

## **Mains Examination for Wardens will be held on July 10 by JSSC**

Ranchi: Manpower starved jails of Jharkhand, which prompted Jharkhand High Court to reprimand the state and issue a deadline for taking correctives, can only hope to be staffed adequately by the end of the year.

Officials of Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission (JSSC), which is responsible for conducting recruitment tests, maintain that decks have been cleared for hiring assistant jailers and wardens with exams being planned from July.

"We will recruit as many as 1,394 wardens and 47 assistant jailers. For wardens, the mains examination will be held on July 10, the date for which was notified last week. The exam will be held across various centres in Ranchi," a senior commission official told The Telegraph, adding that further details, for instance, the exam dates for assistant jailers, would be available via their website and advertisements in local dailies.

While the preliminary test for recruiting wardens was held in January, the one for assistant jailers was held in May. But, no one at the JSSC office was able to explain the delay in conducting the mains examinations.

"By September, we will submit names of those who qualified as wardens and jailers to the department for it to start issuing appointment letters," he promised.

JSSC chairman Ratan Kumar confirmed the exam dates for recruitment of wardens, but was not forthcoming with any other information.

In all, there are 28 prisons in Jharkhand, of which five are central jails - Ranchi, Dumka, Daltonganj, Jamshedpur and Hazaribagh - and the rest are divisional and subdivisional jails. Almost all jails are suffering from acute manpower crunch.

Describing the shortage of personnel as "shameful", the court of Chief Justice Virender Singh and Justice S. Chandrashekar had last week asked the government to make appointments on an ad hoc basis if needed, failing which the chief secretary, home secretary and inspector-general of police (prisons) would have to appear in person and explain the reasons for non-compliance.

While hearing a PIL, which was initiated by the high court suo motu, the judges had given the authorities 48 hours to update the jail website and 15 days to appoint personnel.

According to information, out of 2,329 posts in various jails across the state, only 1,399 are currently occupied. Further, against the eight posts of nurses, all are empty. Similarly, posts of 35 male nurses, 4 pharmacists, 11 X-ray technicians, 28 computer operators and 30 video conferencing operators are also lying vacant.

A Birsa jail official in Ranchi admitted that the manpower crunch had made their lives a living hell. "In our jail, we have around 2,900 inmates. But, I have two permanent staff members, while the rest are on casual basis, most of them ex-servicemen. But we can't depend on the casual staff," he said.

As for the website, officials at the state prison headquarters said they were in touch with JAP-IT to find a way out. "There is a website titled, eprison.nic.in, which is run by National Informatics Centre (NIC) nationally. It offers daily entry-exit of prisoners and visitors on a real-time basis. You have to select a particular state to know the details. We are exploring whether it can be customised to meet our state's specifics. Or else, we will need to develop a separate website," the official added.