



HUMAN RIGHTS

Newsletter

A monthly publication of the National Human Rights Commission, India



Focus

NHRC Foundation day: Rights of older persons conference
Tribal art exhibition

Articles

Mental healthcare in India
India's battle against cybercrime

Consultation

Sports and human rights

HUMAN RIGHTS

Newsletter

Volume 31 | Number 11 | November, 2024

National Human Rights Commission

Acting Chairperson

Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani

Secretary General

Shri Bharat Lal

Editor

Shri Jaimini Kumarr Srivastava
Dy. Director (M&C), NHRC

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.



► Exhibition of tribal art, culture and sustainable conservation practices

 www.nhrc.nic.in

 @India_NHRC

Contents

Monthly recap

- 3 From the desk of the Secretary General & Chief Executive

Reports

- 4 Foundation day of NHRC, India
- 8 National conference on the rights of older persons
- 10 Open house discussion on sports and human rights

Article

- 11 Rights-based approach to augmenting mental healthcare in India: Progress, challenges, and future directions
- 14 Defending rights in cyberspace: India's battle against cybercrime

Important intervention

- 16 Fighting air pollution
- 17 *Suo motu* cognisance
- 18 Recommendations for relief to the victims
- 20 Payment of relief to the victims
- 21 Case studies

Field visits

- 21 Acting Chairperson visits Andhra Pradesh & Telangana
- 22 Special Rapporteurs and Monitors

Capacity building

- 24 Two-day residential capacity-building programme for Tamil Nadu and Karnataka Police officers
- 26 Two-day training of trainers' programme for Rajasthan police officers
- 27 Workshops
- 28 Students visit



► Children's painting competition

Events

- 28 NHRC Hindi Fortnight
- 29 Painting and slogan writing competition
- 29 Art as a beacon of rights and dignity - 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre'
- 32 Global digital health summit – 2024 in Mumbai

NHRC, India in the International arena

- 33 NHRC Secretary General visits London
- 35 Delegation visits to NHRC, India

News from State Human Rights Commissions

- 36 Punjab Human Rights Commission
- 37 Madhya Pradesh State Human Rights Commission
- 37 Voices of victims getting relief
- 38 News in brief
- 39 Forthcoming events
- 39 Complaints in October, 2024

Monthly Recap

From the desk of the Secretary General & Chief Executive

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India was established on 12th October, 1993 and every year, its Foundation Day is celebrated to further promote human rights. This year, owing to festivals, the Foundation Day was celebrated on 18th October, 2024, followed by a National Conference on the 'Rights of older persons' at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi. The Vice President of India, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar, graced the occasion as the chief guest. The event brought together jurists, academicians, members of statutory organizations, NGO/ civil society representatives, government officials, human rights defenders, and diplomats.

This Foundation Day was more than a celebration – It was a poignant moment to reflect on the NHRC's journey and its unwavering commitment to fulfilling its mission. Over the years, the NHRC has served as a beacon of hope, advocating for the protection and promotion of human rights in an ever-changing societal landscape. As we honour the Commission's achievements, we also acknowledge the dedication of all those who have contributed to this noble cause.

At the heart of this mission lies the core Indian values of empathy, compassion, and respect for diversity, supported by a robust institutional framework designed to promote and uphold the human rights of every human being throughout the country. In the past year alone, the NHRC received approximately 68,000 complaints and disposed of around 70,000 cases, including the previous years cases, recommending a total of Rs 17 crore in compensation to the victims of human rights violations and their families.

The day-long conference on the 'Rights of Older Persons' highlighted India's deep-rooted tradition of honouring and respecting its elders, acknowledging their invaluable wisdom. However, modern challenges such as rapid urbanisation, globalisation, and the shift towards nuclear family structures have imposed significant pressures on the elderly. We must reassess our structural, social, legal, and infrastructural frameworks to safeguard their well-being, dignity, and opportunities for active social engagement. By harnessing the potential of our ageing population, we can tackle these challenges with a comprehensive and holistic approach.

Earlier in the month, the Commission supported an international summit held at Mumbai, organised in collaboration with various institutions. This followed a similar collaborative initiative held in the previous month, which focused on securing the right to health through digital healthcare. Healthcare is one of the basic human rights, which is part of the Right to Life. Digital healthcare can reduce costs, improve access and quality, and empower patients and caregivers. This edition carries reports on these conferences.

The Commission also supported the Sankala Foundation's initiative to bring the art, culture, and sustainable conservation practices of tribal communities to urban spaces through an exhibition of their paintings and artifacts at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi. This effort provided these communities with a vital platform to showcase

their artistic talents and create sustainable income sources. This exhibition titled 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre' was inaugurated by the Union Minister for External Affairs, Dr. S. Jaishankar, and a cultural programme was held in the presence of Union Minister of Tourism and Culture, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat. Additionally, several selected artists participated in a nine-day 'Artists-in-Residency' programme at Rashtrapati Bhavan, where they created and exhibited their artwork at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre (RBCC), which was witnessed by the Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu. The report on this initiative promises to offer valuable insights and reflections.

As part of its commitment to raising awareness among All India Services officers, the Commission continues to host capacity-building programmes for them. In October 2024, two such collaborative programmes were organised for senior police officers from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Rajasthan. These interactive sessions have proven to be invaluable in advancing the cause of human rights.

I also had the privilege of representing the Commission at various international forums, where I highlighted India's rich human values and cultural traditions, which continue to set it apart from the rest of the world. Notable events included the address at the Commonwealth BRIDGE programme for the staff of the World Bank on 'Human Rights and Rule of Law in South Asia' and the keynote address on 'Developmental challenges in South Asia: Issues and Solutions' at Marlborough House, London. I also spoke at the House of Lords, London, focusing on safeguarding human rights and promoting progress in India and beyond.

This month holds special significance as we observe World Mental Health Day on 10th October. The Commission has diligently advocated for the rights of persons with disabilities, including those with mental health issues. In recognition of this day, a dedicated article in this edition provides insights into the work done by the Commission and the government in addition to the challenges requiring sustained efforts from all stakeholders. Another article examines the complexities of defending human rights in cyberspace and the legal framework in India to address the concerns.

Additionally, this month has reignited discussions around efforts to combat air pollution in the Delhi-NCR region. A report in this edition offers an update on the Commission's ongoing *suo motu* proceedings related to this critical issue. The newsletter also includes regular features aimed at engaging and informing our readers.



[Bharat Lal]

Secretary General &
Chief Executive Officer

Foundation Day of NHRC, India

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India organised a function and a national conference on the rights of older persons to celebrate its 31st Foundation Day at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi on 18th October, 2024. The Commission was set up on 12th October in 1993. The Vice President of India, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. An extract of his speech is as follows:

I'm honoured to address this distinguished audience on the 31st Foundation Day of the National Human Rights Commission of India. My tenure as Governor of West Bengal often brings the topic of human rights to mind, particularly in light of the post-poll violence in that state. However, such incidents do not define the broader landscape of our nation. I appreciate the National Human Rights Commission's report in the matter highlighting the rule of law versus the law of the ruler.

Today, we commemorate not just an institution, but the core values enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Its Preamble embodies our quest for justice, liberty, and equality, forming the foundation of human rights. We must foster fraternity and respect diverse viewpoints. The true protectors of human rights are the people; upholding the rights of others is a sacred duty.

Our inherent rights are essential to our humanity, a view that has guided India for over 5,000 years.

While the judiciary has expanded these rights, we must also recognize a civilisational understanding rooted in the principle of 'Sarvam Shanti.' This philosophy has influenced our way of life for centuries, even amid challenges. Nurturing human rights is fundamental to our existence as a nation.

Our Vedas and historical practices reveal a vision of collective well-being. We are trustees of the earth, living for the benefit of all and not for the self alone. 'Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah,' emphasised by the NHRC Acting Chairperson, reflects our civilisational values.

Our scriptures serve as guiding principles, ensuring we honour these rights. Historically, our temples pro-

► The Vice President of India, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar addressing the NHRC, India Foundation Day



vided free meals, affirming the right to nourishment, while education was accessible to all, emphasising the right to education. The Indian Constitution highlights universal education, starting with the Gurukul model.

Our policies demonstrate a commitment to human rights. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government distributed free grains to 850 million people, ensuring no one went to bed hungry. This initiative continues even today. Critics who raise questions about hunger in India should recognise this achievement alongside India's support for other countries during global crises.

Human rights should inspire introspection. Nations must evaluate their records based on their people's welfare. In the last decade, India has witnessed exponential economic growth, providing access to housing, clean water, electricity and improved infrastructure for all irrespective of caste, colour and demography. We have ensured everyone can vote. No developmental project has been motivated by anything less than noble intentions aimed at promoting human rights.

Previously, widows faced long waits for pensions, undermining their dignity. Now, they receive benefits at home, showcasing India's leadership in direct digital transfers and targeting corruption. Equality before the law has advanced, allowing human rights to flourish within our rich diversity. Basic amenities like toilets are now recognised as fundamental rights. Technological advancements have fostered an environment of equality, ensuring accountability under the law.

The equality before the law in this country has been demonstrated to such a wholesome level that human rights are flourishing and blossoming in such a large country, with such diversity, the world needs to know about it.

Do we really need lectures on human rights from those who overlook our understanding? We are open to new ideas but don't require sermons on this subject. Acknowledge the challenges we have faced—like the Partition and the Emergency—but recognise that we are a nation that learns and adapts.



► A section of dignitaries attending the NHRC, India Foundation Day

Since 2015, we have celebrated Constitution Day on November 26, reminding us to uphold the values enshrined in our Preamble. The Constitution serves as our north star for human rights. Despite challenges, we maintain a strong record in this regard. Unfortunately, some misuse national and international platforms to tarnish our reputation, believing they have the authority to critique us. Such forces must be met with decisive action, reflecting the spirit of *'Pratighaat.'*

Expansionism is a grave violation of human rights, and India has never pursued it; we have been its victims. The Prime Minister has stated that we must address issues through dialogue and diplomacy, not expansion. Bharat stands ahead of many nations in preserving human rights for minorities and vulnerable groups. Many who sought refuge here have thrived. Human rights should never be weaponised for political gain. We must remain vigilant against sensationalism and distorted narratives. One isolated incident does not define us as a nation of 1.4 billion. Reflecting on nations that have ignored human rights violations, consider Europe's troubled history. In contrast, our educational system remains free from the violence seen in some self-proclaimed developed nations.

For those aligned with specific agendas, critical analysis often gives way to ignorance. The plight of Hindus in neighbouring countries is met with silence from those claiming to be moral guardians, exposing hypocrisy. We have tolerated sacrilege against our religious sites for too long. The deep state appears to engage in lawfare against rising powers. Does the United Nations Security Council genuinely commit to human rights while excluding one-sixth of humanity?

