



HUMAN RIGHTS

Newsletter

A Monthly publication of the National Human Rights Commission, India



Open house discussions

Preventing beggary
Tribal education
Rights of fishermen

Focus

Providing entrepreneurial
livelihood to beggars

Snippets

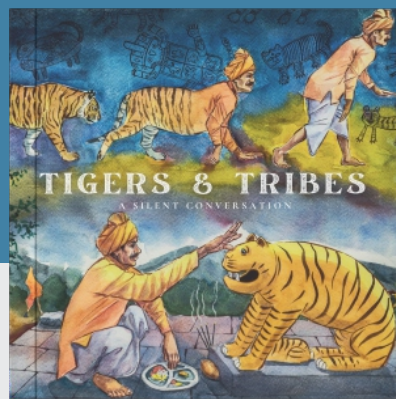


On 16th August, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani paid a courtesy call on the Hon'ble President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu. She briefed her about the Commission's initiatives for promoting and protecting human rights, which the President appreciated.



On 20th August, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani and Registrar (Law), Shri Joginder Singh paid a courtesy call on Former President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind. She apprised him of the NHRC's initiatives for promoting & protecting human rights, which he appreciated.

On 20th August, 2024, NHRC, India, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal, along with Dr. S. P. Yadav, DG, IBCA presented a visual art book 'Tigers and Tribes: A Silent Conversation' to the Hon'ble President of India. The book delves into the symbiotic relationships the Indian tribal communities have nurtured with nature and tigers for centuries, through artwork which captures their enduring bonds. The book underscores the importance of understanding this relationship, as it has significantly contributed to India's conservation efforts, making the country home to 75% of the world's tiger population in the wild. It helps in improving the quality of life of tribal communities & encourages our younger generation to appreciate, internalize, and contribute to the preservation of our natural heritage.



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Newsletter

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National Human Rights Commission

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The Newsletter is also available on the Commission's website www.nhrc.nic.in. NGOs and other organizations are welcome to reproduce material of the Newsletter and disseminate it widely acknowledging the NHRC.

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Monthly Recap

From the desk of the Secretary General & Chief Executive

August 15th marks India's Independence from the British colonial rule, and the country celebrated its 78th Independence Day on this day in 2024. This day serves as a reminder of the sacrifices made by the previous generations, who fought for our freedom and for the creation of a modern nation. We must remember them, draw inspiration, and dedicate ourselves to upholding and protecting those ideals to ensure civic and political rights, as well as the cultural and socio-economic rights of every citizen in the country.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has been committed to protecting and promoting human rights and ensuring dignity for all human beings. This has been reflected in all the initiatives taken up by the Commission through its monthly activities. Sensitizing the officers of the All India Services (IAS, IPS, and IFS) about human rights has been one such initiative, which gained momentum. This reflects a broader vision of transforming India into a nation where human rights are not only protected by laws but also supported by its various institutions. It began with the orientation of IFS officers, which was later expanded during the month of August to include a capacity-building programme for IPS officers in the Hyderabad Police Academy. This initiative aims to sensitize and equip the civil services probationers during their Phase-II training to protect and promote human rights.

The Commission has been making concerted efforts to enhance the understanding and importance of human rights through training programmes and various conferences to reduce human rights violations. A major programme was organized in collaboration with the Manipur University in Manipur in August. The discussion extended beyond civic and political rights to focus on ensuring dignity and quality of life for all. A report on these two programmes has been incorporated into this Newsletter.

Besides such collaborative programmes, the Commission regularly organizes various interactive sessions including meetings, discussions in both hybrid and in-person mode, core group meetings, etc. with various stakeholders and subject experts. The month saw three open house discussions on 'Preventing Beggary and the Rehabilitation of Individuals Engaged in Beggary', 'Tribal Education in India: Problems, Policies and Perspective', and 'Rights of Fisher-

men'. These have been covered in the "Report" section of this Newsletter. To give more visibility to the issue of rehabilitating beggars, an article on how individuals engaged in beggary can be transformed into small entrepreneurs has been included in this Newsletter.

The Commission also encourages the direct participation of people in human rights promotion and awareness activities through various competitions. The NHRC Human Rights Photography Competition 2024 presents itself as a very effective communication tool. The results apart, the process itself is rewarding and all the participants need to be congratulated for capturing various facets of human rights on camera.

It is heartening to see so many university and college students from different academic streams applying for NHRC online short-term internships. Despite the limited number of students who can be selected, we try to accommodate as many students as possible for the programme. 92 university students completed the August schedule of the two-week online short-term internship. The USP of this program is that students from the remotest parts of the country can join it without the need to travel to or stay in Delhi. They had online interactive sessions with 37 eminent figures and domain experts on various aspects of human rights. The interns also engaged in activities such as group presentations, book reviews, and virtual tours of a jail, police station and shelter home.

The Commission strives for the best possible efforts to encourage the students to internalize and practice the human rights values they learnt during the internship. By doing so, they can proactively promote the human rights of all, especially those belonging to the marginalized sections of society.

As we move forward, let us remain dedicated in our efforts to improve the lives of all, especially the marginalized, and strive towards a society where human rights are protected. The journey is long, but with collective efforts, we can build the vision of a developed and just nation.



[Bharat Lal]

Secretary General &
Chief Executive Officer

Open house discussions

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has constituted several core groups on various thematic issues related to human rights to hold discussions with the domain experts and the concerned senior government functionaries representing different ministries. Besides these core group meetings, the Commission also organizes open house discussions with different stakeholders on various issues of human rights. Based on these discussions, the Commission, from time to time, holds national seminars to address the obstacles in existing laws and suggest amendments. In August, 2024, the Commission organized three open house discussions.

Preventing Beggary and the Rehabilitation of Individuals Engaged in Beggary

An open house discussion on 'Preventing Beggary and Rehabilitation of Individuals Engaged in Beggary' was organized by the Commission in hybrid mode at its premises in New Delhi on 28th August, 2024. Chairing it, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani said that despite rapid economic progress and several initiatives and welfare programmes implemented by both the Centre and State Governments, the continuing practice of begging indicates deep socio-economic disparities in the country. As per the 2011 census, there were more than 413 thousand beggars and vagrants in India. They include women, children, transgender and the elderly who are forced to beg for survival.

She said that while giving and accepting alms was once part of spiritual practices aimed at cultivating humility, the charity has now detached from its

original purpose. It has now become begging either due to poverty or criminal activities such as human trafficking, including the exploitation of children for profit. Further, societal neglect has left physically challenged individuals with no choice but to depend on others for survival and daily sustenance.

Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani said that the Commission is dedicated to protecting the human rights of these individuals, ensuring they are treated with dignity and fairness. In this context, she also highlighted the importance of the Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise (SMILE) Scheme, which focuses on the rehabilitation of individuals engaged in begging.

NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal mentioned that the Commission recently issued an Advisory to the Central and State governments and UT Administrations, to develop strategies aimed at eliminating the need for begging and enhancing the quality of life for those involved in it. He also said that governments, especially in recent years, have been committed to improving the quality of life for citizens. There have been focused efforts to ensure universal access to basic services such as water,

► NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani chairing the discussion in the presence of Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal, senior officers and experts



housing, and electricity. He further highlighted that if 80 crore people in the country can receive free food grains, rehabilitation of about 4 lakh individuals engaged in begging should not be difficult.

Shri Lal said that if different stakeholders, including civil society organizations, worked together, the rehabilitation of people engaged in beggary should not pose a significant challenge. By providing them with Aadhar cards, they can also have access to food grains, housing, electricity connections, toilets, and cooking gas.

Giving an overview of the open discussion, Shri Devendra Kumar Nim, Joint Secretary, emphasized the need to re-evaluate existing laws, advocating for a shift from punitive measures to a focus on rehabilitation, in alignment with constitutional principles and recent court rulings. This shift offers a path to more effective and humane solutions to the issue of begging.

Shri Rajesh Kumar, Director of the Society for Promotion of Youth & Masses said that his organization has achieved nearly 100% Aadhar Card enrollment for the residents of their shelter homes. Shri Chandra Mishra, Director of Beggars Corporation Private Limited, shared how he is

As per the 2011 census, there were more than 413 thousand beggars and vagrants in India- Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani

transforming beggars into entrepreneurs by involving them as stakeholders in his company.

The other participants included Shri Joginder Singh, Registrar (Law), NHRC, representative of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, representatives of the Government of Bihar, Government of Rajasthan, Government of NCT of Delhi, NGOs, Academia, and eminent subject-matter experts.

