

Inmates work in the bakery section of Tihar Jail in New Delhi.



PRODUCTIVE IN PRISON

Indian prisoners are producing goods of considerable value, earning the state handsome revenue, while acquiring vocational skills that will stand them in good stead when they rejoin civil society.

By **RAMESH CHAKRAPANI**

Being behind bars is no reason to stop leading a productive life, or so the Indian prison system believes, given the latest data from the National Crime Records Bureau under the Ministry of Home Affairs for the year 2013. Demolishing the widely held misconception that prison inmates are just a burden on the nation and its resources, the data show that the inmates, who numbered 411,992 at the end of the year (396,259 in the States and 15,733 in Union Territories), produced goods worth Rs.144.33 crore. The inmates include convicts, undertrials and detainees.

Delhi topped the list with a total

value of Rs.27.93 crore, closely followed by Kerala with Rs.25.09 crore. However, Kerala recorded a much greater value of goods produced per inmate per annum, at Rs.33,938, since the total revenue was generated by 7,395 inmates, compared with Delhi's 13,552. In fact, Kerala's inmate productivity was the highest in the country, followed by Delhi (Rs.20,609). Among States that recorded inmate productivity of at least Rs.2,000, Gujarat was next with Rs.9,327, followed by Tamil Nadu (Rs.8,787), Maharashtra (Rs.4,555), Bihar (Rs.4,553), Andhra Pradesh (Rs.4,424) and Chhattisgarh (Rs.2,200). Jharkhand, Karnataka,

Punjab and Uttar Pradesh all recorded a productivity below Rs.2,000, while the figure was even worse, below Rs.1,000, for Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan. Significantly, these seven States accounted for more than 50 per cent of all prison inmates in the country.

Delhi and 14 States garnered more than Rs.1 crore each during the year under review, with Bihar (Rs.14.23 crore), Tamil Nadu (Rs.12.93 crore), Maharashtra (Rs.12.48 crore), Gujarat (Rs.11.24 crore) and Uttar Pradesh (Rs.10.57 crore) accounting for the lion's share of revenue. Figures were available only for undivided Andhra Pradesh, which clocked Rs.6.33 crore during the year, followed by Chhattisgarh (Rs.3.48 crore), Punjab (Rs.3.97 crore), Jharkhand (Rs.3.46 crore), Madhya Pradesh (Rs.2.97 crore), Karnataka (Rs.2.59 crore), Haryana (Rs.1.07 crore), and Rajasthan (Rs.1.03 crore).

NUMBER OF CONVICTS BY GENDER



State	Male	Female	Total
Uttar Pradesh	24,347	963	25,310
Madhya Pradesh	16,353	516	16,869
Punjab	8,448	488	8,936
Maharashtra	7,604	437	8,041
Haryana	6,665	355	7,020
Chhattisgarh	6,281	305	6,586
Rajasthan	5,825	219	6,044
Tamil Nadu	4,486	162	4,648
Andhra Pradesh	4,309	289	4,598
Bihar	4,357	123	4,480
Karnataka	4,220	198	4,418
Jharkhand	4,004	158	4,162
Delhi	3,247	141	3,388
Gujarat	3,642	166	3,808
Kerala	2,724	48	2,772



Making incense sticks at the Sabarmati Central Jail in Ahmedabad.

West Bengal, which had a significantly high inmate population of 22,778, earned a shockingly low amount of Rs.57 lakh, which shows that there is enormous room for improvement in the state of affairs there.

The inmates, who bring in crores in revenue, are not expected to work for free. They are paid a daily wage according to skill level—skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled—and in 2013, Puducherry paid the highest wages in the country—Rs.170 for skilled work, Rs.160 for semi-skilled inmates and Rs.150 for unskilled labour. Among the top 15 earners, Bihar was the best paying State, with daily wages fixed at Rs.121 for skilled work, Rs.87 for semi-skilled inmates and Rs.80 for unskilled labour. Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala each paid at least Rs.50 for skilled workers. Punjab, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh were the worst paymasters, paying less than Rs.40 for any kind of work. Low-paying States would do well to redistribute a greater portion of their revenue to the inmates to better equip them financially when they leave the system and return to civil life.

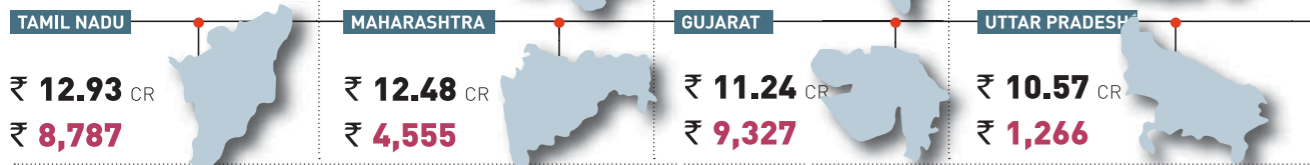
Data on the composition of convicts according to caste, such as Scheduled Caste (S.C.), Scheduled Tribe (S.T.), Other Backward Classes (OBC) and others show that Uttar Pradesh ranked first in the number of S.C. convicts with 5,845, followed by Punjab (3,612), and Madhya Pradesh (3,314). Haryana, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat each had over 1,000 convicts belonging to S.C. communities. A religion-wise breakdown of convicts showed that Hindus, not surprisingly, constituted the majority in most of the top earning States, with the exception of Punjab, where they were vastly outnumbered by Sikhs. Muslim convicts accounted for a sizeable percentage of the total in Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.

2013 DAILY WAGES (IN RUPEES)

State	Skilled	Semi-skilled	Unskilled
Bihar	121	87	80
Tamil Nadu	100	80	60
Delhi	99	81	70
Karnataka	90	80	70
Andhra Pradesh	70	50	30
Madhya Pradesh	55	0	50
Kerala	53	35	21
Jharkhand	46	28	14
Haryana	40	25	20
Maharashtra	40	35	25
Rajasthan	40	30	20
Uttar Pradesh	40	30	25
Punjab	35	30	25
Gujarat	35	30	25
Chhattisgarh	30	0	25

REVENUE AND PRODUCTIVITY

Total ₹ 144.33 crore



Value of goods produced by inmates in 2013 Value of goods produced per inmate per annum