

Recommendations of the
Online Colloquium
on
“Prison Reforms”
10th March 2023



INDIAN POLICE FOUNDATION
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
INSTITUTE OF CORRECTIONAL
ADMINISTRATION, CHANDIGARH



Indian Police Foundation (IPF) in partnership with the Institute of Correctional Administration, Chandigarh organized an online colloquium On “Prison Reform” on 10th March 2023. Serving and retired senior police and prison officers, academicians, researchers, lawyers and judicial officers participated in the colloquium. The agenda for discussion in the meet was - “Issues related to Prison Reforms”. Distinguished experts and other eminent professionals who addressed the colloquium include Shri N.Ramachandran IPS (Retd) and President of the IPF, Dr. M.R.Ahmed (Retd), former Director APCA, Vellore, Shri Somesh Goyal IPS (Retd), former Director General of Police & Prison, Himachal Pradesh, Prof. Vijay Raghavan from Centre for Criminology and Justice, Tata Institute of Social Sciences Mumbai, Dr. K.P. Singh IPS (Retd), Director, IPF Centre for Prison Reforms and former Director General of Police & Prisons, Haryana, Dr. Ish Kumar IPS (Retd), Director, IPF Centre for Internal Police Reforms and former Director NCRB and Dr. Upneet Lalli Head (Training & Research), Institute of Correctional Administration, Chandigarh.

The themes of discussion in the meet were diverse and include various aspects of prison reforms like ‘Alternatives to Imprisonment’, ‘Prisoner’s Reintegration through Livelihood Opportunities’, ‘Mental Health Issues in Prisons’, ‘Role of NGOs in Prison Administration’, ‘Premature Release of Prisoners: Law, Policy and Practice’ and ‘Policy Issues Affecting the Performance of Prison Staff Including Reforms’. More than 100 senior prison and police officers from the States of Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, M.P, Chandigarh, Delhi, U.P, Rajasthan, Ladakh, Uttarakhand, and Karnataka participated in the deliberations.

Shri N.Ramachandran, in his opening remarks hoped that the consultation on these themes would continue and doable agenda of reforms in prisons would emerge from the discussions. He shared the message of Shri Gurbachan Jagat ,Chairman IPF, that there was a need to work with a balanced approach which focuses on the social reintegration of inmates as well as on various aspects of Victimology. Dr.M.R.Ahmed, recalling the importance of ‘All India Prison Service’, emphasised the need to include ‘individual sentence planning’ and ‘alternatives to imprisonment’, like community service and intermittent imprisonment, as essential ingredients of ‘correctional justice’. Shri.Somesh Goyal, stating that *‘jo dikhta hai woh bikta hai’* (only that is sold what is visible), stressed the need to open the prisons for the stakeholders. He advocated collaborative approach involving different departments of the government and shared his initiatives taken in Himachal Pradesh prisons regarding empowerment of prisoners by allowing them to work outside prisons and building a relationship of faith and trust with the inmates, which is essential for their integration in the main stream society. Dr. Upneet Lalli delineated various mental health issues that inmates and staff suffer in prisons. She highlighted the major causes like the environment of prisons, disconnect with family, drugs and substance abuse that result in the poor mental health of the inmates. She also drew attention towards the importance of mental health for prison staff, and the need to have counsellors in prisons.

Prof.Vijay Raghavan discussed the role of NGOs in prison reforms. He emphasised the need to integrate NGOs and trained social workers with the prison administration and inmates. NGOs and social workers can play a vital role in prisons, by becoming a bridge between the inmates and their families. They can render useful services to the prisoners through social-legal and psycho-social interventions. An atmosphere of trust and having a proper mechanism can help to associate NGOs with prisons, emphasised Mr. Raghavan.

Dr.K.P.Singh mentioned that premature release of prisoner is one of the important postulates of a modern and progressive ‘sentencing policy’. He discussed various types of practices and called for a uniform ‘Premature Release Policy’ and also a uniform formula for awarding remissions and calculate ‘custody period’. Dr. Ish Kumar shared the finding of his study on ‘Training Needs Analysis (TNA) & Non-Training Policy Interventions’ conducted by HIPA Gurgaon, wherein he highlighted various ground realities. Policy issues related to prison employees like staff to prisoner ratio, pay parity and promotions etc. were elaborated by him.

The following recommendations were finalised after the deliberations-

1. Subject matter of Prisons and Prisoners, mentioned as ‘Entry 4 in List II – State List’ Should be shifted to ‘List III – Concurrent List’ in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India, to bring in uniform standards of correction policies and practices throughout the country.
2. To achieve the objective of correction, All India Prison Service should be constituted. National Commission for Prisons should be established and prisons should be included in National Development Plan.
3. Alternatives to imprisonment at all stages, like community service, electronic monitoring, probation, suspended sentence, dusk to dawn custody, open prisons, status penalty etc., should be embedded in laws and procedures.
4. ‘Post Release Rehabilitation of Prisoners’ should be included as added responsibility of prison administration, in collaboration with other departments of the government.
5. Revamping of prison training infrastructure in all states to impart extensive training, including setting up of National Academy of Correctional Services should be the utmost priority of the state government and central government should provide funds for it.
6. Policy issues for improving work environment and motivating the prison staff should be addressed by sanctioning adequate staff and improving their service conditions.
7. Services of law officers, counsellors, technical staff and intelligence set up should be made available in each jail. Prison Modernisation Scheme, on the pattern of Police Modernisation Scheme should be chalked out by the MHA.
8. Central government should issue guidelines to ensure time bound disposal of mercy petitions and applications of premature release.
9. Premature Release Policy and scale of remissions to be awarded by prison authorities should be standardised, to ensure uniformity in their application nationwide.

10. Prisons should be opened for NGO's and non-official visitors for ensuring prisoners welfare and speedy redress of their grievances.
11. Standard Operating Procedures should be prescribed to facilitate prisoners coming out of jail for work during the day time.
12. The living conditions, including accommodation, diet chart, time of serving food, lock-up time, beddings and other facilities required for leading a dignified life should be revisited keeping in view modern standard of living of an average person.
13. Concept of 'dusk to dawn custody' for women prisoners should be adopted, whereby women prisoners are allowed to go out of jail during day time to spend time with the family and report back at jail at dusk.
14. Prison industry should be expanded to offer work to all the RI convicts and willing under-trials. Prison Management Board should be established in each state to facilitate quick flow of funds and marketing of prison products.
15. Under-trials should be kept in separate detention centres, to be designed on the patterns of hostels in educational institutions. This facility may be a paid arrangement for the detainees, except for the BPL persons.
16. Health infrastructure needs to be improved in prisons. Proper laboratories for basic tests should be set up in all Central prisons
17. Risk need assessment of inmates should be done and will help in proper classification as also development of correctional programs Sentence Planning is required for the inmates.
18. Mental health needs to be given a priority in prisons. Mental health screening on arrival in prisons is essential. Psychological assessment of inmates, requires that there should be Psychologists ,at least one in each prison.
19. Mental health professionals should be associated with prisons. Counselling services should be made available to the prison inmates.
20. Inmates who are Drug and substance abuse addicts require treatment. Testing and treatment facilities, and setting up of de-addiction centres in prisons having a large number of addicts is required.
21. Training of Prisons staff on mental health issues and suicide prevention.
22. Women prisoners having a child /children below 6 years of age should be kept in 'children home' established under the juvenile laws to ensure welfare of their infants. These women should be given work inside the 'child care institution' itself. Pregnant women should not be kept in jail and their detention in jail should be suspended or they may be released on interim bail.