

Three square meals for Rs 34: Here is why prisoners risk assault to seek better food

In less than a month, two incidents of violence in Maharashtra's prisons have left two dead, including one convict who had been allegedly assaulted by jail staff. A three-part series looks at the faultlines in the state's prisons and the denial of human rights behind bars

ZEESHAN SHAIKH & TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA
MUMBAI, JULY 11

ACCORDING TO many of her former cellmates, it was Manjula Shetye's complaint about a shortage of eggs and paav that cost the 35-year-old inmate her life inside the Byculla Women's Prison. On June 23, the 45-year-old convict serving the final few months of her sentence died after an assault allegedly by jail staff following a scuffle over food rations.

For most, it's hard to imagine staking life and personal safety for two eggs, but former prison inmates do not find it surprising at all that Shetye picked a grave fight over food.

In a place where dal is referred to as "pathar ke sanam" for the substantial number of stones found wading in it, and "rock hard" rotis are surreptitiously used by prisoners as fuel to light up small kitchen fires called "hundis" to spice up their notoriously low quality and bland diet, the longing for decent food afflicts almost every prisoner.

"Every day you should stand outside the prison gates and monitor the garbage that is strewn out. Almost 75 per cent of the garbage would comprise of rotis and rice that get thrown away because they are unpalatable," says Wahid Shaikh, a former undertrial who spent over eight years inside various jails in the city.

Clearly, access to good food is a distant dream for the 29,567 prisoners lodged in Maharashtra's jails. Data shows the Indian state spends as little as Rs 52.42 on every prisoner per day to arrange the three square meals prescribed in the diet charts of prison manuals. In 2015, Maharashtra spent Rs 34.22 per prisoner per day, the third lowest in the country. Only Goa (Rs 32.83) and Delhi (Rs 31.31) fared worse.

In fact, Maharashtra has historically spent smaller sums on prisoners' food than the national average. In 2000, the Indian average was around Rs 13.43 compared to Maharashtra's spending of Rs 10.33 per day.

Prisoners are served three times a day. They get breakfast at 7 am, lunch at 9 am and dinner by 3 pm. The food is prepared by a revolving team of 25 prisoners who work in two shifts rolling out nearly 18,000 chappatis in one day. As per the law, the food is supposed to be prepared under hygienic conditions under strict supervision of a committee headed by the jail superintendent, but the conditions do not meet even basic hygienic requirements in reality.

"If you see the place where food is cooked, I promise you will not touch that food again. From rats to insects, almost



MSHRC REPORT IN A MONTH

In 2016, the Maharashtra State Human Rights Commission (MSHRC) visited several prisons to submit a detailed report to the government on the issue of overcrowding, sanitation and how it has

affected prisoners' health. "We made several observations. Prisons face a wide range of issues. The report will be submitted in a month," said Justice S R Bannurmath, Chairperson, MSHRC.

everything can be found in the kitchen as well as the food. The workers who cook have been allotted a small room in the kitchen where they relieve themselves. Imagine your food being prepared where people piss and defecate," says Shaikh.

Over the last 15 years while the average spending on prison food has increased by 290 per cent from Rs 13.43 per prisoner per day to Rs 52.42 in 2015, the rise in Maharashtra has been only 195 per cent — from Rs 10.33 to Rs 34.22.

This mismatch led the Bombay High Court to take the Maharashtra government to task in 2017, directing it to appoint a three-member committee in each district to monitor prison food.

Not much has changed since the HC's observations. Irfan Shaikh, a former convict who completed his sentence in 2017, says food inside a prison is a powerful reminder of a prisoner's humanity and the person he used to be when outside. "The retributive system of our prisons ensures that a prisoner does not have access to any worldly pleasures. Even food is cooked in such a way that it does not taste like food, it merely serves the nutritional purpose," he says.

Only, the nutrition levels in Maharashtra's jail are shocking too.

"In prison, a prisoner's diet crashes significantly, lowering their immunity and intake of micronutrients. Stress levels are high. The latent TB bacteria in the body gets active. In a day, an infected prisoner may cough 50

to 100 times. The bacteria in droplets remains suspended in air in an enclosed area infecting other prisoners if the cell is poorly ventilated," says Dr Lalit Kumar Anand, senior medical officer at Sewri TB hospital. According to him, even jail staff is at the risk of developing TB infection due to the poor living conditions.