Some of the key suggestions that emanated from the meeting included:

- Identifying and mapping areas with a high concentration of begging, and conducting a survey of beggars to create a comprehensive database;
- State governments should work towards issuing Aadhaar cards to all beggars, facilitating their access to social security schemes and benefits;
- Begging should be decriminalized, as punitive measures and rehabilitation efforts cannot be effectively combined; and
- Beggars are not a homogeneous group; therefore, schemes for their welfare should be tailored to meet their individual needs.

Tribal Education in India: Problems, Policies and Perspective

Another open house discussion in hybrid mode was organized on 'Tribal Education in India: Problems, Policies and Perspective' on 29th August, 2024.



Chairing the meeting, Acting Chairperson, NHRC, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani called for a culturally sensitive education system that integrates and respects the diverse heritage of tribal communities. She said that education will help in empowering tribal communities and advancing societal progress. Despite substantial progress and various government initiatives, tribal communities face persistent barriers such as geographical isolation, language differences, poverty, and early marriage.

Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani said that the Commission is committed to advocating quality education for all, assessing current programs, and



► The meeting in progress

addressing gaps to promote inclusivity and equitable development in tribal education. She also emphasized the need for collaborative and sustained efforts among governmental bodies, NGOs, and tribal groups for this purpose.

In his opening remarks, NHRC Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal highlighted the gaps in tribal education and emphasized the need for targeted interventions to enhance and uplift educational outcomes in these communities. He said that lower literacy rates and higher dropout rates in tribal areas are often linked to specific challenges, such as inadequate access to quality education, the lack of culturally relevant curriculum, poor student-teacher ratio, and insufficient educational infrastructure.

Shri Lal underscored the importance of addressing these gaps to ensure equitable and inclusive education, so every tribal child has an equal opportunity to succeed. He also stressed the need to improve tribal representation in higher educational institutions like IITs and IIMs, targeted scholarship programs, mentorship, and preparatory courses to bridge the educational divide and help tribal students excel in these prestigious institutions.

Giving an overview of the open house, NHRC Joint Secretary, Shri Devendra Kumar Nim, expressed concern over the high dropout rates and declining Gross Enrollment Ratios among tribal students.

Despite substantial progress and various government initiatives, tribal communities face persistent barriers such as geographical isolation, language differences, poverty, and early marriage- Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani

He called for targeted interventions and a comprehensive discussion to identify gaps, analyze existing policies, and explore diverse perspectives to shape a more inclusive educational system and ensure a brighter, equitable future for the tribal population in India.

The meeting covered several key agendas:

- Identifying gaps and challenges in tribal education;
- Analyzing existing policies and programs; and
- Exploring perspectives and ways forward.

The discussions focused on the persistent barriers to educational access for tribal communities, such as geographical isolation, language differences, and socio-economic challenges. The effectiveness of current initiatives like Ashram Schools and Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs) were also evaluated to pinpoint areas requiring improvement.

Some of the key suggestions that emerged during the discussions were as follows:

- There is an urgent need for empirical data, necessitating tribal-centric research in universities to better understand and address specific educational challenges faced by these communities;
- A comprehensive and integrated policy approach is required, focusing on the develop-

ment of proper facilities and infrastructure, including dedicated hostel facilities for female tribal children;

- Increasing community engagement and outreach is crucial for improving enrollment rates, while ensuring basic facilities such as drinking water, sanitation, and adequate hostel accommodations, particularly in remote areas, is essential;
- Capacity-building programs for teachers are necessary to sensitize them to tribal cultures and languages, facilitating better communication and understanding; and
- Incorporating local languages at the primary level is important for easing comprehension and enhancing the overall learning experience for tribal students.

The participants included NHRC DG (I), Shri Ajay Bhatnagar, Registrar (Law), Shri Joginder Singh, Shri Sunil Kumar Barnwal, Additional Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Smt. Archana Sharma Awasthi, Joint Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education; Shri Surat Singh,

Incorporating local languages at the primary level is important for easing comprehension and enhancing the overall learning experience for tribal students

Director, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes; Shri Ajeet Kumar Srivastava, Commissioner, National Education Society for Tribal Students; Shri Kripa Nand Jha, Secretary, Department of Scheduled Tribes, Jharkhand; Mr. Vijesing Vasave, Joint Secretary, Tribal Development Department, Maharashtra; Shri Yogesh T. KAS, Director, Scheduled Tribes Welfare Department; Shri Narendra Kumar Dugga, Commissioner, Tribal & Scheduled Caste Development Department, Chhattisgarh; Prof. Alok Kumar Chakrawal, Vice Chancellor, Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Koni, Bilaspur; Prof. (Dr.) Madhukarbhair S. Padvi, Vice Chancellor, Birsa Munda Tribal University, Gujarat; Prof. T.V. Kattimani, Vice Chancellor, Central Tribal University of Andhra Pradesh; Prof. Ravindra Ramesh Patil, Professor, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi; Dr. Gauri Shankar Mahapatra, Associate Professor, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak; Dr. Satyakam Joshi, Acting Director & Professor, Veer Narmada South Gujarat University; Shri Apoorva Oza, Director, Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, India; Shri Mahesh Sharma, Social Activist, Founder Shivganga Jhabua etc.

Rights of Fishermen

The third open house discussion of the month was organized on the 'Rights of Fishermen' in collaboration with Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law

- NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani addressing the open house discussion



University (DSNLU) at its Visakhapatnam campus on 31st August, 2024. It concluded with many significant suggestions to ameliorate the cause of human rights of fishermen. Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, Acting Chairperson, NHRC, chaired the discussions. She said that the fishermen community plays an important role in advancing India's economy. Therefore, protecting their rights and addressing the related challenges is vital for their livelihood and dignity.

She mentioned that the Commission is committed to protecting the rights of the fisherfolk. In this context, she also mentioned the initiatives taken by the Commission to protect the rights of seafarers. She highlighted various facets of the Commission's functioning



► A section of participants

and diverse areas of its interventions for protecting and promoting the rights of vulnerable segments of society, as well as the various advisories issued in this regard to the authorities in the centre, states and union territory administrations.

Earlier, Prof. D. Surya Prakasa Rao, Vice Chancellor, DSNLU welcomed the participants and gave an overview of the discussions, which were divided into three technical sessions. These included human rights violations of India's fishing communities, fishing rights and environmental issues, social security measures and welfare schemes for fishermen.

The speakers in the first session on 'Human Rights Violations of India's Fishing Communities' highlighted the critical role of fisheries in the economy and the challenges faced by the fisherfolk due to hazardous working conditions. They said that despite laws aimed at protecting the fishermen, their human rights abuses persist, for which building awareness is necessary. They also stressed the need for sustainable fishing practices, climate resilience, and international cooperation to protect the rights and livelihoods of fishermen. Prof. E. Udaya Bhasker Reddy, Andhra University, emphasized the right to a healthy environment, underscoring the impact of pollution and the need to respect nature. Dr. Deepa Suman, Senior Executive (Tech), NFDB, underscored the importance of the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, which supports the fishing community through safety measures, insurance, and infrastructure development.

Fishermen community plays an important role in advancing India's economy- Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani

In the second technical session on 'Fishing Rights and Environmental Issues', Dr. Joe K. Kizhakudan, ICAR-CMFRI, highlighted the challenges faced by fishermen in Andhra Pradesh due to poor governance, contrasting with better conditions in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. He said that the fishermen from Srikakulam are migrating to Odisha due to unfavourable conditions. Dr. S.S. Raju, ICAR-CMFRI, discussed generational entrapment in fishing, lack of alternative jobs, poor living conditions, and environmental degradation from industrial waste. He called for Minimum Support Prices (MSP) and better safety measures. Dr. Divya Karnad, Ashoka University, Sonapat, and Prof. V. Raja Lakshmi formerly with Andhra University emphasized the need to protect traditional fishermen's rights, provide essential services, and consider both community and individual approaches to support their welfare.

In the third technical session on 'Social Security Measures and Welfare Schemes for Fishermen', Dr. Ch. Benarji, Dean and Professor of Law, School of Law, VIT-AP University, highlighted the legal challenges faced by Indian fishermen who are arrested when crossing into Bangladeshi waters. He emphasized the need for education on maritime laws and the law of the seas, urging local law schools like DSNLU to engage in outreach and education efforts for fishermen. He also discussed the complexities of unclear sea boundaries, especially around Katchatheevu, and advocated for legal frameworks and insurance coverage to protect fishermen who inadvertently cross international waters.

In the concluding session, the discussion was opened to representatives from the fishing community. They took this opportunity to articulate the pressing challenges faced by them, including the limited awareness of government programs and the detrimental effects of illegal construction and pollution in coastal areas.

