NCB, New Delhi on 04.05.2024.
4	Training programme of the working scientist consultation with NCB/UNODC for up gradation of knowledge in newer designer drugs/drug analysis	NCB will organize one week training course on “Emerging Trends in illicit Synthetic Drugs” scheduled to be held on 24-28 February, 2025. Nomination to attend the training from SFSL &

		Anti Narcotics Unit had been sent to NCB on 18-12-2024, (copy enclosed).
5	NCB has started training program for ANTF officials, the training for FSL officials and inclusion of FSL officials in sensitization program and in field screening of drugs	-do-
6	Request was made to AD, NCB to supply 30 NDPS kits box for field use in important Police Stations.	NCB, Guwahati Zonal Unit approved fresh stock of portable field drug detection kits for Tripura Police vide SP, NCB, Guwahati Zonal Unit letter No. 18/NCB/GZU/DDKit/01/2025/9602 dated 22-01-2025. (copy enclosed).

Further, the Directorate of Higher Education has asked the Registrar, MBB University to ensure awareness campaigns among the students on scheduled dates and time for such 35 institutions regulated by the MBB University. The schedule starts from 3rd of March, 2025 and ends on 26th March, 2025 covering these 35 institutions.

Dr. Samarpita Dutta, Project Director, Tripura State AIDS Control Society has also joined us through digital mode. She has sought to convey that necessary support and cooperation is being extended by the stakeholder departments like Higher Education and Secondary Education for carrying out effective awareness campaign in educational institutions across the State. She, however, does not have the complete data of the number of institutions and the students/youths covered under this campaigns.

For the present, we feel that strengthening of infrastructural needs both physical and human resources are being carried out by the TSACS with

the approval and support of the NACO pursuant to the orders passed by this Court from time to time. But the need of the hour is to reach out through widespread aggressive campaigns across the State amongst the youths in particular. We, therefore, deem it proper to allow six weeks' time to the concerned stakeholders specifically the departments of Education, Health, Police and TSACS to undertake the massive awareness campaigns across the State covering the vulnerable population which primarily constitutes youths and the student community.

The concerned departments were supposed to file their reports in advance as per the previous orders but it is only during course of the proceedings that certain action taken reports as referred to hereinabove, have been produced.

It is, therefore, made clear that progress reports from different respondent departments including TSACS and NACO should be placed on record at least 48 hours before the next date of hearing.

If desired progress in the matter including widespread campaign through educational Institutions and amongst the youth in general is not shown, the presence of the officers of the concerned stakeholder departments may be called for on the next date.

Accordingly, the matter is adjourned to **10.04.2025**.

Let this report be kept on record.

(BISWAJIT PALIT),J

(APARESH KUMAR SINGH), CJ