I come from humble beginnings, and consider figures like Smt. Droupadi Murmu, our first tribal President, and Prime Minister Modi, from Other Backward Community who also faced challenges. Their stories reflect transformative, pro-human rights changes in our governance. When one overlooks positive developments and focuses on negative narrative, it reflects a disconnect from reality. We must remain vigilant against those aiming to destabilize our country. This century belongs to us, and we are determined to achieve developed nation status by 2047, ensuring human rights for all.

Domestically, we must guard against the exploitation of human rights for political gain. The Citizenship Amendment Act is designed to grant citizenship to persecuted individuals, not strip rights. The changing

demographic landscape requires urgent attention. The demographic climate change in the world and particularly in the nation is an issue that calls for urgent systemic addressing.

Nations must embrace their identities to promote human rights effectively. If the world has to live in peace and harmony, nations have to believe in their nationalism and preserve their identity. Human rights should not extend to those who instigate terror. Society cannot be held hostage to lawbreakers. Law enforcement must confront these threats to safety and human rights.

We must never allow anyone to co-opt the discourse around rights for political agendas. I urge you to embrace bipartisanship on critical issues. Let's work together to identify a governance model that effectively implements human rights. Bharat has invaluable lessons to share, as a nation that has championed these rights for centuries. Pick up any part of the globe, and you'll find they have to take many lessons from Bharat that has nurtured human rights since ages. As we celebrate the NHRC's establishment, let us renew our commitment to human rights, remembering that their preservation is our collective duty.

The NHRC, Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani in her address said that the Commission plays a crucial role in ensuring dignity, freedom, and well-being for all by raising awareness about human rights and fostering empowerment of the marginalized including transgender persons. This is to help them to assert their entitlements and contribute to national progress.

The Acting Chairperson said that throughout its history, the NHRC, India has addressed landmark cases and made significant recommendations to uphold human rights in the country handling a wide spectrum of cases. She said that the Commission



► NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani addressing the gathering

responded to grave reports of harassment and sexual assault against women in Sandeshkhali, West Bengal. A spot inquiry conducted by the NHRC revealed a climate of fear and intimidation that prevented victims from seeking justice.

The NHRC Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal in his welcome address also gave an account of the NHRC's work during the last year. He said that the Commission fosters a culture of respect and dignity for all. Giving a glimpse of the Commission's wide mandate, he said that in the last one year, more than 68,000 complaints were registered, almost 70,000 were disposed of and more than Rs 17 crore in compensation was recommended to the aggrieved and their next of kin. He said that the NHRC's national consultations, core group meetings, and open house discussions are another mechanism by which it engages with



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal delivering the welcome address

stakeholders such as government officials, members of NGOs and CSOs, human rights defenders, and subject matter experts.

Members of State Human Rights Commissions, members of the Judiciary, diplomats, NHRC senior officers, Special Rapporteurs and Monitors, senior government functionaries, civil society representatives, and human rights defenders, among other national and international dignitaries, attended the function.

► A section of dignitaries attending the NHRC, India Foundation Day function



National conference on the rights of older persons

On the Foundation Day, a day-long national conference on the 'rights of older persons' was also organised at Vigyan Bhawan. Delivering the keynote address, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani said that elders are the architects of our nation's history, the keepers of our cultural heritage, and the pillars of our families. It is our moral and ethical duty to ensure that they are treated with respect, compassion, and dignity in their twilight years. A growing ageing population presents both opportunities and challenges for the government and society. The Commission maintains a strong resolve to protect the rights of the elderly and has taken several steps including forming a core group and issuing guidelines in this regard.

She said that the challenges faced by older persons are multi-fold. From financial insecurity and healthcare disparities to social isolation and discrimination, they confront a myriad of obstacles that can significantly impact their quality of life. These are not merely hypothetical scenarios; they are realities faced by countless older persons in our society. It is a stark reminder that the protection of the rights of our elders is not just a legal or policy matter; it is a deeply personal and societal responsibility.



► NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani addressing the conference



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

Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani said that there are laws and several government schemes to address the needs of older adults. However, their effective implementation remains a key challenge. Some of their needs that require immediate attention include ensuring access to affordable and quality healthcare services, recognising and addressing their mental health needs, adequate pensions and social security benefits, affordable and quality housing, safety measures, and social support services, financial literacy for informed financial decisions, and participation in the economy.

She said that strengthening and enforcing anti-discrimination laws to protect older persons from age-based discrimination in all aspects of life, including employment, housing, and healthcare, is essential. Implementing effective measures to prevent and address elder abuse, both physical and emotional and ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable is also crucial.

Before this, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal said that historically, India has had a deep-rooted tradition of respecting and venerating elders. They have always been seen as repositories of wisdom. However, in contemporary India, the combination of rapid urbanisation, globalisation, and the nuclear family structure has brought to the fore new challenges faced by the elderly. It is imperative that we examine the structural, social, legal, and infrastructural frameworks in place to ensure their well-being, dignity, and active participation in society.

He said that we must harness the potential of our ageing population and address the challenges through a comprehensive and holistic approach. He stressed the need to create an enabling environment to support the elderly and to make use of their experiences.



► Shri Amit Yadav, Secretary, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment



► Ms Andrea M. Wojnar, Resident Country Representative, UNFPA India



► Dr V.K. Paul, Member, NITI Aayog

Giving an overview of the national conference, Joint Secretary, Shri Devendra Kumar Nim said that the Commission has been making concerted efforts to address various issues concerning the rights of older persons. The three technical sessions of the conference include 'Addressing the issue of ageing of the aged,' 'Analysing the gendered face of ageing and how to tackle the same' and 'Evaluating the healthcare scenario,' to ignite various thoughts on the gaps between the policies, their implementation, new challenges and the way forward.

Chairing the first thematic session on the issues of 'Ageing of the Aged,' Secretary, Department of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, Shri Amit Yadav said that the government is committed to the welfare of older persons and may affect certain required changes in the existing laws to this effect. The other speakers included Smt Chhaya Sharma, Special Commissioner of Police, Training and SPUWAC; Dr O. P. Sharma, Geriatrics Care Specialist, Apollo Hospital; Dr Sudha Goel, Senior Consultant, NITI Aayog – Health and Family Welfare Vertical; Dr T. V. Shekhar, Prof. Department of Family & Generations, IIPS; Dr. Mala Kapur Shankardass, Sociologist and Gerontologist- Gender and Aging, Elder Abuse and Social Policies, and Ms Anupama Dutta, Senior Advisor, HelpAge India Foundation.

Chairing the second session on the 'Gendered face of Ageing,' Ms Andrea M. Wojnar, Resident Country Representative, UNFPA India said that India introduced the National Policy for Older Persons before it was introduced in

► A section of participants



other countries. However, with time and new challenges, these are required to be reviewed with more focus on the inter-generational approach. She said that technology is a way forward to ensure the needs of older persons are met. The other panellists included Smt Sonam Mishra, Vice President, Sulabh International; Dr Laxmi Gautam, Professor, Institute of Oriental Philosophy, Vrindavan and Founder, Kanak Dhara Foundation, Vrindavan; Prof. Aasha Kapur Mehta, Chairperson, Centre for Gender Studies Institute of Human Development; Smt Damayanti V. Tambay, War Widows Association, New Delhi, and Smt Abha Chaudhary, Founder, Anugraha.

Dr V. K. Paul, Member, NITI Aayog, chaired the third session on evaluating the 'Healthcare scenario: Impact on the healthy life, productivity and social security'. He stressed the need for discussions on the themes of Universal Health Coverage to find solutions for strengthening the pathways. He highlighted that the Government has included the entire population above the age of 70 in the AYUSH scheme, enabling them to access more than 1,900 packages available at hospitals including 12,000 private hospitals. He said that now the older persons have separate cover of Rs 5 lakh, in addition to their family having the cover of the same amount. The panellists, included,

Dr Sanjay Wadhwa, Professor and Head, Department of Physical Medicine, AIIMS; Dr Prasun Chatterjee, Professor, Department of Geriatric Medicine, AIIMS among others.

The major points of discussion included the challenges of social isolation, emotional vulnerability, inadequate trained manpower, insufficient infrastructure, limited social support, and poor awareness of elderly rights. Discussions also highlighted the impacts of changing family structures and the specific challenges faced by elderly widows.

The conference stressed the importance of involving older persons in decision-making processes. Suggested reforms included promoting private sector involvement and CSR funding for the welfare of the elderly, maintaining registries of elderly residents at local police stations, and expanding teleconsultation services for bedridden

elderly. The need for vocational training, increased awareness of the security needs of elderly persons, especially women, early savings plans, financial literacy, and digital literacy were also discussed.

All speakers emphasized the value of older persons' knowledge and experience. They called for closing the gap between policy design and implementation to ensure effective support for the elderly and their continued engagement in society. Attendees included senior government officials, representatives from NGOs and civil society organisations, as well as police and healthcare professionals.

The Commission will further deliberate upon the various suggestions to finalise its recommendations to the government for strengthening the care and welfare mechanism in the country. The full proceedings of the conference is available at www.nhrc.nic.in.

Open house discussion on sports and human rights

On 29th October, 2024, the NHRC, India, organised an open house discussion in hybrid mode on 'Sports and Human Rights: Safeguarding the Rights and Well-being of Sportspersons' at its premises in New Delhi. Chairing the discussion, Acting Chairperson, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani said that maintaining human values is the hallmark of a sportsperson's spirit. Therefore, respecting the human rights of the sportspersons and ensuring protection thereof through an institutionalised mechanism is necessary for better performance of the country's talent in sports.



► Open house discussion chaired by Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani in progress

She highlighted the importance of understanding the intersectionality between athlete rights and the role of institutions in safeguarding them. The concept of inter-sectionality can help policymakers and sports programmers understand how different types of discrimination – like racism, homophobia, and ableism – combine to prevent athletes particularly women from participating in sports.

The Acting Chairperson also stressed on strengthening the judicial mechanisms in addressing any violations of athlete's rights besides the rehabilitation of sportspersons in case of abuse and addressing their mental health concerns.

NHRC, India Director General (Investigation), Shri Ajay Bhatnagar emphasized zero tolerance for sexual abuse of sportspersons. He highlighted how institutions, especially those in authority, are more accountable for safeguarding athletes.

Earlier, the NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Shri Devendra Kumar Nim gave an

overview of the three technical sessions of the open house which included 'Rehabilitation of Sportspersons after Incidents of Abuse,' 'Mental Health of Sportspersons in India' and 'Institutional Frameworks Required to Safeguard Interests of Sportspersons.'