Data analysed by *The Indian Express* showed that prevalence of tuberculosis (TB) in Mumbai prisons is eight times higher, at an average 14 per 1,000 population, than in general population, which stands at 1.67 per 1,000 people. The Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP), which provides free TB treatment to patients, provided DOTs (Directly Observed Treatment, Short-Course) treatment to 24 TB prisoners in 2013, which increased to 26 in 2014 and 35 in 2015 at the Arthur Road prison. Apart from living conditions, nutrition levels are directly to blame for the high TB incidence in Mumbai's prisons.

The Model Prison Manual drafted by the Union Ministry for Home Affairs prescribes that a male prisoner should have an intake of 2,320 to 2,730 kilo calories (kcal) per day. For female prisoners, it is stipulated to be between 1,900 and 2,830 kcal/day.

Prison administration being a federal subject, every state has the right to decide on its food menu, provided it adheres to the nutritional requirements laid down by the prison manual. While prison manuals specify the exact weightage of pulses

Expenditure on prison food: Maharashtra in bottom three

A SAMPLE SCALE OF DAILY DIET FOR A PRISONER

Cereals (including millet)	600g
Pulses	100g
Vegetables	250g
Fish/meat/milk	100g or twice per week
Milk	50ml/curd
Grams	60g
Jaggery	20g
Oil	30g
Salt	30g
Onion	25g
Sugar	50g

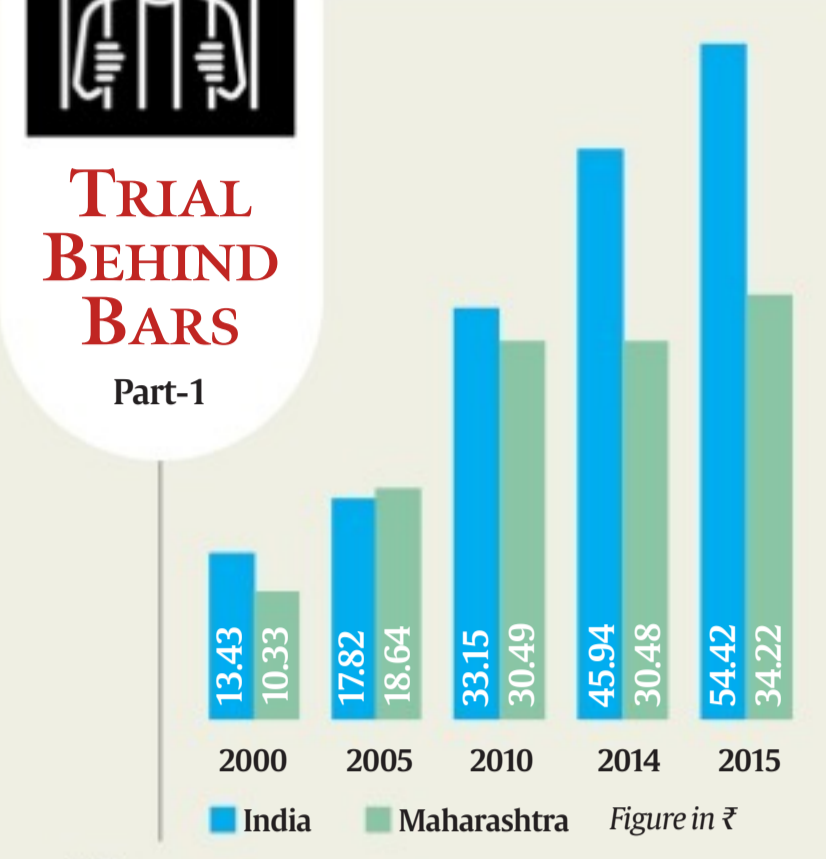
*A suitable diet may be prescribed according to local food habits



TRIAL BEHIND BARS

Part-1

AVERAGE SPEND FOR DAILY FOOD PER PRISONER



STATES THAT SPEND LOWEST ON JAIL FOOD PER DAY

Delhi: ₹ 31.31
Gujarat: ₹ 35.38
Maharashtra: ₹ 34.22
Goa: ₹ 32.83

Source: NCRB

STATES THAT SPEND HIGHEST ON JAIL FOOD PER DAY

J&K: ₹ 110.33
Nagaland: ₹ 139.22
Meghalaya: ₹ 99.07
Sikkim: ₹ 80.77
Karnataka: ₹ 76.76

and vegetables that a prisoner should get, the quality of food served leaves a lot to be desired.

