



# International Centre for Prison Studies

## ICPS NEWS DIGEST

### 6<sup>th</sup> Edition – November/December 2011

Welcome to the sixth edition of the ICPS News Digest, a selection of news items from around the world on prison and the use of imprisonment. The articles have mainly been selected for their relevance to current debates in the UK. The Digest is produced bi-monthly and this issue covers the period from 1 November to 31 December 2011. Please click on the blue highlighted words to access the news reports.

#### **Prison populations**

Overcrowding continues to lead to inhuman and degrading treatment of prisoners in many countries. In Chandigarh, [India](#), a high level jail reform committee reported that there are 1,119 prisoners being held in Rohtak jail when the jail has capacity for only 370 prisoners, Sonipat jail has 815 prisoners but has capacity for 363 and Narnaul jail has capacity for 292 prisoners and is holding 412. The committee said “In all these overcrowded jails, prisoners are treated as human garbage living in most pitiable unhygienic conditions.” Prisoners are forced to sleep on verandas and on the floor between berths. Prisoners also have to sleep on mattresses on the floor in Cork Prison, [Ireland](#), due to overcrowding.

In British Columbia and Manitoba, [Canada](#), overcrowding means federal prisons are forcing some prisoners to be double bunked in segregation cells, a practice that was supposed to have been abolished for everything but extreme emergency situations a decade ago. The Office of the Correctional Investigator says double bunking in segregation is a violation of government policy, the Charter of Rights and international human rights standards. Overcrowding at the women’s prison in Kitchener, [Ontario](#), means that a number of women have been forced to double bunk in units reserved for family visits. The units, designed for prisoners to spend up to three days with a spouse or family members, are built to house only one prisoner and her loved ones but are currently holding eight prisoners in each room.

An [Australian](#) Capital Territory Legislative Assembly committee has been told that a lack of resources and space in Canberra's Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) means some prisoners who need to be separated from other groups are unable to attend programmes and activities. An official prison visitor told the committee that the situation in the crisis unit is particularly concerning. "By law they must have one hour of exercise so they're allowed out of their cell. But guess what? They go into a corridor and walk up and down there. There is a tiny, very small area [outside] but it's kind of meshed and it's enclosed. I suppose it's like caged chooks."

The [Bulgarian](#) Helsinki Committee has reported that the overcrowding of prisons in the country's largest cities remains a huge problem, triggering a number of human rights abuses. During the Committee's last visit to the Burgas jail they found 866 prisoners in a facility designed for 371. There were 40 beds in a 55 square metre cell; beds were often piled on top of each other while some prisoners slept on mats on the floor. There were no toilets in the cells and buckets were used instead. Similar conditions were found in the Varna jail where cells of 25 square metres held 15 prisoners, there was poor lighting and the cells were dirty.

Prisons across [Nepal](#) have seen a significant surge in the number of prisoners they hold, posing a serious challenge to prison management. The number of prisoners has doubled in the past ten years causing overcrowding and forcing prisoners to live in inhuman conditions. There were 12,875 prisoners in the country in December 2011, while the capacity of the prison system is only 6,416. Every space available in the prisons is used and other prisoners are held in makeshift camps.

The President of [Croatia](#) has described the country's prisons as overcrowded but said that great effort is made to make the prisons functional even in difficult circumstances. Initiatives to reduce the overcrowding include the opening of a new 420 prison in Glina, and a new law that aims to replace short-term jail sentences with community work.

A study carried out by the Ombudsman's office in [Peru](#) has found that as of July 2011, the country's prison population stood at 48,858, despite the prisons only being designed to hold 28,689 prisoners, meaning that the prisons are 70 percent overcrowded. The report found that there are only 1,050 prison guards working in the whole system.

The [Nigerian](#) Federal Government has again emphasised the urgent need to decongest prisons across the country. The Minister of Justice stated that statistics revealed that over 70 percent of the prison population are Awaiting Trial persons and said the government would vigorously pursue measures to address this issue, stating that "this figure is indefensible and must not be allowed to persist as it reflects negatively on our entire criminal justice system, both within and outside the country."

[Italy](#)'s new Justice Minister has announced plans to release thousands of prisoners in an attempt to ease overcrowding and save money. The plan would release some 3,300 prisoners with 18 months or less to serve on their sentences. The released prisoners would serve the remainder of their sentence under house arrest.