Some of the suggestions that emerged from the discussion were as follows:

- It is necessary to have coaches having training in clinical psychology to prepare the athletes better;
- Streamline insurance benefits to athletes suffering sports injuries;
- Bring awareness among athletes to report sexual abuse;
- Ensure action on complaints of sexual harassment through functional institutional mechanisms in all sports bodies;
- Strengthen institutional mechanisms to support para-athletes; and
- Strengthen institutional mechanisms within various sports bodies to develop social equitability among sportspersons from diverse backgrounds and marginalised communities

A section of participants in the discussion

Respecting the human rights of the sportspersons and ensuring protection thereof through an institutionalised mechanism is necessary for better performance of the country's talent in sports- Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani



The meeting was attended by the representatives of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports; Netaji Subhas Sports Authority of India at Patiala; National Centre for Sports Science and Research; National Sports University, Imphal; Wrestling Federation of India; National Rifle Association of India; All India Kabaddi Federation; Sports and Rights Alliance, Switzerland; WAKO India Kickboxing Federation; Humans for Sports, UK; GoSports Foundation based in Bangalore, India, and Sports Injury Centre at the Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi.

Article

Rights-based approach to augmenting mental healthcare in India: Progress, challenges, and future directions

Mental health is the basis for an individual's well-being to lead a meaningful and productive life. Over the years, significant progress has been made in mainstreaming mental health within the healthcare system in the country. There are 47 Government-run mental health establishments in the country, including 3 Central Mental Health Institutions, viz. National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bengaluru, Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health, Tezpur, Assam, and Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi. It is vital to raise awareness about mental and psychological disorders to destigmatise their treatment,

just like any other illness. This requires a sustained collaborative effort among all stakeholders as a lot more needs to be done to streamline mental healthcare.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India, in accordance with a mandate from the Supreme Court in 1997, began monitoring three mental health hospitals in Agra, Gwalior, and Ranchi. Over time, it expanded its oversight to all mental hospitals across the country to assess their operations and the conditions of patients. In 1997-1998, the NHRC collaborated with NIMHANS on a research project titled 'Quality Assurance in Mental Health'. The advocacy for improving mental health care was reinforced by NHRC's publications, such as 'Quality Assurance in Mental Health' (1999) and 'Mental Health Care and Human Rights' (2008). These informed policymakers about best practices in mental healthcare and provided a framework for minimum standards. These documents emphasized the need for community-based services, greater investment in mental health infrastructure, and policy changes that prioritise human rights.

Thereafter, the Commission continued holding discussions with different stakeholders to assess the status of mental healthcare infrastructure within the healthcare system of the country to build an understanding of further improvement therein given the increase in the varied manifestations and dimensions of mental health issues with the changing lifestyles and work culture.

NHRC's policy advocacy extended its support for mental health legislation and institutional reforms. The Commission has consistently called for improved policies and guidelines in mental health care. In 2015, NHRC released the 'Technical Committee on Mental Health' report, a comprehensive analysis of mental health services across states, providing recommendations to bridge gaps in care and improve service delivery.

The effect on the ground may not have been so much visible but mental health became a part of health discourse in society. Despite very limited seats for professional degrees, many students started opting for careers in psychiatry and clinical psychology given the scope of employ-

It is vital to raise awareness about mental and psychological disorders to destigmatise their treatment, just like any other illness.

ment opportunities in hospitals, business establishments, and educational institutions for treatment and counselling, specifically in schools.

The concerted efforts of the Commission, civil society, medical professionals, and the Government resulted in the enactment of India's Mental Healthcare Act, 2017, which granted a legally binding right to mental healthcare to all Indians. This was in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which was ratified by many countries but remarkably got the legal sanctity by only a few, like India.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought mental health issues to the forefront as lockdowns, isolation, and economic hardships took a toll on psychological well-being worldwide. NHRC responded promptly by establishing twelve 'Committees of Experts on the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Human Rights and Future Response' in July 2020, comprising civil society representatives, domain experts, and government officials. These committees evaluated the pandemic's impact on vulnerable groups, including those with mental health conditions, and highlighted the need for a more inclusive healthcare approach.

Drawing from these findings, the NHRC issued two major advisories focused on mental health in October 2020 and May 2021, addressing the critical need for support during the pandemic's first and second waves. These advisories advocated for better access to mental health care, increased public awareness, and enhanced protections for people experiencing mental health issues. They stressed the importance of a human rights-based response that would emphasise patient autonomy and dignity, pushing for policies that would provide individuals with mental health conditions the choice to make informed decisions about their treatment. Recognising the interlinkage of mental health with economic productivity and social stability, these advisories underscored that neglecting mental health not only impacts individuals but also has long-term societal and economic costs.

In line with its emphasis on destigmatising mental health, the Commission launched mental

health awareness workshops across workplaces. In June 2022, NHRC organised the first session of a series aimed at increasing mental health awareness and destigmatising related issues among employees. This initiative sought to educate employees on recognising mental health challenges and the importance of timely intervention. The workshops provided a platform to discuss mental health openly, fostering an environment where employees could express concerns without fear of stigma. This initiative further aimed to normalise mental health issues, highlighting that they deserve the same attention and support as physical health problems.

These awareness programmes reflect NHRC's view that mental health conditions should be addressed similarly to other chronic illnesses, like diabetes or hypertension. The NHRC continues to emphasize that early intervention, adequate support, and professional counselling are essential in addressing mental health issues, which, when left untreated, can exacerbate both personal and societal challenges.

In 2022, the NHRC gave a fresh impetus to its programme of physical inspection of mental health facilities. The Chairperson and Members conducted inspections of various mental health institutions, including Gwalior Mansik Arogyashala, the Institute of Mental Health and Hospital (IMHH) Agra, and Ranchi's Central Institute of Psychiatry, and Ranchi Institute of Neuro-Psychiatry & allied sciences. These visits revealed significant issues such as overcrowding, lack of adequate resources, cleanliness, and in some cases, the abandonment of long-stay patients by their families besides the lack of rehabilitation of the recovered patients back to their families.

These visits accentuated the challenges and status of mental health institutions in the country. Therefore, the Commission directed its Special Rapporteurs to visit the remaining forty-three government mental health institutes, pan India. NHRC organised follow-up workshops with institutional authorities and state representatives to devise strategies for enhancing the care provided in these mental health establishments.

While there has been a realisation of the need to strengthen mental health services in India, much work remains to protect the rights of individuals with mental illness.

Based on the findings on the ground and consultations with various stakeholders, the NHRC, India released a report on the 'Status of implementation of the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017' at a National Conference on 'Moving Mental Health Beyond Institutions' on 26th July 2023. A book titled 'Mental Health- Concern for All: In Context of the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017' was also released on the occasion. It attempts to incorporate significant aspects of mental health, such as the mental health of children, women, geriatric, LGBTQIA+, prison inmates; mental health and homelessness; disaster and mental health, among others. It also includes mental health policies and laws in India to make it serve the purpose of a reference book.

Later, based on the wide-ranging consultations, the Commission, on World Mental Health Day in 2023, issued an Advisory to the Centre, States and UT Administrations to ensure the welfare and rights of persons with mental illnesses. The major concern was that despite the enactment of the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 to provide mental healthcare services to persons with mental illnesses and to protect their rights, its implementation on the ground remains a matter of concern.

This despite the fact the District Mental Health Programme component of the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) has been sanctioned for implementation in 767 districts of the country. Under the Tertiary care component of NMHP, 25 Centres of Excellence have been sanctioned to increase the intake of students in PG departments in mental health specialities as well as to provide tertiary-level treatment facilities. Mental health services have been added to the package of services under Comprehensive Primary Health Care provided at Ayushman Arogya Mandirs. As of July 23, 2024, the programme has established 53 Tele MANAS Cells across 36 states and Union Territories, handling over 1.17 million calls through its helpline.

But barring a few exceptions, like in the case of southern states, the challenge remains about ensuring the functionality of primary, tertiary, and district-level mental healthcare facilities in all parts of the country. The same is the case with the upkeep of the 47 mental health institutions

requiring sustained systemic finances, infrastructure development and its maintenance, and deployment of sufficient qualified doctors, and paramedical staff.

While there has been a realisation of the need to strengthen mental health services in India, much work remains to protect the rights of individuals with mental illness. There is a pressing need for public education to shift attitudes toward mental

health and to advocate for the rights of those affected. Additionally, training more mental health professionals is essential to ensure that quality services are accessible at all levels of the healthcare system. The NHRC's initiatives underscore a commitment to a rights-based approach to mental health, highlighting the importance of patient autonomy, community involvement, and the integration of mental health into broader public health and social services.

Article

Defending rights in cyberspace *India's battle against cybercrime*

- Praveen Dixit

Special Rapporteur, NHRC, India

In the last two decades, India has witnessed significant technological advancements in information and communication technology. It is estimated that nearly one billion people in India use computers and mobile devices, a number that is expected to continue rising rapidly. However, as more individuals engage in cyberspace, anti-social elements are also exploiting legal and social vulnerabilities, severely infringing on human rights. According to data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), cybercriminals target a wide range of victims, including infants, children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly, indicating that no one is immune to this threat.

In response to these escalating cyber threats, India is actively pursuing measures at international, national, and organisational levels to combat cybercrime, adopting innovative technologies along the way. The foundational step was the enactment of the Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act), with amendments in 2008 and 2015. To enhance cybersecurity, India follows five primary laws: the IT Act, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, the Companies Act of 2013,



Cybercriminals have increasingly leveraged cyberspace for terrorist activities and the recruitment of young individuals into extremist ideologies.

and the National Cybersecurity Framework (NCSF). These laws establish penalties and sanctions that protect e-governance, e-banking, e-commerce, and gaming sectors.

A landmark move to modernize the legal framework involved repealing three outdated criminal laws, leading to the implementation of the BNS, Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023, effective from 1st July, 2024. These new laws recognize electronic communication within criminal processes, thereby promoting transparency and addressing cyber offences against children, women, and the elderly.

Cybercriminals have increasingly leveraged cyberspace for terrorist activities and the recruitment of young individuals into extremist ideologies. They utilise the dark web, cryptocurrency, and drug trafficking to facilitate their illegal operations. In response, India has taken tough actions against terrorism, rejected the legalisation of cryptocurrency, and adopted a zero-tolerance policy towards the drug trade.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) recently reported on 10th October, 2024, that investigations revealed the trafficking of vulnerable Indian youth to the Golden Triangle Region in Laos, where they were forced to carry out cyber scams targeting European and American citizens. This operation was reportedly disguised as a consultancy firm, All International Services, which was a front for human trafficking.

Additionally, cybercriminals from China and Pakistan have been implicated in crimes against vulnerable individuals in India, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom. This situation underscores the necessity for enhanced cooperation among international law enforcement agencies through multilateral collaboration.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has issued an advisory in 2023 calling for action from the central, state, and Union Territory administrations to tackle Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM). The production, distribution, and consumption of CSAM are among the most egregious forms of child exploitation and represent a serious violation of human rights. While the NHRC acknowledges the benefits of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), it also recognises the environment it has created that allows CSAM to flourish, resulting in considerable harm.

