



Hindu, The, Delhi

Friday, 8th February 2019; Page: 6

Width: 8.03 cms; Height: 48.94 cms; a3; ID: 21.2019-02-08.43

## NHRC seeks report on witch-hunt incidents

STAFF REPORTER

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The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to the Odisha Chief Secretary and the Director-General of Police over the State's alleged inaction to prevent witch-hunt incidents which often result in murders.

The NHRC has asked the two top officers to submit a report within four weeks. Radhakanta Tripathy, a human rights lawyer, had drawn the attention of the NHRC over the recent murder of five persons, including a mother and her four children, in the Koida block of Sundargarh district.

The rights panel has warned that it would invoke coercive process under Section 13 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, for personal appearance of the concerned authority if the report was not submitted within the stipulated time.

Mr. Tripathy had moved the NHRC in 2013, pointing out that three women and one elderly man were paraded naked by villagers, branding them black magicians in Amapada village in Sundargarh district. Despite the NHRC recommendations, the situation has not improved in the district, he said.

According to him, over 500 persons have been killed on suspicion of practising witchcraft in Odisha during the last 14 years.

“Of these, 274 murders have taken place in the last five years alone. It suggests that the incidents of witch-hunting have not come down despite increase in access to education,” he said.