Some of the key suggestions that emerged during the discussions were as follows:

- Education and awareness of fishermen community on maritime laws and the law of the seas to promote sustainable fishing through institutions based in coastal areas is necessary;
- Awareness of government programs for fishermen welfare also needs to be augmented;
- The detrimental effects of illegal construction and pollution impacting marine ecosystems around coastal areas need to be checked;

Coastal states need to collaborate on adopting best practices of each other for fishermen welfare to check their inter-state migration.

- Empower and protect fishermen by advocating their rights to safe working conditions, fair compensation, and access to essential services;
- Coastal states need to collaborate on adopting best practices of each other for fishermen's welfare to check their inter-state migration.

The participants included representatives from the Department of Fisheries, Government of India, and professors from Andhra University, Ashoka University, and other academic institutions like the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (ICAR- CMFRI), National Fisheries Development Board, as well as international and national NGOs, CSOs, and private institutions. The event also witnessed the participation of around 50 Fishermen and their families.

Article

Making India beggar free

A case study of Beggars Corporation

- Shri Chandra Mishra
Beggars Corporation



Providing sustainable and dignified means to earn a living to dissuade people from begging is a challenge, but one that is not difficult to achieve. The Beggars Corporation (BC) stands out as a groundbreaking social impact startup in this regard. It has made significant strides in improving the lives of beggars in Varanasi. It is officially recognized by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as a registered for-profit private limited company, with an annual turnover of 3.48 Crore INR from its operations. The company is

not only innovative in its approach but also unique in its structure. Unlike traditional entities, Beggars Corporation includes beggars themselves as shareholders, with five members of the board holding stakes in the company. The inclusion of beggars as shareholders—holding 24% of the company— demonstrates a commitment to not just rehabilitate but also empower the individuals they aim to help.

The idea behind the initiative

If poverty was the root cause of begging, then every poor person would be a beggar. Trying to solve beggary through charity or donations is a blunder that ultimately gives rise to begging as a profession, or worse, as a racket.

Individuals who are genuinely engaged in beggary are in dire need of our support rather than sympathy. We destroy their self-worth and reduce them mentally to beggars by flinging coins at them. They need our support to develop self-confidence and trust in society and to grow as self-sufficient, responsible citizens.

That is why Beggars Corporation is incorporated as a for-profit company, which aims to turn beggars into entrepreneurs and a productive force in the economy as both creators & owners of wealth. Recognized by DPIIT, Government of India, as a Social Impact Industry, the beggar-turned-entrepreneurs (BTE) control 24% stake in different projects/ Special Purpose vehicles (SPVs).

Beggars can do dignified business

Under the common brand name of Beggars Corporation, the beggar- turned-entrepreneurs (BTEs) have several product lines in three distinct SPVs - Bagful of Dreams, Enchanted Shirt and Poonya. The first SPV of BC - Bagful of Dreams - has 12 types of theme bags including laptop-cum-conference bags, wedding bags, saree bags, shopping bags, ornament bags and 'potli' or gift bags. The Enchanted Shirt, named after the famous poem of the American statesman John Hay, consists of jackets, stoles, door-window

If poverty was the root cause of begging, then every poor person would be a beggar

curtains and space branding items. The third SPV consists of products made by beggars based in the ancient spiritual city Varanasi. These beggars who used to sit near temples and the ghats are now selling/ supplying 'puja samagri' and organizing Monday Jalabhishek at the famous Kashi Vishwanath temple to benefit from the local market demand.

After incorporation in August 2022, the BTEs under Beggars Corporation completed business worth Rs. 69.61 lakh in FY23 and repaid its first batch of 57 Social Investors with 16.5% Rate of Interest (ROI) in just 7 months. In the last financial year FY24, our 17 BTEs collectively achieved revenue of Rs. 3.48 Cr and repaid the Social Investors with 25% ROI. Needless to say, Beggar Corporation has not faced any loss so far.

The experience of the Beggar Corporation in the last one and half years has proved that once you empower the 'real beggars', with self- confidence, basic resources and guidance to overcome the initial challenges, they will never accept defeat.

Functioning

Beggars Corporation employs a multifaceted approach to address and alleviate beggary. One of its flagship initiatives is the 'Begging Free Banaras'

Beggars Corporation among street children



campaign, which encourages people to spend time with beggars rather than simply giving them money. This initiative aims to foster a better understanding of the underlying conditions that drive individuals to beg.

The Corporation's efforts are bolstered by practical support mechanisms. For example, they encourage people to donate used clothes instead of discarding them. These clothes are upcycled into stylish handbags, which are then sold through partnerships with platforms like ONDC, PayTm and Myntra. The revenue generated from these sales supports the activities of the Corporation. When a beggar is identified and onboarded, they receive 7,000 INR per month, along with rental accommodation, for a three-month orientation period.

Month-1: Counselling, orientation, behavioural change and work culture

Month 2: Skill training, trial production and quality consciousness

Month-3: Market trial of their products, order collection and market collaboration

Additionally, if the beggars have children, they are enrolled in formal schools with the Corporation covering the costs of uniforms and books. After initial verification and orientation, the beggar is relocated to a rented house in a standard locality.

The financial sustainability of Beggars Corporation is supported through various schemes such as the Bag-making Unit and Poonya Unit etc. The "One Beggar One Mentor" (OBOM) scheme pairs each beggar family with a mentor who invests Rs. 2 lakh over three years. When a beggar is onboarded after training, a socially conscious citizen as a 'Mentor' is paired with the beggar to help the beggar compete in the market. After this, Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs), comprising 12-15 BTEs together, are formed under the guidance of a group of subject experts and professionals. The BTEs and Social Investors control 24% stake each in the SPV while the rest is divided between experts, professionals and the Corporation.

The Poonya Unit, for instance, employs beggars to arrange ritual services at the Kashi Vishwanath

Beggars Corporation has formed a pan-India network of Citizens for Begging Free India (CBFI) taking all its Social Investors, Mentors and Member Customers together.

Temple, with beggars holding a 24 % share in the revenue.

Beggar Corporation signs a 3-year agreement with the BTEs which guarantees a minimum of Rs. 10,000 as monthly remuneration and Rs. 1,00,000 towards Better Life Fund after 3 years. All these are calculated against their share in the SPV and ROI on that.

Don't donate but invest or purchase

Beggars Corporation has formed a pan-India network of Citizens for Begging Free India (CBFI) taking all its Social Investors, Mentors and Member Customers together. As of 31st March, 2024, it had 2152 Members. Beggars Corporation asks people not to donate, but to use their proposed donations for investment in their ventures or purchase of their products. Besides encouraging the beggars to work, it also helps the citizens to create visible impacts and social change. To turn this into a socio-economic re-evolution, in the past, Beggar Corporation has deliberately declined offers of funds from VC firms, corporations and the government. After a long 2 years of experiment, on 12th August, 2024, Beggars Corporation gave a written proposal to the Commissioner of Varanasi to help in making the spiritual city Varanasi begging-free in 3 years and offered to provide a sustainable, dignified livelihood to 1000 beggar families by 2027 at the cost of Beggars Corporation.

Challenges

A major challenge faced by the organization is the identification of genuine beggars. The complexity arises from the fact that not all individuals begging on the streets are in need; some are exploited by others, including their own families. The corporation also encounters issues where children are used to solicit alms, complicating their mission. In response, the company operates an informal educational initiative called School for Life, which eventually helps these children transition into formal English-medium schools.

The change

The impact of Beggars Corporation's approach is profound. By integrating beggars into the corpo-

rate structure as shareholders and providing them with a stake in the business, the organization is not only providing immediate support but also fostering long-term self-reliance. This model offers dual benefits: it empowers beggars with ownership and dignity, while ensuring their sustained commitment to the program.

The success of this model has broader implications, particularly for large urban areas like Delhi, where it

could be adapted to prevent and rehabilitate individuals engaged in begging on a larger scale. Beggars Corporation's innovative model, supported by their recent advocacy for government collaboration, is paving the way for a more humane and effective approach to tackling beggary. The growing awareness and support for this initiative are expected to enhance its reach and impact, showcasing a promising example of how social entrepreneurship can drive significant change in society.