Statistics indicate a troubling increase in CSAM globally. The National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) reported that out of 32 million cases in 2022, 5.6 million involved CSAM uploaded by perpetrators based in India.

To effectively combat this issue, it is crucial to implement strategies for identifying and blocking CSAM, sharing data among stakeholders, and expediting the prosecution of offenders. Collaboration among various national and international entities—including governments, law enforcement, internet service providers, and civil society—is vital to addressing this grave threat.

Furthermore, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and other banks are actively warning customers against fraud, advising them not to share account

The Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C), established by the Ministry of Home Affairs in New Delhi, aims to provide a cohesive framework for law enforcement agencies to address cybercrime effectively.

details or fall victim to fraudulent links. They have publicised helplines for victims to report incidents promptly. The Government of India has established a helpline number 1930 and encourages victims to report at cybercrime.gov.in. The Department of Telecommunications has launched a portal called Chakshu (चक्षु) for reporting suspected fraud and unsolicited commercial communication within the last 30 days (Chakshu Portal). This portal provides various resources, including information on internet service providers and tools for verifying mobile devices using IMEI numbers.

It helps you in a number of ways including knowing your wireline internet service provider, https://services.india.gov.in/service/service_url_redirect?id=MjQoMTA=; for reporting incoming international call with Indian number (https://services.india.gov.in/service/service_url_redirect?id=MjQoMDg=) know the number of connections issued in your name (https://services.india.gov.in/service/service_url_redirect?id=MjQwNTA=) and facility to verify mobile device using IMEI number (https://services.india.gov.in/service/service_url_redirect?id=MjQwNDg=).

The Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C), established by the Ministry of Home Affairs in New Delhi, aims to provide a cohesive framework for law enforcement agencies to address cybercrime effectively. The I4C serves as a central hub for combating cybercrime and is involved in training law enforcement personnel through initiatives like Cyber Yoddha (योद्धा), raising awareness via social media campaigns such as Cyber Dost (दोस्त). Safe practices for preventing cybercrime promoted by I4C include:

- i.) Avoiding pop-ups, unknown emails, and links
- ii.) Using strong passwords and authentication
- iii.) Installing updates and backing up data

The portal categorises cybercrimes, which include:

- Cryptocurrency crimes
- Cyber terrorism
- Hacking and damage to computer systems

Additionally, online and social media-related crimes encompass:

- Cheating by impersonation
- Cyberbullying, stalking, and sexting
- Email phishing and impersonating profiles
- Intimidating emails
- Online job and matrimonial fraud
- Profile hacking and identity theft
- Provocative speech inciting unlawful acts

In efforts to strengthen the fight against cybercrime, other states are enhancing their mechanisms as well. For example, the Government of Maharashtra has established a Cybercrime Investigation Capacity Centre, equipped with advanced technologies, including Technology-Assisted Intelligence (TAI) and machine learning tools, to aid investigations into cryptocurrency fraud and other cybercrimes. This centre features a Security Operations Centre

(SOC) designed to manage large-scale security breaches and respond to threats targeting individuals and businesses. They have also launched a dedicated helpline - 14407 - operating 24/7. A Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) has been established to coordinate rapid responses to cyber incidents.

India urgently needs to address the rights to disconnect from social media and to protect personal data privacy, as these areas are often exploited by cybercriminals. Users of cyberspace—whether through computers, mobiles, or other electronic devices—are advised to refrain from responding to calls or messages from unknown numbers, whether domestic or international. Verification of callers' identities and links before responding is crucial. Continuous awareness is essential for safeguarding human rights related to life, financial security, dignity, and reputation in the face of growing cybercrime threats.

Important intervention

Fighting air pollution

(Case No. 2886/90/0/2022)

With the onset of winter, the concerns about smog and air pollution in Delhi-NCR has again gained attention in various discourses with the Supreme Court asking the concerned authorities to take proactive measures to check it. The NHRC, India also continues to hear the case registered by it on the matter based on *suo motu* cognisance in the year 2022 of a media report titled "Pollution reducing life expectancy by 5 years: Study," highlighting a significant reduction in life expectancy due to air pollution, particularly in Delhi- NCR, where the decrease was noted to be as high as 9.7 years. Following this, the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change submitted a detailed report outlining pollution levels, governmental efforts to control air pollution, and the implementation of the National Clean Air Programme.

Despite these measures, the Commission found little improvement in air quality, primarily attributing ongoing pollution to crop burning in neighbouring states. As a result, the Commission directed the Chief Secretaries of Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh to provide detailed reports on air pollution and attend a meeting scheduled for 10.11.2022, either in person or via hybrid mode.

During subsequent deliberations, the Commission raised various queries regarding the measures taken by these states. Notices were issued to numerous departments, including the Delhi Police, Central Pollution Control Board, and Delhi Development Authority, to submit their plans for improving air quality.

On 29th September, 2023, the Commission directed Chief Secretaries of all States and Union Territories to submit action taken reports related to an advisory issued on 24th September, 2021 regarding the protection of human rights of those engaged in hazardous cleaning, as well as plans for improving air quality in Delhi and NCR. A video conferencing meeting was held with government representatives discussing waste management along the Azadpur to Narela railway

line, and a joint inspection was planned for 3rd October, 2023 to assess cleanliness and waste removal.

The joint inspection conducted on the 3rd and 4th October, 2023 revealed significant issues with waste management, indicating that large piles of legacy waste persisted in several locations. The findings highlighted the need for collaborative efforts among various stakeholders to address waste accumulation and improve sanitation in the area.

Following this, the Commission scheduled a further inspection for 20th November, 2023 to evaluate progress on cleaning efforts along the railway tracks and directed the Chief Secretaries of various states to present their reports and findings during a hybrid meeting on 30th November, 2023

The Joint Inspection Team submitted recommendations for waste management, including assigning garbage collection tasks to existing railway cleanliness agencies, educating residents on waste disposal, and ensuring that the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) rehabilitates squatter settlements and arranges for proper sanitation.

At the meeting on 30th November, 2023, the Commission noted that several states had not

The Commission's efforts illustrate a structured approach to addressing air quality and waste management issues in Delhi- NCR and other parts of the country.

submitted the required reports and directed all states to review the Supreme Court's judgment in *Dr. Balram Singh v. Union of India & Others* (dated 20th October, 2023) and provide a comprehensive roadmap to comply with its directions within four weeks. The Commission emphasized the need for a long-term strategy to eliminate manual scavenging as part of these measures.

The matter was scheduled for further discussion on 24th January, 2024, with representatives from various states required to present their progress regarding hazardous cleaning practices in accordance with the Act of 2013. After the meeting, requests for extensions were received due to the Parliamentary elections, leading the Commission to postpone hearings on 18th April, 2024. By 18th July, 2024, reports from several states had been received, but many remained outstanding. The Commission issued a reminder to the remaining states on 24th October, 2024 for submission of their reports, indicating ongoing active consideration of the matter. The Commission has listed the further hearing of the matter on 2nd December, 2024.

The Commission's efforts illustrate a structured approach to addressing air quality and waste management issues in Delhi- NCR and other parts of the country, emphasising collaborative action among various government bodies and adherence to judicial directives.

Suo motu cognisance

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* cognisance of many such issues and brought succour to the victims of human rights violations. During October 2024, the Commission took *suo motu* cognisance in four cases of alleged human rights violations reported by the media and issued notices to the concerned authorities for reports. Summaries of these cases are as follows:

Unlawful police detention results in the death of a snake bite victim

(Case No. 3999/4/15/2024)

The media reported on 27th October, 2024 that a man bitten by a snake lost

his life as he was detained and not allowed to rush to the hospital for treatment by some policemen despite his repeated requests in the Kaimur district of Bihar. Reportedly, they demanded Rs. 2000/- in bribe, forcing him to call his brother in distress who

could arrange only Rs. 700/- to manage his release. But by that time, he had lost considerable time to get treated. The Commission has issued a notice to the Director General of Police, Government of Bihar calling for a detailed report. It has also asked the District

Magistrate, Kaimur to inform whether any compensation has been paid to the next of kin of the deceased.

Death of a boy after falling into an open drain

(Case No. 3834/30/6/2024)

The media on 8th October, 2024 reported that a five-year-old boy died after falling into an open drain in the Alipur area of North West Delhi on 7th October, 2024. Reportedly, the contractor, who worked there, had left the drain opened at various places without placing any warning signs. This is the fifth such incident in the national capital in the recent past.

The Commission has issued notices to the Chief Secretary, Government of NCT of Delhi, the Commissioner of Police, Delhi, the Vice-Chairman, Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and the Commissioner, Municipal Corporation of Delhi calling for a detailed report. It is expected to include the status of the FIRs in all such cases, details of action taken against the responsible officials, and compensation if any, paid to the next of kin of the deceased persons. The Commission would also like to know about the steps taken/ proposed by the authorities to stop the recurrence of such incidents.

Death of a four-year-old boy after a part of a machine in an open-air gym fell on him

(Case No. 3917/30/9/2024)

The media reported that a four-year-old boy died after a part of a machine in an open-air gym fell on him in a municipality-run park in West Delhi's Moti Nagar. Reportedly, the people present on the spot suspected that the nuts and bolts of the equipment were loose which led to the incident.

The Commission, expressing concern over the reported incident, observed that all the public parks having open gyms needed maintenance and inspection. Accordingly, it has issued notices to the Chief Secretary, Government of NCT of Delhi, Vice-Chairman, Delhi Development Authority (DDA), Commissioner, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), and Secretary, New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) calling for a detailed report.

It is expected to include the status of the maintenance and safety audit of the swings and gym equipment, etc. installed in the public parks under their jurisdiction in Delhi. The authorities are also expected to inform whether any compensation has been paid to the aggrieved family. The Commission has

also asked the Commissioner of Police, Delhi to submit his comments on the subject along with the status of the police investigation being conducted in the instant case.

Death of a girl by suicide on a private school premises

(Case No. 1589/1/6/2024)

The media reported that a 13-year-old girl student in VIII standard at a private school allegedly died by suicide in the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh on 23rd October, 2024. Reportedly, the incident happened in the school hostel campus at Reddypalem village panchayat area of the district. The Commission observed that going by the media reports, the girl committed suicide inside the hostel premises i.e. in the lawful custody of the school authorities which is a matter of concern.

Accordingly, it has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, Government of Andhra Pradesh calling for a detailed report supported by a thorough probe. It is expected to include the status of the police investigation and post-mortem examination including the cause of death. The authorities are also directed to share the report of any other enquiry conducted in the matter.

