



HUMAN RIGHTS

Newsletter

A monthly publication of the National Human Rights Commission, India



Report

NHRC ITEC Executive Capacity-Building Programme for NHRIs of Global South

Articles

- Human rights in India: Course and Discourse
- Legal and policy interventions for women and girls in India: A human rights perspective
- Water security and human rights: Building a future of equity, sustainability and dignity

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Newsletter

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National Human Rights Commission

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► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian, addressing the senior officers and staff at an event organised to mark Women's Day at the Commission

Monthly Recap

From the desk of the Secretary General & Chief Executive

The month of March, 2025 witnessed a series of significant initiatives undertaken by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India, aimed at advancing the cause of human rights and reinforcing the framework for their protection. The NHRC, India undertook a series of impactful activities throughout March, 2025 to promote and safeguard the rights of individuals.

The month featured several international engagements aimed at strengthening the Commission's global outreach and cooperation. Along with NHRC, India, Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian, I attended various international meetings held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva. These included sessions of the Asia Pacific Forum (APF) of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), Commonwealth Forum of National human Rights Institutions (CHNHRIs), the General Assembly of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), and the GANHRI Bureau, where NHRC, India is a member. During the visit, I had the opportunity to present the GANHRI Finance Committee report, in my capacity as its Chairperson, to the GANHRI Governance Bureau and General Assembly. The report comprised key financial details including budget, expenditure overview, fee waivers, project-based funding, strategies for fund mobilisation, reserve status, audit reports, etc.

One of the noteworthy highlights of the month was the seminar titled 'Human Rights in India: Course and Discourse,' held on 13th March, 2025 at Palais des Nations, Geneva. The event coincided with the ongoing session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva and served as a meaningful platform to highlight India's work in human rights and recent developments. The seminar featured a keynote address by NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian and attracted participation from Permanent Representatives and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) from various countries, UN officials, human rights defenders, civil society representatives, and other distinguished individuals. The session was moderated by Ambassador Arindam Bagchi, India's Permanent Representative to the UN organisations in Geneva.

The discussions highlighted India's unwavering commitment to equality and justice, the ethical foundations of its Constitution, and its robust federal system of governance. Special emphasis was placed on India's vibrant, multi-religious democracy, as well as the increasingly prominent leadership roles played by women. The session also emphasised the strength of India's human rights institutions, both at the federal and provincial levels, which continue to play a crucial role in the country's progress as a modern democratic state. This seminar generated significant interest within the UN and was a resounding success. This edition of the Newsletter carries a brief report on these events.

In line with India's philosophy of '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*,' meaning the world is one family, the country has consistently extended a helping hand to nations in the Global South. NHRC India, in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs,

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Government of India, has initiated capacity-building and experience-sharing programmes aimed at strengthening National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in the Global South. The third six-day training programme organised for 35 senior NHRI officials from 11 countries across Africa, East Asia, Central Asia, and the Pacific received a tremendous response.

NHRC, India continues to work closely with NGOs, civil society, and human rights defenders, maintaining a strong partnership in promoting and protecting human rights. I highlighted this enduring partnership in my pre-recorded statement during the UNHRC session in Geneva, where I addressed the topic of 'Human Rights Defenders.'

March also marks two important international days: Women's Day on 8th March and International Water Day on 22nd March. The NHRC, India has been consistent with its approach of promoting the human rights of women through consultations, advisories, and sensitisation programmes. In celebration of Women's Day, the Commission organised an event addressed by Chairperson Justice V. Ramasubramanian, Members, Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi and Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani and senior officers. The event acknowledged the significant contributions of women in shaping Indian society to draw inspiration from them. India has been a place of many notable women rulers, reformers, and leaders who have played a significant role in shaping what the Indian ethos stands for respecting women. It has long been a strong votary of women's rights, having granted women the right to vote right since independence far earlier than many developed economies. One cannot forget the contributions of Ms Hansa Mehta and Lakshmi Menon in shaping the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). As part of the Indian delegation, Ms Mehta prevailed upon the drafting committee to replace the expression "All men are born free and equal" to "All human beings are born free and equal". thereby ensuring a more gender sensitive language of the UDHR. Ms Lakshmi Menon argued for including the line "equal rights of men and women" in the preamble to the Declaration.

