

“It takes guts and humility to admit mistakes. Admitting we're wrong is courage, not weakness.” Roy T. Bennett

NATIONAL**OVERCROWDING IN PRISONS IS A PROBLEM:
SUPREME COURT**

The Supreme Court has expressed concern about overcrowding in prisons across the country, in some cases beyond 150 per cent of the capacity, and asked all the high courts to consider the issue as it involves “violation of human rights”.

The court has requested the chief justices of the high courts to take up the matter as a suo-motu writ petition.

The Centre apprised the court that steps were being taken to encourage setting up of ‘open prisons’ and a model uniform rules for the administration of open correctional institutions have already been framed.

Semi-open prisons or open prisons allow convicts to work outside the jail premises and earn a livelihood and return in the evening. The concept was brought in to assimilate the convicts with society and reduce the psychological pressure and lack of confidence they faced lack of confidence in returning to lives outside prison.

Overcrowding is one of the biggest problems faced by prison inmates. It results in poor hygiene and lack of sleep among other problems. More than 65% of the under trials spend three months to five years in jail before getting bail. A fourth of all the under trials have been under detention for more than a year.

The management of prisons falls exclusively under the domain of the state government, as per the seventh schedule of the constitution. In every state, the prison administrative machinery works under the chief of prisons who is a senior ranking IPS officer.

NHRC figures show that prisoners cut off from family and friends had a 50% more chance of committing suicide than those outside. The average suicide rate among the general public for this period is 11 (per 100,000) whereas the average suicide rate in prison is 16.9 (per

100,000). In other words, the average suicide rate in prisons is over 50% more than in normal conditions.

Indian prisons face three long-standing structural constraints: overcrowding, understaffing and underfunding. The inevitable outcome is sub-human living conditions, poor hygiene, and violent clashes between the inmates and jail authorities.

Besides, while 33% of the total requirement of prison officials still lies vacant, almost 36% of vacancy for supervising officers is still unfulfilled. In the absence of adequate prison staff, overcrowding of prisons leads to rampant violence and other criminal activities inside the jails.

Fundamental rights of prisoners cannot be placed in the back-burner and the Centre and the states need to be more pro-active in sensitising staff about the need to treat prisoners as humanely as possible.

MORE TESTS REQUIRED FOR GM MUSTARD: GEAC

Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee has said that in light of several representations both “for and against” the release of GM mustard, there was a need for more tests.

The Centre has also demanded more tests for genetically modified mustard, a year after clearing the crop for “commercial cultivation”.

The GM mustard has never been tested as a herbicide tolerant crop, for its environmental and health ramifications. It is a point that has remained unaddressed by the regulators.

Dhara Mustard Hybrid (DMH -11) had been developed by a team of scientists at Delhi University. It was developed under a government-funded project.

Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC):

It functions in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).

As per Rules, 1989, it is responsible for appraisal of activities involving large scale use of hazardous microorganisms and

recombinants in research and industrial production from the environmental angle.

The committee is also responsible for appraisal of proposals relating to release of genetically engineered (GE) organisms and products into the environment including experimental field trials.

GEAC is chaired by the Special Secretary/Additional Secretary of MoEF&CC and co-chaired by a representative from the Department of Biotechnology (DBT). Presently, it has 24 members and meets every month to review the applications in the areas indicated above.

NATIONAL WIND-SOLAR HYBRID POLICY

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has issued National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy.

The objective of the policy is to provide a framework for promotion of large grid connected wind-solar PV hybrid system for efficient utilization of transmission infrastructure and land. It also aims at reducing the variability in renewable power generation and achieving better grid stability.

On technology front the Policy provides for integration of both the energy sources i.e. wind and solar at AC as well as DC level. The Policy also provides for flexibility in share of wind and solar components in hybrid project, subject to the condition that, rated power capacity of one resource be at least 25 per cent of the rated power capacity of other resource for it to be recognized hybrid project.

The Policy seeks to promote new hybrid projects as well as hybridization of existing wind/solar projects. The existing wind/solar projects can be hybridized with higher transmission capacity than the sanctioned one, subject to availability of margin in the existing transmission capacity.

The Policy provides for procurement of power from a hybrid project on tariff based transparent bidding process for which Government entities may invite bids. The Policy also permits use of battery storage in

the hybrid project for optimising the output and further reduce the variability. It mandates the regulatory authorities to formulate necessary standards and regulations for wind-solar hybrid systems.

With significant capacity additions in renewables in recent years and with Hybrid Policy aiming at better utilisation of resources, it is envisaged that the Hybrid Policy will open-up a new area for availability of renewable power at competitive prices along with reduced variability.

BHAROSA

Aimed at empowering vulnerable and marginalized women by imparting skills training, the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** will soon set up a **skill development centre at 'Bharosa,' an integrated support centre for distressed women and children in Hyderabad.**

'Bharosa,' an **initiative of Hyderabad City Police**, is a state-of-the-art centre to support women and children who are victims of violence. Since its inception in 2016, a total of 3,560 victims have approached 'Bharosa' centre with a range of problems.

