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HUMAN RIGHTS Newsletter



A Monthly publication of the National Human Rights Commission, India



Inside:

Vijayawada camp sitting
Core Group Meetings
Human rights protection regime in India



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National Human Rights Commission, India

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and disseminate it widely acknowledging the NHRC.



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“The greatness of humanity is not in being human, but in being humane.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

Monthly Recap

From the desk of the Secretary General & Chief Executive

March, 2024 marked a period of intense activities in the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India as it addressed a variety of issues on human rights. The Commission organized a day-long camp sitting at Vijayawada to hear the pending cases of human rights violations in Andhra Pradesh.

The camp sitting was significant since it facilitated immediate relief to the victims of human rights violations in the presence of the senior officers of the state government. It also provided a platform for dialogue between the Commission, government officials, and NGOs on various issues of human rights violations peculiar to the State.

This was an opportunity to sensitize the official machinery in dealing with cases of human rights violations and to impress upon them the necessity of timely submission of reports to the Commission to help it ensure justice to the victims of human

rights violations. The Commission also had a meeting with the senior state government officials and discussed various cases and advisories to ensure action. The media briefing following the camp sitting was also instrumental in amplifying the Commission's role among the masses. Our cover story is focused on the outcome of this camp sitting.

The Commission's various thematic core groups comprising experts, senior officers and NGOs help in identifying gaps between the policy and implementation and make necessary recommendations to the government to ameliorate the cause of human rights. In March, 2024, four core group meetings were organized on the issues of older persons, women and children, the right to food and persons with disabilities. Each has been briefly reported upon in this edition.

On 8th March, 2024, NHRC India celebrated International Women's Day under the theme 'Promoting Respectful &

Dignified Work Places for Women'. The Commission promotes safe, secure, respectful and dignified workplaces for women and girls through its diverse activities. The NHRC strongly supports women's right to safe workplaces, and believes it is the collective agenda of India and its people to ensure that women are entitled to it. Women in India are at an inflexion point, with society, families and governments facilitating their leapfrogging. Among STEM graduates in the country, 43% are girls, and in the top institutions, girls lead in the list of toppers, making their march visible in every walk of life.

Initiatives taken by the government in the last decade to ensure basic amenities for all are not only improving the quality of life of people but also helping women and girls explore opportunities to improve their own lives and contribute to the family income. Women's participation in the workforce is crucial for better quality of life and higher economic growth in the country.



It is equally important to support girls coming from remote tribal and forested areas, other rural areas and economically poor families.

The month also provided an opportunity to discuss water and climate-related issues which have a direct and sustained impact on human life and rights. The World Water Day on 22nd March, 2024 provided an opportunity to delve into the vital intersection between water access, gender equality, and human rights. Women play a pivotal role in water management and they can be a transformative power at the grassroots in water conservation and sustainable development.

The concept of a circular economy of water, grey water treatment and reuse, the profligate use of water in agriculture, and the lack of appreciation of its economic and environmental consequences needs to be taken down to the grassroots level in both urban and rural India for an improved quality of life and higher economic returns. States that have improved their water governance and achieved water security have experienced sustained double-digit growth. In India, governments, civil society and communities at all

levels are focusing on ensuring piped potable water to every household. This massive effort has converted water into everyone's business, leading to achieving water security in the country.

Expanding on their existing partnership, India and Nordic countries can share their technology, innovations, best practices, and governance framework to ensure water security at both the national and international level. Measurement and monitoring of water supply by using Internet of Things (IoT) devices - a collective network of connected devices and the technology, grey water collection, treatment and reuse, and involvement of local communities and NGOs, are the ways to ensure adequate water for all.

Let's innovate, use technology, join hands and work together, and focus on water governance to ensure that everyone has access to sufficient amounts of water for different purposes. This partnership can bring water security in the Global South and help in achieving SDGs, food and ecological security. In this way, we can create a sustainable future for all.

While the interactions with the foreign delegates provided an opportunity to learn about their

human rights issues they witnessed and addressed, it was also a chance to share with them the successful story of India's human rights journey, where a country with diverse culture has been focusing on improving the quality of life, enhancing ease of living and ensuring dignity to every person. With people-centric growth at the heart of its development model, India is ensuring basic amenities and assured public service delivery, with a special focus on marginalized sections of society such as transgenders, mental health patients, trafficked children, beggars, orphans, destitute, and widowed women.

India continues to set an example for other countries in providing respectful lives to all citizens and a robust rights violation grievance registration and redressal system. This edition of the Newsletter carries an article on this aspect. I hope the contents of this newsletter will provide an engaging reading experience to all.

Bharat Lal

Secretary General &
Chief Executive, NHRC India



Cover story

Camp sitting at Vijayawada

On 6th March, 2024, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India organized a day-long camp sitting at Vijayawada to hear cases of human rights violations in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri Arun Mishra, Members, Dr. Dnyaneshwar M. Mulay, Shri Rajiv Jain and Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani heard the cases in the presence of Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal, Registrar (Law), Shri Surajit Dey, senior officers, the concerned officers of the state government, and the complainants. After hearing 30 pending cases, the Commission recommended about ₹ 80 lakh as relief to the victims of human rights

violations and the payment process has been initiated for the victims.

Some of the other cases that the Commission examined and passed directions include, no compulsion for the medical students to stay in hostels that charge exorbitant fees, compensation of ₹ 25,000/- in a case where the Sarpanch was illegally kept in custody by the police, order for payment of interest on delayed payment of pensionary benefits, and immediate medical examination of a disabled person to provide an increase in the pension.

The Commission passed final orders in 17 matters of which 05 were

closed after recommending compensation. The state functionaries were directed to put up the proposals before the POCSO Court in cases of compensation for child victims of sexual offences. They were also directed to ensure that payment of compensation under the 'Victim Compensation Scheme' is as per the guidelines framed by the NALSA.

After hearing the cases, the Commission held a meeting with the Chief Secretary, Director General of Police and senior officers of the Andhra Pradesh government to create an enabling environment to preserve, protect and promote the human rights of citizens in the



NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri Arun Mishra, Members, Dr D.M. Mulay, Shri Rajiv Jain and Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani at the camp sitting



Hearing of cases in progress at the camp sitting

state. The Chairperson and Members of the Andhra Pradesh State Human Rights Commission also participated in the meeting.

The Commission asked the officers to submit action-taken reports on its various Advisories. These included Mental Health, Bonded Labour, Right to Food & Safety, Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), Truck Drivers, Ocular Trauma, Prevention of Suicide in judicial and police custody, manual scavenging and others. They were asked to ensure timely submission of reports to the Commission so that justice to the victims of human rights violations could be expedited. It was also emphasized that the compliance reports on the Commission's recommendations be submitted without delay. The State Chief Secretary assured full compliance and cooperation in this regard.

Later, the Commission also interacted with the representatives of civil society organizations, NGOs and human rights defenders (HRDs). They raised a gamut of issues related to human rights

violations and brought to attention the lack of facilities including access to education and transportation for persons with disabilities. They also pointed out the abuse of children in children's homes, human trafficking, and lack of employment opportunities for transgender persons, non-repatriation of a Bangladeshi woman etc.

The Commission appreciated the work being done by the NGOs and HRDs in the State and encouraged

them to continue doing so without fear or favour. The interaction concluded with the observation that the continued partnership of the NGOs and HRDs with the NHRC will go a long way in strengthening the human rights regime in the country. They were informed that they can file complaints of human rights violations online through hrcnet.nic.in. The one-day camp sitting concluded with the Commission briefing the media on the outcome of the sitting.



The Commission interacting with the NGOs/CSOs/HRDs in progress

Consultation

Core group meetings

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.

