

KAROL BAGH FIRE: NHRC NOTICE TO TOP OFFICIALS

Panel seeks details of action taken against errant officials

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

@ New Delhi

TWO days after 17 people were killed in a fire at a hotel here, the National Human Rights Commission on Thursday sent notices to the chief secretary, police chief and the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, calling for a detailed report in the matter.

The NHRC also sought details on the action taken against "errant officers", and the relief and rehabilitation provided to the injured persons.

In a statement issued to the press, the NHRC described the fire at Hotel Arpit Palace in central Delhi's Karol Bagh as one of "the deadliest fire tragedies in the capital in recent years..."

Citing media reports, the commission said the hotel owner had carried out unauthorized construction and modification in the building after obtaining the required clearance from the fire department.

Noting that several workers had died at a clothes ironing workshop in the same area of the city, the commission observed "some common facts" pertaining to both the incidents.

"In both the incidents, the victims could not come out of the premises due to a blocked fire exit. Both the incidents have occurred in the Karol Bagh area, which has become highly congested due to commercialization of buildings in the vicinity, in a reckless manner... most of these hotels have installed wooden floorings and fibreglass ceilings in the buildings..."

The Commission directed the state government to "immediately form a committee of experts" to look into the matter relating to violation of norms by hotel owners, shopkeepers, other individuals and firms engaged in commercial activities in residential areas and encouraging encroachment on public roads by illegal parking.

"The committee should examine all the issues thoroughly and submit a report along with their suggestions to



Fire personnel dousing the fire which broke out at the Archie's factory at Naraina Industrial Area in Delhi on Thursday| SHEKHAR YADAV

streamline these areas, making them safe and worth living for the citizens," the commission said, adding that the response was expected within six weeks.

Two days after the fire at the hotel, the owner of the establishment was still absconding. Meanwhile, the Delhi Police Crime Branch used 3D laser scanners to understand the crime scene and investigate the matter.

A senior officer in the department told this newspaper that there was "nothing substantial" in the statement given by the hotel manger and general manager, who were sent to two-day police custody on Wednesday.

"The owner has not been arrested and a lookout notice has been sent again," he said.

"Today, we did a 3D imaging of the place of occurrence," he added.

FIRE AT ARCHIES FACTORY

New Delhi: A massive fire destroyed a gift shop's factory in west Delhi's Naraina area on Thursday, gutting huge stocks of greeting cards and novelty items, officials said. No casualty was reported. "The fire at Archies factory was reported at 7.10 AM. Twenty-three fire tenders were rushed to the spot. Later, seven more were dispatched," said a Delhi Fire Services official. Prima facie a short circuit at the corporate office on the first floor of the building is believed to have caused the fire, the officer said. "The fire was controlled by 11.15 am and the cooling process was initiated. No one was injured in the incident," said the official.



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NHRC notice to Delhi govt, police, civic body

Rights panel seeks reports in 6 weeks

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Stating that it looked like the authorities had not learnt any lessons from recent tragedies, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Thursday issued notices to the Delhi government, the Delhi police and the North Delhi Municipal Corporation over Tuesday's fire at a Karol Bagh hotel.

Seventeen people were killed and three injured when a fire broke out at Hotel Arpit Palace in Karol Bagh early on Tuesday morning. Later, it emerged that there was unauthorised construction at the site and several other irregularities, including fire safety violations.

Taking suo motu cognisance of media reports, the NHRC issued notices to the Delhi government Chief Se-

cretary, Delhi Police Commissioner and North Corporation Commissioner, seeking detailed reports in six weeks.

'Form expert panel'

The Chief Secretary was also asked to form a committee of experts to look into violation of norms by hotels, shops and others carrying out commercial activity in residential areas.

"The Commission is of the opinion that it seems the authorities have not learnt any lessons from the tragic incidents occurred in the recent past...This painful incident could have been avoided if the hotel management and the authorities concerned would have acted sincerely. This is indeed a very serious case of violation of human rights," an NHRC statement said.



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NOTICES TO DELHI GOVT, NORTH BODY

NEW DELHI: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to the Delhi government, the city police chief and the area's civic body over the deadly fire incident at a hotel in Karol Bagh in which 17 people were killed, officials said Thursday.

The rights panel has issued notices to the Delhi chief secretary, city police commissioner and the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) seeking a detailed report in the matter, an official said.