Recommendations for relief to the victims

One of the primary responsibilities of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India 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 October 2024, monetary relief of more than Rs. 127.7 lakh was recommended for the victims or their next of kin (NoK) in the 36

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	179/30/2/2024-JCD	Death in judicial custody	3.00	Delhi
2	2634/30/3/2023-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Delhi
3	2850/30/5/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Delhi
4	3728/30/9/2023-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Delhi
5	6797/30/9/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	7.50	Delhi
6	92/6/21/2024-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Gujarat
7	86/9/5/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Jammu & Kashmir
8	102/34/1/2024-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Jharkhand
9	1491/34/4/2023-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Jharkhand
10	489/34/10/2019-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Jharkhand
11	225/13/14/2023-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Maharashtra
12	2289/18/3/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	2.00	Odisha
13	3306/20/26/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	7.50	Rajasthan
14	2535/22/15/2023-JCD	Death in judicial custody	3.00	Tamil Nadu
15	10065/24/48/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Uttar Pradesh
16	3118/24/60/2024-JCD	Death in judicial custody	3.00	Uttar Pradesh
17	405/35/1/2023-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Uttar Pradesh
18	5061/25/5/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	West Bengal
19	1967/7/20/2020-AD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Haryana
20	1253/34/2/2019-AD	Death in police custody	5.00	Jharkhand
21	214/34/4/2023	Inaction over police atrocity on a minor	0.50	Jharkhand
22	647/4/23/2024	Police assault resulting in loss of one eye of the victim	0.25	Bihar
23	2580/4/39/2024	Police inaction in a case of assault in public	0.50	Bihar
24	6298/30/9/2022	Failure to take lawful action	0.50	Delhi
25	2469/20/11/2023	Sexual assault on a minor by police personnel	2.50	Rajasthan
26	644/33/2/2023-CL	Child labour	5.00	Chhattisgarh
27	210/10/1/2023	Harassment of students and parents	0.10	Karnataka
28	10423/24/32/2022	Harassment of students and parents	3.00	Uttar Pradesh
29	100/11/14/2024	Suicide due to torture in the name of ragging	7.00	Kerala
30	5449/30/3/2022	Denial of degree/ character certificate/ marks sheet/ migration certificate	0.50	Delhi

S. No.	Case Number	Nature of complaint	Amount (Rs. in lakh)	Authority
31	554/4/10/2023	Delay in providing the result/ mark sheet by a university	1.00	Bihar
32	785/6/23/2021	Non-payment of pension/ compensation	0.50	Gujarat
33	2564/24/4/2023	Non-payment of pension/ compensation	0.25	Uttar Pradesh
34	1532/4/26/2024	Inaction in a case of murder by anti-social elements	5.00	Bihar
35	14531/24/19/2024	Death due to electrocution	5.00	Uttar Pradesh
36	179/10/1/2023	Misbehaviour of a college Principal with students	0.10	Karnataka

Payment of relief to the victims

The Commission closed 14 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 Rs. 49 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	207/7/6/2023-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Haryana
2	1353/18/13/2023-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Odisha
3	917/34/8/2019-PCD	Death in police custody	5.00	Jharkhand
4	604/10/4/2020-PCD	Death in police custody	5.00	Karnataka
5	2904/20/14/2018-AD	Death in police custody	7.50	Rajasthan
6	1516/18/14/2023	Custodial torture	0.25	Odisha
7	30073/24/52/2022	Custodial violence	1.00	Uttar Pradesh
8	262/4/15/2023	Atrocities on old/ aged by police	0.50	Bihar
9	340/10/4/2022	Torture by police	0.50	Karnataka
10	3564/30/6/2023-WC	Attempt to rape	0.50	Delhi
11	6033/30/8/2022-WC	Family dispute	1.00	Delhi
12	3996/12/29/2022	Deaths of students due to negligence of school authorities	7.00	Madhya Pradesh
13	6067/4/1/2022	Death due to electrocution	0.75	Bihar
14	468/18/29/2023	Death of two minor children after falling into a water-filled pit	10.00	Odisha

Case studies

In many cases, the Commission, contrary to the claims of the concerned State authorities, found that the human rights of the victims were violated due to the lack of their lawful action, inaction, or omission. Therefore, the Commission, under the Protection of Human Rights Act, not only recommended punitive action against erring officials on a case-to-case basis but also recommended monetary relief to the victims of human rights violations or their next of kin. The Commission also received reports of compliance with its recommendations by the respective state authorities. Summaries of some of these cases are as under:

Death of two students after collapsing of water tank wall

(Case No. 512/36/28/2023)

The matter pertained to the death of two minor students, as a dilapidated water tank wall of a Residential School, running in a private building, collapsed on the victims when they were taking a bath in Nalgonda District in Telangana. Based on the material on record received in response to its notices, the Commission found that the incident happened due to the negligence of the concerned authorities. Despite direction/ reminders, the District Magistrate failed to submit an action taken report. It had to issue a conditional summons to the District Magistrate, Suryapet, Telangana. Subsequently, the Commis-

sion was informed that the families of the two victim boys were paid Rs. 6 lakh and Rs. 5 lakh each respectively as relief and they were also offered jobs in the school. A criminal action against the accused building owner was initiated by the School Principal. The school building was shifted to Thirumalagiri Vashista School after verifying the amenities like classrooms, dormitories, dining hall, sufficient capacity water storage tanks, etc.

Senior citizen beaten by police personnel

(Case No. 262/4/15/2023)

The matter pertained to the incident where a 70-year-old man, a teacher by profession in a private school in the

Kaimur district of Bihar, was publicly beaten up by two female police personnel with batons in 2023. Based on the material on record in response to its notice to the concerned authorities, the Commission found that the man fell from his bicycle and was reportedly trying to get up. However, instead of helping him, the two women police Constables of Home Guards shouted at the victim. He was beaten up with the baton on the road. Therefore, it recommended that the Government of Bihar pay Rs. 50,000/- as relief to the victim, which was paid. The report further revealed that departmental action was initiated against the female Constables and both have been removed from duty due to indiscipline while dealing with a senior citizen.

Field visits

The Chairperson, Members, and senior officers of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India periodically visit various locations across the country to evaluate the human rights situation and the status of the implementation of its advisories, guidelines, and recommendations by state governments and the concerned authorities. These visits include inspections of shelter homes, prisons, and observation homes, where they aim to raise awareness among government officials about the importance of addressing human rights issues. The NHRC also emphasises the need for timely reporting by state authorities to facilitate the prompt resolution of cases involving human rights violations.

Acting Chairperson visits Andhra Pradesh & Telangana

On 19th October, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani visited several places in Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh and Nalgonda District in Telangana to make an assessment of the human rights situation. She made a surprise visit to the Tribal Girls Hostel and assessed its

facilities and asked the District officers to address the shortcomings. She also held a meeting at the District Collector's office with key officials and discussed departmental operations and the importance of focusing on the welfare and rights of women, children, and the elderly.



► NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani visiting the Sai Dhamam Ashramam in Nalgonda District, Telangana

The Acting Chairperson also delivered a talk on Human Rights Awareness at the Hindu College of Pharmacy and briefed about the functioning of NHRC, its interventions and engagement with international bodies, emphasising training and capacity-building programmes for various institutions.

On 20th October, 2024, she made a surprise visit to the Scheduled Tribe Boys Hostel in the district. She assessed its facilities and asked the district officers to address the shortcomings.

On 28th October, 2024, she visited the Sai Dhamam Ashramam in Nalgonda District, Telangana. She assessed the classrooms and facilities made available for the students. She found the Ashramam spacious, clean and well-illuminated classrooms for children. She expressed satisfaction with the overall condition of the school.



► NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani interacting with the students of Scheduled Tribe Boys Hostel in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh

Special Rapporteurs and Monitors

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has appointed 14 Special Rapporteurs to monitor human rights conditions in various regions across the country. These Rapporteurs visit shelter homes, prisons, observation homes, and similar institutions, compiling reports that detail their observations and recommendations for future action. In addition, the Commission has designated 21 Special Monitors to focus on specific thematic human rights issues and report their findings back to the Commission. Throughout October 2024, both Special Rapporteurs and Monitors conducted visits to numerous locations.

Special Rapporteurs

- From 13th - 19th October 2024, Shri Akhil Kumar Shukla visited two drug de-addiction centres and the mental healthcare facility at Civil Hospital, Aizawl, Medical College, Aizawl and Psychiatric Hospital, Kulikwan, Aizawl to assess the facility made available to the inmates.
- From 17th - 20th October 2024, Shri Umesh Kumar visited Anganwadi Centres in Meghalaya to ensure that the human rights of the children and other beneficiaries of the centres are protected.
- From 21st - 26th October 2024, Smt Suchitra Sinha visited flooded-affected villages and Rehabilitation Centre to assess the human rights situation in the Districts – Saraikela and Kharsawan in Jharkhand. She held meetings with all stakeholders.
- From 23rd - 29th October 2024, Shri Mahesh Kumar Singla visited two old age homes for senior citizens in



► NHRC, India Special Rapporteur, Shri Mahesh Kumar Singla interacting with the senior citizens at an old age home in Ambala

Ambala and Chandigarh to assess the condition of the inmates and the facilities made available to them.

Special Monitors

- From 7th-10th October, 2024, Dr Sadhana Rout visited St. Joseph's College, Mount Carmel College and slums in Koramangala in Karnataka to understand the unique issues plaguing slum dwellers, including sexual violence. She also met with a Nodal officer under the PoSH Act and visited IT companies in Bengaluru to understand and examine the issues faced by women across different occupations.
- From 7th-11th October, 2024, Shri Khushwant Singh Sethi visited some Panchayats in Bhopal, Vidisha, Raisen, Sehore and Jabalpur districts, Madhya Pradesh to take note of the human rights situation there.
- From 14th-18th October, 2024, Shri Prem Singh Bisht visited several places in Tamil Nadu. He visited the Government automobile workshop and MSME Development Institute Coimbatore and held meetings with the officers to understand the issues related to business and human rights violations. He

also visited KG Denim Ltd and held interactive sessions with the officers of Tamil Nadu Tea Plantation Corporation Ltd, Coonoor and Pasteur Institute of India to assess the human rights situation there. Besides, he also visited several industrial areas in and around Nilgiri and held meetings with the District Industry officers to know the steps taken by them in promoting and protecting human rights in business and industrial setup.

- From 21st-26th October, 2024, Shri Balkrishan Goel visited Old Age Homes, Child Care Institutions, Observation Homes and Anganwadi Centres in Rajkot and Dwarka in Gujarat to see the facilities made available to the inmates.
- From 21st-25th October, 2024, Dr. Pradeepta Kumar Nayak visited the TLM Leprosy Hospitals and ICMR-National JALMA Institute for Leprosy & other Mycobacterial Diseases (ICMR-NJIL&OMD) in Uttar Pradesh to assess the various facilities made available.
- From 23rd-25th October, 2024, Dr. Yogesh Dube visited One Stop Centre, Balika Greh, Working Women's Hostel in Patna District, Bihar for an on-the-spot inspection to assess their condition.