Based on these discussions, the Commission from time to time holds national seminars to address the obstacles in existing laws and suggest amendments. In March 2024, four core group meetings were organized in hybrid format to discuss the growing concerns surrounding women, older per-

sons, the right to food, and persons with disabilities. The insights gathered in these meetings help the Commission to further deliberate upon various suggestions in the matter, enabling it to provide more insightful inputs to the government for improvement.

Tracing missing women

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India organized a core group meeting on Women on 14th March, 2024. Chairing it, Member, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani said that currently, there is no Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to help the state machinery in tracing missing women and girls. Despite robust legislation, the poor implementation of these laws hampers the ability of the victims to get justice. A lot of these girls and women come from tribal belts and marginalized communities and often live in abject poverty. In the absence of an SOP, the police often have a dismissive attitude to intervene in such matters.

The meeting aimed to come up with practical solutions and recommendations that could be conveyed to

government authorities to address the issue more holistically so that the issue of trafficking for sex, organ donation, forced domestic work etc could be addressed better.

The focus of the discussion was on three themes;

- Missing women and girls in India: Causes
- Factors and the ugly reality, Institutional mechanisms
- Challenges and the way forward



NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani chairing the meeting

NHRC, India Member, Dr. Dnyaneshwar Manohar Mulay, Director General (Investigation), Shri Ajay Bhatnagar, Joint Secretary, Smt. Anita Sinha, Senior Superintendent of Police, Smt. Ilakkiya Karunakaran, experts from the field of law, academia, and social work, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) and the National Commission for Women (NCW) and other senior officers of the Commission, took part in the discussion.

NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt. Anita Sinha detailed the factors that have led to the disturbing number of women reported missing, like poverty, forceful abduction, and trafficking by luring young women in the name of high-paying jobs in big cities.

Asserting the need to empower and up-skill women, Dr. Meena Gopal, Associate Professor, Pondicherry University, highlighted the importance of providing vocational training, through mediums like Yuvati Mela. She said that it was crucial to have a convergence of already existing schemes and local

bodies, which had a strong role to play in protecting and promoting the rights of these women. Smt. Meenakshi Negi, Member Secretary, NCW, stated that solutions for rehabilitation ought to be area and problem-specific, and must be tailored to the needs of the survivors.

Some of the suggestions recommended included;

- Increase sensitization of all the stakeholders including families, police personnel, and activists on the issues concerning the welfare of women;

- Engagement of Panchayats and other local bodies to be made more proactive in ensuring the welfare of women;
- Focus should be on providing targeted and need-based solutions instead of having uniform rehabilitative measures across the country;
- Rescued survivors should be given all the necessary support needed for their reintegration into mainstream society



Scenes from the meeting in progress

Rights of Older Persons

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India organized a core group meeting on the rights of older persons on 12th March, 2024. Chairing it, Member, Dr Dnyaneshwar M. Mulay said that the fast disintegrating family

structure has played a significant role in causing ageing parents to be deemed as a 'burden' on their children and kin. There should be a reliable monitoring body in place and practice that addresses and redresses this burning issue of elderly parents becoming the

victims of disintegrating joint family norms.

He also emphasized the role of old age homes and how the environment therein plays a crucial role in maintaining a quality of life for its residents. He said that old age

homes should not be treated as remand facilities with the undertone of taboo and stigma. They should foster an environment of living a life of health, quality and dignity. He said that the gaps in policy-making and effective implementation need an immediate response, which included suggestions like regularly updating the websites of the concerned ministries and their databases, among various others.

Initiating the discussion, NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Shri Devendra Kumar Nim highlighted the aim of the meeting. The following agendas were discussed in the three technical sessions:

- Assessing current institutional responses and support available to the elderly;
- Analyzing the socio-legal aspect of over-burden on children, and challenges thereof; and
- Way Forward: Strengthening institutional care mechanisms

NHRC, India Member, Shri Rajiv Jain, senior officers, domain experts, the representatives from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, civil society and NGOs participated in the discussions. Some of the suggestions recommended were as follows:

- Regularly review and update laws related to senior citizens;
- Conduct outreach programmes to raise awareness about the rights of older persons;

- Improve efficiency in allocating funds for elderly welfare programs;
- Promote digital literacy among the elderly population;
- Conduct need-based assessment to identify the specific challenges faced by different elderly demographics; and
- Establish standard operating procedures (SOPs) for elder care across different institutions.



NHRC, India Member, Dr D.M. Mulay chairing the meeting

Right to food and public distribution system

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India organized a core group meeting on the right to food with a focus on the Public Distribution System (PDS) on 19th March, 2024. Chairing the meeting, NHRC Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani highlighted the importance of the PDS in serving over 80 crore citizens of India and its effectiveness in addressing the specific nutritional needs of vulnerable groups.



NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani chairing the meeting

While she highlighted the significance of the scheme in the nation's march towards ensuring universal food security, she also drew attention to the persisting problems impacting the PDS, such as leakage and diversion of food grains. She said that a multi-pronged approach is required to address these issues for more effective implementation of the scheme. She also highlighted the significance of the One Nation One Ration Card Scheme (ONORC) in ensuring accessibility to food grains for migrant labourers.

Co-chairing the discussions, NHRC Member, Dr. Dnyaneshwar M. Mulay highlighted the responsibility and importance of NHRC core group members in policy formulation. He emphasized that PDS has a very important role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He stressed that the discussions should look into the gaps between the policy and its implementation to reach out to the needy through this scheme. He also emphasized the need to improve the quality of mid-day meals.

Earlier, Shri Devendra Kumar Nim, Joint Secretary gave an overview of the discussions highlighting the gravity of the issues surrounding food security and nutrition in our nation which needed to be looked into, identified and eliminated with constructive suggestions through such discourse. The sub-agenda of the meeting was as follows:

- **Effectiveness of the Public Distribution System (PDS)** - The discussion centred on the PDS' role in addressing the nutritional needs of specific vulnerable groups, such as pregnant



NHRC, India Member, Dr D.M. Mulay co-chairing the meeting

women, lactating mothers, and children. The aim was to tackle the problem of the double burden of nutrition effectively.

- **Corruption and leakage of food grains** - The meeting addressed the implementation issues and challenges related to corruption and leakage of food grains in the PDS.
- **One Nation One Ration Card Scheme (ONORC)** - The implementation, challenges, and potential solutions of the ONORC were discussed.

The meeting saw the participation of representatives from various ministries, autonomous bodies, civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), central and state universities, eminent subject-matter experts, medical professionals, and research scholars who participated in the deliberations to reflect on the government's commitment to public service and its successes in implementing policies and programs that

have had a positive impact on the lives of millions of Indians.

It was emphasized that more efforts were needed to address food grain leakage in PDS, and dietary diversity with affordable nutritious food through Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and take-home ration programme. The other most commonly raised issues included comprehensive and multi-sectoral strategies to tackle the challenges associated with double and triple nutrition burdens. These burdens refer to the coexistence of under-nutrition, over-nutrition, and micronutrient deficiencies within a population; measures to promote dietary diversity and ensure the availability and affordability of nutritious foods for all sections of society for maintaining good health and preventing diseases.

The participants were unanimous on the need to ensure the right to food through the effectiveness, integrity, and transparency of the PDS to serve as a beacon of hope in the fight against hunger and malnutrition.

Persons with Disabilities

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India organized its core group meeting on disabilities with a focus on mapping inclusivity from the lens of skill development and employability avenues for the persons with disabilities in India on 20th March, 2024. The meeting in hybrid mode was chaired by the NHRC, India Member, Dr Dnyaneshwar M. Mulay in the presence of Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, Joint Secretary, Shri Devendra Kumar Nim, core group members, representatives of the concerned ministries, civil society, NGOs and other senior officers of the Commission.