PTI

NHRC notice to Delhi govt, police, civic body

FEBRUARY 15, 2019

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Karol Bagh fire: NHRC sends notice to Delhi govt, police chief and NDMC

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The NHRC has issued notices to the Delhi government, the city police chief and the area's civic body over the deadly fire incident at a hotel in Karol Bagh in which 17 people were killed, officials said Thursday.

"This painful incident could have been avoided if the hotel management and the authorities concerned would have acted sincerely. This is indeed a very serious case of violation of human rights," the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) said.

The rights panel has issued notices to the Delhi chief secretary, city police commissioner and the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) seeking a detailed report in the matter, an official said.

The NHRC has also sought details on action taken against errant officers, and relief and rehabilitation provided to the next of kin of the deceased and injured persons.

The commission in the statement said it also "expects from the chief secretary to immediately form a committee of experts to look into the matter relating to violation of norms by the hotel owners, shopkeepers and other individuals or firms who are conducting commercial activities in the residential colonies and encouraging encroachment of public roads with recourse to illegal parking".

The committee should examine all the issues thoroughly and submit a report along with their suggestions to streamline these areas, making them safe and worth living for the citizens. The response is expected, within six weeks, the NHRC said.

The commission is of the opinion that "it seems the authorities have not learnt any lessons from the tragic incidents that occurred in the recent past; no one appears to be bothered about the rules or norms to be followed by the building owners and local residents," the statement said.

The commission said it has also observed that recently several workers had died at a cloth-ironing workshop in Karol Bagh area of Delhi after a steam boiler had caught fire and the victims got trapped due to cloth piles blocking the entrance.

Suo motu cognisance of that tragic incident was taken by the NHRC and a report was sought from the police commissioner and the chief secretary,"which is yet to be received," the statement said.

The commission has observed some common facts pertaining to both the incidents. In both the cases, the victims could not come out of the premises due to blocked fire exit, the rights panel said.

"Both the incidents have occurred in the Karol Bagh area which has become highly congested due to commercialisation of buildings in the vicinity, in a reckless manner," the NHRC observed.

These incidents raise several issues regarding working of the civic authorities in the national capital as well as police authorities, particularly in the Karol Bagh and Paharganj areas, where huge clusters of hotels have come up and they are "often found flouting the prescribed rules" in spite of procurement of fire safety clearance, the NHRC said.

"Most of these hotels have installed wooden floorings and fibreglass ceilings in the buildings as emerges from the news report," it said.

The commission said it has also noticed that in the latest case, the fire tenders could not reach in time as "there was no U-turn on the road for traffic and the vehicles had to drive all the way to Jhandewalan Chowk for a U-turn".

"The road was also blocked by vehicles parked on the road. In the earlier incident too, the fire tenders could not reach the congested Beadon Pura area in Karol Bagh due to narrow roads and traffic congestion," it rued.

According to the media reports, two senior HPCL officials died in the fire as six company officials who had come to attend the Petro-tech conference were accommodated in the hotel, it said.

The police personnel have reportedly seized the record pertaining to the details of the occupants of the hotel, to identify the deceased and the injured persons. Out of panic some of the guests jumped from the hotel windows to save their lives.

One IRS officer who jumped out of a window, died in the hospital due to fracture and head injuries, it added.

It is also mentioned in reports that the fire department had given a safety certificate to the hotel on December 28, 2017, which is valid for three years.

The hotel owners have reportedly claimed that Hotel Arpit Palace was a "guest house," which as per rules, cannot have an operational kitchen for cooking, but the firemen found a fibreglass structure on the rooftop which could be a bar or restaurant, the statement said.



NHRC notice to the Delhi Chief Secretary, Police Commissioner and the Commissioner, North Delhi Municipal Corporation over hotel fire incident in Karol Bagh

14 February 2019

The National Human Rights Commission has taken suo motu cognizance of media reports about one of the deadliest fire tragedies in the capital in recent years resulting in the death of 17 people were killed at a five-storey hotel in central Delhi's Karol Bagh on Tuesday, 12th February, 2018. Many of them died in their sleep, after an early morning blaze spread swiftly through AC ducts. Reportedly, the hotel owner had, apparently, carried out unauthorized construction/ modification in the building, after obtaining the clearance from the Fire Department.

The Commission has issued notices to the Chief Secretary, Government of NCT of Delhi, Commissioner of Police, Delhi and the Commissioner, North Delhi Municipal Corporation calling for a detailed report in the matter along with action taken against the errant officers/ officials along with relief and rehabilitation provided to the NOKs of the deceased and the injured persons.