In [Russia](#) the Prison Service has announced that the number of people in pre-trial detention has dropped significantly over the last ten years. An official said that pre-trial prisons are now only 90.3 percent full, while back in 2001 they were 200 percent full. The trend is being linked with President Medvedev's radical reform of the judicial system which was launched three years ago.

The number of people in [Australian](#) jails has dropped for the first time in a decade. There were 29,106 adult prisoners as of June 30<sup>th</sup> 2011, with just three states contributing to the national decrease – New South Wales (NSW), Queensland and Western Australia. The Australian Bureau of Statistics said the decrease in the national prisoner population was primarily driven by the decline in NSW which has reduced its prisoner numbers by eight percent over the last decade.

[Canada](#)'s Correctional Investigator Howard Sapers has expressed concern in his annual report about the growing number of over 50 year olds in the country's prisons. About 20 percent of the 14,000 federal prisoners are 50 years and older, an increase of over 50 percent in the last decade. Mr Sapers says the government is ill-equipped to handle the accessibility and health and safety issues associated with aging, saying that "some aging offenders find it difficult to maintain everyday essential routines such as eating, bathing, dressing and meeting their hygiene requirement." He has called for prison design and regimes to be adapted to meet the needs of the older population, and for prison staff to be better trained to be able to handle the needs of this group. The [Canadian](#) Correctional Investigator has also launched an inquiry into a 50 percent spike in the proportion of black prisoners filling federal jails over the last ten years. Most of them are in Ontario, where 20 percent of the entire federal prison population of 14,312 prisoners is black. Black people make up around 2.5 percent of Canada's population.

In Queensland, [Australia](#), the State Government has released the Indigenous Justice Just Futures Strategy which aims to tackle what it says are the underlying causes of indigenous crime – poverty, unemployment and alcohol and drug abuse. Indigenous people are almost 12 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous people.

## Health

In [New Zealand](#) the Department of Corrections has enlisted clinical and cultural experts to support clinical leadership of the healthcare services provided in prisons. The committee will meet face-to-face four times a year and will have monthly teleconferences. The members will look at such issues as the effectiveness of prison healthcare services, staff training and development, clinical safety and information and knowledge management.

[Switzerland](#)'s first psychiatric unit for young people in trouble with the law has opened in Basel to treat serious cases from German-speaking parts of the country. The unit has space and facilities for 12 people and the regime involves labour intensive therapy. The supervision includes social workers and carers as well as medical and psychiatric specialists.

In Karachi, [Pakistan](#), 80 prisoners have tested positive for HIV/AIDS in a special screening campaign launched by Sindh Aids Control Programme (SACP) following a directive from the

Sindh High Court. Around 1900 prisoners were screened and those who tested positive are being treated. In Lahore a petition has been filed in the High Court alleging misuse of World Bank funds given to the [Punjab](#) government for the treatment of prisoners suffering from tuberculosis (TB) in the state's jails. The NGO the Helms Foundation alleges that the funds have been misused by the government, the jail authorities and the Health Department as the health conditions of the prisoners were miserable and no improvement could be seen.

In [Uganda](#) the Medical Officer in charge of Luzira Upper prison has called on the Government to allocate more funds from the prison's health budget in order to reduce HIV/AIDS infections among prisoners. According to the medical personnel HIV prevalence is still high because prisoners share razor blades and needles. 333 out of the 2,575 prisoners at Luzira Upper prison are living with HIV/AIDS, of which 178 access antiretroviral medicine.

A survey in [Zambia](#) has revealed that 91 out of the 257 prisoners who underwent voluntary testing and counselling at Kamfinsa State Prison tested positive for HIV. A spokesman said "In our prisons the number of HIV positive people doubles that of the outside communities. What is worrying is that the affected age group is between 24 and 44 years, which is our most productive group."

[Researchers](#) at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Union World Conference on Lung Health have reported that innovative TB control programmes in prisons have reduced the prevalence of TB. The researchers cited the examples of Azerbaijan and Tanzania where TB control and treatment initiatives are being implemented.

In [Australia](#), Queensland's coroner has called for prisons to overhaul their approach to hepatitis infections following the death in custody of an Aboriginal teenager. The coroner found that the prisoner had tested positive for hepatitis B and C but medical staff had elected not to treat him with expensive antivirals because, as a remand prisoner, he would be less likely to complete the treatment.

