



NEWSLINES

[More Cities](#)

[Home](#) > [Mumbai](#) > [News](#)

Monday , May 22, 2006

NL ARCHIVE

Search by Date

[Page One](#) | [Talk](#) | [Tele Express](#) | [All Headlines](#)

SERVICES

- [Matrimonials](#)
- [Real People. Real Answers.](#)
- [Great deals on properties!](#)
- [New friendships, romance...](#)
- [send Gifts online](#)
- [Lowest Prices only on eBay.in!](#)
- [Personalised Predictions](#)

CHANNELS

- [Astrology](#)
- [Shopping](#)
- [Express Classifieds](#)
- [Express Estates](#)
- [Express Money](#)
- [Express Travel](#)
- GROUP SITES**
- [Expressindia](#)
- [The Indian Express](#)
- [The Financial Express](#)
- [Screen](#)
- [Kashmir Live](#)
- [Express Cricket](#)
- [Loksatta](#)
- [Lokprabha](#)
- [North American Edition \[Print\]](#)

COLUMNISTS

- [The Indian Express](#)
- [The Financial Express](#)

SUBSCRIPTIONS

- [Free Newsletter](#)
- [Wireless Express](#)

SYNDICATIONS

NEWS

AT CONFERENCE ON PRISON REFORMS, SUGGESTIONS INCLUDE IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

'Don't think of them as criminals'

[Swatee Kher](#)

Mumbai, May 21: All LLB students should undergo some kind of an internship, where they take up about 100 cases, providing legal aid to prisoners," said Superintendent of Police (Nagpur Central Jail) Vinod Shekdar.

Suggesting this as a solution for the lack of legal aid for prisoners—a major concern for several participants at the three-day National Conference on Prison Reforms and Prison Rights—Shekdar, who manages one of the oldest jails in the state also spoke on overcrowding in prisons and lack of police escorts.

Meanwhile, Ramon Magsaysay Award winner and former inspector general of Delhi's Tihar Jail Kiran Bedi emphasised the need for computerisation and use of technology for maintenance of records.

"Make use of technology. Use computers to store information. Also, cheap technology like fingerprinting and biometrics must be used," she advised.

Held at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, the conference saw non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and jail authorities from across the country discussing issues like lack of availability of legal aid to prisoners, health and sanitation problems, HIV/AIDS and issues of mental health, juveniles, minorities and violence in prisons.

"The problem of production of undertrials at courts is a large concern due to

Advertisement

Unimpressed
with marriage proposals from your aunty?
Find exactly who you are looking for...
[Search for free!](#)
shaadi.com
The smart way to get married!



the lack of police escorts,” said Shekdar, who has an equal number of convicts and undertrials in his prison, adding that non-production of undertrials led to overcrowding.

Maharashtra Deputy Inspector General (Prisons) Swati Sathe, speaking about problems faced by prison authorities said: “If anything goes wrong because of one decision taken by me, I stand to lose my job. Once I got a letter from an NGO asking to send dry fruits on a festival. I found out that the NGO was a front for a gangster.”

Defining the role of a prison superintendent, Bedi said: “You are a city manager, a municipal commissioner. Every prison is like a fort, you have to think that they are residents not criminals.”

“You are not exercising authority, but compassion and care,” she added. Citing an example, she spoke how a mobile feedback box (a locked box taken around the prison on a bicycle), implemented in the Tihar and Nagpur prisons, had become a feedback and communication box.

Bedi felt that jailors should take the help of NGOs and people for reform programmes. She also suggested one-to-one counselling for habitual criminals and asked officials to take a tough stand on corrupt officials.