Dr Mulay said that the entrepreneurial ventures providing inspiring case studies towards the employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs) needed to be shared so that their model could be emulated at a larger scale. He said that concerted efforts are required to be made to identify and fill the gaps in the

implementation of the existing laws and policies related to the welfare of PwDs. For this, a collaborative approach is required among all stakeholders.

Dr Mulay also said that periodic auditing of all the public facilities, including government offices, hospitals, and schools from the point of view of ensuring convenient access to PwDs is an important step towards ensuring inclusivity. The PwDs should be given incentives, health and medical services, and there should be an end to bullying and stigma at all levels. He also called for amplifying awareness about various services meant for PwDs.

Earlier, NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Shri D.K. Nim gave an overview of the aim of the meeting. The discussions were divided into three sessions

- Addressing Gaps in Inclusive Education

- Navigating Implementation Blocks in Employment of PwDs and
- Way Forward for Building an Inclusive Nation with an Empathetic Approach.

Some of the recommended suggestions were as follows:

- Awareness not just at an empathetic level, but also at a policy and advocacy level needs to be increased;
- Monitor non-compliance of measures given in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act for the welfare of PwDs;
- Create an SOP at a central level to ensure the benefits of the RPwD Act reach the grass-root level beneficiaries too;
- Review the current housing and building codes to implement disability-friendly infrastructure;
- Address deficiencies in accessibility guidelines and implementation thereof;
- Work on fostering an empathetic environment to alleviate the social stigma attached to disability;
- Increase the percentage of benchmark disability to make it a broader spectrum;
- Increase budget allocation for educational institutions to



NHRC, India Member, Dr D.M. Mulay chairing the meeting



promote and incorporate a disability-friendly curriculum and infrastructure;

- Create more specific and accessible courses that would aid skill development and employability opportunities for PwDs;
- Have regular need-based assessments and impact assessments, ensuring stricter compliance with UNCRPD guidelines;
- Encourage entrepreneurial support and strategic private

sector partnerships would truly help in achieving the goal of economic independence and dignity of PwDs.

Besides the NHRC Members and senior officers, the meeting was attended by representatives from various stakeholder groups including organizations like Centre for Promotion of Social Justice, Sense International India, NCPEDP, Rising Flame, Nipman Foundation; entrepreneurial ventures like TERASINEE, MITTI Café and academicians from the University of Delhi. A fresh perspective was

presented by the business model of the Mitti Café and Terasinne, which focused on the advantages of providing the right entrepreneurial platforms and avenues for PwDs, to truly realize their potential and focusing more on their 'ability' than 'disability'. Mitti Café is the first privately owned café presently operating on the premises of the Supreme Court of India and is managed entirely by persons with disabilities. The café is set to also operate at the Rashtrapati Bhawan.

Article

Multi-layered human rights protection regime in India

India has a very robust multi-layered pluralistic and unique human rights protection regime. It is supported by an inclusive Constitution in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and sound statutory provisions. The Preamble of the Constitution of India has its genesis in the promotion and protection of human rights by "securing to its all citizens; Justice, social, economic and political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; Equality of status and opportunity; and to promote among them all; Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation."

This places India uniquely as a role model for many countries, including

the developed and advanced economies, some of which don't even have a human rights institution. Apart from the National Human Rights Commission as an umbrella and apex human rights institution with nation-wide reach for various issues of rights violations, seven other National Commissions are looking into the problems of sectoral rights violations.

These include the National Commission for Backward Classes, National Commission for Minorities, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, National Commission for the Scheduled Castes, National Commission for the Scheduled Tribes, National Commission for Women and the

Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities. The Chairpersons of these seven National Commissions are deemed Members of the NHRC, making it a pluralistic institutional mechanism for the discharge of functions specified in clause (b) to (j) of the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993 to address and build awareness about various issues of human rights and the violations thereof to ensure that basic amenities and constitutional guarantees are provided to everyone by the systems of governance.

Similarly, in the states, there are counterparts of these seven National Commissions functioning along with the State Human Rights Commissions (SHRCs). The SHRCs are not under the NHRC but are as



autonomous and independent as the NHRC is at the national level. They also have an overarching reach, providing a forum to register the complaints of rights violations and get relief at the level of the state.

As per the Protection of Human Rights Act passed by Parliament, the NHRC, India consists of a Chairperson who has been a Chief Justice of India or a Judge of the Supreme Court, one Member who is or has been a Judge of the Supreme Court; one Member who is or has been a Chief Justice of a High Court; and three more Members out of which at least one shall be a woman, who are appointed from amongst persons having knowledge or practical experience in matters relating to human rights under a Presidential Warrant on the recommendations of the high powered Committee. This six - Member committee comprises the Prime Minister as the Chairperson, and the Speaker of Lok Sabha, the Union Home Minister, Leaders of Opposition in both the Houses of Parliament and the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha as the Members, indicating a sound statutory sanction to the process in a multi-party democracy. Such a strong human rights institution is unparalleled in the world.

The secretariat in its functioning supports the Commission. It is headed by a Secretary General and the Chief Executive Officer with five substantive Divisions comprising specialist officers and staff. These Divisions include, i.) Law for processing complaints, ii.) Investigation for enquiries, iii.) Research for expert consultations, advisories and

research studies, iv.) Training for capacity building and human rights awareness and v.) Administration for facilitating, human, finance and infrastructure resources, international and national coordination, media engagements, publications etc.

The civil servants posted in the Commission are very experienced officers of All India Services and are selected by a constitutional body – the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). Irrespective of any political dispensation at any given point in time, they owe their allegiance to the Constitution of India and the statutory mandate of the institutions. They are posted in various capacities in the Centre and state governments in addition to the autonomous bodies like the NHRC, India and other National and State Commissions. As part of India's uniquely placed administrative governance set-up, these senior officers in autonomous institutions like the NHRC, are better equipped in terms of facilitating dialogues at their peer level in the Centre and the state governments, to convince and ensure the smooth compliance of the Commission's recommendations in the interest of human rights which is the prime objective in a democracy.

In addition to these autonomous National and State Commissions, there is an independent judicial system in the country besides a vibrant multi-party democracy, civil society and the media. The citizens always have an option to approach the courts from the District level to the High Courts and the Supreme Court. There is also a provision in the Protection of Human Rights Act

for setting up Human Rights Courts to provide speedy trial of offences arising out of violation of human rights. For this, the State Government may, with the concurrence of the Chief Justice of the High Court, by notification specify for each district a Court of Session to be a Human Rights Court to try the said offences.

These institutions have brought succour to several victims of rights violations over the years and helped in mainstreaming the human rights concerns of various segments of society in India, which is the world's largest democracy having the highest population of more than 1.4 billion people. In its 30-year journey, the NHRC, India alone has resolved more than 22 lakh cases and recommended the payment of monetary relief of more than ₹ 230 crores to the victims of human rights violations. Several open hearings, camp sittings, and spot investigations have been conducted by it. The Commission's work to promote and protect human rights is underlined by reviews of countless bills and laws, conferences, research projects, twenty-eight advisories, and more than 100 publications, including monthly newsletters, thousands of media reports, and participation in international forums.

It has a unique mechanism of bringing people and communities together in advancing human rights sensibilities and culture through its internship programmes, moot courts, debates, photography and film competitions on human rights, quiz and painting competitions, etc. Over the past three decades, the Commission's work has generated



expectations from various sections of society. However, at times there may be cases beyond its jurisdiction, like cases already under judicial scrutiny in a court of law or already in consideration before another national or state Commission or beyond the scope of the existing legal provisions.