In the [US](#), HIV positive prisoners are suing the state of Ohio saying they were harassed and threatened after their medical records were released to the general prison population. The lawsuit alleges that prison officials at the Mansfield Correctional Institution left a record of prisoners being treated for HIV in a location where it could be released to other prisoners. The Ohio Department of Corrections is investigating.

## **Treatment of prisoners**

Conditions in prisons in many countries continue to give cause for concern. Female prisoners at Lusaka Central Prison in [Zambia](#) have complained of deplorable and harsh living conditions in their cells. One prisoner said "In the five years that I have been here, I have never sat on a chair and those of us that seem fat are actually not fat but swollen. We are malnourished." Particular concern was expressed about the treatment of pregnant women. In response the Deputy Minister of Community Development, Mother and Child Health said her Ministry will liaise with the Ministry of Home Affairs to chart ways of addressing the challenges being faced by prisons and other detention centres in the country.

The [Irish](#) Prison Service has been strongly criticised in a visiting committee report for forcing women prisoners to strip naked to be searched for drugs in the presence of male prison officers. The report also highlights the case of a woman whose human rights were violated when she was forcibly removed from the prison, as well as other instances where female prisoners were denied toothbrushes and clean underwear.

The Centre for Victims of Torture in [Nepal](#) has warned that the current conditions of detention in the country's jails do not respect the prisoners' fundamental rights and amount to inhuman and degrading treatment. The Centre's recent fact sheet, based on a study of seven prisons, showed that 74 percent of those detained had been tortured during police interrogation and most of them were found to be living in inhuman conditions. Most prisons are overcrowded and prisoners are kept in unhygienic conditions and are denied access to basic services.

A year after a fire at the San Miguel Prison in Santiago, [Chile](#), left 81 prisoners dead and 14 others in critical condition, reform legislation has made little progress through Congress. Three months after the fire the Government announced a series of measures to confront the issue of overcrowding, including a bill that would allow some non-violent offenders to exchange jail time for community service, which would have benefitted some 5,000 prisoners. However the Senate still has not approved the final draft of the legislation. The lack of progress in this area was also criticised in the Chilean National Institute of Human Rights' [annual report](#).

In New South Wales, [Australia](#), a coroner has found authorities failed in their duty of care to three men who committed suicide at Sydney's Villawood Immigration Detention Centre in the space of three months. The coroner said that in all three deaths "some of the actions of some of the staff were careless, ignorant or both, and communications were sadly lacking," and found that staff often ignored policies and procedures to deal with potential cases of self-harm. The coroner criticised the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, the Centre's operator Serco and health services contractor International Health and Medical Services.

Law enforcement officials in [Ukraine](#) face professional misconduct sanctions after the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) highlighted concerns about the conditions and treatment of detainees in the country. The report states "This relates in particular to the treatment of persons detained by law enforcement agencies (a substantial number of allegations of police ill-treatment were heard during the visit), the situation in pre-trial establishments (notably at Kyiv SIZO where deplorable material conditions were observed) and the conditions under which life-sentenced prisoners serve their sentences (impoverished regime of activities, excessive security arrangements, severe restrictions on contact with the outside world etc)."

The CPT has also published a report on its visit to [Kosovo](#) in which it expressed concern about the over-familiarity between staff and prisoners in Dubrava prison which were "indicative of a climate of favouritism." A Kosovan lawyer explained that due to logistical issues guards routinely work in prisons where relatives are prisoners. The CPT called upon

the relevant authorities to “take decisive action to combat the phenomena of corruption and favouritism in all penitentiary establishments in Kosovo.”

Prisoners in Grootvlei Prison outside Bloemfontein, [South Africa](#), have been striking and refusing to go to their court appearances because of unhappiness with overcrowding, corruption among magistrates and prosecutors and other issues. The Acting Area Commissioner confirmed that the facility is overcrowded, an issue which they are addressing, but could not comment on the allegations of corruption as investigations had to be instituted.

A top prison official says the demands of hundreds of protesting prisoners across [Kyrgyzstan](#) are being addressed and changes are being made. He said that the country’s penitentiaries have started receiving medical supplies, visits by friends and relatives of prisoners are being simplified and steps have been made to start improving living conditions in correctional institutions.

The [Ghanaian](#) government has tripled the amount of money to be spent per day on providing meals to prisoners. The Minister of the Interior explained that based on the advice of experts the new amount would be able to provide “decent” three square meals a day and would improve the health of the prisoners.