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Water availability is not just a necessity but a fundamental human right. Ensuring water security is directly linked to national security, as scarcity hinders socio-economic development. The high-level policy dialogues on water are the need of the hour and the dialogues such as 'Fostering Collaborative Efforts to Protect Receding Glaciers' organised by the India Water Foundation in Geneva, gave an excellent platform for the idea exchange, wherein I delivered a keynote online about challenges and work taken up by India to achieve water security, which also requires a concerted global response as rising temperature has serious impact on water availability.

This edition of the Newsletter also includes three insightful articles titled 'Human Rights in India: Course and Discourse', 'Legal and policy interventions for women and girls in India: A human rights perspective' and 'Water security and human rights: Building a future of equity, sustainability and dignity.' Hope these informative articles will make for engaging reading.

The Commission also felicitated the seven winners of its tenth edition of the short film competition. A record number of 303 entries indicates the increasing awareness about the importance of promoting and protecting human rights. The award-winning films are uploaded on the Commission's website and YouTube channel and are open to screening for human rights awareness purposes by government departments, training and academic institutions, as well as civil society.

This edition of the Newsletter also brings you reports on the key engagements and activities undertaken by the Commission, including the two-week Online Short-Term Internship programme. We hope you find it an insightful and engaging reading.



[Bharat Lal]

Secretary General &
Chief Executive Officer

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India, in collaboration with the Union Ministry of External Affairs, has launched capacity-building and experience-sharing programmes to strengthen National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in the Global South. The third edition of the six-day training programme, designed for 35 senior NHRI officials from 11 countries across Africa, East Asia, Central Asia, and the Pacific, received an overwhelmingly positive response.

NHRC ITEC Executive Capacity-Building Programme for NHRIs of Global South

From 3rd - 8th March, 2025, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India organised the third ITEC Executive Capacity-Building Programme on Human Rights for senior functionaries of the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) of the Global South in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs. This six-day long event was inaugurated by the NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian, in the presence of Members, Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani and Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal.

The programme witnessed the participation of 35 senior functionaries from 11 NHRIs of Madagascar, Uganda, Timor Leste, DR Congo, Togo, Mali, Nigeria,

Egypt, Tanzania, Burundi and Turkmenistan. The programme included interactive sessions with eminent persons and domain experts, and participants got exposure to various aspects of civil and political rights as well as socio-economic and cultural rights enjoyed by the people of India.

During the 6-day programme, speakers included NHRC, India Chairperson, Members, Secretary General, Shri V. K. Paul, Member, NITI Aayog and Shri Rajeev Kumar, Former Chief Election Commissioner of India, Shri Yugal Kishore Joshi, Mission Director at NITI Aayog and Ambassador Asoke Kumar Mukerji, former PR of India to UN, Mr Chris Garroway, Economist & Development Coordinator, United Nations,



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian addressing the inaugural session of the ITEC Executive Capacity-Building Programme on human rights for NHRIs of Global South in the presence of Members, Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani and Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal



Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian
Chairperson, NHRC, India



Shri V.K. Paul
Member (Health), NITI Aayog



Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi
Member, NHRC, India



Shri Bharat Lal
Secretary General,
NHRC, India

Shri Manoj Yadava, former DG (I), Shri Surajit Dey, former Registrar (Law) and Smt Anita Sinha and Shri D. K. Nim, former Joint Secretaries of the NHRC. The programme was also enriched by the sharing of experiences by the participating senior functionaries of various NHRIs.