The Centre, the State governments and the courts value the role and recommendations of the NHRC, India. Most of its recommendations are complied with by the government ensuring relief to the victims of human rights violations, which is its one of the prime objectives. The Apex Court, as well as the High Courts of the country, have remitted and referred cases concerning human rights to the NHRC. The remittance of monitoring mental health institutions of Gwalior, Agra, and Ranchi to the Commission by the Supreme Court and the enquiry of post-poll violence in the state of West Bengal by the Calcutta High Court are a few such examples.

An objective assessment will show that the Commission has continued to address the ever-expanding scope of human rights and recommended corrective measures through its advisories. The rights and welfare of the LGBTI community, truck drivers, environment and climate change, victims of ocular trauma, rights of older persons, right to dignity to the dead, persons with mental health issues, and Child Sexual Abuse Material are some of such notable advisories in the recent past.

Some of the other important interventions of the Commission include recommending amend-

ments in about 97 laws, which are discriminatory to the person with Hansen's disease. The Government has enhanced compensation for bonded labour based on NHRC advisory at the pre-trial stage. The Commission actively provides care for all 47 government mental health facilities in the nation, as well as the rights of poor widows, the criminal justice system, persons with disabilities, seafarers, and LGBTQI people.

The NHRC, India has also put in place various other special mechanisms to assess the human rights situation in the country and address the concerns of various segments of society. For this purpose, it has set up various core groups of experts, representatives of civil society and non-government organizations, and several government functionaries in different thematic areas. These core groups meet at regular intervals to discuss and have an understanding of the existing legal professions or the lack thereof and the implementation status of various welfare schemes and give suggestions to the Commission for consideration of making necessary recommendations to the government for improvement.

Besides this, the Commission has several Special Rapporteurs and Special Monitors to conduct an on-the-spot assessment of the human rights situation, particularly in public institutions like hospitals, schools, observation homes, shelter homes, reform homes, elderly care centres, child care centres, prisons, etc. The Special Rapporteurs are deputed in different zones for this purpose. The Special Monitors focus on the thematic issues of

human rights like bonded labour, human trafficking, prisons, child labour etc. They also visit the related facilities and see on the ground the implementation status of the government policies, laws and welfare measures to report any shortcomings and sensitize the concerned officials.

Its expanded outreach helps any person to file complaints online through its HRCNet portal without any hassle and track the real-time status of his complaint. This portal has also been boarded by the State Human Rights Commissions and all the State authorities for quick submission of reports. The online complaint filing system is linked to over five lakh Common Service Centers and the National Government Services Portal.

NHRC, India is a founder member of the Asia Pacific Forum of Human Rights Institutions (APF). It has been the vocal partner of the human rights institution regime at the international forum having a status of 'A' accreditation with the Global Alliance of Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI). The fact remains that a few technicalities apart, which may be unique to different democracies, the NHRC, India has been constructively playing an important and impactful role at various national and international forums towards the promotion and protection of human rights.

For more than 76 years since its independence from the British regime, India and its institutional framework continue to serve as a model for democracies in showcasing how to address the ever-expanding scope of human



rights including holding free and fair elections from local self-government institutions, corporations to Assemblies and Parliament, which are a benchmark of ensuring human rights and civil

liberties. The multi-party Indian democracy with diverse faiths, multiple languages and regional cultural identities, continues to sustain successfully its unity in diversity on the path to all-around

growth backed by four strong pillars of the legislature, judiciary, executive and a vibrant media.

- Jaimini Kumar Srivastava,
Deputy Director
(Media & Communication)

Important intervention

Suo motu cognizance

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

Lack of toilets in a government school

(Case No.193/36/7/2024)

The media reported that the girl students were facing hardships due to the lack of toilet facilities in the Devarakonda Zila Parishad High School for Girls in Nalgonda district, Telangana. Reportedly, the students started using the urinals at Sulabh complexes but they had to stop when asked to pay money for using it. After this, the girls started using free toilets at Devarakonda

Bus Stop, however, the management stopped them. The Commission has issued a notice to the Chief Secretary, Government of Bihar calling for a detailed report. It should include the steps taken/proposed to be taken to ensure that such incidents do not recur.

Death of five persons after consuming spurious liquor

(Case No.203/19/18/2024)

The media reported that five persons died after consuming spurious liquor in Gujran village in Sangrur District, Punjab in the intervening night of 19th-20th March, 2024. Reportedly, five others were undergoing treatment at a hospital. The Commission has issued the notices to the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, Punjab calling for a detailed report in the matter. It should include the status of the FIR registered by the police, medical treatment of the victims, and compensation if any, granted to the aggrieved families. The Commission would also like to know about the action taken against the

delinquent officers, responsible for the incident.

Delayed police action in a case of sexual assault

(Case No.883/4/10/2024)

The media reported that in Darbhanga District of Bihar, the police failed to know till the death of a 13-year-old rape victim that her parents and the village Panchayat tried to settle the case by asking her tormentor to pay ₹ 1.25 lakh to the family. Reportedly, after receiving the amount, the victim's family sent her to the house of the accused saying nobody would marry her. She stayed there for five days before being thrown out. Subsequently, she was sent by her parents to her elder sister's house where she died 16 days after her sexual assault on 1st March 2024. Reportedly, the victim was not provided with any medical treatment. The Commission has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, Government of Bihar calling for a detailed report.



Recommendations for relief

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 March, 2024, besides the number of cases taken up daily by the Member Benches, two cases were heard by the Full Commission. Monetary relief of more than ₹ 109 lakh was recommended for the victims or their next of kin (NoK) in

the 24 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:

Sr. No.	Case No.	Incident	Amounts (₹ in lakh)	Authority
1.	1352/1/5/2023-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Andhra Pradesh
2.	78/1/5/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Andhra Pradesh
3.	914/1/5/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Andhra Pradesh
4.	381/33/11/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Chhattisgarh
5.	268/30/5/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Delhi
6.	1112/7/8/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Haryana
7.	436/7/5/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Haryana
8.	125/9/5/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Jammu & Kashmir
9.	1335/34/16/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Jharkhand
10.	1394/34/3/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	08.00	Jharkhand
11.	108/11/13/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Kerala
12.	191/20/19/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Rajasthan
13.	4/21/3/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Sikkim
14.	12766/24/26/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	04.00	Uttar Pradesh
15.	18459/24/3/2021	Custodial torture	02.00	Uttar Pradesh
16.	1121/4/26/2023	Unlawful detention	00.50	Bihar
17.	406/34/12/2023	Abuse of power	00.50	Jharkhand
18.	3996/12/29/2022	Children	03.50	Madhya Pradesh



Sr. No.	Case No.	Incident	Amounts (₹ in lakh)	Authority
19.	1380/18/3/2023	Children	04.00	Odisha
20.	2005/18/8/2023	Death due to electrocution	05.00	Odisha
21.	16495/24/28/2020	Denial of treatment during pandemic	05.00	Uttar Pradesh
22.	1216/6/2/2022	Miscellaneous	02.00	Gujarat
23.	300/6/21/2023	Miscellaneous	07.00	Gujarat
24.	27432/24/31/2022	Miscellaneous	07.50	Uttar Pradesh