The [Zimbabwean](#) Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Justice, Legal, Constitutional and Parliamentary Affairs has said the withdrawal of the International Committee of the Red Cross from providing meals for prisoners has severely compromised the operations of the Prison Service as the government cannot adequately provide the prisoners with food. To alleviate the dire food situation the committee recommended there was a need to equip the Prison Services with necessary farming implements so that they can provide for their own food.

Conditions in women’s prisons and services offered to women prisoners in [Lebanon](#) have improved considerably in the past ten years but there is still “a lot of work to do” according to a newly released “Guide for Working in Women’s Prisons in Lebanon.” The Guide aims to help those wishing to implement projects in women’s prisons by providing general information on rights of prisoners in the country, as well as a 1999 – 2010 comparative study on the situation of women in prison.

In [Venezuela](#) the Minister for Penitentiary Services is visiting every prison in the country in order to assess living conditions and carry out a registration of prisoners – a move which the minister hopes will be the first step in humanising the nation’s penitentiary centres and addressing the country’s problem with delays in the judicial system.

A report suggests [China](#) has made progress in protecting the human rights of prisoners. The Ministry of Justice has rewritten the national code of conduct for prisoners, eliminating a ban on homosexuality and other lifestyles and practices not previously allowed in prisons. Prisoners will not be forced to squat with both hands crossed behind their heads, a practice that is commonly used to demoralise prisoners who are entering prison for the first time. Women prisoners are now allowed to keep their hair dyed, which, according to the head of

the Human Rights Office at the Ministry, is “a minor detail but with a great significance to respect for human rights.”

## **Prison violence**

Prisoners in Gilgit, [Pakistan](#), started a riot and injured a magistrate after a blanket ban on cell phones in the sub-jail was introduced. Prisoners smashed an empty teacup on a magistrate’s head when he tried to conduct a body search of prisoners suspected of illegally using cell phones in the prison. Prisoners also set fire to furniture and blocked police reinforcements from gaining access to the jail for over two hours. In [Argentina](#) a group of prisoners from the number 29 prison in La Plata rioted and held a prison guard hostage. It was reported that the prisoners were demanding better living conditions. The situation was eventually controlled and no-one was hurt.

An NGO in [Venezuela](#) reported that by November 2011 the number of prisoners killed in custody had surpassed the total for 2010. The Venezuelan Prison Observatory, a non-governmental organisation that monitors conditions and treatment in the country’s penitentiary system, reported that 457 prisoners had been killed and 1,061 seriously wounded while in custody up to that date. At the beginning of November prisoners rioting at a jail in the city of [San Cristobel](#) killed eight other prisoners and took four police officers hostage. The State Police Chief said the prisoners resorted to violence to protest against long delays that have prevented their cases from being heard in court.

In [New Zealand](#) a Corrections Department report revealed that prisoner attacks on guards and other prisoners have nearly doubled in five years. Forty eight prisoners were beaten or sexually assaulted by other prisoners in 2010/11 compared to 27 such incidents in 2006/07. A criminology professor from Canterbury University said the rise in attacks is the result of increasing overcrowding in prisons, saying that a rise in double bunking, increased lock-up hours and reduced rehabilitation programmes can all add to tensions. However a Corrections spokesman said the prisons are safe and that violence has decreased dramatically since the 1990s.

Four prison officials in central [Kazakhstan](#) may face trial in connection with the death of a prisoner whose body showed numerous signs of abuse and torture. A court in Qaraghandy, the regional capital, ruled that four penitentiary officers should be arrested as suspects in the case.

In the [US](#) allegations of abuse and other wrongdoing have sparked a federal investigation of Alabama’s state prison system. The investigation stems from Ventress Correctional Facility in Barbour County where a prison guard was accused of fatally beating a prisoner to death in 2010, but civil rights groups who have lobbied for federal intervention claim Alabama’s prison system has fostered a culture of violence and abuse by prison guards against prisoners at facilities across the state. The Alabama Department of Corrections confirmed that it is cooperating with the Justice Department.

[Puerto Rico](#)’s justice secretary has opened a criminal investigation against two prison guards who were escorting eight prisoners who drowned while shackled in a van which was



covered by floodwaters. A witness said the prisoners died because the guards refused to unlock the van for fear that the prisoners would escape.