► NHRC, India Special Monitor, Shri Balkrishan Goel visiting a Child Care Institution in Rajkot district, Gujarat



Capacity building

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India is actively collaborating with central and state governments, parastatal organisations, academic institutions, NGOs, and human rights defenders to safeguard and promote the human rights of all individuals. The NHRC has been conducting awareness programmes aimed at sensitising All India Services officers, including IAS, IPS, and IFS personnel. These initiatives mark a significant advancement in the promotion and advocacy of human rights across the country, underscoring the NHRC's unwavering commitment to fostering respect and understanding for human rights. In October 2024, the Commission organised two capacity-building programmes for senior officers of the Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Rajasthan Police.

Two-day residential capacity-building programme for Tamil Nadu and Karnataka Police officers

The Commission in collaboration with Tamil Nadu Police organised a two-day residential capacity-building programme for their and the senior officers of Karnataka police in Coimbatore from 3rd-4th October, 2024. Forty five police officers in the rank of Additional Superintendents of Police (Addl. SP), Superintendents of Police (SP) and Deputy Inspectors General (DIG) attended.

Inaugurating it, Shri Ajay Bhatnagar, Director General (Investigation) of the Commission, said that the concept of preventive actions by the states should preside over punitive actions. The idea should percolate to every aspect of policing. Shri Shankar Jiwal, Director General of Police, Tamil Nadu, praised the innovative concept of capacity-building training at the zonal level in Coimbatore and expressed gratitude to the NHRC for organising it. Shri Devajyoti Roy, Additional Director General, Karnataka and Shri Joginder Singh, Registrar (Law), NHRC were present.

In addition to the inaugural and valedictory sessions, the programme had seven technical sessions on various aspects of human rights and policing. In

the first session on the 'Human Rights and Ethical Dilemmas - A Practitioner's Perspective,' Shri Ajay Bhatnagar highlighted the challenges and the way forward in line with their duty by upholding human rights within the framework of law enforcement.

In the second session, Justice Shri V. Kannadasan, Member, Tamil Nadu State Human Rights Commission spoke about the 'Human Rights and the Role of Police Officers'. He highlighted issues including false complaints and the importance of judicial activism in ensuring justice.

Shri Joginder Singh, Registrar (Law), NHRC spoke in the third session on 'Various guidelines issued by the NHRC relating to policing and important Supreme Court cases'. He highlighted the key areas where the



► NHRC, India DG(I), Shri Ajay Bhatnagar inaugurating the capacity building programme



► Director General of Police, Tamil Nadu, Shri Shankar Jiwal addressing the participants



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressing a session

Commission has issued directions to improve police practices, with a particular emphasis on human rights violations during investigations, custodial violence, and the need for transparency and accountability in law enforcement.

Shri Devajyoti Ray, Additional Director General of Police, Karnataka, spoke on the 'Infrastructure of Human Rights Complaints Redressing System in Karnataka' in the fourth session of the first day. He gave an insight into the Karnataka State Human Rights Commission's (KSHRC's) innovative approach to complaint registration, which includes both an app-based system and a web-based platform, making it easier for citizens to report violations.

On Day 2, the first session began with the NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal speaking about the 'Evolution of Human Rights Framework'. He emphasised that greatness is all about prioritising others' welfare and highlighted the police's crucial role in delivering justice and upholding the human rights of all, particularly those

who are most vulnerable. He cited examples from Lord Buddha and other Indians like Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Ambedkar, Dr. Karve, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and so many freedom fighters and social reformers, who devoted their whole life to the wellbeing of others. Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., and many other civil rights activists worked as human rights defenders. He appealed to the police officers to draw inspiration from such great human beings to evolve as a true human rights defender.

Shri Rajiv Jain, former Member, NHRC delivered a lecture in the second session on 'Jurisprudence on Human Rights'. He emphasised the importance of protecting fundamental rights as in Article 21 of the Constitution and referred to landmark Supreme Court cases, including Sunil Batra and Maneka Gandhi in this regard. He discussed justice access, female prisoners' rights, and state liability. Besides policing, he highlighted the critical role of the judiciary in safeguarding human rights.

The last session was addressed by Shri Joginder Singh, Registrar (Law), on the 'Cases of human rights violations registered at NHRC in connection with Tamil Nadu.'



► NHRC, India Former Member, Shri Rajiv Jain delivering a lecture

► Senior officers with the participants of the two-day residential capacity building programme in Jaipur, Rajasthan



Two-day training of trainers' programme for Rajasthan police officers

The collaborative capacity building programme for senior police officers of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka was followed by a similar two-day collaborative programme with Rajasthan Police for their senior officers in Jaipur from 25th-26th October, 2024. The NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal inaugurated it in the presence of Shri Ajay Bhatnagar, DG(I), NHRC, India, Shri Joginder Singh, Registrar (Law), NHRC, India, Shri Utkal Ranjan Sahoo, Rajasthan DGP, Smt Malini Aggarwal, ADG (Civil Rights), ADG Ashok Rathore, ADG Training and Shri S Sengathir, ADG and other senior officers of Rajasthan Police. About 40 senior officers of Rajasthan Police attended.

The nine sessions were addressed by several prominent speakers on various aspects of human rights including among others, National and International perspectives on Human Rights, PHR Act, 1993, NHRC and the Role of the Investigation Division in addressing the violation of Human Rights, Issues pertaining to Human Rights violation in Rajasthan with special focus on women and caste, Human Rights and Ethical Dilemma in Policing, and Human Rights of Women with special emphasis on Domestic Violence.

Addressing the inaugural session, Shri Bharat Lal emphasised the importance of the true meaning of the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and Directive Principles of State Policy given in the Constitution, which will immensely help them to carry out their duties more effectively in the public interest. He said that these will

help in having a broader understanding of governance objectives at both the Union and State levels. He also emphasised that the new governance ideals focus on proactive processes, where the government actively reaches out to the most marginalised individuals to ensure the provision of basic human rights and amenities, rather than waiting for public demands.

Later, addressing the first session on 'National and international perspectives on human rights', Shri Bharat Lal said that a public servant, particularly the young police officer, has a role in creating a conducive environment for the development of India, providing safety and security to every citizen and ensuring proper implementation of all government initiatives promoting gender equality and mainstreaming.

Addressing the second session on 'PHR Act, 1993, NHRC and the role of its Investigation Division in addressing the violation of Human Rights,' Shri Ajay Bhatnagar, DG (I), NHRC highlighted the framework on which the Commission works in line with the requirements of the Paris Principles. He also highlighted sections 200 to 220 IPC (as replaced by Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita) about commission and omission on the part of public servants.

In the third session, Shri Joginder Singh, Registrar (Law) spoke on various guidelines issued by the Commission relating to policing and important Supreme Court cases in this regard. He also highlighted the NHRC guidelines on custodial deaths and encounter deaths.

NHRC, India Former Member, Shri Rajiv Jain elaborated the concepts of various rights of accused and victims in our criminal justice system. He also delved into the historical, political, religious, and cultural events that built up these rights.

► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal inaugurating the training programme





► Senior police officers at the inaugural session of the training programme

On the second day, Shri Ajay Bhatnagar spoke about human rights & ethical dilemmas in policing. He highlighted challenges in balancing public expectations with ethics, emphasising dilemmas like "Effectiveness vs. Correctness," pressures for immediate results, custodial violence and gender bias. He stressed the importance of ethical decision-making to uphold public trust and integrity in law enforcement.

Shri Joginder Singh, Registrar (Law), NHRC, India spoke about the cases of human rights violations registered in the NHRC related to the Rajasthan Police and the requirements of various reports to dispose of these cases. Smt Malini Aggarwal, Rajasthan ADG spoke on the human rights of women with special emphasis on domestic violence. She emphasised the Indian Constitution's provisions for women's rights, including legal aid, healthcare, and specific laws like the Witch Hunting Act and the Immoral Trafficking Act. Dr Shivani M. Sadhoo, Founder of Saarthi Counselling Services, spoke on the criminality involved in the issue of domestic abuse of women- the ultimate betrayal of human rights. She discussed emotional abuse in marriages and the impact of childhood trauma on adult relationships. The sessions highlighted legal, societal, and emotional aspects of domestic violence.

Shri Ajay Bhatnagar, DG (I) NHRC, India Shri Utpal Ranjan Sahoo, Rajasthan DGP, Shri Hemant Priyadarshi, DG, Smt Malini Aggarwal, ADG and other senior officers were present in the valedictory session. Shri Sahoo said that such training programmes are very useful for police officers and expressed the hope that the senior officers will take forward the knowledge to their colleagues towards protecting and promoting human rights in line of their duty.

Workshops

Besides this, the Commission also supported two collaborative human rights awareness workshops during October 2024, which were held by the Goa Institute of Public Administration and Rural Development and Raja Lakhamgouda Law College, Belagavi in Karnataka.



► A session in progress during human rights workshop at Goa Institute of Public Administration



► A session in progress during human rights workshop at Raja Lakhamgouda Law College, Belagavi, Karnataka

Students visit

To raise awareness of human rights among college students and faculty, the National Human Rights Commission invites educational institutions to visit and learn about human rights, their protection mechanisms, and the Commission's operations, as outlined in the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA) of 1993. In October 2024, 113 students and faculty members from the Department of Teacher Training and Non-Formal Education at Jamia Millia Islamia, the School of Law at Sharda University in Greater Noida, and Jamia Hamdard in New Delhi visited the Commission. They participated in an interactive session with NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Shri Devendra Kumar Nim and other senior officers,



▶ Visiting students and faculty from the Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

who provided insights into the PHRA, the functions of the Law and Investigation Divisions, and the Complaints Management System. The visitors also took a human rights pledge during their visit.



▶ Visiting students and faculty from the School of Law, Sharda University, Greater Noida



▶ Visiting students and faculty from the Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi

Events

NHRC Hindi Fortnight

The Commission encourages its employees to use the official language Hindi in its day-to-day functioning. In this connection, as part of the special drive during the Hindi Fortnight from 17th to 28th September, 2024, it organised

various competitions for its employees to promote the use of the Hindi language. On 24th October, 2024, a prize distribution ceremony was organised to award the winners.

On the occasion, the Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani congratulated all the participants and said that over the years the use of Hindi language has increased in day-to-day conversations in different parts of the country. She described how in 1984, the television serial in Hindi language based on the Ramayana popularised both the language and the Indian culture even in the southern region. The Hindi language is an important component in binding together the people of the country.