After the inaugural, the programme on day one had four sessions on 'Enforcement of human rights: New age challenges' addressed by NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri V Ramasubramanian, 'Universal access to affordable quality healthcare' by Shri V.K. Paul, Member, NITI Aayog, 'Democracy and fair elections: A pre-requisite for human rights' by Shri Rajeev Kumar, former Chief Election Commissioner of India and 'Convergence of human rights framework and Sustainable Development Goals' by Shri Chris Garroway, Economist and Development Coordinator, United Nations.

On the second day, the participants had interactive sessions on 'Institutional framework for protection of human rights in India' by the NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal. He also addressed a session on the 'Promotion of socio-economic and cultural rights: Quality of life and Dignity,' 'Complaints management and redressal of human rights violations' by Shri Surajit Dey, former Registrar (Law), NHRC, India and 'NHRC's approach to research, training, outreach and advocacy' by Shri Devendra Kumar Nim, former Joint Secretary, NHRC, India.

On third day of the capacity-building programme, the three sessions were 'Evolution of human rights in Indian jurisprudence' by NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, 'Cyberspace and human rights: Ensuring cyber security' by Dr Muktesh Chander, Special Monitor, NHRC, India, and 'Collaboration between HRDs, NGOs and CSOs in promoting human rights' by Shri Sandeep Chachra, Executive Director, Action Aid Association.

On the fourth day, the sessions covered included 'NHRC and international outreach, collaboration & partnerships' by Smt Anita Sinha, former Joint Secretary, NHRC, India, 'Mission Life: Sustainability and human rights' by Shri Yugal Kishore,



Shri Rajeev Kumar
Former Chief Election
Commissioner of India



Shri P Kumaram
Secretary,
Ministry of External Affairs



Shri Manoj Yadava
Former DG (I),
NHRC, India



Shri Surajit Dey
Former Registrar (Law),
NHRC, India



Smt Anita Sinha
Former Joint Secretary,
NHRC, India



Shri Asoke Kumar Mukerji
Former Indian Ambassador to UN,
New York



Shri Devendra Kumar Nim
Former Joint Secretary,
NHRC, India



Dr Muktesh Chander
Special Monitor,
NHRC, India



Shri Sandeep Chachra
Executive Director,
Action Aid Association



Shri Chris Garroway
Economist and
Development Coordinator, UN

Mission Director, NITI Aayog, and 'UN and human rights framework, mechanisms and processes' by Shri Asoke Kumar Mukerji, former Permanent Representative of India to UN.

On the fifth day, Shri P Kumaram, Special Secretary, MEA, addressed a session on India and Global South: Developmental cooperation and partnership' and Shri Manoj Yadava, former DG (I), NHRC, India spoke about 'Human rights violations: Investigations, spot enquiries, and analysis of reports.'

In the valedictory session, the NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian, expressed his heartfelt gratitude to all attendees. He emphasised that free exchange of knowledge is the foundation of a better world, stating that humanity has the power to create a just and harmonious society on Earth. Citing the Rig Veda, he underscored the importance of welcoming noble thoughts from all directions and reiterated that the ultimate aim of all human endeavours is to enhance the quality of life for all.

He reflected on the universal essence of humanity, drawing parallels between the unity of mankind and the singularity of gold despite the multitude of

jewels it forms. He reminded all participants that the highest virtue is to be a good human being. Reiterating his remarks in the inaugural session, the NHRC, India Chairperson said that platforms like ITEC provide an opportunity to share and exchange each other's rich cultural diversity and human rights values, to think and find ways on how best to address the ever-emerging human rights challenges.

NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, acknowledged the participants' dedication to human rights advocacy and applauded their enthusiasm and commitment to meaningful change. He reaffirmed the



► The inaugural session of the NHRC ITEC Executive Capacity-Building Programme in progress

NHRC India's commitment to strengthening future collaborations with NHRIs worldwide. Quoting the philosophy of "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" (The World is One Family), he emphasised NHRC's vision of fostering global solidarity in protecting and promoting human rights.

NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, expressed gratitude to all participants for their valuable contributions, recognising their engagement and willingness to share insights. She emphasised the Commission's commitment to continuous learning and collaboration and extended warm wishes for International Women's Day, underlining the importance of gender equality and human rights for all.

Before this, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal commended all attendees for their active participation. He highlighted the significance of cooperation among the countries of the Global South, emphasising their

shared values and mutual learning opportunities. He also discussed the signing of potential Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with interested countries to deepen this collaboration. Notably, he offered the NHRC's knowledge and experience in strengthening human rights in their countries, including advanced complaint redressal system software, for robust grievance redressal mechanisms and further strengthening human rights enforcement.

The participants also got the opportunity to visit iconic places like Pradhan Mantri Museum, Humayun tomb, Taj Mahal, Dilli Haat, etc., to have an exposure to India's rich cultural heritage.

NHRC, India Director, Lt Col Virender Singh, the course coordinator, applauded the active engagement of participants and the invaluable exchange of knowledge throughout the programme. Shri Vikram Harimohan Meena, SSP, co-course coordinator, emphasised the role of law enforcement in human rights protection, advocating greater synergy between policing and human rights organisations.



► A section of participants attending the NHRC ITEC Executive Capacity-Building Programme



► NHRC, India and MEA senior officers with the participants of eight NHRIs of Global South in the NHRC ITEC Capacity-Building Programme

Article

Human rights in India: Course and Discourse

(Excerpts of Justice V Ramasubramanian's address at a seminar held on 13th March, 2025 at Palais des Nations, Geneva)

- Justice V Ramasubramanian
Chairperson, NHRC



On 13th March, 2025, the NHRC, India organised an event on the sidelines of the Annual GANHRI Conference. The ambassadors/ permanent representatives of several countries attended the event held at Palais des Nations, Geneva. The event began with a brief talk by me on “Human rights in India: Course and Discourse” followed by Q & A Session. The following is the summary of the talk delivered:

Yesterday, the UNDP Administrator made a statement at the High-level opening of the Annual GANHRI Conference 2025 in the context of the theme of this year's conference namely “The human rights of women and girls: Promoting gender equality and the role of NHRIs.” In the statement, he said:

“Legal reforms have dismantled discriminatory laws, strengthened institutions, and deepened commitments to women's visibility and opportunity. Yet, we all know that progress is uneven, fragile, and too often reversible. Globally, women still have only two-thirds of the legal rights of men. At the current pace, it will take an additional 137 years to eliminate extreme poverty for women.”

Therefore, 'where does India stand in this discourse' is the question that I would like to address in the next 15 to 20 minutes before throwing the floor open to some Q & A.

I will divide this discourse into 3 parts, the first giving a broad view of the complexities of the society that constitute the Nation-State India, the second dealing with a historical perspective of how the Indian Society valued human rights particularly women's rights in ancient times, and the third about women's empowerment in India.

First, let us see the complexities of our society:

People who are familiar with India would know that it is a country with a population of more than 1.4 billion people,

which constitutes 18% of the world's population but which occupies only 2.4 % of the land mass. We have people following 8 major religions of the world, out of which 4 were born in India. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism were born here. We have people professing Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam. We have people belonging to 1686 ethnic groups, speaking 22 official languages and 1652 other languages and dialects. Our people identify themselves as belonging to more than 3800 castes and communities. When the British ruled India, there were about 647 or so Princely States, each considering itself to be an independent State.

When the cry for independence from colonial rule reached its zenith, many western scholars thought, believed and advocated that India was not one nation. In 1888, Sir John Strachey wrote that there was no one Indian nation in the past and there will never be one in future.

But when it became clear at the dawn of the 20th century that the people of India could come together and seek independence, the so-called scholars started singing a different tune. Mr Welldon, the Bishop of Calcutta remarked that the moment the last British soldier sailed out of Bombay or Karachi, India will become a battlefield of antagonistic racial and religious forces.