Prison activists in [South Africa](#) have said the country urgently needs laws that criminalise torture in its penal system if it is to prevent the type of abuses it was chastised for by the United Nations Human Rights Committee. Currently the Correctional Services Act does not refer directly to a prohibition on torture or ill-treatment. The use of equipment such as electro-shock belts, stun shields, stun batons and leg irons has been criticised by anti-torture activists.

## **Developments in rehabilitation**

High security prisoners in Tihar Prison, [India](#), will be permitted for the first time to take part in the 'Tihar Olympics,' the annual inter-jail sports tournament. According to Tihar Prison authorities the move is part of the rehabilitation and reformation programme run across all the jails which make up Tihar Prison. In [Sabarmati](#) Central Jail authorities are training some 40 prisoners to form a band. One of the aims of the band training is to enable prisoners to learn skills that may help them in the rehabilitation process. In [Poojapura](#) Central Prison prisoners are making chappatis to be sold at market. The prisoners make the dough which is then put through a chappati-making machine. The machine can produce up to 20,000 chappatis a day.

In Ras Al Khaimah Central Prison in the [United Arab Emirates](#) prisoners can put their time to good use by revealing hidden artistic talents. Murals adorn every wall as prisoners are encouraged to paint their cells and corridors. Prisoners also make chairs, tables, mirrors, traditional wooden mandos and even model ships.

Prisoners from Mangaung Correctional Centre in [South Africa](#) worked to transform the waiting area at the Tshepong Victim Support Centre into a colourful room with bright artwork. The prisoners repainted the room and manufactured new furniture including cupboards and couches.

In Sindh Province, [Pakistan](#), the Sindh Education Foundation has launched the Jail School Project for the juvenile prisoners at the Central Jail, Sukkur. The project aims to provide a proper educational curriculum inside the prison, and will provide facilities including school bags and books for the children.

In [Estonia](#) prisoners are paid to produce t-shirts, bags and accessories which are then sold online and through stockists in London, Denmark, Finland, Belgium and the Netherlands. The work aims to provide hope and rehabilitation to the prisoners, and fifty percent of all profit is donated to Estonian NGOs benefitting orphanages and the homeless.

In [Dubai](#) the Awqaf and Minors Affairs Foundation (AMAF) has donated Dh191,000 to the General Department of Punitive and Correctional Establishments of the Dubai Police to encourage well behaved prisoners during their jail terms and to help them perform Haj next year. The Foundation believes that Haj will help the prisoners to reintegrate into the mainstream and to start anew.



The community rehabilitation programme for soon to be released prisoners in Kajang, [Malaysia](#), has been hailed a success with a zero relapse rate so far. The prisoners, placed at five army camps during the programme, have learnt entrepreneurship and vocational skills through undertaking activities such as fish rearing and chilli planting. The prisoners are encouraged to use the skills they have learnt to start businesses once released from prison.

Prisoners participating in a yam improvement project at the Prison Farm Centre in Elele, [Nigeria](#), are gaining skills on how better to cultivate the tuber crop. The partner organisations implementing the project intend to give participating prisoners healthy seed yam to start yam production when they leave prison. Researchers say that the success of the project will pave the way for similar projects across the country along the yam growing belt.

Prisoners at the New Bilibid Prison in the [Philippines](#) have produced a Christmas video with popular male singing group Angelos. The music video has three songs with Angelos and another three sung by the Bilibid Prison College Guild alone. The activity seeks to help change the image of the prison system and stress its rehabilitative aspect.

In Perth, Western [Australia](#), Noongar radio's 'Inside Out' programme helps to provide a link between prisoners and their families. The four hour music request programme airs every Sunday night and prisoners can formally request songs to be dedicated to their friends and families by applying to prison staff, who check them through security before passing them on to the show. Family and friends in the community can also call the station to request songs. The programme has been praised for bridging the gap between the prison and the wider community.

A study by researchers at the Minnesota Department of Corrections in the [US](#) has determined that prisoners who received at least one personal visit at any time during their imprisonment were 13 percent less likely to commit another offence and 25 percent less likely to end up back in prison on a technical parole violation. Data showed that the more visits prisoners received the lower their chance of committing further crime on release.

## **Sentencing and the law**

In the [US](#) the Fair Sentencing Act, passed by Congress in August 2010, changed the disparity between minimum sentences for crack and powder cocaine from 100-1 to 18-1. The US Sentencing Commission voted to make the reduced crack penalties retroactive, taking effect in early November 2011. More than 12,000 current prisoners are eligible to request reduced sentences and the Commission estimates that 1,800 of those became eligible for immediate release.