Empowering lives

Article

SPYM's ongoing battle against drug abuse and begging

- Shri Rajesh Kumar
Director, SPYM



► The SPYM team at work

In the bustling streets of Delhi, the Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses (SPYM) has been a beacon of hope for the past forty years. The organization has tirelessly worked to combat drug and substance abuse among children and young adults, shining a light on a dark issue that plagues many. By addressing the immediate needs and long-term solutions, the SPYM's program discourages begging through collaboration with the police and institutionalized donations, while bringing individuals into shelters where they receive essential services such as, education, skill development, and counseling. Our initiative focuses on children, ensuring they are enrolled in schools and engaged in activities that support their development, while

women are provided with vocational training to help them achieve financial independence. The program has successfully integrated approximately 750 individuals (568 children & 180 women) into a more stable lifestyle. Among these, 489 children have been enrolled in Government schools, 79 children received non-formal education, and 448 residents obtained necessary documentation like Aadhaar cards, domicile certificates, birth certificates, and bank accounts.

At SPYM, children are also exposed to extracurricular activities such as dance, karate, artwork, drama, and other games, which support their kinesthetic development. Women receive training in beautician skills and stitching, and are engaged in daily wage work.

But a pressing concern has come to the fore: the intersection of drug abuse and begging. A significant number of beggars in Delhi are also grappling with



► SPYM team

substance abuse. Unfortunately, they are unable to avail treatment, largely due to the lack of essential documents like Aadhaar Cards, which complicates their access to clinical care.

Strategies Employed in SPYM:

Pull Strategy:

- Attracted people involved in begging to shelter homes to prevent their return to the streets;
- Provided shelter, hygiene, food, clothing, bedding, medical care, counseling, and education;
- Collaborated with the State on skill development and linkages to government schemes to help people in the begging achieve independence.

Push Strategy:

- Discouraged people involved in beggary in hotspot/traffic junction areas with the help of police and local authorities;

In addition to preventive and treatment measures, SPYM calls for alternatives to incarceration.

- Encouraged institutionalized donations through transparent and digital receipts, with proceeds enhancing the quality of interventions;
- Mobilized people in begging on both individual and group levels at targeted hotspots.

Activities conducted in SPYM:

- Surveyed and identified people involved in beggary near the flyovers.
- Mobilized children and women involved in beggary.
- Provided shelter, basic services, and education.
- Offered therapeutic support and training (drama, dance, karate) for children.
- Delivered skill development and vocational training for reintegration.
- Enhanced services with medical check-ups, counseling, and gender sensitization.
- Aided sustainable settlement through job placement and skills training.

Success Stories

From beggar to role model

A child in his early life was marked by the harsh reality of begging at traffic junctions, where each day was a struggle for survival. Without a stable home or support, his future seemed bleak, overshadowed by uncertainty and the relentless fight for basic needs. He was rescued by SPYM from the streets beneath the Munirka flyover. He was brought to a shelter in Munirka, where he found not only a safe haven and regular meals but also the opportunity to pursue an education. Seizing this chance with remarkable determination, the child quickly stood out for his thirst for knowledge and consistent academic excellence. Enrolled in the 10th grade at Government Boys Senior Secondary School, RK Puram Sector 3, he soon began achieving scores above 85% in his studies.

A 12-year-old boy joined SPYM in 2022, along with his sister. Raised by their single mother, who worked as a maid, the family faced numerous challenges following their parents' divorce when he was still young. Living in Coolie Camp, he had many friends, who, unfortunately, did not support his educational ambitions. Instead, they introduced him to negative influences, leading him to adopt unhealthy habits such as consuming meethi supari (sweetened betel nuts) and bidi (a type of tobacco product). Concerned about his well-being, his mother reached out to SPYM in April 2023 after he fell ill with a persistent fever, which caused him to miss school and center classes. A medical checkup revealed lumps in his stomach, making it difficult for him to eat and drink. SPYM stepped in to provide full support, arranging for his treatment, medication, and offering emotional and psychological guidance. Upon returning to the centre, he started actively participating in all activities and classes, and has made significant progress in both his education and personal well-being.

The organization advocates for the need for dedicated treatment centers for individuals involved in begging and substance abuse. It advocates for a prioritization of treatment for children (both male and female), followed by women, and then adult men, recognizing the various segments within adult populations such as the disabled and mentally challenged.

SPYM has observed that first-generation school children are often bullied, and sympathetic peers may offer them substances soaked in solvents, leading to a cycle of addiction. To combat this, the organization advocates for

an Early Warning System in schools, designed to identify and assist children at risk of drug abuse. SPYM has developed a module called NAVCHETNA for this purpose, which has been adopted by 100 countries worldwide. Despite the Government of India's push for this model, state-level adoption remains a challenge.

In addition to preventive and treatment measures, SPYM calls for alternatives to incarceration. The organization suggests that individuals struggling with substance abuse should be sent to treatment centers rather than prisons. The focus should be on comprehensive, ongoing counseling rather than one-time interventions, as those living chaotic lives on the streets require consistent support.

To address the funding challenges faced by NGOs, the organization says that there is a need for creation of a dedicated fund where the public can contribute directly. SPYM has successfully done it in the past, where children living in their own shelter homes held up QR codes on the streets with the message “Bhiksha Nahi Shiksha” (Education instead of Begging). This initiative successfully garnered public support and donations, demonstrating the power of transparency and community involvement.

Despite its achievements, SPYM faces ongoing challenges. Although 100% of their shelter home residents now have Aadhar Cards, accessing social security schemes such as ration cards and housing remains a hurdle. Nonetheless, SPYM's impact is evident. Two children who were previously involved in begging recently scored 85% in their Board exams and were felicitated by Shri Virendra Kumar, Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment. Additionally, women from SPYM's RK Puram Shelter Homes are now employed as housemaids, earning between Rs. 15,000/- to Rs. 20,000/- per month, due to the training in various skills provided by SPYM.

Despite these successes, former residents still face social ostracism. The stigma attached to their pasts often overshadows their achievements. SPYM's ongoing efforts to train residents in housekeeping, security, and plumbing are crucial steps towards their reintegration into society.

Unwavering commitment and the impactful work of SPYM continue to inspire hope and drive change. As we forge ahead, our efforts highlight the urgent need for a holistic approach to address drug abuse and its intersections with begging and homelessness.

Suo motu cognizance

The media reports have been a very useful instrument for the National Human Rights Commission to bring to light the incidents of human rights violations. Over the years, it has taken *suo motu* cognizance of many such issues and brought succour to the victims of human rights violations. During August 2024, the Commission took *suo motu* cognizance in 10 cases of alleged human rights violations reported by the media and issued notices to the concerned authorities for reports. Summaries of some cases are as follows:

Many deaths within a month at a government-run shelter home

(Case No.3029/30/0/2024)

On 2nd August, 2024, the media reported that 12 inmates died within one month between 15th to 31st July, 2024, at a Delhi government-run shelter home- Asha Kiran, for people with mental impairment in Rohini. Reportedly, they included 10 women and two men. They exhibited similar symptoms i.e. loose motion and vomiting. The Commission observed that the reported deaths of inmates, in such a large number within a short period, indicated negligence on the part of the authorities. Therefore, it has issued notices to the Chief Secretary, Government of NCT of Delhi and the Commissioner of Police, Delhi calling for a detailed report. It is expected to include the status of the FIR in the matter, action taken against the responsible officials/ officers and steps taken/ proposed by the authorities to ensure that such incidents do not recur.

Death of 13 people due to drowning and electrocution amid heavy rain

(Case No.3030/30/0/2024)

On 2nd August, 2024, the media reported that at least 13 lives were lost in Delhi-NCR, including six due to electrocution and four due to drowning after falling into overflowing drains amid heavy rain, magnifying the

creaky infrastructure and civic negligence.

The Commission has issued notices to the Delhi Chief Secretary, Vice-Chairman, Delhi Development Authority (DDA), Delhi Police Commissioner, District Magistrate and the Commissioner of Police, Gurugram, Haryana, and the District Magistrate, Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, calling for detailed reports on the incidents.

The reports are expected to include the status of the FIR registered, action taken against the responsible officials/ officers and the status of compensation if any, paid to the next of kin of the deceased persons. The Commission would also like to know the steps taken/ proposed by the authorities to ensure that such painful incidents do not recur.

Rape and murder of a junior woman doctor at a state-run hospital

(Case No.2184/25/5/2024-WC)

On 9th August, 2024, the media reported that a junior woman doctor was found dead at the Seminar Hall of Kolkata's state-run R G Kar Medical College & Hospital. Reportedly, the body of the deceased bore scratches, indicating that there was some struggle at the time of the incident. The family has reportedly alleged that the victim was raped and murdered.

The Commission has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, West Bengal calling for a detailed report. The report is expected to include the present status of the investigation being conducted by the police and the action taken against the responsible persons as well as compensation, if any, paid to the next of kin of the deceased. The Commission would also like to know about the steps taken/ proposed by the authorities to ensure that such incidents do not recur.

