Polity & Governance · GS - II

Examine the constitutional and administrative responsibilities of the State in ensuring the safety, dignity and rights of undertrial prisoners in India.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 09/11/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Article 21, presumption of innocence, prison administration under State List, custodial safety, overcrowding, legal aid, judicial oversight, prison reforms and accountability.

Model Answer

Introduction

Undertrial prisoners are individuals awaiting the conclusion of their criminal trials. Although accused of offences, they retain fundamental rights and are entitled to humane treatment.

Constitutional Responsibilities

Article 21 guarantees the right to life and personal liberty to every person, including prisoners. The presumption of innocence and access to fair trial are essential safeguards. Free legal aid under Article 39A supports access to justice.

Administrative Responsibilities

Prisons fall under the State List, making State governments primarily responsible for prison administration. Authorities must:

- Ensure protection against threats, violence and custodial abuse.
- Provide adequate healthcare, sanitation and humane living conditions.
- Prevent unnecessary detention and facilitate timely trials.

- Maintain effective grievance-redressal and security mechanisms.

Role of Judiciary and Reforms

Courts monitor prison conditions and can direct corrective action. Independent inspections, accountability of prison officials, legal aid and implementation of modern prison-management standards are necessary.

Conclusion

Prisoners do not lose their constitutional dignity upon detention. Ensuring their safety is essential to uphold the rule of law and a humane criminal justice system.

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