



CURRENT AFFAIRS (15/05/2023)

1) POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

TOPIC: MODEL PRISON ACT 2023

Why is it in the news?

Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs has prepared the ‘**Model Prisons Act 2023**’ on the recommendations of the **Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD)**.

Present Legal Status

I) Prisons/persons detained therein' is a “**State-List**” subject under Entry 4 of List II of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. Administration and management of prisons and prisoners is the responsibility of respective State Governments.

II) The existing law in this context, the Prisons Act of 1894 is a pre-independence era Act and is almost 130 years old. Two other related laws — The Prisoners Act, 1900 and The Transfer of Prisoners Act, 1950 are also decades-old. There is also The Repatriation of Prisoners Act, 2003.

III) The number of jail establishments in India stood over 1,000 which are categorised as Central Jails, District Jails, Sub-Jails, Juvenile and Women Jails as well as open Jails/Camps.

Present issues with Prisons in India: View of Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2007)

I) The existing Act mainly focuses on keeping the criminals in custody and enforcement of discipline and order in prisons. There is **no provision for reform and rehabilitation** of prisoners in the existing Act.

II) Jails in India suffer from serious **overcrowding**. India’s prison population stood at 331,391 as on 31.12.2004 reflecting a jail population of 30 per hundred thousand Indians and jail occupancy levels stood at 139% of capacity.

III) Bulk of the inmates comprises **undertrial prisoners**. These are often people from disadvantaged backgrounds involved in minor and technical violations of the law who are incarcerated due to their inability to pay for bail and/or for good legal representation.

IV) The situation in many prisons is appalling enough to be considered a violation of human dignity as well as the basic human rights of the inmates. Convicts are imprisoned for long periods in crumbling buildings with **inadequate accommodation and sanitary facilities**.

V) Paradoxically, a few individuals, who are powerful are allowed to enjoy **extraordinary facilities not permitted under the rules**.

VI) The issue of **misuse of the provisions for parole and for remission of sentences** has significant implications for public order because



indiscriminate and reckless grant of parole or remission of sentences can impact public order adversely.

Model Prisons Act 2023

I) Model Prisons Act 2023 has assimilated the relevant provisions of **'The Prisons Act, 1894', 'The Prisoners Act, 1900' and 'The Transfer of Prisoners Act, 1950'**. These three acts will be replaced by the **Model Prisons Act 2023**.

II) It will serve as a **"guiding document"** for the States, and for adoption in their jurisdiction. It aims to overhaul the prison administration, with focus on the reformation and rehabilitation of inmates.

III) Some salient features of the new Model Prisons Act are as follows:

- a) Provision for security assessment and segregation of prisoners, individual sentence planning.
- b) Grievance redressal, prison development board, attitudinal change towards prisoners.
- c) Provision of separate accommodation for women prisoners, transgender, etc.
- d) Provision for use of technology in prison administration with a view to bring transparency in prison administration.
- e) Provision for video conferencing with courts, scientific and technological interventions in prisons, etc.
- f) Provision of punishment for prisoners and jail staff for use of prohibited items like mobile phones etc. in jails;
- g) Provision regarding establishment and management of high security jail, open jail (open and semi open), etc.
- h) Provision for protecting the society from the criminal activities of hardened criminals and habitual offenders, etc.
- i) Provision for legal aid to prisoners, provision of parole, furlough, and premature release etc. to incentivise good conduct and
- j) Focus on vocational training and skill development of prisoners and their reintegration into the society.

2) INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

TOPIC: CALIFORNIA ANTI-CASTE BILL (SB 403)

Why is it in the news?

Recently, the California Senate has passed the **SB 403 Bill**, a legislation seeking to **explicitly ban caste discrimination**.

Caste discrimination in U.S

I) Indian Americans are the **second-largest immigrant group** in the US. According to data from the 2018 **American Community Survey (ACS)**, which is conducted by the US Census Bureau, there are 4.2 million people of Indian origin residing in the United States.



