Prison security – CM Vijay sets up high-level panel headed by former DGP J.K. Tripathy

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News

On the night of 26 Oct 2026, 17 remand prisoners attacked guards and escaped from the Theni District Jail (Thekkampatti); all were recaptured within two days. Following this, CM C. Joseph Vijay on 2 Nov 2026 set up a three-member high-level committee headed by retired DGP J.K. Tripathy to review security in Tamil Nadu's prisons. Members: K. Shankar (ADGP, head of the Prisons and Correctional Services Department) and S. Rajendran (retired DIG of Prisons). It will examine security lapses, standard operating procedures (SOPs), technology gaps and manpower, and recommend measures drawing on best practices in India and abroad 'at the earliest'.

Key facts

Constituted by	CM C. Joseph Vijay, 2 Nov 2026
Chair	J.K. (Jalad Kumar) Tripathy – 1985-batch IPS; TN DGP (till 30.6.2021)
Members	K. Shankar (ADGP, Prisons head); S. Rajendran (retd DIG)
Trigger	Theni District Jail – 17 escaped on night of 26 Oct; capacity 200, held 334
Other steps	9 staff suspended; armed guards at Central and district jails

TN prisons	142 incl. 9 Central, 5 Special for Women, 14 District jails (Policy Note 2024–25)

Background

- Constitution: 'Prisons, reformatories, Borstal institutions and persons detained therein' – Seventh Schedule, State List Entry 4. Prison administration is therefore a State responsibility; the Centre gives only funds and advice.
- Legal history: the colonial 'Prisons Act, 1894' is still the basic law. To replace it, the Union Home Ministry (through BPR&D) prepared the 'Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act, 2023' and sent it to States in May 2023; relevant parts of the Prisoners Act 1900 and Transfer of Prisoners Act 1950 were also merged into it. It covers parole, furlough, separate housing for women and transgender inmates, high-security jails and use of technology in prisons.
- Undertrials: Section 479 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 – a first-time accused who has spent one-third of the maximum sentence in custody is to be released on bail. The principle 'bail, not jail' was laid down by Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer in State of Rajasthan v. Balchand (1977).

Tamil Nadu link: the Prisons and Correctional Services Department is under the Home, Prohibition and Excise Department. The Puzhal prison complex holds Central Prison-1, Central Prison-2 and a Special Prison for Women; all foreign prisoners are lodged there. 'PATTAM', a reform programme for first-time young offenders aged 18–24, has run since 2021.

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