Payment of relief to the victims

The Commission closed 25 cases, either on receipt of the compliance reports and proof of payment from the public authorities or by giving other

observations/ directions. An amount of ₹ 102.5 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 No.	Incident	Amounts (₹ in lakh)	Authority
1.	2090/1/21/2020-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Andhra Pradesh
2.	2444/4/10/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Bihar
3.	268/30/5/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Delhi
4.	678/30/9/2020-JCD	Death in judicial custody	04.00	Delhi
5.	891/30/9/2020-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Delhi
6.	219/8/4/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	03.00	Himachal Pradesh
7.	173/9/7/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Jammu & Kashmir
8.	670/34/11/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Jharkhand
9.	108/11/13/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Kerala
10.	12766/24/26/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	04.00	Uttar Pradesh



S. No.	Case No.	Incident	Amounts (₹ in lakh)	Authority
11.	4121/24/42/2020-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	Uttar Pradesh
12.	1865/25/19/2019-JCD	Death in judicial custody	02.50.	West Bengal
13.	859/25/22/2020-JCD	Death in judicial custody	05.00	West Bengal
14.	1088/34/14/2019-DH	Death of child of a female prisoner	00.50	Jharkhand
15.	2842/7/3/2022	Death due to electrocution	04.00	Haryana
16.	1791/18/7/2023	Death due to electrocution	04.00	Odisha
17.	2005/18/8/2023	Death due to electrocution	05.00	Odisha
18.	4688/30/1/2021-WC	Rape	05.00	Delhi
19.	7271/30/2/2022-WC	Rape	00.50	Delhi
20.	1121/4/26/2023	Unlawful detention	00.50	Bihar
21.	6850/30/8/2021	Abuse of power	01.50	Delhi
22.	1461/4/23/2017	Malfunctioning of medical professionals	09.00	Bihar
23.	874/12/8/2021	Irregularities in govt. hospitals/primary health centers	05.00	Madhya Pradesh
24.	141/18/3/2023	Inaction by the state /central govt. officials	02.00	Odisha
25.	233/30/8/2020	Murder by anti-social elements	07.00	Delhi

Case studies

In many cases, the Commission received compliance report from the respective state authorities. Summaries of some of these cases are as under:

Death of newborn baby

(Case No. 1088/34/14/2019-DH)

The matter pertained to the death

of a newborn baby of a woman in the custody of Mandal Jail, Pakur, Jharkhand in 2019. Based on the material on record, the Commission observed that when the baby showed respiratory distress after his heart stopped working, he was not provided oxygen in the Jail and even in the ambulance while being taken to the hospital. The mother of

the bay was also not associated during the magisterial enquiry which was a basic requirement. The newborn baby died due to negligence on the part of the Jail administration, for which the State is responsible vicariously. Accordingly, it recommended that the Government of Jharkhand pay a relief of ₹50,000/- to the next of kin



of the deceased, which was sanctioned.

Unlawful detention and custodial torture

(Case No.1121/4/26/2023)

The matter pertained to the illegal detention and harassment of a man in the Vikram Police Station, Patna, Bihar accusing him of recording a video of Holi celebrations by police personnel. Based on the material on record, the Commission found that the police abused and tortured the complainant and detained him for more than 24 hours. His mobile phone was also returned to him after the intimation of the Commission. The State Government informed that departmental action was initiated against the erring police officers. Since the allegations of police excesses were found true, the Commission recommended that the Government of Bihar pay a relief of ₹ 50,000/- to the victim.

Custodial death

(Case No. 108/11/13/2021-JCD)

The matter pertained to the custodial death of a man in Sub Jail, Chavakkad, Thrissur, Kerala in 2019. Based on the material on record, the victim committed suicide by hanging inside the conference hall of the jail in broad daylight. Based on the material on record, the Commission noted that the judicial inquiry ruled out foul play in the death but held that the State is vicariously liable for its failure to ensure the safety of the inmate in its custody. Accordingly, it recommended ₹ 5 lakh to the NoK of the deceased.

Man killed during the laying of MTNL Wifi Lines

(Case No. 233/30/8/2020)

The matter pertained to the death of a man while laying the Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) Wifi Lines in Hari

Nagar, New Delhi in 2020. Based on the material on record, the Commission held that the negligence of the contractor and subcontractor cannot be denied in the case. Given the agreement between contractor M/s Pratap Technocrats Pvt. Ltd. and MTNL, it was held that in case of any injury or loss to any workers for lack of proper precautions on the part of the contractor, the contractor would be held responsible and has to be compensated for the same. In case MTNL has to incur any expenditure in this regard, the same would be recovered from the dues/bills of the contractor from security deposits or both. Accordingly, the Commission recommended that the Chairman, MTNL pay ₹7 lakh as relief to the next of kin (NoK) of the deceased. It is informed that out of this, ₹2 lakhs has been paid by the subcontractor, and the remaining amount of ₹5 lakh is to be paid by the contractor.

Spot enquiries

The following spot enquiries were conducted during March 2024 by the Commission's officers in its Investigation Division:

Sr. No	Case number	Complaint	Date of enquiry
1.	1810/7/3/2023	Pathetic condition of roads in front of the school posing serious threats to students and parents in Faridabad, Haryana.	1 st March, 2024
2.	3504/30/11/2023	Abduction, kidnapping of complainant's brother in Delhi.	1 st March, 2024

Field visits

Visits of Special Rapporteurs and Special Monitors

The National Human Rights Commission, India, has appointed 15 Special Rapporteurs to keep watch on the human rights situations in different geographical zones in the country. They visit shelter homes, prisons,

observation homes, etc., and submit reports to the Commission on their observations and suggestions for further course of action. Besides this, the Commission has also appointed 17 Special Monitors, who have been assigned thematic

issues of human rights to keep a watch on the related development in the country and report to the Commission accordingly. During March, 2024, several places were visited by the Special Rapporteurs and Special Monitors.

Special Rapporteurs

From 26th-31st March, 2024, Dr Ashok Kumar Verma visited District Jail at Tehri and Observation Home & Old Age Home at Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand to assess the living conditions of the inmates and the facilities made available to them.

From 18th-19th March, 2024, Shri Madan Lal Meena visited the Sub-divisional Jail in the newly created district of Kotputli-Behror, Rajasthan to assess their living conditions and human rights situation.

From 26th-31st March, 2024, Shri Umesh Kumar visited the BDS Government Higher Secondary School for the hearing impaired in Kahilipara, Guwahati city, Assam for an inspection to assess the condition of the inmates and the facilities available to them.

Special Monitors

From 25th-29th March, 2024, Shri Veerendra Singh Rawat visited a police training institute prone to human rights violations in Uttar Pradesh.

From 4th-6th March, 2024, Dr. Yogesh Dube visited Surat, Gujarat from 4th - 6th March, 2024 to the Schools for the visually impaired, Mukhbadhir Vikas Trust Deaf & Dumb School and Mavjat Parents Association of Mentally Challenged Persons and Charitable Trust. He also visited Rajasthan from 17th-19th March, 2024 for on-the-spot inspection and data collection.

From 12th-20th March, 2024, Shri Balkrishan Goel visited Old Age Homes, Child Care Institutions, Observation Homes and Anganwadi Centres in Una, Kangra and Hamirpur, Himachal Pradesh.



From 28th-30th March, 2024, Shri Sudhir Choudhary visited the One Stop Centre in Faridabad, Haryana. He also held discussions with the Commissioner and field officers regarding the steps to combat human trafficking, rescue and relief operations.

From 12th-15th March, 2024, Dr. Muktesh Chander visited Kolkata, West Bengal to study the incidents of cybercrime in the state, their conversion in FIR, recovery of money in cyber frauds, police preparedness in dealing with cybercrime.