▶ NHRC, India Acting Chairperson addressing the Hindi Fortnight awards function



► A section of NHRC, India officers and staff

Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal said that the language and culture are closely linked to the identity and existence of a country. We must promote the use of our languages in the pockets where these are understood and spoken the most for better outreach of the intended message. He said that the official work in the Hindi language needs to be encouraged at least in the communications to the States where it is their official language.

The Acting Chairperson and the Secretary General were joined by the DG (I), Shri Ajay Bhatnagar, Registrar (Law), Shri Joginder Singh, Joint Secretaries, Smt Anita Sinha, Shri Devendra Kumar Nim and Director, Lt Col Virender

Singh in presenting the awards to the 45 winners in the presence of the other senior officers and staff.

Painting and slogan writing competition

Every year, Swachh Bharat Diwas is celebrated across the nation on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti to promote sanitation, cleanliness and hygiene. In this connection, the Commission on 13th October 2024, organised a painting competition on Swachhata in three categories up to 12th Standard for the children of officers and staff. About 73 children participated in the competition. Besides, the Commission also organised a slogan writing competition for all its employees on the same theme.

Art as a beacon of rights and dignity - 'Silent conversation: From margins to the centre'



► Union Minister for External Affairs, Dr. S. Jaishankar addressing the exhibition

India is home to over 104 million tribal people, representing approximately 730 Scheduled Tribes, including 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). These communities embody a unique cultural heritage safeguarded under the Constitution through Articles 244 and 342. Yet, beyond legal protection, there is a moral imperative to honour their contributions to society, nurture their livelihoods, and preserve their dignity. It is against this backdrop that the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India, supported the art



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



► A section of tribal artists



► Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat addressing the gathering

exhibition 'Silent conversation: From margins to the centre', organised by the Sankala Foundation and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), in collaboration with the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA). This initiative celebrated the deep connection between tribal communities, their cultural expressions, and the natural world they influence.

The first edition of the exhibition was inaugurated by the Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu in 2023. The second edition, hosted at the India Habitat Centre, was inaugurated by Union Minister for External Affairs, Dr. S. Jaishankar. He emphasised on India's development journey, which is deeply connected with environmental conservation. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to the welfare of Scheduled Tribes through various initiatives, highlighting that the Antyodaya scheme is rooted in the principle of uplifting marginalised communities and ensuring that no one is left behind. He highlighted that the 2022 amendments to the Wildlife Protection Act aimed to balance environmental conservation with development needs. He emphasised that policies are most effective when embraced by all citizens, referring to the concept of Jan Bhagidari. Union Minister for Environment, Forests, and Climate Change, Shri Bhupendra Yadav, in the video message, emphasized that the spirit of coexistence reflects how communities live in harmony with nature while protecting and respecting it. He praised this approach, especially as the world faces critical challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and soil desertification.

NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal said that tribal communities showcase a symbiotic relationship between humans and nature, and promote the conservation ethos. This relationship has been brought to cities



Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, who showed keen interest in these artworks, interacted with artists, and honoured them. It was highly appreciated and the President desired that this exhibition be organised in the Rashtrapati Bhavan Museum.

At its core, Silent Conversation was more than an art exhibition—it was a platform to amplify the voices of tribal communities, many of whom reside on the fringes of mainstream recognition. The exhibition included over 200 paintings and 100 art pieces by 49 artists from 22 tiger reserves across India including from Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Telangana, Rajasthan, Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Mizoram. Traditional art forms like Gond, Warli, Bhil, Patachitra, and Sohrai conveyed stories of coexistence, resilience, and conservation values. Each stroke of paint and each handcrafted artifact embodied centuries of wisdom, cultural pride, and ecological stewardship. Beyond their aesthetic appeal, these creations were a testament to the role of art in preserving identity and promoting dignity, echoing NHRC's commitment to the cultural and human rights of tribal communities.

► President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu and NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal interacting with a tribal artist from Mizoram

through their works of art and is expected to introduce the youth to the concept of conservation of nature. On the occasion, a book titled 'Hidden Treasures: India's Heritage in Tiger Reserves' and a magazine called 'Big Cats' were also released. The inauguration of the exhibition was followed by cultural performances by the tribal communities to showcase their rich traditions in the presence of the Union Minister, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, and several other dignitaries.

After this exhibition, 15 tribal artists among them were selected for the 9-day 'Artists-in-Residency' programme of Rashtrapati Bhavan, which concluded on 29th October, 2024. During their residency, they painted and exhibited their work at the prestigious Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre (RBCC). NHRC, India, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal showed their artwork and paintings to the



► The President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu with the tribal artists and senior officers

Global digital health summit – 2024 in Mumbai

The NHRC, India is promoting awareness about the need and significance of digital health care in the country to address seamlessly the medical needs of vast sections of the population. Last month, it collaborated with the Sankala Foundation for a national conference on this issue in Delhi. Several experts and prominent speakers, including the NHRC Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal highlighted various advantages the digital health care system may leverage to the needs of all segments of society, particularly marginalised, to afford an efficient treatment within their reach at minimum costs.

Thereafter, the Commission also supported a two-day Global digital health summit 2024 in Mumbai from 4th – 5th October, 2024. It was organised by the Indian Association of Private Psychiatry and the Institute of Human Behav-

our & Allied Sciences. The Summit brought together national and international experts on one platform to deliberate on the future of healthcare through digital innovations. Besides the digital health mechanisms, it also focussed on mental health and human rights.

Addressing a session on 'Universal Health Coverage and Digital Health' on the second day of the summit, Shri Bharat Lal, Secretary General, NHRC, India, said that the Commission prioritises the right to life, including healthcare, and has issued key advisories on health issues, especially for marginalised groups. He emphasised that ensuring access to healthcare, including mental health services presents significant challenges. The Commission is apprised of the government's initiatives like the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission and the Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA), which aim to deliver essential health services digitally nationwide.

Shri Lal highlighted that expanding digital healthcare services is crucial for achieving universal access across the country, as it can reduce costs, enhance access, and empower both patients and caregivers. He urged doctors to embrace digital technologies and solutions. He said that the use of digital technology can provide this solution on a scale in a country like India with 1.4 billion people living in 1.8 million rural habitations or 650 thousand villages and 4,500 cities and towns, and even the whole global south. In fact, digital healthcare will bring huge efficiency to the healthcare system. With the availability of electronic health records, the use of



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressing the Global Digital Health Summit



► A section of participants

data analytics and AI, digital healthcare will bring accuracy to the treatment. Of course, privacy issues need to be addressed.

Shri Lal also noted that Indian youth have the potential to provide digital healthcare services globally, just as they have excelled in the IT sector over the

past two decades. He expressed confidence that digital health could help achieve the goal of universal healthcare coverage by 2030, as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). India is poised to become a hub for digital healthcare solutions on the global stage.

Earlier, on 4th October, 2024, chairing a session at the national scientific symposium on mental health, human rights and digital health as part of the summit, Shri Devendra Kumar Nim, Joint Secretary, NHRC emphasised that the digital solutions must be integrated with mental health services for easy access and support to the vulnerable. He said that the NHRC is committed to sensitising all the stakeholders to create an inclusive healthcare system accessible to all.



► NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Shri D.K Nim chairing a session on Mental health, human rights and digital health

NHRC, India in the International arena

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India actively participates in international programmes to facilitate the exchange of ideas on human rights issues. Delegates from various foreign institutions also visit the Commission to meet with the Chairperson, Members, and senior officers, gaining insights into its operations aimed at promoting and protecting human rights. Additionally, the Chairperson and Members frequently attend international forums to share the Commission's achievements, engage with other National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), and address the evolving challenges to human rights in today's world.

NHRC, India Secretary General visits London

NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal was invited to address the participants in the Commonwealth Bridge Programme for World Bank staff, jointly organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the World Bank to improve understanding of human rights, rule of law and developmental challenges in South Asia. The Secretary General was also invited to speak at the event organised by the World Woman Foundation in partnership with the BBC at the House of Lords, Westminster, London.

On 9th October 2024, Shri Lal delivered a talk for the staff of the World Bank on 'Human Rights and Rule of Law in South Asia' at Marlborough House, London, as part of the Commonwealth Bridge Programme. He spoke at length

about the rich history, unique culture and diversity in the 8 South Asian countries, while also highlighting the challenges to human rights and the rule of law, such as poverty and illiteracy, pollution and environmental degradation, gender inequality, exploitation of child labour, corruption and political instability. In his talk, he spoke about the Indian civilisation and ethos which places emphasis on acceptability rather than tolerance. Home to multiple religions, India has assimilated foreign religions into its social fold, ensuring universal brother-



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressing the Commonwealth BRIDGE Programme in London

hood and humanity. Concluding his talk, he underscored the importance of 'leaving no one behind', and how the Government of India places great importance on ensuring basic amenities like housing, piped water, toilet, cooking gas, electricity, healthcare, education, banking services are being provided to all with speed and scale



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressing the World Woman Foundation Commonwealth Agenda event



► A section of participants

On 10th October, 2024 Shri Bharat Lal delivered the keynote address on 'Development Challenges in South Asia: Issues and Solutions' at the Commonwealth Bridge Programme. This talk was attended by both the staff and Young Professionals (YP) of the World Bank. In his speech, he emphasised the vibrancy and aspirational nature of the society in the 8 South Asian countries. There is a desire among these societies to ensure the best public services and the welfare of all. These countries also have a significantly large youth population, which creates both opportunities and challenges for the governments.

He emphasised the need to address rural income disparities by strengthening institutional mechanisms and creating opportunities for youth. India's governance model, centred on the welfare of the poorest, has significantly improved the quality of life over the past decade, evident in pandemic response measures like free food grains, financial support, and vaccinations. He cited initiatives like the Government E-Marketplace (GEM) platform and collateral-free loans for small businesses, which empower youth and promote entrepreneurship, as well as the digital physical infrastructure and JAM trinity (Jan Dhan accounts, Aadhaar, and mobile phones) which transformed governance, ensuring transparency, accountability, and speed. In his speech, Shri Lal urged the World Bank and multilateral institutions to expedite project approvals, conduct thorough impact assessments, and align policies with national goals. He criticised delays in critical projects.

On 14th October, 2024 Shri Lal spoke on 'Safeguarding Human Rights and Driving Progress in India and Beyond', at the World Woman Foundation Commonwealth Agenda event at the

House of Lords, UK Parliament, in partnership with the BBC. In the discussion, which was attended by HRH Princess Beatrice, Baroness Sandy Verma, and influential women leaders from around the world, he highlighted India's development journey which has now progressed from promoting women's empowerment to fostering women-led development. He cited government initiatives such as PM Awas Yojana, PM Ujjwala Yojana, Jan Dhan Accounts, and the Jal Jeevan Mission, which have been instrumental in propelling women's workforce participation from around 18% in 2014 to over 27% today. He also highlighted the role of the National Human Rights Commission, which strives to promote safe, secure, and respectful workplaces for young women.