The Commission also expects from the Chief Secretary, Government of NCT of Delhi to immediately form a committee of experts to look into the matter relating to violation of norms by the hotel owners/ shopkeepers and other individuals/ firms who are conducting commercial activities in the residential colonies and encouraging encroachment of public roads by recourse to illegal parking. The Committee should examine all the issues thoroughly and submit a report along with their suggestions to streamline these areas, making them safe and worth living for the citizens. The response is expected, within six weeks.

The Commission is of the opinion that it seems the authorities have not learnt any lessons from the tragic incidents occurred in the recent past; no one appears to be bothered about the rules/ norms to be followed by the building owners and local residents. This painful incident could have been avoided if the hotel management and the authorities concerned would have acted sincerely. This is indeed a very serious case of violation of human rights.

The Commission has also observed that recently, several workers had died at a clothes ironing workshop in Karol Bagh area of Delhi after a steam boiler caught fire and the victims got trapped due to cloth piles blocking the entrance. Suo-motu cognizance of the tragic incident was taken by the Commission and a report was called for from the Commissioner of Police and the Chief Secretary, Government of NCT of Delhi of Delhi which is yet to be received.

The Commission has observed some common facts pertaining to both the incidents. In both the incidents, the victims could not come out of the premises due to blocked

fire exit. Both the incidents have occurred in the Karol Bagh area which has become highly congested due to commercialization of buildings in the vicinity, in a reckless manner. These incidents raise several issues regarding working of the civic authorities in the National Capital as well as police authorities particularly, in the Karol Bagh and Paharganj areas where huge clusters of hotels have come up and they are often found flouting the prescribed rules in spite of procurement of fire safety clearance. Most of these hotels have installed wooden floorings and fiber glass ceilings in the buildings as emerges from the news report.

The Commission has also noticed that in the instant case, the fire tenders could not reach in time as there was no U-turn on the road for traffic and the vehicles had to drive all the way to Jhandewalan Chowk for a U-turn. The road was also blocked by vehicles parked on the road. In the earlier incident too, the fire tenders could not reach the congested Beadon Pura area in Karol Bagh due to narrow roads and traffic congestion.

Reportedly, it took almost four hours for the police and the firemen in mounting the tough rescue operation at the fateful hotel. The fire, as mentioned in the news report, was reported to the fire brigade around 4:35 AM and 26 fire tenders were immediately sent to the spot which brought the fire under control by 7:30 AM. Later, the cooling operation was launched at 8:00 AM which continued till noon after which the survivors were allowed to enter their rooms to collect their belongings. About 40 of the 45 rooms of the hotel were occupied by the guests, many of whom were from an extended family in Kerala who had come to attend a wedding in Ghaziabad.

According to the media reports, two senior HPCL officials have also died in the fire as six company officials who had come to attend the Petro-tech conference were accommodated in the hotel. The police personnel have reportedly seized the record pertaining to the details of the occupants of the hotel, to identify the deceased and the injured persons. Out of panic some of the guests jumped from the hotel windows to save their lives. One IRS officer who jumped out of a window, died in the hospital due to fracture and head injuries.

It is also mentioned in the news reports that the Fire Department had given a Safety Certificate to the hotel on the 28th December, 2017, which is valid for three years. The hotel owners have reportedly claimed that the “Arpit Palace Hotel” was a guest house, which as per rules, cannot have an operational kitchen for cooking but the firemen found a fiberglass structure on the rooftop which could be a Bar or Restaurant, the police is yet to investigate the matter. It is also stated further that the fire officials in the year 2014 had found a permanent structure on the roof of the building and orders for its demolition were issued. The demolition was mandatory to obtain safety clearance from the Fire Department. The hotel was also running a bar in the basement which has not been mentioned in the fire audit.

Reportedly, as the fire broke out, most of those who suffered burn injuries tried to make their way down the main staircase but unfortunately the fire exit door was also locked. The “Water Hydrants” were present but not functional. The Mayor of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation has reportedly stated that electrical wiring was faulty and the fire exit seemed not have been used, for years.

Karol Bagh fire: NHRC sends notice to Delhi govt, police chief and NDMC

The rights panel has issued notices to the Delhi chief secretary, city police commissioner and the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) seeking a detailed report in the matter.

February 14, 2019 UPDATED: February 14, 2019 19:46 IST

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This painful incident could have been "avoided" if the hotel management and the authorities concerned would have acted sincerely. This is indeed a "very serious case of violation of human rights", the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) said.

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