Polity & Governance · GS - II

Examine the constitutional and human rights obligations of the state towards persons in judicial custody. Discuss the institutional measures required to ensure adequate healthcare, humane treatment and accountability within prison systems.

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

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Article 21, prisoners' rights, right to health, custodial dignity, Nelson Mandela Rules, judicial oversight, prison administration, medical infrastructure, independent inspections, custodial accountability, prison reforms.

Model Answer

Introduction

Imprisonment restricts personal liberty through lawful authority but does not eliminate an individual's fundamental human rights. The state has a responsibility to ensure humane treatment and adequate healthcare for all persons in custody.

Constitutional and Human Rights Framework

- **Article 21:** The right to life and personal liberty protects prisoners against arbitrary or inhuman treatment.
- **Judicial safeguards:** Courts can intervene where custodial conditions violate constitutional rights or undermine fair legal procedures.

- **International standards:** The Nelson Mandela Rules emphasise healthcare, dignity and protection against torture and degrading treatment.

Institutional Challenges

Overcrowding, inadequate medical facilities, shortages of trained personnel and delayed access to specialist treatment weaken prison healthcare. Limited transparency and inadequate grievance mechanisms can also undermine accountability.

Reform Measures

States should strengthen prison hospitals, ensure regular medical examinations and establish referral systems with public healthcare institutions. Independent inspections, accessible complaint mechanisms and judicial monitoring can improve accountability. Mental healthcare and emergency medical services must receive particular attention.

Conclusion

A humane prison system is an essential component of constitutional governance. Protecting prisoners' dignity and health strengthens the rule of law and reflects the state's commitment to justice.

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