II) A 2020 study conducted among Indian Americans by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace found that roughly half of the Hindu respondents identified with a caste group.

III) In the U.S., caste has long been a sensitive and controversial issue as it stands directly in opposition to the myth that the Indian diaspora is a “**model minority**”—a group of well-educated and hard-working immigrants who assimilate seamlessly into the country.

IV) A survey conducted by Dalit rights organization **Equality Labs in 2018** found that one in four Dalits had faced verbal or physical assault, while two out of every three faced caste discrimination at work. In 2020, California regulators sued tech giant Cisco Systems Inc for allowing caste-based harassment.

California SB 403 Bill

I) A similar bill is being introduced in the State House of Representatives, before it can be sent to the Governor to be signed into a law. The law would make California the first US State to add caste as a protected category in its anti-discrimination laws.

II) The bill adds caste as a protected category to an existing law, **the Unruh Civil Rights Act**, which provides that all people in California are entitled to the full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, privileges, or services in all business establishments.

III) The bill provides explicit protections to those who have been systemically harmed due to caste bias and prejudice.

IV) It also provides firm legal consequences for those seeking to avoid responsibility or ramifications for permitting or participating in caste discrimination and caste-based violence.

Other anti-caste discrimination policies in the U.S.

I) This law is an extension of a similar trend that has been observed in college campuses across the US.

Several universities in the U.S., including Harvard, Brown and California State University, have added the caste criteria to its anti-discrimination policies.

II) Earlier this year, **Seattle became the first US city to outlaw caste discrimination.**

Arguments in favour of California Bill

I) All of the inequalities associated with Caste status have become embedded into mainstream American institutions which have significant South Asian immigrant populations.

II) Till now in California, caste was not an explicitly protected class. The human rights authorities were unable to investigate a complaint based solely on caste discrimination. Caste discrimination should be recognised even if it is experienced by “**just a small population**”.



Arguments against California Bill

- I) Many Hindu organisations across the US opposed this move on the ground that it could put the Hindu Community under more legal scrutiny, generate more anti-Hindu discrimination and could dissuade employers from hiring South Asians.
- II) They also argued that proper research has not been done before the resolution was passed.

TOPIC: Indo-Thai CORPAT

Why is it in the news?

Recently, the **35th edition of India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol (Indo-Thai CORPAT)** between the Indian Navy and the Royal Thai Navy was conducted.

About Indo-Thai CORPAT

- I) The **Indian Navy and the Royal Thai Navy** have been undertaking CORPAT bi-annually since 2005 along the **International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL)**.
- II) It builds up understanding and interoperability between navies and facilitates instituting measures to prevent and suppress unlawful activities like **Illegal Unreported Unregulated (IUU)** fishing, drug trafficking, piracy, and armed robbery.

Importance

- I) It is another step towards enhancing the Indian Navy's efforts to consolidate inter-operability and forge strong bonds of friendship between India and Thailand. It will reinforce maritime linkages between the two countries.
- II) It further helps enhance the operational synergy by exchanging information for the prevention of smuggling, and illegal immigration and for the conduct of **Search and Rescue (SAR)** operations at sea.

3) SOCIAL ISSUES

TOPIC: Mpox

Why is it in the news?

- I) The **World Health Organization (WHO)** said that mpox was no longer a global health emergency.
- II) The organization declared mpox a **public health emergency of international concern** in July 2022 and backed its stand in November and February.

About Mpox

- I) It is an infectious disease caused by the **monkeypox virus**.
- II) It can cause a painful rash, enlarged lymph nodes, and fever. Most people fully recover, but some get very sick.
- III) It was discovered in Denmark (1958) in monkeys kept for research and the first reported human case of mpox was a nine-month-old boy in



the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, 1970). In 2022, the disease's name was changed by WHO from 'monkeypox' to 'mpox' to reduce the racial and sexual stigma surrounding it.

IV) It can spread from person to person or occasionally from animal to people.

V) Early and supportive care is important to help manage symptoms and avoid further problems. Getting a mpox vaccine can help prevent infection.