Sexual assault of two minor female students by a school staff

(Case No.1773/13/30/2024)

On 18th August, 2024, the media reported that two minor girl students, aged four years, were allegedly sexually abused by a staff of a school in the Thane district of Maharashtra. The accused was engaged in cleaning the girls' toilet in the school, where he allegedly victimized them on 12th - 13th August, 2024. Allegedly, the registration of FIR was delayed by almost 12 hours after they complained to the police in the matter.

The Commission has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, Maharashtra, calling for a detailed report on the matter, including the reason behind the delay in the registration of an FIR, its status, and the health of the victim girls. It

would also like to know whether any counselling has been provided to the victims by the authorities or school management.

Sexual assault of 13 girl students at an alleged fake NCC camp

(Case No.1605/ 22/ 48/ 2024)

On 20th August, 2024, the media reported that 13 girl students were sexually assaulted at an alleged fake National Cadet Corps (NCC) camp at a private school in Krishnagiri district of Tamil Nadu during the 5th-9th August, 2024. 41 students, including 17 girls, attended the camp. Allegedly, a political leader convinced the school authorities that he would get them a unit of the NCC if they organized a students' camp. Four other schools in the district had also organized such camps.

The Commission has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, Tamil Nadu, calling for a detailed report. It is expected to include the status of the FIR and the status of the victim's health and their counselling. It has also asked the State authorities to reach out to the students who attended similar camps organized by the same person in the other schools of the district and to find out if anyone else was subjected to abuse or ill-treatment. The report should also mention the steps taken/ proposed to ensure that such incidents do not recur.

Death of several workers in an explosion at a private industrial unit

(Case No.1267/ 1/ 28/ 2024)

The media reported that at least 17 workers died, and 50 others were injured in a reactor blast at a private

industrial unit at Atchutapuram Special Economic Zone in Anakapalli district of Andhra Pradesh on 21st August, 2024. The reasons behind the explosion were not clear. The Commission has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, Andhra Pradesh, calling for a report after conducting a thorough investigation to check whether all the safety norms and legal provisions were being strictly followed by the owner of the industrial unit and supervised by the authorities concerned.

It is expected to include the status of the FIR, updated information on the health and medical treatment of the injured, disbursement of the compensation, and any other relief/ rehabilitation provided to the injured as well as the families of the deceased workers. The Commission would also like to know about the action taken against the delinquent officers responsible for the tragedy.

Food poisoning causes serious health problems

(Case No.1268/ 1/ 3/ 2024)

On 19th and 21st August, 2024, the media reported two incidents of food poisoning in Andhra Pradesh. In one case, the health of 70 students was seriously affected due to food poisoning at Chittoor Apollo Health University, while in the second case, three children died and 37 fell ill due to food poisoning at an orphanage in Anakapalli district. Both incidents, reportedly, indicated negligence of the concerned authorities towards ensuring proper food quality and the health of the inmates.

The Commission has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, Andhra Pradesh, calling for a detailed report on both matters. It is expected to include the

status of the FIRs and the health status of the victims. The report should also mention the steps taken/ proposed to ensure that such incidents do not recur.

Manual scavenging in the de-silting of stormwater cum sewage drain

(Case No. 1858/ 13/ 16/ 2024)

The media reported that every year before the onset of monsoon, the Mumbai municipal authorities engage 'seasonal sanitation workers' to clean the 2200 km long storm water cum sewage drain network with their bare hands, an act that amounts to 'manual scavenging'. Reportedly, no separate sewer lines from stormwater drains in Mumbai violates Section 239 of the Mumbai Municipal Corporation Act, 1888. Therefore, the 'de- silting of stormwater drains' is only eyewash to escape the liabilities of banned manual scavenging as the so-called 'seasonal sanitation workers' are forced to enter sewer lines without safety gear.

The Commission, therefore, has issued notices to the Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra calling for a detailed report on the matter. The report should also mention the steps taken/ proposed to address the issues. The Commission would also like to know if any proposal/ project is under consideration before the state government to separate the sewer and stormwater drains in Mumbai.

Recommendations for relief to the victims

One of the primary responsibilities of the National Human Rights Commission is to address cases of human rights violations, listen to the grievances of victims, and recommend appropriate relief in such instances. It regularly

takes up various such cases and gives directions and recommendations to the concerned authorities for relief to the victims. In August, 2024, monetary relief of more than Rs. 67.3 lakh was recommended for the victims or their next of kin (NoK) in the 15 cases,

wherein it was found that public servants had either violated human rights or been negligent in protecting them. The specific details of these cases can be downloaded from the NHRC website by logging the case number given in the table below:

S. No.	Case Number	Nature of complaint	Amount (Rs. in lakh)	Authority
1.	1588/4/9/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	4.00	Bihar
2.	458/33/16/2022- JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Chhattisgarh
3.	825/34/15/2018- JCD	Death in judicial custody	4.00	Jharkhand
4.	1289/11/12/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	7.50	Kerala
5.	2835/22/5/2021- JCD	Death in judicial custody	7.50	Tamil Nadu
6.	19253/24/1/2021- JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Uttar Pradesh
7.	33190/24/22/2021- JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Uttar Pradesh
8.	1749/24/8/2023- AD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Uttar Pradesh
9.	701/7/3/2024	Death in police firing	7.50	Haryana
10.	4494/30/9/2023- WC	Delay in registration of an FIR in a case of sexual assault	0.50	Delhi
11.	771/4/23/2023	Public authority's negligence resulting in the death due to electrocution	1.00	Bihar
12.	3541/12/13/2022	Public authority's negligence resulting in the death due to electrocution	5.00	Madhya Pradesh
13.	3115/18/0/2022	Public authority's negligence resulting in the death due to electrocution	5.00	Odisha
14.	437/9/3/2022	Misbehaviour by police personnel	0.30	Jammu & Kashmir
15.	1313/19/10/2022	Public authority's negligence resulting in the death due to electrocution	5.00	Punjab

Relief received by the victims

The Commission closed 8 cases, either on receipt of the compliance reports and proof of payment from the public authorities

or by giving other observations/directions. The amount of Rs. 38.5 lakh was paid to the victims or their next of kin (NoK) on the recommendations of

the Commission. The specific details of these cases can be downloaded from the NHRC website by logging the case number given in the table below:

S. No.	Case Number	Nature of complaint	Amount (Rs. in lakh)	Authority
1.	28/33/14/2020-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Chhattisgarh
2.	4512/30/0/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Delhi
3.	1666/7/18/2022- JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Haryana
4.	3355/7/7/2022- JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Haryana
5.	816/13/30/2021- JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Maharashtra
6.	316/7/22/2018- PCD	Death in police custody	7.50	Haryana
7.	4335/22/36/2022	Public authority's negligence resulting in the death due to electrocution	5.00	Tamil Nadu
8.	425/33/20/2023	Rape of a tribal girl child at a Government-run residential school	1.00	Chhattisgarh

Case studies

In many cases, the unlawful action, inaction or omission of State authorities may result in human rights violations of the people. Therefore, the Commission, under the Protection of Human Rights Act, not only recommends punitive action against the erring officials on a case-to-case basis but also monetary relief to the victims of human rights violations or their next of kin. The Commission also receives reports of compliance with its recommendations from the respective state authorities. Summaries of some of these cases are as under:

Suicide in judicial custody

(Case No. 682/34/16/2020-JCD)

The matter pertains to the suicide of an undertrial prisoner by hanging himself with the help of his 'Gamchha' (a piece of cloth like a towel) in the quarantine ward of the Birsa Munda Central Jail in Ranchi, Jharkhand in 2020. Based on the material on record received from the concerned State authorities in response to its notices, the Commission observed that the death of the prisoner showed negligence and lack of vigil on the part of Jail authorities.

Therefore, the Commission recommended that the Government of Jharkhand pay Rs 5 lakh as relief to the victim's family besides action against the erring prison staff. The State Government informed that the prison warden was dismissed from service due to negligence in duty and the

recommended amount of relief was paid to the next of kin of the deceased prisoner.

Denial of pension

(Case No. 10275/24/34/2023)

The matter pertained to the delay in getting the old age pension dues to a widow despite the submission of an application for the same to the concerned authorities in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh in 2023. The Commission took cognizance of the matter and sought a report from the State Authority. However, having received no concrete response showing progress in the matter, the Commission issued conditional summons to the Principal Secretary, the Department of Social Welfare, Uttar Pradesh to appear before it on 10.07.2024 along with a requisite additional/ status report towards the disbursement of old age

pension to the complainant. However, his personal appearance was dispensed on getting a report on 3.7.2024 stating that the pension application of the victim was approved on 03.06.2023 and the pension amount of Rs. 10,000/- for the financial year 2023-24 for 10 months has now been paid to the victim through a direct benefit transfer scheme.

