

# **SAMPLE DESCRIPTIVE SECTION** **QUESTIONS**

## **Prison reforms in India**

**Q. *Administrative skill and political will are required to bring about jail reforms in India. Express your views on the subject.***

**Ans.** The fact remains that both institutions and administrative entities like prisons have deteriorated in India. The clashes between the prison inmates and their official custodians is not a matter to be glossed over but a subject that needs urgent and immediate attention and corrective action. Some deaths of jail inmates in New Delhi's Tihar Jail bring to the fore the deplorable state of affairs, not only in the premier prison, but elsewhere in the country also. The time and tendency to sit back is over. Now the crying need of the hour is to sit up and exhibit political will and administrative skill to come to grips with the all-pervasive problem of prison-reforms.

Over the years a number of commissions have gone into the challenges that continue to confront the jail administrations. The latest in the series is the 'Moily Panel Report' that says reforms in prison administration require modernisation of jail infrastructure as well as procedural reforms in the entire criminal justice system.

Overcrowding in jails is a very big problem that leads to confusion, chaos and conflicts resulting in a virtual breakdown of services. The problem is endemic and widespread. It should be understood both by political leadership and bureaucratic set-up that a prison is not a hell with no proper amenities, but an institution of reforms. The State cannot deny the inmates their basic right to life and a speedy trial. Unfortunately, our prisons house more undertrials than convicts. In order to reduce pressure on the jail administration, expeditious trials are the only way out of the "traffic-jam-like situation".

It is also time for a uniform national policy on prisons. Why not shift prisons from the State List to the Concurrent List as recommended by the Mulla Committee? Its other proposals, if implemented, could go a long way in bringing about the much needed prison reforms in the country.

## **Making road travel safe**

**Q. *In the present age of speed, it is imperative that all modes of travel, especially the road travel in India is made safe for all categories of people.***

**Comment.**

**Ans.** For all those who feel for India and its people, the number of deaths on Indian roads as a result of accidents, collision, negligence, rash driving et al, is both shocking and stupefying. When knowledgeable people describe Indian road as 'death traps' it does credit neither to road makers nor to those whose duty it is to see that roads remain free from all types of hassels and harrowing happenings.

Unless and until the Ministry of Surface Transport, Traffic Regulatory Agencies/Police etc. put road safety under the scanner and devise meaningful and result-oriented ways and means to render road travel a pleasant experience, things would not improve. Strict adherence to traffic rules and regulations is just one of the measures that can bring about perceptible change in the situation. Unfortunately, the series of accidents that occur on Indian roads day in and day out brings home the terrible truth that raising the safety bar on Indian roads remains a pipedream. When the tools of high technology are

readily available and there is no shortage of funds, it is not comprehensible why this vital area of transport, both goods and humans, remains vulnerable to accidents.

Ironically, while new roads are being built, and newer, supposedly safer automobiles—with safety features like airbags, crash sensors etc—race out of the factories, the country's road safety record remains abysmal. No doubt, several factors contribute to the appalling statistics that tell the sorry state of affairs on roads. In India, this is particularly true since the facilities available for non-motorised users are poor or even non-existent. It is high time the authorities did more than indulge in "traffic drives" to book errant drivers.

Only a zero tolerance policy on a sustained basis to educate people on good road sense will work. The test of this is the way road users put on their best behaviour during the "Safety Week" every year. This is the one period when the number of accidents come down significantly.

### **Urbanisation of India**

***Q. India is getting urbanised faster than the rest of the world. On the basis of your reading, knowledge and experience state the implications of rapid urbanisation.***

**Ans.** The state of the "World Population 2007" report points out that, for the first time in history, more than half of the world's population will be living in towns/cities by 2008. The same report further tries to bring home a message of caution in a world in which population growth is being accompanied by urbanisation that could lead to congestion. Unlike Thomas Malthus's fears of high population growth leading to scarcities and conflict, the UNPFA Report simply cautions such countries as China and India that the future course of dealing with population-growth-cum-rapid urbanisation may not prove as smooth and easy as a cakewalk.

The implications of urbanisation in India getting faster than in the rest of the world, holds a cup of both promises and problems. People migrating to urban areas in search of better opportunities and amenities, real or imaginary, would certainly, though temporarily, reduce pressure on land and agriculture in rural India. It goes without saying that rapid but unplanned urbanisation in India leading to a spurt in slums and degrading living conditions of slum dwellers, even worse than those of the rural poor.

Strangely enough, the population of towns and cities in developing countries like India is set to double in the space of a generation. While the urban population in the developed world is expected to grow relatively lower. With the state of health services, sanitation, housing, education etc. already under tremendous pressure in urban India, the scenario in future holds no big and pragmatic promise of coping with ever increasing migration from rural India to urban India. We cannot lose sight of another fact that climate change can result in higher migration rate, leading to further growth in urbanisation with all possible consequences, both sour and sweet. Besides, what should be of particular concern to India, is the warning provided by the report on the drought, flooding, and the other fallouts of climate change/global warming, which would not only hit drier cities like Delhi, but also modify the migration patterns of rural and urban areas.

The report rightly points out, "the future of those in developing countries, and humanity itself will depend on the decision of policy-makers today." Therefore, the approach to

urban growth of India and China—who happen to have 37 per cent of the world's slums between them—becomes critical for the world's future.

### **Legalising sting operations**

***Q. It is time that sting operations carried out by media and others are legalised in India. Express your views.***

**Ans.** From 'Watergate' (USA) to Tehelka, to 'Cash for Questions' the invisible camera has cut short the political career of many a big-wig politicians and made their real faces visible to the people. No doubt, sting operations carried out by the media (both print and electronic) and others in public interest merit to be legalised so that their findings command due respect and recognition in the courts as well as in the perception of the people at large. The exposure of corrupt politicians and bureaucrats is the primary responsibility of not only the investigating agencies like the CBI and VB but also of the ever vigilant media, provided the operations are done not to settle personal scores but in the national interest.

Soaked in scams and scandals, the power brokers/wielders, whether politicians or bureaucrats or both, deserve to be thoroughly exposed and this onerous task can be performed only by persons of strong conviction and confidence. Since 'sting operations' tend to impinge upon the dubious dealings of powerful persons, they should be undertaken with utmost diligence and dexterity, coupled with objectivity, and not vendatta or vengeance.

Needless to reiterate that 'sting operations' not only play a major role in unearthing the nefarious designs and deeds of corrupt politicians and bureaucrats but also reaffirm the faith of the masses in a free and vibrant media. If the investigating agencies of the government can trap culprits, why can't the media be allowed to do so?