Also in the [US](#) legislation that would make it more difficult to cover up the causes of deaths in jails, prisons and private detention centres appears poised to pass Congress. The Senate Judiciary Committee has now approved the Deaths in Custody Reporting Act which would make it mandatory for all public and private prisons, jails and boot camps to report deaths

and their causes to the Justice Department. The Attorney General would then be required to analyse and report on the causes of death.

The former chief minister of the [Australian](#) Capital Territory has said that deaths in custody should be treated as corporate manslaughter, citing the example of the UK where the Corporate Manslaughter and Homicide Act was recently extended to cover all deaths in custody. He said that it was right to demand that prison operators should be accountable and that the human rights of prisoners were upheld.

Data provided by the Department of Correctional Services in [Jamaica](#) show that between January and July 2011, 46 percent of all those sentenced were imprisoned for non-violent or minor offences. The country's prisons currently contain twice as many prisoners as they were built to hold. The use of more non-custodial sentences is among a number of options being explored by the national security ministry to reduce the overcrowding in the nation's prison system.

Those convicted of minor offences in the state of Sabah, [Malaysia](#), will soon be asked to do community work at the state's various welfare homes instead of serving time in prison. Discussions are taking place between the Prisons Department and the State Government to extend the Compulsory Attendance Centre (CAC) to Sabah by 2012. The CAC offers a second chance for those convicted by giving them the chance to serve their sentences within society whilst working and earning money to support their families.

Thousands of [Ukrainians](#) could be released from prisons and the budget could receive badly needed cash when a new law comes into force in early 2012. The legislation narrows the range of economic crimes for which a person can be detained and kept in prison, changing the punishment from imprisonment to a fine.

Police in the [Cook Islands](#) are introducing two restorative justice schemes for people facing minor offences. The diversion and pre-charge warning schemes will be reviewed in six months, before a decision is made about implementing them permanently. They will target first time offenders facing charges which carry maximum penalties of less than a year's imprisonment.

Western [Australia](#)'s Auditor General has found an increase in the number of prisoners being denied or stripped of parole is costing the state an extra \$42 million a year. The report showed that between April and December 2009, the number of people whose parole was cancelled or rejected grew by more than 700. The Auditor General said a harder stance taken by the Prisoners Review Board has had a major impact, with only 21 percent of parole applications now accepted compared to 92 percent three years ago.

The President of [Sri Lanka](#) has told Parliament that there are about 650,000 cases awaiting trial. He gave an example of a case in which the accused in a murder trial was released because all the witnesses died in the two decades it took for the case to get to court. The President explained that new computer systems are being introduced to efficiently monitor the filing of new cases and the conclusion of old ones so that there can be effective intervention to prevent a backlog. He also pointed out that increased emphasis is being

given to popularising arbitration as an alternative method of dispute resolution as well as giving legal aid to the poverty stricken via legal clinics in villages.

Hundreds of prisoners have gone on hunger strike in jails in the eastern [Indian](#) state of West Bengal to demand speedier trials. It is estimated there are around 3,000 prisoners awaiting trial in the state. More than 170 of those have spent more than five years on remand, while another 25 have spent more than a decade in prison without trial.

The National Assembly of [Cambodia](#) has passed a law to reform the country's prisons, but critics say its wording remains unclear and one section that allows prisoners to work for private companies should not have been included.

A report released in [Canada](#) has shown that it will cost some \$19 billion to build prisons to imprison more people for longer periods of time as part of the federal government's 'tough on crime' legislation. It says the cost of the plan to end the practice of judges handing prisoners time credits – on a two for one basis, to compensate for time spent in pre-sentence custody – at \$16.5 billion for the country as a whole, with the provinces expected to pay for \$12.6 billion of that. The cost of the introduction of mandatory prison sentences for drug-related crimes and child sex offences is estimated at \$2.3 billion.

In [New Zealand](#) the Labour Party's justice spokesman wants to eliminate jail sentences of less than six months because they are of "zero utility." He said abolishing short sentences, commonly used for minor offences such as drug possession and stealing cars, would free up money to help offenders with their education and addictions. Labour also proposes more use of police diversion for people caught possessing drugs or committing minor offences under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

In [Israel](#) the Public Security Ministry and the Prison Service may put an end to the use of electronic bracelets that allow prisoners who are not yet sentenced to be monitored outside of prison, apparently because of numerous breaches. But some critics believe the Prison Service is taking the step out of concern that the ever dropping occupancy rate in prisons will lead to a significant budget cut.