Training - Building bonds through awareness of human rights

Training of Trainers course for Prison officers

NHRC, India organized its 3rd one-week residential Training of Trainers course on Human Rights for prison officers from all States and UTs from 18th-22nd March, 2024. About 32 prison officers including three female prison superintendents attended the five-day programme. The objective of the course was to train the trainers who impart basic training to the new recruits enabling the trainers to sensitize and inculcate cultural ethos in trainees at the entry level itself to respect and ensure the human rights of jail inmates.

Addressing the valedictory session, the NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri Arun Mishra congratulated the prison officers for completing their training of trainers course on human rights. He expressed the hope they would take forward the knowledge to their colleagues for an overall improvement in prison administration including prisoners' perspective. He encouraged them to adopt new technologies in their functioning and study best international practices with a humane face to bring about a change in their image in public perception. Member, Dr Dnyaneshwar M. Mulay, DG (Investigation), Shri Ajay Bhatnagar, Registrar (Law), Shri Surajit Dey, Joint Secretaries, Smt Anita Sinha, Shri D.K. Nim, DIG, Shri P. K. Baliram and other senior officers were present.



Earlier, addressing the inaugural session on 18th March, 2024, the NHRC, India Member, Shri Rajiv Jain said that besides pointing out the theoretical and legal aspects of the functioning of the prisons, the training by the NHRC intends to give an orientation to the prison officers to see through the victim's perspective including their challenges of dealing with long trials, non-submission of bail bonds, their work wages in prison, etc. He also spoke about various issues concerning prisons briefed about the objectives of punishment, its attributes, and the prison officer's role in changing the lives of prisoners thereby contributing to society at large.



NHRC, India Member, Shri Rajiv Jain addressing the officers in the inaugural session

The Director General (I), Shri Ajay Bhatnagar expressed the hope that the training of trainers program will not only enhance the capabilities of the participants but also foster a culture of collaboration, instil values such as integrity, professionalism, and knowledge-sharing within the law enforcement community with a commitment to the service of humanity. The role of a trainer is pivotal in shaping the next generation of prison officers.

NHRC, India Member, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani also interacted with the participants. She spoke about how perceptions of dealing with prisoners through punishment have changed from retributive to reformatory theory. Several resource persons from various fields of law enforcement and academics addressed the sessions on various issues relating to prisons. They included senior field officers of the rank of Director General (both serving and retired), Deputy Inspectors General, and Sr. Superintendents (Prison), respectively from Prison departments of Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and New Delhi, along with Director, Bihar Institute of Correctional Administration shared practical knowledge and experience on the various topics of Human Rights issues in prison. The Special Rapporteurs of the Commission, faculties from academic institutions such as The Indian Law Institute, Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences, and internal faculty of the Commission also contributed to the training programme by taking sessions.



NHRC Chairperson, Members, and senior officers with the participants of the training course

Training of trainer programmes for police officers

Besides this residential training of trainers programme in its premises, the NHRC, India also collaborated with the Maharaj Ranjit Singh

Punjab Police Academy, Phillaur, Punjab for a three-day Training of Trainers Programme on Human Rights from 12th-14th March, 2024. NHRC, India Director, Lt. Col

Virender Singh addressed the participants online on the rights of people in custody and related guidelines of the Commission.



Participants of the training of trainers' programme

Student & faculty visits

The National Human Rights Commission invites college-level students and their faculty members to visit the Commission to raise awareness of human rights among them and to gain an understanding of human rights, their protection mechanism, and how it functions under the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993. During March, 2024, about 199 students and 20 faculty members from seven colleges along

with the faculties visited the Commission for such orientation. They included students and faculties from three colleges in Maharashtra - Sonopanth Dandekar Law College, Palghar, TMV's Lokmanya Tilak College, Pune, and Yashvant Rao Chavan Law College, Kharghar. Besides them, groups of students and faculties of Jindal Global Law School, Sonipat, Haryana, Parul Institute of Law, Vadodara, Gujarat,

KLEF College of Law, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh and National Forensics Sciences University, Delhi also visited the Commission.

NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Shri D. K. Nim and other senior officers briefed them on the functioning of the Law & Investigation Divisions and the Complaint Management System of the Commission and related aspects. They were also administered the human rights pledge.





Workshops

The Commission also supported 20 collaborative human rights awareness workshops in March, 2024. Each workshop had about 100 participants. On 5th March, 2024 the NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt Anita Sinha presided as Chief Guest and addressed the inaugural session at the National Law University, Jodhpur, Rajasthan. The themes included human rights in the digital age, cyber security measures, and women's empowerment.

Another collaborative workshop was organized on 'Exploring the Intersection of Gig Economy, Labour and Human Rights' in collaboration with the Centre for Human Rights Studies of Ramanujan College, Delhi on 19th March, 2024. Smt Sinha, as the Chief Guest, emphasized that there is an urgent need to assess international best practices for gig worker protections. Discussions like these are even more important now that the gig economy, labour, and human rights are all so clearly outlined.

The other institutional collaborative workshops were held at Karim City College, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, Shri S S Shasun Jain College for Women, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, MTU Foundation in Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, Shri Gramodhyog Sansthan, Unnao, Uttar Pradesh, Christ University (deemed to be), Bangalore, Karnataka, Ishwar Sharan Degree College, Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, Kisan Seva Charitable Trust, Deoria, Uttar Pradesh, Dayal Singh College, Delhi, BMS Institute of Technology



and Management, Bengaluru, Karnataka, Parul University, Vadodara, Gujarat, Bharti Seva Sadan Trust, Araria, Bihar, and Maharshi Karve Stree Sikshan Sansthan, Kharvenagar, Pune, Maharashtra, Bharti Seva Sadan Trust, Araria, Bihar, Central University of Karnataka, Kalaburagi,

Karnataka, Biju Patnaik State Police Academy in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

The various themes included human rights in the digital age, cyber security measures, and women's empowerment, tribal development, community identity and legal empowerment of minorities, Law

and women in human rights, contemporary challenges, rights of disadvantaged women, judiciary, and women, the role of human rights defenders, gender equality and the role of media and civil society in promoting human rights.



Moot Courts

To promote awareness about the legal acumen and aspects of human rights among law students, the Commission sponsors Moot Court competitions. During March, 2024, one such collaborative event was organized on 15th March, 2024 at NHRC, India in collaboration with the National Law University Meghalaya. NHRC, India Registrar (Law), Shri Surajit Dey presided as the Guest of Honour. The competition's theme was on the critical issues of online harassment and cyber-bullying. About 38 teams participated.



NHRC, India Registrar (Law), Shri Surajit Dey addressing the inaugural session

Awards

NHRC short film awards function

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India organizes an annual competition of short films on human rights

encouraging citizens of all ages to think and express themselves on various aspects of human rights. The 2023 competition received 139

entries. Out of these, after initial scrutiny, 118 went into the fray for the awards which were decided by a Jury chaired by the NHRC Chairper-



NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri Arun Mishra addressing the short film award ceremony



NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressing the gathering

son comprising Members, senior officers, and external experts.

On 21st March, 2024, the Commission organized a function to present awards to the seven winners of its short film competition at its premises. NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri Arun Mishra, Members, Dr Dnyaneshwar M. Mulay, Shri Rajiv Jain and Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal, Director General (Investigation), Shri Ajay Bhatnagar, Registrar (Law), Shri Surajit Dey, Joint Secretaries, Smt. Anita Sinha, Shri Devendra Kumar Nim and external jury member, Smt. Rachna Sharma senior officers and guests of the award winners were present.

Addressing the function, Justice Mishra congratulated the winners

and said that their films highlight their intent to change the mindsets necessary for removing barriers to socio-economic development in society. The awarded films have touched on different subjects including the challenges in the realization of the rights of Transgenders, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, children, and women.