"The food in prison parlance is called bhatta. It is watery and tasteless. There have been times where I have seen prisoners break down in frustration after having to eat those meals day after day," says a former convicted prisoner who spent time in various jails in Maharashtra.

Food accounts for nearly 60 per cent of the total money spent on prisoners in India. This also makes it one of the major expense heads, which is susceptible when officials decide to cut corners.

The only way that prisoners could have access to better food was through jail canteens. Every prisoner is allowed to receive a sum of Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,200 per month from family, which he or she could spend in the jail canteen. But this facility was shut down in Maharashtra around 2008. Prisoners can't buy food from the canteen any longer. The only time prisoners have access to outside food is during festival days where there is a provision of canteens selling food.

Prisoners also access food through the home cooked meal that certain prisoners are allowed to have on the directions of a court. Earlier, under the provisions of home cooked food, huge food containers would be slipped in by rich inmates to feed dozens of fellow inmates. Certain jails have now laid down rules that say an individual can't get more than 850 grams of home cooked food per day inside the prison.

Incidentally, barring

Northeast and Southern states, besides West Bengal and Jammu & Kashmir, non-vegetarian food is not given free to prisoners in any other state. Certain states have a provision of allowing certain prisoners to access non-vegetarian food from jail canteens on limited days in a year.

"The administration believes prisoners are sub human and do not have right to enjoy even basic facilities. My experience in prison was that whenever prisoners got access to decent food on certain special days, the entire day passed peacefully without any incident. It does not take much for a caged prisoner to go crazy. However, the days people had access to decent food even the looniest among us would be normal," recalls Shaikh.

As a direct consequence of poor nutrition, health problems are routine occurrences for prisoners. A recent survey of 24 sub-jails in Maharashtra by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) observed that "prisoners are not medically examined at the time of admission and there are no regular medical check-ups".

In Byculla jail, where the women inmates rioted to demand better food and living conditions following Shetye's death last month, almost all inmates suffer from skin infections. The two other most common ailments among the women inmates are TB and HIV. "Skin diseases are contagious in nature. In jail, as hygiene conditions are poor, this spreads rapidly as they use the common toilets and in some cases even share their soap and towels.

Almost all the inmates complain of this," says a senior official.

A former medical officer who was attached with the Arthur Road prison in 2016 says 300 prisoners visit the prison out-patient department on an average every day. "Of these, one-third would have skin infections. Most prisoners have rashes on their body for a range of reasons. Prisoners share the same bedsheets, do not wash their clothes often and share soap bars," he says. According to him, fungal infection, measles and herpes were most common. "There was usually a shortage of anti-fungal cream and tablets for skin infections. Since treatment usually got delayed, the infection would spread to other body parts," says the former medical officer.

With overcrowding and skin infections common, the medical officer says, prisoners need a skin specialist for regular consultation in jails. "This is not a life threatening disease. So, jail authority would not send prisoners to hospital for merely skin consultation. What we need is a regular consultant in the prison itself," he adds.

According to the CHRI report, "Conditions in the sub-jails are extremely unhygienic due to the lack of proper cleaning facilities, which exacerbates health challenges inside prisons. The cells are cleaned by inmates, who lack the necessary supply of phenol and water."

(With Rashmi Rajput)

TOMORROW: OVERCROWDING IN JAILS: NO SOLUTION IN SIGHT

'Say No to Drugs': Anti Narcotics Cell takes message to schools and colleges



KAJOL RUNWAL
MUMBAI, JULY 11

ONE MIGHT think that the Mumbai Police's Anti Narcotics Cell (ANC) is only about catching drug-peddlers and drug-traffickers. But these days, a team from the ANC has been spreading the message of 'Say No to Drugs' in schools and colleges in the city, reaching out to students to raise awareness and educate them about the harmful effects of drugs.