Delegation visits to NHRC, India

- On 22nd October, 2024, a delegation from Miami University, Ohio, USA including Dr. Daniel E. Hall, J.D. Ed.D, Dr. Jae-Seung Lee PhD, Department



▶ Visiting delegation of the Miami University with the NHRC, India Secretary General and senior officers

of Justice & Community Studies and Dr. Meera Mathew, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Delhi-NCR and students visited NHRC. They met the Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal in the presence of Shri Joginder Singh, Registrar (Law) and Shri Devendra Kumar Nim, Joint Secretary.

- On 23rd October, 2024, Mr Bamang Tago, Acting Chairperson, Arunachal Pradesh State Human Rights Commission, visited NHRC and met the Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal. They discussed various human rights dimensions and prospects of future collaborations.
- On 24th October, 2024, a team of Karnataka Human Rights Commission consisting of Shri T. Sham Bhat, Acting Chairperson, Shri S.K. Vantigodi, Member and Shri A. Dinesh Sampath Raj, Secretary (I/c) visited NHRC. They were briefed by the senior officers on how with the help of HRCNet portal of the NHRC, the issue of duplication of cases can be avoided. They also discussed about the Complaint Management System, and training of the staff in this regard.



▶ Arunachal Pradesh SHRC Acting Chairperson, Shri Bamang Tago interacting with the NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal

News from State Human Rights Commissions

The promotion and protection of human rights is an ongoing endeavour, continually shaped by the evolving dimensions of human life and its associated challenges. In India, democratically elected governments are constitutionally obligated to safeguard the welfare of the people by upholding their basic human rights. Alongside these governments, various institutions—including the legislature, judiciary, a vibrant media landscape, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), State Human Rights Commissions (SHRCs), and other National and State Commissions—serve as vigilant guardians of rights issues affecting diverse segments of society. This column aims to highlight the remarkable activities undertaken by the SHRCs to protect and promote human rights.

Punjab Human Rights Commission

The Punjab State Human Rights Commission (PSHRC) with its proactive approach to addressing human rights violations, registered 7,531 cases from 1st January to 20th October, 2024. This includes *suo motu* cognisance of 92 incidents of human rights violations. Besides the disposal of cases, the PSHRC also regularly engages with the students and their faculty to build human rights awareness. On 8th September, 2024, a group of 40 students from the Department of Human Rights and Duties at Punjab University,

Chandigarh, visited the PSHRC for a one-day session aimed at providing them with practical insights into the Commission's functioning with regard to human rights. This was followed by an interactive session with the PSHRC Chairperson, Justice Sant Parkash.



► Students and faculty from the Punjab University, Chandigarh visiting the Punjab SHRC

Madhya Pradesh State Human Rights Commission

The Madhya Pradesh State Human Rights Commission (MPSHRC), led by Acting Chairperson Shri Manohar Mamtani, has engaged in various activities



► Students and faculty from the Bhopal School of Social Sciences visiting the Madhya Pradesh SHRC

alongside addressing case resolutions. On 9th October, 2024, the Commission hosted a study visit for 19 students and 2 faculty members from the Bhopal School of Social Sciences. During this visit, students received insights into human rights and the Commission's functions, including information on complaint management and self-initiated cases.

In October, 2024, the Commission also resolved several significant cases, including five deaths in different state prisons attributed to negligence by prison authorities. Other cases addressed included issues related to non-payment of pension and gratuity, unpaid salaries, illegal detention, and a death caused by lightning. The Commission recommended over 30 lakh in monetary relief for the victims or their next of kin.

Voices of victims getting relief

Since its establishment on 12th October, 1993, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has provided support to numerous victims of human rights violations and their families through its interventions. This column presents a brief overview of the experiences of these beneficiaries, highlighting the voices of those who have benefited from the NHRC's recommendations implemented by various government authorities.

Death due to electrocution

(Case No. 3223/18/18/2022)

The complainant alleged that a farmer died after he came into contact with a live electric wire lying on the road while returning back from the agricultural field after finishing his agricultural work in Bhadrak, Odisha in 2022. The complainant alleged that this incident happened due to the inaction, negligence and failure of the electricity department. After the Commission's

notices to the concerned authorities, the complainant informed that Rs. 4 lakh relief was paid to the next of kin of the victim by the Government of Odisha. The complainant has also conveyed his gratitude to the Commission for its intervention.

Death of a baby in cross-firing

(Case No. 10/33/17/2024)

The complainant alleged that a six-month-old girl was killed while her mother suffered a bullet injury after they were caught in the cross-firing between Maoists and security forces in the forests of Bijapur district in the Bastar region of South Chhattisgarh in 2024. After the Commission's notices to the concerned authorities, the complainant informed that the Rs. 7 lakh relief was paid to the victim's family by the Government of Chhattisgarh. The complainant has conveyed his gratitude to the Commission for its intervention in the matter.

News in brief

- On 2nd October, 2024, NHRC, India joined the nation in paying homage to Mahatma Gandhi on his 155 birth anniversary. He was a great human rights defender who inspired millions across the globe to win freedom from colonialism and a narrow mindset through non-violence. His teachings encouraged living in harmony with respect to equality, dignity and liberty of all human beings.
- On 4th October, 2024, a group of Muscular Dystrophy warriors visited the Commission and met with the Joint Secretary, Smt Anita Sinha and the other senior officers. They shared their challenges & human rights concerns and expressed the hope for institutional intervention to create awareness in society about them. They were also briefed about the functioning of the NHRC, the Core Group on Disabilities, complaints registration and advisories issued for the protection of human rights of various vulnerable segments of society.
- On 10th October, 2024, NHRC, India joined the global fraternity in observing World Mental Health Day with the theme 'Mental Health at Work.' The Commission is committed to protecting the rights and welfare of persons suffering from mental illnesses and has taken several initiatives in this regard.
- On 14th October, 2024, NHRC, India Presenting Officer, Smt Yasmin Ahmad & Dr Rajul Raikwar, Consultant (Research) visited Mitwa Sankalp Samiti Garima Greh Shelter Home for Transgender persons in Raipur, Chhattisgarh to understand their problems. The inmates were also briefed about the functioning of the Commission.
- On 16th October, 2024, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal had an interactive session in the USISPF Board of Directors. He shared valuable insights on how government welfare schemes launched by the Prime Minister, such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Jal Jeevan Mission, Ayushman Bharat, Ujjwala Yojana, and others, have transformed lives and provided dignity to millions of citizens, especially women, across the country. He also briefed members on the crucial role and initiatives of the Commission in upholding human rights and ensuring justice for all. He spoke on how the lives of people and their income are improving in India and that women are at the centre of all these initiatives.
- On 17th October, 2024, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal, in a keynote address at SHRMIAC24 in New Delhi, said that organisations aren't dealing with money and machines but with humans. Governance should be a tool to make lives easier and better, fostering a more inclusive, human-centric future for all. He said that the diversity of more than 5,000-year-old Indian civilisation defines the greatness of its people. Empathy and compassion have always been central to Indian culture, and it is these values that set us apart. These values define us. Respect for human rights and dignity in business is the way forward.
- On 20th October, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani as Chief Guest, delivered a lecture on Human Rights Awareness at Thumalpali, Kalkashetra, Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh. She spoke about the functioning of the NHRC, *suo motu* cases, the Rapid Action Cell, training and capacity-building programmes, and international engagements. On the occasion, the Biography of Rani Ahilya Bai Holkar in Telugu was also released.
- From 21st -22nd October, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani accompanied by Director General (Investigation), Shri Ajay Bhatnagar, visited the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir. On 21st October, 2024, the Acting Chairperson inaugurated 'Sangi Fatak Samajik Utthan Kendra' set up by the Aditi Sewa Pratishthan (ASP) at Udhampur, Jammu & Kashmir. The ASP was established more than 20 years ago with the purpose of taking care of the orphaned children whose parents became the victims of terrorism in J&K. The next day, she also held a series of meetings arranged by the ASP with various stakeholders and victims of human rights violation at Circuit House Jammu. The Acting Chairperson also met with the Hindu migrants from Doda, Talwara and Kashmiri on the issues of women & girl children led by the Forum for Human Rights & Social Justice.
- On 21st and 23rd October, 2024, NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt Anita Sinha visited two Garima Grehs in Kolkatta, West Bengal and the Dostana Safar Garima Greh Shelter for transgender in Bihar. These shelters have been estab-

lished under the Support for Marginalised Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise (SMILE) scheme of the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for transgender. It aims to mainstream transgender persons by addressing their unique psycho-social, socio-economic, and health issues among others. Recently, the Commission has embarked upon a series of visits to the Garima Greh shelters in different parts of the country to understand their problems and the required improvements. The inmates are also briefed about various human rights aspects and the functioning of the Commission to address the grievances related to rights violations.

- On 25th October, 2024, the NHRC, India organised an awareness programme emphasising the importance of the role of sanitation workers in maintaining health and hygiene practices in society. Smt Sonam Mishra, Vice President, Sulabh International School of Action Sociology was the guest speaker.
- On 26th October, 2024, Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani spoke on 'Business and Human Rights' at the Swadeshi Mela in Hyderabad, Telangana. The participants included several stakeholders, entrepreneurs, academicians and policymakers. She highlighted various aspects of human rights and the functioning of the Commission. She also visited stalls to encourage local producers.
- On 30th October, 2024, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal administered the Rashtriya Ekta Diwas pledge to the officers, and staff of the Commission on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

Forthcoming events

5th November, 2024	The Commission will organise a special module on 'Krav Maga: How to tackle offenses against Women,' for women employees. The aim is to equip the women officers with essential self-defense skills.
11th-16th November, 2024	NHRC, India in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs will organise a series of 'Executive Capacity Building Programme on Human Rights' under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programmes for the functionaries of the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) of different countries. The programme aims to enhance their capacities, facilitate the exchange of best practices, and promote collaboration to advance and safeguard human rights in their respective countries.
18th-20th November, 2024	The Commission will organise a three-day on-site training programme on human rights for Arunachal Pradesh State Human Rights Commission.
18th November, 2024	The Commission will begin its two week short term internship programme for university- level students.
2nd December, 2024	The Commission has listed the further hearing of its case related to Delhi- NCR air pollution.
10th December, 2024	The Commission will organise a function to observe Human Rights Day. This will be followed by a National Conference on 'Mental well-being: Navigating stress from classroom to workplace.'
11th December, 2024	The Commission will organise a one-day National Conference of NHRC- SHRCs and Special Monitors/ Special Rapporteurs.

Complaints in October, 2024

New complaints received	5,276
Disposed off including old cases	7,277
Under consideration of the Commission	6,441

[illegible]

RNI No. 59340/94