He said that we must empathize with the sufferers and the films are very potent and effective means of capturing emotions facing humanity and make feel the pain in the life of the people to bring about the desired change in society. These days people do not have much time, therefore, short films become a very effective tool for carrying impactful

messages concisely in a limited time which is challenging. The shorter the better to convey a deep-rooted message to serve the purpose of social change by triggering a discourse in society. He said that realizing this potential of short films and to encourage people from all walks of life, the Commission opened a platform through a competition for short films on human rights in 2015.

Earlier, NHRC, India Member, Dr. Dnyaneshwar M. Mulay, who chaired the second stage of the jury process, announced the names of the winners and said that over the years the NHRC short film competition has gained a lot of significance as each year the quality of film has been improving. This also underscores the fact that people's awareness of human rights and the need to sensitize others about them has been increasing. This competition serves the purpose of a bridge between the NHRC and the youth of the country to spread awareness about human rights by making very effective films about various aspects impacting the life and dignity of humans.

NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal in his opening remarks gave an overview of the short film competition of the NHRC, which started in 2015 and that over the years the number of films in the competition has increased. He said that every film carried some meaning related to human rights and it was challenging to choose the best among them for the awards. These films must reach the masses. He expressed hope that in the coming years, the number of quality films will further increase.



NHRC, India Member, Dr D.M. Mulay announcing the winners of the competition



Shri Bhushan Arun Mehare's film, 'Kiran-A Ray of Hope' was awarded the first prize of ₹ 2 lakh, a trophy and a certificate. The film highlights and raises concerns on LGBTQI+ rights, including among others, the right to equal opportunities with dignity to earn a livelihood. It is in Hindi and English with subtitles in English.

The second prize of ₹ 1.5 lakh, a trophy and a certificate were given to Shri Bibhujjal Raj Kashyap for his film 'Mukhagni - The Cremation' in



the Assamese language. Inspired by a true story, the film raises various issues including untouchability, caste discrimination, social dogmas,

overbearing diktat of caste panchayat, and the right of dignity to the dead.

The third prize of ₹ 1 lakh, a trophy and a certificate was given to Shri Nitin Sonkar for his film 'Right to Freedom' in Hindi language. The film symbolically advocates equal opportunities for the children of slum dwellers and highlights that there should be no cap on dreaming and achieving big in life through the story of a young boy living in a slum.



NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri Arun Mishra, Members, Dr D.M. Mulay, Shri Rajiv Jain, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal and other senior offices with the winners of the short film competition

The four films were awarded 'Certificate of Special Mention' with ₹ 50,000 each. These included Ms Abdullah Alfazeena's 'Glass of Humanity', Smt. Supriti Ghosh's

Harassment of Deepshikha', Shri M. Baskar's 'Naragam – Hell' and Shri Rashid Usman Nimbalkar's 'RAHAS'. The award-winning films are uploaded on the NHRC website so

that these can be used as an open source for creating awareness about human rights and sensibilities.

New joining

Shri Ajay Bhatnagar joins the NHRC, India as the Director General (Investigation)



Shri Ajay Bhatnagar joined the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India as the Director General (Investigation) on 4th March, 2024. In 1989, he joined the Indian Police Service in

Bihar and moved to the Jharkhand cadre after the formation of the new state. Before joining the NHRC, he was a Special Director in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) with country-wide jurisdiction. He has a Master in Economics from Delhi School of Economics and an M. Phil in Defence Studies from the University of Madras. He was adjudged as the best IPS probationer officer and awarded the Prime Minister's Baton and Home Minister's Revolver by the Government.

As an IPS officer, Shri Bhatnagar has handled various key assignments in different capacities in the State and Centre. He worked as SP of five districts, highly affected by Left Wing Extremism in Bihar, Jharkhand. As a faculty in the National Police Academy, he taught IPS officers

Investigation & Law. He was selected by the United Nations where he worked as the Lead of the Training and Selection in the United Nations for more than six years at the UN Head Quarters in New York. He has conducted training programmes in more than 40 countries across the world.

He has worked as IG in CRPF and CISF and specialized in Airport Security. He has served as ADG in Jharkhand where he was responsible for all personnel matters. He has also worked as the Joint Director and, Additional Director in CBI for a period of more than 6 years.

Shri Bhatnagar received the President's Police Medal in 2010 and the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Services in 2016.

NHRC in International arena

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India continues to engage with various international programmes relating to the exchange of ideas on

various aspects of human rights. Several foreign institutional delegates visit the Commission and call on the Chairperson and Members to hold a courtesy meeting with

the Secretary General to have an understanding of the functioning of the Commission for the promotion and protection of human rights. The NHRC, India Chairperson, Members,

and Secretary General also visit various international forums to share their thoughts on the achievements of the Commission and understand the functioning of various other human rights institutions.

The four foreign delegations, who visited the NHRC, India in March 2024 were from Denmark, Netherlands, New Zealand, and the Human Rights Officer, Asia Pacific Section of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Danish delegation led by the Parliament Speaker, Mr Soren Gade Jesen comprised Ambassador Mr Freddy Svane, Deputy Head of Mission, Mr Martin Egknud Petersen, four Vice Chairman of Parliament, Leif Lahn Jensen, Jeppe Soe, Karsten Honge and Karina Meldgaard Adsbol. The Netherlands delegation was led by the Ambassador, Mrs Marisa Gerards and the New Zealand

delegation was led by the High Commissioner to India, Mr David Pine. They discussed various aspects of human rights in their respective countries and India. Ms Georgia Drake, Human Rights Officer, Asia Pacific Section of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights accompanied by her colleague Mr David also visited the Commission.

Besides this, on 13th March, 2024, the NHRC, India through its Members also gave two video statements during the 55th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council. Member, Dr Dnyaneshwar M. Mulay gave a statement in the Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion in the 16th meeting. Member, Shri Rajiv Jain gave a statement in the Interactive Dialogue with Independent Expert on Counter Terrorism in the 24th meeting of the 55th Regular Session.

On 22nd March, 2024, the NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal had an interactive session with all Heads/ Representatives of UN Agencies in India. In his address and Q&A session, he highlighted the goal of the country having primacy to human rights, which is the focus of the NHRC, India. Shri Lal said that India is focusing on improving the quality of life of its citizens with enhanced ease of living and dignity for every individual. The welfare of the poorest of the poor and marginalized sections of society like transgender, people with mental issues, trafficked girls, beggars, the homeless, destitute, orphans, etc. is the top priority.

He highlighted the robust institutional mechanism in India to protect and promote human rights by ensuring basic amenities to everyone with the motto that no one



Meeting with Danish delegation



Meeting with New Zealand delegation



Meeting with APF officials



Meeting with Netherland delegation



NHRC, India Members, Dr D.M. Mulay and Shri Rajiv Jain giving video statements

is left out. He gave numerous examples from various fields indicating India's work with speed & scale. He spoke about India's 7 national sectoral institutions, and their counterparts in states along with SHRCs and NHRC, which are always vigilant and proactive in protecting and promoting human rights. Courts are the guardians of Fundamental Rights.

Shri Lal said that the NHRC, India Chairperson and Members are recommended for appointment by a high-powered six-member committee having the Prime Minister, Speaker of Lok Sabha, Union Home Minister, Leaders of Opposition in both the Houses of Parliament and Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. He said that in India, All India

Services officers are selected by a Constitutional body - UPSC, and after their training, these civil servants are posted to work both at the Centre and in states, where different political parties may be in power. Civil servants owe their allegiance to the Constitution of India.

In India, elections are conducted by these civil servants under the supervision of the Election Commission of India, which is respected worldwide for being free and fair. Similarly, civil servants working with the NHRC, work to protect and promote the human rights of people under the supervision and mandate of the NHRC. Every year, NHRC, India handles about 1 lakh cases giving relief to the victims of various types of human rights violations.