Delay in payment of retirement benefits

(Case No.192/13/16/2024)

The matter pertained to the delay in the payment of retirement benefits to an employee of the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) Mumbai, who retired in July, 2023. The complainant also alleged that he was not getting a full monthly pension. Subsequent to the Commission's notices, reminders and summon proceedings, the NYKS

eventually informed that the full pension amount has been paid to the complainant along with the pending pension amount from August, 2023 till March, 2024.

Torching of a shop by a mob during an agitation

(Case No. 361/7/19/2024)

The matter pertained to the loss caused after a mob torched the complainant's showroom of new scooters/ motorcycles during an agitation in Sonipat, Haryana in 2016. He alleged that the incident caused a substantial financial setback to him to the tune of approximately Rs. 1 crore 15 lakh. An interim compensation of Rs. 5 lakh only was provided by the State Government as an immediate relief. Another sum of Rs. 34,55,000/- was given by the insurance company. However, despite requesting the State authorities to fulfill their assurance to compensate the remaining amount to cover the loss, it was not paid. The Commission pursued the matter with the concerned state authorities and eventually, it was informed by the

Government of Haryana that the remaining amount of Rs. 33,27,525/- as relief was paid to the complainant in May, 2024.

Custodial death

(Case No. 316/7/22/2018-pcd)

The matter pertained to the death of a man in police custody in Palwal, Haryana in 2018. On consideration of reports, it was found that the enquiry Magistrate concluded that the allegation levelled by the victim's family members of custodial torture could not be substantiated as they could not submit/ produce any cogent proof in support of their allegations of torture in police custody resulting in his death. However, the Commission, with the help of a medical expert, found the evidence of custodial torture of the victim during police remand. He had sustained several injuries due to blunt objects consistent with beating and there were multiple contusions on different body parts of the deceased. It was also noticed that there were grave lapses on the part of the autopsy surgeon while performing the post-

mortem of the deceased which was contrary to the practice and guidelines issued by the Commission, thus amounting to an incomplete autopsy.

The Commission observed that Under Article 21 of the Constitution, a person detained or arrested lawfully by the police is entitled to be treated with dignity befitting a human being and that legal detention does not mean that he could be tortured or beaten up. Therefore, it recommended that the Government of Haryana pay Rs. 7.5 lakh as relief to the next of kin of the deceased, which was paid.

Spot enquiry

(Case No. 2615/30/2/2024)

A spot inquiry was conducted in East Delhi from 28th to 30th August, 2024 on the allegations of non-registration of FIR in a case of threat and harassment.

Field visits

The Chairperson, Members and senior officers of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India visit various places in the country from time to time to assess the human rights situation and the status of the implementation of the Commission's advisories, guidelines and recommendations by the respective state governments and their concerned authorities. They also visit shelter homes, prisons, observation homes, etc. and sensitize the government functionaries to make necessary efforts towards ameliorating the cause of human rights. Submission of timely reports by the state authorities to help the Commission in the early disposal of cases of human rights violations is also emphasized.

NHRC Acting Chairperson visits Telangana and Andhra Pradesh

On 12th and 30th August, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani visited Osmania Medical College, Girls Hostel in Telangana and ST Girls Hostel in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. She interacted with

both students and staff to address various concerns related to the condition of the hostels.

She found that the infrastructure of both the hostels was in poor condition. The buildings were dilapidated with



► NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani with the girls in their hostel

unhygienic conditions. There were no proper food services, sufficient beds or bed sheets. The presence of male individuals on the premises at night raised additional concerns about the safety and security of the female students. The lack of bathrooms and basic healthcare facilities for the students was also an issue of concern. There were no designated wardens present in the facilities. The Acting Chairperson pointed out the concerned authorities to take necessary steps in this regard.

On 26th August 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani visited Gundayapalem and Devarampadu villages in Andhra Pradesh. Several fishermen and women highlighted their issues of human rights violations including the lack of shelter, clean water, boats, hospitals, connectivity, etc. The Acting Chairperson expressed concern over their problems and briefed them about the functioning of the Commission, its jurisdiction & how and when to approach it for redressal of their grievances relating to human rights violations.

Visits of Special Rapporteurs and Special Monitors

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has designated 14 Special Rapporteurs to assess human rights conditions across various regions of the country. They conduct visits to shelter homes, prisons, observation homes, and similar institutions, compiling reports for the Commission that detail their observations and suggestions for future action. Additionally, the Commission has also appointed 21 Special Monitors tasked with overseeing specific thematic human rights issues and reporting their findings to the Commission. Throughout August, 2024, both Special Rapporteurs and Monitors conducted visits to numerous locations.

Special Rapporteur

- From 15th - 20th August, 2024, Shri Mahesh Kumar Singla visited the District Drug De-Addiction and Rehabilitation run by the Health Department, Punjab Government and Red Cross Drug De-addiction Centre, Guru Nanak Sarai, Sangrur to assess the condition of the inmates and the facilities made available to them.



- From 26th - 31st August, 2024, Shri Umesh Kumar visited Anganwadi Centres in Assam to assess the human rights situation and the condition of the centres.
- From 21st - 31st August, 2024 Smt. Suchitra Sinha visited various institutions including colleges and Anganwadi centres in Jamshedpur in Jharkhand to assess the human rights situation and facilities available there.



- From 26th - 31st August, 2024 Dr. Ashok Kumar Verma visited Leh and Diskit, to assess the human rights situation in the District Jail, Correctional Care Institutions for Boys & Girls and Pagir-NGO run set-up for disabled persons.

Special Monitor

- From 7th to 9th August, 2024, Shri Rakesh Asthana visited prisons in Punjab to assess the human rights situation within the facility.
- From 26th - 29th August, 2024, Dr. Muktesh Chander met the Police Commissioner-in charge of cybercrime for data collection about cybercrime in Delhi. He visited the cybercrime police station of Central Districts and State Forensic Science Laboratory, the Cybercrime capacity building training unit of Delhi Police and the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre to study the incidents of cybercrime in the State, their conversion in FIR, recovery of money in cyber frauds, police preparedness in dealing with cybercrimes.

Capacity building

Short-term internship

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India is mandated to protect and promote human rights and build awareness about the same. For this purpose, it has been conducting internship programmes, collaborative training

and various other activities to expand its outreach and human rights sensitization. Internships are conducted in person as well as in online mode. The online internships are organized to ensure that students from remote areas can join without any expenses on their travelling and stay in Delhi.

From 5th to 16th August, 2024, the Commission held a two-week online short-term internship programme. About 100 university-level students from different academic backgrounds, shortlisted from over 1,300 applicants, were selected for the internship, out of which 92 students successfully completed it.

Acting Chairperson, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, in the valedictory session, urged the interns to evolve as



▶ NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani addressing the valedictory session



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressing the interns

Human Rights Defenders to promote and protect the rights of weaker sections of society. She also asked the interns to be considerate of the problems faced by vulnerable people and take action to address their concerns. She said that the Commission is committed to organizing such internship programmes for the students to enhance their sensitization towards upholding and protecting the basic human rights of all the citizens of the country.

Earlier, inaugurating the internship, the NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal said that human rights values and protection thereof is part of Indian ethos. It is embedded in the social and cultural fabric of the country. He elaborated on India's historical role in providing refuge to persecuted people from different countries, reflecting its deep-rooted value system of protecting human rights. He emphasized that the ancient Indian ethos of empathy and compassion was part of basic human values.

Besides the interactive sessions by various experts and senior officers of the Commission, the interns had an opportunity to engage in virtual visits to jail, police station, NGO, shelter home, etc. to gain a better understanding of their functioning.

Collaborative programmes

Programme for IPS Probationers on Human Rights

The NHRC, India is working with national academies of All India Services to sensitize IAS, IPS & IFS officers, and build their capacity to protect and promote human rights as they work on the ground. From 12th – 14th August, 2024, the Commission organized its first three-day capacity-building programme on human rights for Phase II IPS Probationers of 75 Regular Recruit (2022 batch) in collaboration with the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy (SVPNPA), Hyderabad. The 10-lecture module had various speakers, including senior officers from the Commission and other subject experts.

On 12th August, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani inaugurated the programme. She emphasized the importance of

safeguarding human rights and dignity by promoting justice, especially for the poor and marginalized, ensuring equitable distribution of the fruits of development. Shri Amit Garg, Director, SVPNPA, said that this specialized human rights module in Phase-II training aims to equip IPS Probationers with the essential knowledge and sensitivity to uphold and promote human rights in their professional duties.

NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressed the first session on the 'Overview and evolution of Human Rights Worldwide and Nationally, Psychological Approaches to Human Rights and Human Rights Duties Embedded in Indian Constitution.' He spoke about the evolution of human rights jurisprudence in India, tracing its origins from ancient times, to the making of the Indian Constitution. Mentioning the key historical milestones related to the human rights world over, he talked about the Magna Carta, the United States Bill of Rights, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

Shri Lal emphasized the crucial role of psychological perspectives in understanding human rights. He also explored the role of the Union, State and Concurrent lists within the VII Schedule, emphasizing the intertwined nature of human rights and governance. He highlighted the practices at both national and international levels, underlining the importance of upholding human rights through effective legal frameworks and proactive governance.

In the second session on 'Police and Human Rights and Ethical Dilemma in Police Working,' Shri Ajay Bhatnagar, DG (Investigation), NHRC, India outlined the essential duties of the



police in maintaining law and order, handling public agitations, performing VIP duties, and managing situations during pandemics, disasters, and counter-terrorism operations. Measures to prevent custodial crimes and extrajudicial executions were emphasized to protect the rights of an individual in police custody.

Addressing the third session on 'Supreme Court Cases relating to Upholding Human Rights during the Investigation of Criminal Cases and Maintenance of Law and Order, Major Human Rights violations in India and other important Laws,' Shri Joginder Singh, Registrar (Law), NHRC, India, spoke about the procedural aspects involved in registration of FIR, arrest, pre-arrest bail, and fair investigation in light of the court judgments. He highlighted the rights of vulnerable groups, including women, children, SC/ST communities, the elderly, differently-abled individuals, and the LGBTQI+ community, and outlined the roles of various agencies and relevant legislation in protecting their rights.

Shri Viplav Kumar Choudhry, Joint Director, CBI in the fourth session on 'NHRC Guidelines and Advisories,' elaborated on the law enforcement practices. He said that these guidelines cover a wide range of police operations, ensuring adherence to human rights standards during arrests, police encounters, and incidents of rape or sexual assault. He highlighted the importance that must be given in the procedures for deaths in police custody, including mandatory magisterial inquiries and the use of video recording during post-mortem examinations. He also spoke about the interrogation procedures, police remand, and the functioning of Human Rights Cells within police headquarters.

Shri Choudhry also underscored the importance of scientific aid in investigations, procedures during protests, and preventive measures for suicides in prisons. Additionally, he highlighted the Commission's Advisories addressing the concerns of unorganized workers, illegal trade in human organs, and the strengthening of police-public relationships.

In the fifth session on the 'Victim Compensation Matters,' Former Member, NHRC, India, Shri Rajiv Jain emphasized the State Government's role in victim compensation and gave an overview of the provisions under Sections 357 and 357A of the CrPC (Section 395 and 396, BNSS, 2023). He also underscored the importance and implementation of the National Legal Services (NALSA) Scheme in addressing compensation for crimes against women, and compensation provisions under the POCSO Act and the SC & ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

He gave significant Supreme Court rulings that have established precedents for compensating victims of illegal detention/ confinement, custodial torture, mob lynching, and other abuses of power. Highlighting the importance of these mechanisms in safeguarding and restoring their



rights, he also briefed about the crucial role of the District Legal Services Authority in ensuring justice and prompt compensation to the victims.

Two-day training programme on 'Human rights in India' in Manipur

The University of Manipur, in collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India concluded a very well-attended 'Two-Day Training Programme on Human Rights in India' in Manipur University on 30th August, 2024. This programme marks a significant step in advancing Human Rights education and advocacy in the North-East, with continued commitment from NHRC to fostering respect and understanding of Human Rights. Over 100 legal experts, academicians, Human Rights Defenders, and students attended the training programme, which was addressed by several prominent speakers over eight key sessions on various aspects of human rights.

Prof. Rameshchandra Borpatragohain, former Dean, opened the sessions with an overview of Human Rights principles and practices. Dr. N. Pramod Singh, Associate Professor Dhanamajuri University discussed the role of Human Rights institutions in India. Former Judge, Manipur High Court, Justice Kh. Nobin Singh explored the intersection of Human Rights and the Criminal Justice System, while Shri Keisham Pradipkumar, Chairperson, Manipur Commission for Protection of Child Rights addressed child rights challenges in Manipur. Mrs Sobita Mangsatabam, Secretary of Women Action for Development, highlighted the role of NGOs in gender justice, and Mr Meihoubam Rakesh, Director,



Human Rights Law Network, Manipur, spoke about the constitutional safeguards on arrest and detention. Mr. Rinku Khumukcham, Chief Editor, Imphal Times, discussed the role of media in promoting and protecting human rights.

In the valedictory address, Shri Bharat Lal, Secretary General of the NHRC emphasized the importance of the true meaning in the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and Directive Principles of State Policy. He also spoke on the constitutional and legal recourse available to citizens for securing justice, especially Article 32 in seeking justice. He reiterated the government's responsibility in upholding civil, political, cultural, and socio-economic rights.

Shri Lal stressed the need to foster fraternity among people as enshrined in the Constitution, urging reliance on constitutional and legal provisions rather than violence to achieve justice. He asserted that upholding Human Rights must be an internal commitment, not an externally imposed duty.

He emphasized that the Preamble, the soul of the Constitution, encapsulates the core ideals of equality, justice, liberty, and fraternity. He asserted that any form of violence is fundamentally a violation of human rights, highlighting that war, terrorism, and violence are among the greatest threats to human life and dignity. He urged students and teachers alike to actively promote peace and respect for the human rights of all, emphasizing that these efforts are essential for securing prosperity and a bright future for the younger generation.

Shri Lal also highlighted NHRC's recent camp sitting in Guwahati, where 25 cases of alleged Human Rights violations in Manipur were addressed. He reaffirmed the NHRC's commitment to protecting and promoting



human rights for all, calling for collective resolve and sustained efforts to ensure that respecting human rights becomes a way of life ensuring improvement in living standards and dignity for all.

NHRC, India continues to work with renewed vigour in partnership with Central and various state governments, their parastatal organizations, academic institutions, NGOs, and human rights defenders, especially youth and women to protect and promote human rights and treat every human being with respect and dignity, as a way of life.

Other training programmes

Besides this training programme, the Commission also supported 06 collaborative human rights awareness workshops in August, 2024. Each workshop had about 100 participants. The themes included, among others, the rights of children, women, and women empowerment.



The institutional collaborative workshops were held at Centre for Research at Prince Shri Venkateshwara Padmavathy Engineering College, Chennai, AAA College of Engineering and Technology, Virudhunagar & Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan College of Engineering, Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Gobindgarh & Khalsa College of Education, Amritsar in Punjab, training branch of Mizoram Police at the CID complex, Aizawl, Mizoram, Vivekananda Global University, Jaipur, Rajasthan and Shri B B Raghuvanshi College of Law, Institute of Legal Education & Research, Nandurbar, Maharashtra.



Students' visit

On 9th August, 2024, 18 students and two faculty members from Bimal Chandra College of Law, Murshidabad, West Bengal, visited NHRC, India, where senior officers briefed them about the Protection of Human Rights Act, the functioning of the Law & Investigation Divisions and complaints management system of the Commission.



Awards

NHRC, India Inspector, Shri Balveer Singh Shekhawat awarded the Police Medal for Meritorious Services

Shri Balveer Singh Shekhawat, Inspector, National Human Rights Commission, India has been chosen for the Police Medal for Meritorious Services on Independence Day on 15th August, 2024. He has been posted in the Investigation Division of the NHRC, India since 21st May, 2020 as an Inspector on deputation from the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), which he joined as a Sub-Inspector in 1995. Shri Shekhawat has been part of various spot enquiry teams of the NHRC including among others, post-poll violence in West Bengal, the Hooch tragedy in Saran district, Bihar and custodial death in Jail at Bokaro district of Jharkhand. He has received appreciation on several occasions for his dedication and quality work in the conduct of spot enquiries, as well as for the analysis of the case files of human rights violations. Besides this, Shri Shekhawat also contributed actively during various national and international human rights events of the NHRC.



Winners of NHRC online human rights photography competition

To seek peoples' direct participation in promoting and protecting human rights, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India organizes various activities like photography and short film competitions on human rights, debates and moot court competitions etc. In line with this approach, the Commission organized an online human rights photography competition from 07th June to 07th July, 2024 in collaboration with MyGov.

It was aimed at igniting people's thought processes to capture visual impressions of human rights situations and positivity in adversity in our day-to-day lives to draw others' attention to them for awareness and sensitivity. The participants were given 10 themes covering socio-economic, cultural, and political rights.