"We go to schools and colleges, and spread awareness about the ill-effects of drug-con-



This year, Inspector Santosh Bhalekar and his team have been to 11 schools and junior colleges. Express

sumption and addiction. We educate the students and make them more aware and alert," said Inspector Santosh Bhalekar, who has been involved in arranging these awareness programmes for a couple of years now.

This year, for well over a fortnight, Bhalekar and his team have been to 11 schools and junior colleges, including Siddharth College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Sant Gadge Maharaj College and Chikitsak Samuha Shirolkar High School, among others. The anti-

drug awareness session is conducted for high school, junior college and college students. These sessions begin with 'The Wrong Turn' — a short film which depicts how drug abuse cripples the life of its protagonist and is then followed by a talk delivered by a guest speaker to 150-200 students. This year, Bhalekar's team invited Ramesh Sangle, the founder of Miracle Foundation to share his personal journey — from being an addict to starting his own rehab in Virar.

"Most cases I deal with are of kids who belong to the 12-17 age group. In 10 years, I have worked with at least 50 students who have been victimised directly or indirectly by drug-peddlers," says Sangle. He tells students that they need to say 'no' and should not succumb to peer pressure.

"I knew very little about drugs. This session has opened my eyes and made me more alert," said Kajol Chawlikar, a Class 10 student at Chikitsak Samuha Shirolkar High School.

"The supply of drugs exists because of the demand created for it and we want to curb that demand. All five units of the ANC (Azad Maidan, Bandra, Worli, Ghatkopar and Kandivali) have conducted successful awareness sessions in more than 50 schools and colleges across Mumbai," said Shivdeep Lande, Deputy Commissioner of Police, ANC.

Have a comment or suggestion for Police Diary? Write to mumbai.newsline@expressindia.com with subject line: Police Diary

No evidence Salem was part of 1993 conspiracy: lawyer

Mumbai: Arguing before the special TADA court here Tuesday, the lawyer of extradited gangster Abu Salem said his client was not a part of the conspiracy that led to the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts. The court had last month convicted Salem and five others in the case. The court is now hearing arguments on the quantum of sentence. Seeking a lesser punishment for his client, Salem's lawyer

Sudeep Passbola said there was no evidence that Salem was a part of the conspiracy, nor was there any evidence that he attended the meetings where the blasts were plotted. There was nothing to show that he was even in contact with the masterminds of the conspiracy, said Passbola, adding: "Salem played a very limited role". The arguments will continue Wednesday. PTI

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Sr. No.	District	Industrial Area	Total Area in H.A.	No. of Plots
1	Nagpur	Umred	71.47	8
2	Bhandara	Pauni (mini)	1.22	5

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Helpline No. : 8422944043 During working Days (Morning 11.00 to 5.00 P.M.)
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MIDC, Mumbai - 93

BYCULLA JAIL INMATE'S DEATH

Initial probe of CCTV footage doesn't show sexual assault: Police

MOHAMED THAYER
MUMBAI, JULY 11

THE MUMBAI Police Crime Branch investigating the alleged murder of Byculla jail inmate Manjula Shetye has not found any evidence of prison guards sexually assaulting her in the CCTV footage received from the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL).

The Crime Branch had written to the FSL seeking specific footage from the CCTV cameras at the Byculla prison for preliminary investigations. The footage from two channels of cameras inside the prison - vital to the probe since it covers the area where the incident took place - does not show any instance of sexual assault as alleged by Shetye's cell mate Maryam Shaikh, an officer claimed. The CCTV camera footage provided so far, however, does not cover the entire prison premises.

An officer linked to the probe said, "Normally FSL extracts the entire footage from a hard disk and sends it to us after confirming if it is genuine. However, in this case, we sent them a letter asking for footage from June 23 and June 24 on an urgent basis." While the CCTV and hard disks were damaged, the FSL managed to get a mirror image and sent the footage asked by the Crime Branch. "We went through the footage from two camera channels of the Network Video Recorder (NVR) of the prison provided by FSL. No sexual assault is seen in any of the footage so far," said the officer, who didn't wish to be named. The officer said the footage establishes the role of the six accused jailors but declined to provide details.