In [Ireland](#) nearly 7,000 people had been jailed up to the end of November 2011 for failing to pay fines – the highest number in recent years. This is despite the introduction of laws 18 months previously which were supposed to stop the imprisonment of fine defaulters. A key part of that legislation – allowing the payment of fines by instalment – has not been introduced because funding was not provided to update the Courts Service computer system. The money has been allocated in the 2012 budget but the system will then take 12 months to be updated.

## **Prison policy**

In New South Wales, [Australia](#), an increase in lockdowns in prisons, caused by budget cuts and staff shortages, has raised concerns for the safety of prisoners and guards, the Public Service Association has said. A local MP said lockdowns created a pressure-cooker environment in prisons, posing a safety risk. He said "Lockdowns should only be used when

the security of guards and inmates is at risk, not because it's cheaper to run a prison when all the inmates are locked in their cells.”

In Victoria, [Australia](#), a report by the Sentencing Advisory Council concluded that jail is unlikely to deter crime and could make it worse. The report said research had shown imprisonment “has, at best, no effect on the rate of reoffending and is often criminogenic resulting in a greater rate of recidivism...compared with offenders who receive a different sentencing outcome.”

In [India](#) the Committee on Draft National Policy on Prison Reforms and Correctional Administrations has submitted its recommendations concerning Central and State Governments. The recommendations include the inclusion of prisons in the Concurrent List; the formulation of a comprehensive central law to replace the Prison Act 1894; the amendment of the Representation of People Act 1951 to allow all prisoners the right to vote; and the continuation of the scheme to modernise the prisons. However the Home Ministry did not find it feasible to take any action on the first two of these recommendations and the Supreme Court has rejected the third recommendation.

A prisoner swap agreement signed between the [United Arab Emirates and India](#) has unintended consequences for some of the 40 Indian women in UAE jails. They fear that returning to India will reveal to family and friends that they were convicted of prostitution. The Transfer of Sentenced Persons agreement will pave the way for convicted prisoners from both countries to complete their sentences in their homelands.

Under a project sponsored by the [South Korean](#) Ministry of Justice, trials of robot prison guards will be held for a month at a jail in the city of Pohang from March. The robots are designed to patrol the corridors of corrective institutions, monitoring conditions inside the cells. If they detect sudden or unusual activity such as violent behaviour they alert human guards. The robots can also work as a communication channel when prisoners want to contact guards in an emergency.

In the [US](#), Riverside County in Southern California has approved a measure which will allow them to charge prisoners for the daily cost of their stay, amounting to \$142.42 per prisoner per day. The county will review the reimbursement requirements of prisoners on a case-by-case basis and make determinations based on their ability to pay. The County believes that 25 percent of the people who go through the jail system will be able to afford to pay, which result in a saving to the County of \$6.7 million.

The [Ghanaian](#) President has offered assurances that the government will resource the Electoral Commission to put in place mechanisms that would enable prisoners to exercise their franchise.

Prison authorities from [Uganda and Rwanda](#) have agreed to establish a joint committee to help the two countries improve service delivery in their facilities. Under the arrangement there would be learning and sharing of information on best practices in terms of training, prison design, environment management and rehabilitation programmes. Prison officials

from the two countries will meet every year to strengthen the relationship between the two institutions to ensure implementation of agreed areas of cooperation.

[China](#) plans to spend 46.3 billion yuan upgrading police-run detention houses over the next five years. The money will be used to improve the conditions in the houses, to provide basic human rights for those held in them, to try and solve the problem of overcrowding and to build more rooms where lawyers can meet their clients.

The [Japanese](#) government plans to introduce a system to approve temporary suspensions of prison terms by revising relevant laws. According to government sources, bills to revise the Penal Code and related laws will be submitted to the current Diet session. The bills allow some prisoners to be released on probation before serving full prison terms. The envisaged system will be introduced as an intermediate between suspended and full prison terms and will apply to defendants who are sentenced to prison terms of up to three years for less serious crimes. For example the court could hand down a ruling calling for two years punishment but make the prisoner eligible for probation after 18 months.

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