Shri Lal said that Indian ethos is built on compassion and empathy. UN and India's goals are synergetic in focusing on SDGs and climate issues. He underscored India's approach of treating the world as one family and helping other countries to speed up socio-economic development. He said that the sharing of knowledge and technology by India to improve people's lives in other countries, providing them with COVID-19 vaccines and ensuring the African Union's entry into G20 are some of the latest shining examples of India's inclusive approach. This ethos is ingrained in the people, governments and various institutions of the country. This learning from India can be used by the UN agencies in different parts of the world to improve the lives of people and protect their rights.



NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal interacting with the Heads/Representatives of the UN Agencies in India

News in brief

On 6th March, 2024, a meeting was organized to examine the existing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on the issue of missing children was held at the premises of the Commission. The objective of the meeting was to examine the existing SOPs on missing children, identify gaps and suggest measures for harmonization of the same so that there is a common understanding of the procedures and roles of various stakeholders on the issue of missing children.

On 6th March, 2024, a meeting was organized to discuss the Optional Protocol on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The meeting was chaired by, Joint Secretary, Smt Anita Sinha in the presence of senior officers of the Commission and subject experts. The meeting was held to study the articles of the UNCRC Optional Protocol vis-a-vis the Indian Legislature, identify the gaps and make suggestions for consideration by the Commission.

On 7th March, 2024, NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt Anita Sinha presided as the Chief Guest and addressed the gathering at the International Women's Day event on the theme of 'Empowerment of Women in the New Millennium' organized by the B L Amlani College of Commerce and Economics, Mumbai, Maharashtra.



On 8th March, 2024, NHRC, India organized an interactive session on the occasion of International Women's Day at its premises. Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani chaired the session attended by all women employees and senior officers of the Commission. She recalled how, much before the celebration of Int'l Women's Day started, the Indian cultural ethos respected women as equal partners and how significantly Nari Shakti transformed lives, and shaped social, cultural and historical moments empowering society & the nation. Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal, DG(I), Shri Ajay Bhatnagar, Joint Secretary, Shri Devendra Kumar Nim and women officers also shared their thoughts highlighting how important it is to create an enabling atmosphere overcoming gender stereotypes to ensure all enjoy their rights with duties in building a just & equitable society.



On 12th March, 2024, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressed the SPRING Water Summit in New Delhi as the Chief Guest. It is an annual event organized by the Indo-Nordic Water Forum and participants include various national and international dignitaries.



On 12th March, 2024, NHRC, India Registrar (Law), Shri Surajit Dey presided as the Chief Guest of a debate competition on the theme, 'Human Rights in Digital Age', organized by Delhi Police in association with the Commission.



On 14th March, 2024, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal interacted with the journalists of Central Europe organized by the Ministry of External Affairs. Shared Indian ethos of empathy & compassion, India's Constitution, efforts to improve the quality of life, focus on marginalized sections of society, and role of Commission & Courts. He highlighted the robust institutional mechanism in India to protect and promote human rights by ensuring basic amenities to everyone with the motto that no one is left out. He gave numerous examples from various fields indicating India's work with speed & scale.



On 21st March, 2024, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal attended the TERI Water Sustainability Awards. He spoke on the need to focus on water governance and management, measurement & monitoring, circular economy of water, grey water reuse, water use in agriculture, water use efficiency, new technology to dispose of human excreta, pollution, etc.



On 22nd March, 2024, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat delivered a lecture on 'Women & water: human rights approach' organized by the Centre for Social Research on the occasion of World Water Day. He said that Women are the worst affected by the paucity of water. A massive effort is on to ensure water security to improve the lives of people, especially women & girls.



On 26th March, 2024, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani addressed the students of NTR Junior & Degree College for Women in Hyderabad, Telangana on 'Women & Human Rights'. She also threw light on the role and importance of women in the legal profession.



On 26th March, 2024, NHRC, India Member, Dr Dnyaneshwar M. Mulay addressed the inaugural session of the 6th Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues on Landscape of Enlightenment: Bodh Gaya, Rajgir and Nalanda.



On 27th March, 2024, NHRC, India Deputy Director (Media & Communication), Shri Jaimini Kumar Srivastava had an interactive session on 'Media and Human Rights' with the P. G. diploma students of the Radio and Television Journalism Department of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi.



On 27th March, 2024, NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani was invited by the Lioness Club, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh to address PDPs, Presidents and Directors belonging to four different clubs on understanding the workings and objectives of NHRC and the critical role of NGOs in protection of Human Rights.



On 27th March, 2024, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani had an interactive session with a group of advocates on the Protection of Human Rights - Role of Advocates at City Civil Courts Complex, Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

On 28th March, 2024, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal delivered a lecture about the 'Climate Priorities' organized by 'Climate Trends'. He said that climate change is a reality and one of the most critical existential threats faced by the entire humanity & planet Earth. Any dithering has huge consequences. It's time to act and act now.

On 28th March, 2024 NHRC, India organized a two-day international conference titled 'One Earth, One Family, One Future: Navigating human rights through the lens of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.' It was organized in collaboration with the Human Rights Studies Programme, JNU, Delhi. About 150 participants across the country attended.



From 28th-29th March, 2024, NHRC, India Member Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani addressed, as the Chief Guest of the two-day training workshop on 'Unveiling challenges faced by young women and the available legal antidotes' organized by Seva Bharathi, Hyderabad. She spoke about the activities and the functioning of the NHRC and the role such organizations play in the protection of human rights.

On 29th March, 2024, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressed the valedictory session of a 2-day programme at Central University of Karnataka. He highlighted the evolution of human rights, Indian ethos, constitutional provisions, and NHRC's role in protecting and promoting human rights. He said that the youth of the country need to imbibe these values and take them forward in the spirit of fraternity. He further elaborated on the Commission's investigative procedures, stating that the NHRC not only inquires into cases registered through the online portal, email, and letters but also initiates suo motu inquiries based on news reports.



On 30th March, 2024, NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani participated as the Chief Guest in a programme conducted by Pragna Bharathi, Hyderabad on the Topic 'National Population Policy'.



Forthcoming events

- On 5th April, 2024 NHRC, India will organize a lecture by Dr Roma Debnath, Associate Prof, IIPA on research methodology with a specific focus on the basics of research and steps that must be followed for preparing terms of reference for research proposals, evaluating proposals and study reports.
- On 10th April, 2024, a presentation will be organized by the Principal Investigator, Shri S. Raghavan, New Concept Information System on findings and recommendations emanated from a research study titled 'Research Study on Missing Children.'
- On 15th April, 2024, online short term internship will begin.
- On 23rd April, 2024, the Commission will organize a day-long meeting on criminal justice system reforms.
- On 24th April, 2024, the Commission will organize a core group meeting on health and mental health at its premises.
- On 25th April, 2024, the Commission will organize an open house discussion in hybrid mode on access to legal aid to victims.



Human rights and NHRC in news



Complaint management in March, 2024

Complaints received	6,818
Disposed off	5,426
Under consideration of the Commission	7,748

Important telephone numbers of the NHRC for filing complaints

Toll Free No.: 14433 (Facilitation Centers)

Fax No.: 011-2465 1332

For Filing online complaints: www.nhrc.nic.in, hrcnet.nic.in, Common Service Centres

Email: jrlawnhrc@nic.in (For complaints), cr.nhrc@nic.in (For general queries/ correspondence)

Focal point for Human Rights Defenders:

Indrajeet Kumar, Deputy Registrar (Law)

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