A total of 642 valid entries were received including 471 photographs through MyGov and 171 from the NHRC website. 20 photographs were shortlisted by the three sub-committees comprising senior officers of the Commission and external experts for consideration of the Full Commission Jury to decide the winners. After due deliberations, the Full Commission Jury comprising the Acting Chairperson, Secretary General, Divisional Heads and an external expert did not find any photograph suitable for the 1st and 2nd prizes. However, one photograph was chosen for the third prize of Rs. 5,000/- and 5 for the consolation prize of Rs. 2,000/- each.

Awarded photos



3rd prize: Dimpal Pancholi
Theme: Developing initiatives improving life and living standards



Consolation prize: Sourav Das
Theme: Women (rights, challenges, their contribution to the development of the nation)



Consolation prize: Sankari Roy
Theme: Women (rights, challenges, their contribution to the development of the nation)



Consolation prize: Alok Avinash
Theme: Environmental Hazards impacting life on planet Earth



Consolation prize: Somenath Mukhopadhyay
Theme: Environmental Hazards impacting life on planet Earth



Consolation prize: Shourjendra Datta
Theme: Environmental Hazards impacting life on planet Earth

News from State Human Rights Commissions

The promotion and protection of human rights is always a work in progress given the ever-expanding dimensions of human life and related challenges. In India, besides the democratically elected governments constitutionally committed to ensuring the welfare of the people by protecting their basic human rights, there are institutions of legislature, judiciary, a vibrant media, the National Human Rights Commission and State Human Rights Commissions, as well as the other National Commissions and their state counterparts working as guardians of rights of various segments of society. This column intends to highlight the exceptional activities of the SHRCs undertaken to protect and promote human rights.

Tripura Human Rights Commission

The Tripura Human Rights Commission (TSHRC) was established in January 2016. The Commission, led by Chairperson, Justice S.C. Das disposed of 28 cases, including *suo motu* among the newly registered and pending cases from 1st July to 30th August, 2024. It also recommended the payment of Rs. 8,50,000/- to the victims as relief in 04 cases of human rights violations in the State.

The TSHRC also visited the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Old Age Home, a state-run home for the distressed people to assess the facilities for the inmates, which it found satisfactory by and large. However, it recommended that the State Government shift the mentally ill persons among the inmates to a separate accommoda-



tion with treatment facilities. They also recommended the installation of solar panels for uninterrupted power supply in the Home. The TSHRC also recommended the deployment of a yoga instructor and a physiotherapist for the inmates.

Voices of victims getting relief

Since its inception on 12th October, 1993, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has brought succour to various victims of human rights violations or their next of kin through its interventions. This column carries a brief extract on the voices of such victims who have been the beneficiaries of the NHRC's recommendations implemented by the different government authorities.

Denial of compensation for land loss

(Case no. 201/18/18/2023)

Shri Radhakanta Tripathy complained in 2023 that a senior citizen was not given compensation after he lost his land in the Salandi Sanskar Yojna

in village Nayapatana, District-Bhadrak in Odisha which started during 2006-2007. The victim had been struggling to obtain the compensation which was already given to the other similarly placed persons. After the Commission's notices to the concerned authorities, he was eventually paid compensation for his acquired land. A letter has been received from the victim conveying his thanks to the Commission for its intervention due to which he has received a payment of Rs. 2,25,540/- from the authorities.

Wrong deduction from gratuity amount after retirement

(Case no. 4595/30/0/2023)

The complainant from Gautam Budh Nagar, New Delhi alleged that he retired as an Under Secretary from the Ministry of Defence on 31st March, 2017. The amount of Rs. 3,29,962/- was wrongly and unlawfully recovered from his

retirement gratuity on account of excess payments despite clear instructions of DoPT that recovery from a retired employee or an employee due to retire within one year would be impermissible. Despite his repeated attempts to get back the wrongly deducted amount, there was no action even after 6 years of his retirement. He thanked the Commission for its intervention in the matter due to which eventually he got the amount.

News in brief

- On 5th August, 2024, NHRC, India Registrar (Law), Shri Joginder Singh delivered a lecture in Vertical Interaction Course on Internal Security and Human Rights at Internal Security Academy, CRPF, Mount Abu, Rajasthan.
- On 6th August, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani chaired a meeting of the Advisory Board comprising the Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal, senior officers and external experts to select the content and to discuss to enhance the value of the Hindi Journal for its readers. The main objective of the meeting was to select articles for publication in the current issue of the Commission's annual Hindi journal, 'Human Rights: Nai Dishayein.'
- On 10th August, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani addressed as the Chief Guest, a national conference on 'Citizenship, Immigration and Refugees: Issues, Challenges and Roadmap for Future India' organized by IIT Kharagpur, West Bengal. She spoke about India's refugee & immigration challenges and the need to reassess the legal framework. She also briefed about the NHRC's proactive approach and efforts for the human rights of refugees in India.
- On 15th August, 2024, NHRC, India celebrated Independence Day at its premises in New Delhi. Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal hoisted the tricolour and congratulated all on this joyous occasion. DG (I), Shri Ajay Bhatnagar was also present. Shri Lal said that this was the day to remember the sacrifices of our previous generations for granting us the freedom to build a modern nation. He said that we all must remember the freedom fighters and dedicate ourselves to upholding those ideals to ensure civic and political rights as well as cultural and socio-economic rights of every citizen in the country. NHRC officers, staff & their families as well as CISF personnel were present.
- On 16th August, 2024, NHRC, India Director, Lt Col. Virendra Singh attended a one-day 'Consultation of Review of Milestone Setting for National SDGs Indicators' organized by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.
- On 18th August, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani visited Hyderabad for the inauguration of the New YMIS Building, Swantaya Veera Savarkar Auditorium, Rani Rudrama Devi Meeting Hall, Swami Vivekananda Library, Dhanvantrai Clinic, organized by the Young Men's Improvement Society
- On 21st August, 2024, Shri Dushyant Tyagi, DSP, Investigation Division, NHRC, delivered a lecture on 'Investigation of Custodial Death with Case Studies' during a three-day offline course on 'Training of Trainers for Investigation Officers in New Criminal Laws' at the Central Detective Training Institute (CDTI), Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh.
- On 25th August, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani was the Chief Guest of a program on 'Indian Literature, Culture and Human Rights' organized by Akhila Bharatiya Sahitya Parishad, Hyderabad. She spoke about the functioning of the Commission and its complaint management system. She also emphasized the

importance of people's active participation in promoting & protecting human rights and evolving as human rights defenders for a peaceful coexistence.

- On 28th August, 2024, Shri Kulbir Singh, DSP, Investigation Division, NHRC, delivered a lecture on the topic of 'Protection of Human Rights and Role of NHRC: Components, Function, Objective, Important Cases decided by NHRC – Procedure in respect of interrogation-death in police custody NHRC guidelines encounter deaths' at Delhi Police Training Centre, Rajinder Nagar, Delhi.
- On 29th and 30th August, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani interacted with students at NRI Medical College, Visakhapatnam & BVK Degree & PG College, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. They were informed about the establishment of NHRC, its functions, varied interventions, the kind of cases dealt with, instrumentalities followed, and roles played in protecting and promoting Human rights. Being in pursuit of noble medical education and profession, they were reminded of their specialized role and responsibilities, urging them to contribute as HRDs for the betterment of society and the nation.
- On 31st August, 2024 NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt. Anita Sinha addressed the inaugural session of a National Consultation for Transgender Persons wherein the Union Law & Justice Minister of State, Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal was the Chief Guest. She highlighted the steps taken by the NHRC in

safeguarding the rights of transgender persons, the Commission's functioning and how they can approach it if they face inaction by the public authorities in matters of violence and discrimination. The consultation was organized by the Dostana safar, supported by UNDP, Bar Council of India, and Delhi University Law Faculty.

Forthcoming events

On 3rd September, 2024,

NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani will attend the inaugural function of a 3-day international conference organized by NHRC Nepal in Kathmandu on 'Gender inclusion in NHRIs'.

From 17th September, 2024,

NHRC, India will begin its two-week online short-term internship programme for university-level students.

On 30th September, 2024,

NHRC, India will organize an open house discussion on 'Rights of Children of Sex Workers and Children from Marginalized Communities.'

The 12th October

is the Foundation Day of the NHRC. However, this time being a holiday, the Commission has decided to organize a function to mark the day with a conference on older persons' rights on 18th October, 2024.

Complaints in August, 2024

New complaints received	5,073
Disposed off including old cases	6,061
Under consideration of the Commission	7,008

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