A senior Crime Branch officer said, "The entire prison area is not covered by CCTV cameras. Also, currently we have just got a preliminary report. We are awaiting the final report from FSL that will include a certified copy of the entire CCTV footage. As of now, it would be too early to rule out anything."

Shetye's cell mate Shaikh, based on whose statement an FIR was registered at the Nagpada police station, had said

The entire prison area is not covered by CCTV cameras. Also, currently we have just got a preliminary report. We are awaiting the final report from FSL that will include a certified copy of the entire CCTV footage. As of now, it would be too early to rule out anything"

A CRIME BRANCH OFFICIAL

that Shetye was assaulted and later taken to her own barracks, with the jail guards dragging her by the hair. She had also alleged that the six guards had also inserted a stick inside her private parts. In the FIR registered at the Nagpada police station, the police had not added provisions relating to sexual assault. Later, the postmortem report of Shetye did not point to any injuries to her private parts. The police had been relying on the CCTV footage to see if any sexual assault was captured.

A senior officer said, "Currently, we are in the process of recording the statements of the inmates. We are also verifying if the guards had called up anyone outside the prison in the time between Shetye was admitted to the hospital and when she died. It seems that trouble was brewing up between Shetye and the prison guards and what happened on June 22 was just the trigger. We are trying to get to the root of the issue."

The incident took place between June 23 and 24 when Shetye was allegedly beaten to death by six prison guards. Nearly 291 Byculla prison inmates then started protesting, and moved to prison terrace after breaking the lock and lit a bonfire inside the prison. Later, the Nagpada police registered a case of murder against the six jail guards and a case of rioting against the prison inmates. The murder case was transferred to the Mumbai Crime Branch, which now has the custody of the six accused.

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30 women MPs to meet Byculla prison inmates

RAHUL TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, JULY 11

A 30-MEMBER panel of women MPs will meet Mumbai's Byculla prison inmates on July 13 and 14 in connection with recent rioting there. Murder accused media executive Indrani Mukerjea had alleged that jail guards had assaulted her during the riot inside Byculla Women's Prison.

BJP MP Bijoya Chakravarty, who would lead the MPs, said that they want to see the condition of the jail and the condition under which inmates are staying. "We will seek a report from the state government."

The panel, which includes DMK's Kanimozhi, TMC's Satabdi Roy and NCP's Supriya Sule, will talk to prison authori-

ties. The MPs committee for empowerment of women is likely to prepare a report on women in detention and access to justice based on their interaction. Officials said that since prisons are a state subject, the panel can only make recommendations. Officials from the Union home ministry and state prisons department are also likely to be present during the interaction.

Mukerjea, who is in jail since 2015 for the alleged murder of her daughter, Sheena Bora, has submitted a complaint alleging that the jail's superintendent threatened her with sexual assault if she spoke out against inmate Manjula Shetye's death that led to the rioting. A jailer and five guards have been arrested for alleged custodial killing of Shetye, who was a murder convict.



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NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the 110th Annual General Meeting ('AGM') of the Members of the Company will be held on Tuesday, August 8, 2017 at 3:00 p.m. (IST) at the Birla Matushri Sabhagar, 19, Sir Vithaldas Thackersey Marg, Mumbai - 400 020.

Notice is also hereby given pursuant to Section 91 of the Companies Act, 2013, that, the Register of Members & Share Transfer Books of the Company for Ordinary (equity) Shares will remain closed from Saturday, July 22, 2017 to Tuesday, August 8, 2017 (both days inclusive) for the purpose of AGM and payment of dividend.

The dividend of Rs. 10/- per Ordinary (equity) Shares of Rs. 10/- each, as recommended by the Board of Directors, if declared at the AGM, will be paid on and from Thursday, August 10, 2017 to those shareholders whose names appear in the Register of Members after giving effect to valid transfers in respect of transfer requests lodged with the Company on or before Friday, July 21, 2017. In respect of Ordinary (equity) Shares held in electronic form, the dividend will be paid to the beneficial owners of shares as at the end of business hours on Friday, July 21, 2017, as per details furnished by the Depositories for this purpose.

Tata Steel Limited
Sd/-
Parvathesam K
Company Secretary

July 11, 2017
Mumbai

TATA STEEL