National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) Report 2017

What is the issue?

- The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report 2017 was released recently.
- It presents numbers on different aspects of the criminal justice system, there are crucial gaps in the data collected.

What is the basis for classification?

- Offences under crime have been categorised outside the provisions of the Indian Penal Code and other special and local laws.
- While the report states that socio-economic causative factors or reasons of crimes have **not been captured**, the non-legislative parameters for classifying some offences have **not been adequately explained**.
- This raises questions about the basis for classification.
- The purpose of such classification would be achieved only if a more detailed description of the categories was provided for motives.
- In contrast to crime statistics, prison statistics do not provide any such offence-wise data on under trials and convicts.
- This prevents cross-referencing and examination of the numbers in both reports.
- While prison statistics provide information on the different kinds of sentences being served by convicts, these numbers haven't been categorised on the basis of offences.

What are the other concerns?

- It is impossible to gain insights into the sentencing trends for various offences and in various States or formulate policy on sentencing.
- There are concerns about the **methods of computation and presentation** of data.
- While recording **rates of recidivism**, the report collects State-wise information on the number of juveniles and adults who were arrested earlier but not convicted, and those who were previously convicted.
- However, this data's reliability is questionable, given the understanding of recidivism.

- It is understood as arrests of people who may not have been convicted earlier for crimes they were suspected or accused of committing, and who may not be convicted again.
- This is especially problematic given that socio-economically marginalised people are known to repeatedly come in conflict with the law, and are routinely arrested and released on mere suspicion.
- There are methodological concerns about the **rate of calculating charge-sheeting.**
- It is measured based on the total number of cases disposed of by the police, and not the total number of cases for investigation.
- There are similar concerns about the **presentation of data** on arrests, convictions and acquittals.
- The statistics in this section do not speak to the total number of cases disposed of by courts in 2017.

What could be done?

- In order to effectuate sound policies which do justice to the goals of **reformation and rehabilitation**, it is important to critically understand existing programmes.
- While current prison statistics provide some information on the kind of facilities available for reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners, they do not go beyond the **enrolment rate to evaluate their efficacy**.
- In the absence of information on the quality and impact of these programmes, robust policies cannot be formulated.
- These policies would ensure successful reintegration of prisoners and provide those serving life-term imprisonments (**52.6%** of all convicts) an opportunity to reform.
- These policies are especially important since **94.4%** of those entering the criminal justice system were arrested for the first time.
- In a political system that pays little attention to those in conflict with the law, the importance of these statistics is undeniable.
- However, in order to explore more precise and effective solutions to criminal justice issues, NCRB must first take **steps towards ensuring the accuracy, reliability and comprehensiveness** of these reports.

Source: The Hindu



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