State of jails

Why in news?

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The eight alleged SIMI terrorists who were killed by Madhya Pradesh Police on Monday hours after they had broken out of Bhopal Central Jail, had unlocked their cell, killed the lone guard on duty, and scaled a 30-foot wall.

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National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data

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- Jail staff vacancies severely compromise jail security.
- According to the latest data on prisons, published by the NCRB for 2015, there is a vacancy of 33% among prison guards, and 36% among officers.
- As many as 200 inmates escaped — both in jailbreaks and from custody while outside prison premises — across the country in 2015.
- Prisons across the country are facing a severe staff crunch — with over 27,000 vacancies against the sanctioned strength of a little over 80,000.
- **Bihar and Jharkhand, have the most poorly guarded jails**. Both states have over 65% vacancy among officers, staff and jail guards. Bihar, along with Rajasthan, also has the highest vacancy among officers, at 71%.
- Madhya Pradesh, which also witnessed a similar jailbreak by three alleged SIMI activists of the same group in 2013, has a vacancy of 28%.
- **Delhi has some of the most overcrowded jails** in the country, housing over 220 inmates for every 100 that it should be having.
- UP, which has **the highest number of prisoners** and sanctioned strength of jail staff and officers, faces a vacancy of 33%.

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State of Muslims

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- Muslims make up 15.8% of all convicts and 20.9% of all undertrials in jails across the country. **This is higher than their share in the country's population**, which is 14.2%.
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- In some states, this gap is even far wider.
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- In Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, the percentage of Muslims in the incarcerated population was almost **thrice the percentage of Muslims in the overall population**.
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- In states such as West Bengal, Gujarat and Rajasthan, Muslims have almost double the share of undertrial populations in prisons than their share in the populations of the states.
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- It is also important to compare these figures with those of Muslim convicts languishing in jails across states. A bigger gap between the two figures would show that **while more Muslims are being booked in such states, they are not being convicted for lack of evidence**.
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- **Caste-based analysis** shows that 34% of the convicts belong to the general category, while 31.2% belong to the OBC category. Also, 21% belong to the scheduled castes, while 14% belonged to the schedul tribes. Almost similar percentages were reported for caste-based analysis of undertrial prisoners.
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- Tamil Nadu also tops **in use of preventive detention law** with 1,268 detenues held across the State in 2015. The Tamil Nadu Prevention of Dangerous Activities of Bootleggers, Drug Offenders, Forest Offenders, Goondas, Immoral Traffic Offenders, Sand Offenders, Slum Grabbers and Video Pirates Act, 1982, referred to as the Goondas Act, empowers law-enforcement authorities to issue orders to detain 'habitual offenders' for up to a year in prison.
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Source: The Indian Express

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