'Bharosa' provides 24X7 services related to police, medical, legal, prosecution, psycho-therapeutic counselling and relief and rehabilitation services in completely private counselling rooms to maintain confidentiality and privacy.

The centre is equipped with well-trained staff and modern gadgets, including facilities like video conferencing, so that the victims need not go to the court.

UNDP:

Headquartered in New York City, UNDP advocates for change and connects countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life.

The status of UNDP is that of an executive board within the United Nations General Assembly.

The UNDP Administrator is the third highest-ranking official of the United Nations after the

United Nations Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General.

The UNDP Human Development Report Office also publishes an annual Human Development Report.

It provides expert advice, training and grants support to developing countries, with increasing emphasis on assistance to the least developed countries. It promotes technical and investment cooperation among nations.

To accomplish the SDGs and encourage global development, UNDP focuses on poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS, democratic governance, energy and environment, social development, and crisis prevention and recovery.

GENDER BIAS CAUSED 'EXCESS' DEATHS OF GIRLS UNDER 5: LANCET STUDY

There have been 2, 39,000 “excess deaths” per year of girls under the age of five in India, and 29 out of 35 States contributed to this mortality, according to a study in the online, open access, peer-reviewed journal That works out to about 2.4 million deaths in a decade, and the additional deaths were found in 90% of districts in the country.

Around 22% of the overall mortality burden of under-five females is therefore due to gender bias.

Excess mortality is the difference between observed and expected mortality rates in both genders.

The worst affected areas were all rural, agricultural areas with lower levels of education, high population densities, low socio-economic development and high levels of fertility.

Many deaths of females under five are partly due to unwanted childbearing and subsequent neglect.

The sustained fertility decline currently observed in north India is likely to lead to a reduction in postnatal discrimination.

Unless son preference diminishes, lower fertility, however, might bring about a rise in gender-biased sex selection as was observed 20 years ago in western India

SAMARTH

Samarth – Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector under the Skill India Mission.

The broad objective of the scheme is to skill the youth for gainful and sustainable employment in the textile sector covering the entire value chain of textiles, excluding spinning and weaving.

The scheme is intended to provide demand driven, placement oriented National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) compliant skilling programmes to incentivize and supplement the efforts of the industry in creating jobs in the textiles sectors.

The scheme targets to train 10 lakh persons (9 lakh in organized and 1 lakh in traditional sector) over a period of 3 years (2017-20), with an outlay of Rs. 1300 crore.

NSQF:

National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) organizes qualifications according to a series of levels of knowledge, skills and aptitude. These levels are defined in terms of learning outcomes which the learner must possess regardless of whether they were acquired through formal, non-formal or informal learning.

There are 10 levels in the framework, with the entry level being 1, and the highest level being 10. This will enable a person to acquire desired competency levels, transit to the job market and, at an opportune time, return for acquiring additional skills to further upgrade competencies.

The framework would be anchored and operationalised by the National Skill Development Agency (NSDA), an autonomous body attached to the Ministry of Finance, mandated to coordinate and harmonize skill development efforts of the Government of India and the private sector.

The NSQF would also help shift emphasis to outcome based learning – both in the general and vocational space.

NSQF will also facilitate Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) that is largely lacking in the present education and training scenario.

Additionally, it would help alignment of Indian qualifications to international qualifications.

The credit accumulation and transfer system that will be integrated in the NSQF will allow people to move between education, vocational training and work at different stages in their lives according to their needs and convenience.

GREEN SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (GSPD)

In its bid to create over five lakh job opportunities by 2021 through green skills, the government has launched GSPD-ENVIS mobile app to begin enrolments in 30 expert courses under its Green Skill Development Programme (GSPD).

Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP):

GSDP is a recent initiative under the ENVIS scheme for skilling the youth in the country. It is an initiative for skill development in the environment and forest region by the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (MoEF&CC) to develop India's youth into employable and/or self-employment, making use of the widespread network and experience of ENVIS Hubs/RPs.

The Green Skill Development programme endeavours to develop green skilled workers having technical knowledge and commitment to sustainable development, which will help in the attainment of the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and National Biodiversity Targets (NBT).

Green skills are those skills required to adapt processes, services and products to climate change and the environmental rules and necessities related to it. They embrace the information, abilities, values and attitudes required to live in, develop and support a sustainable and resource-efficient society. India is the second most populous country in the world is bestowed with a large working population.

Even though India has an advantage of reaping this demographic dividend but high drop-out rates from school coupled with poor

vocational skills may hinder in reaping this dividend. There exists a demand-supply gap of skill sets, both cognitive and practical, at various levels in the Environment/ Forest fields in India.

Green skilling is crucial for making a transition from energy and emissions – intensive economy to cleaner and greener production and service patterns. It also prepares people for green jobs that contribute to preserving or restoring the quality of the environment, while improving human well being and social equity.

These skills are needed in areas like sewer water treatment, Climate resilient cities, green construction, Solid waste management etc.