In 1931, Winston Churchill predicted that if the British left, then the entire gamut of public services created by them—the judicial, medical, railway and public works departments would perish and India will fall back rapidly through the centuries into the barbarism and privations of middle ages.

But India attained independence in 1947. It did not break into smaller nations. It did not go back to the middle ages and fall back into barbarism. Surprised at the simple people of this country belying every doomsday predictions, a British journalist, Don Taylor remarked in 1969:

“When one looks at this vast country with many diversities and conflicting religions, it seems incredible that one

nation could ever emerge. It is difficult to even encompass this country in the mind- the great Himalaya, the wide Indo Gangetic plain burnt by the sun and savaged by the fierce monsoon rains, the green flooded delta of the east, the great cities like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. It does not often seem like one country. And yet there is a resilience about India which seems an assurance of survival. There is something which can only be described as an Indian spirit.”

Coming to the second part, let us now have a historical perspective of how the Indian Society valued human rights in ancient times.

In the vedic tradition of India, we have had very prominent women scholars. The Rig Veda mentions Romasa, Lopamudra, Apala, Kadru, Visvavara, Ghosha, Juhu, Vagambhrini, Paulomi, Yami, Indrani, Savitri, and Devajami. The Sama Veda adds Nodha, Akrishtabhasha, Sikatanivavari and Gaupayana.

In Tamil language, Sangam literature of the 2nd to 3rd century saw at least 27 lady Bards (poet), showing thereby that women had a place in the literary world in ancient India. Similarly, there were women poets in the Pali language who were mostly Buddhist nuns. Their works were collectively called “*Therikatha*”. The word “*Theri*” is the feminine gender word for the monks and “*Therar*” denotes the male counterpart.

Just as the history of civilisation of India is ancient, the history of human rights in India is also age-old.

“Access to justice” is a cry that we hear the world over these days. It appears from Book 3, Chapter 20, verse 22 of Kautilya's Artha Sastra, that there was a system of free or pro bono legal services. The verse says that the Judges themselves shall take care of the affairs of gods, Brahmins, ascetics, women, minors, old, sick and those who are helpless, even if they do not approach the court. Such transactions as pertain to gods, Brahmins, ascetics, women, minors, aged Persons, diseased persons and helpless creatures shall, though not be complained of, be settled by the judges themselves; and in such transactions as the above, excuses due to time, place, or possession shall not be pleaded.

Book 4 is completely dedicated to the administration of criminal jurisprudence. Verses 5 and 6 of Chapter 8 of Book 4 states that no one shall be arrested for a crime committed more than three nights earlier, unless he is caught with the tools of the crime. This is because of the difficulties of conducting a proper investigation, if the

offence is detected after sometime. Three days after the commission of a crime, no suspected person (*sankitakah*) shall be arrested, in as much as there is no room for questions unless there is strong evidence to bring home the charge. Any person who keeps an innocent man in confinement (*parivasayatahsuddham*) shall be punished with the first amercement (damages for wrongful prosecution).

Ignoramuses, youngsters, the aged, the afflicted, persons under intoxication, lunatics, persons suffering from hunger, thirst, or fatigue from journey, persons who have just taken more than enough of meal, persons who have confessed of their own accord (*atmukasitai*), and persons who are very weak—none of these shall be subjected to torture.

Dear friends, you now know wherefrom and how we started our journey. But the question of where we have arrived and what more distance we have to cover, to achieve our goal, is still unclear. Though a dismal picture is presented about India at the global level in some quarters at some time, the achievements made by India, especially in promoting gender rights, is phenomenal. The New York Times published a positive report on 27.01.2010. It gave the following statistics:

- HSBC, JP Morgan Chase, Royal Bank of Scotland, UBS and Fidelity International are run by women in India. This must be seen in the context of the fact that 11% of HSBC's 331,000 employees and 7% of JP Morgan Chase's 220,000 employees were in India at that time.
- Second biggest Bank ICICI headed by a woman.
- Third largest Bank Axis Bank headed by a woman.
- Head of Investment Banking Operations in Kotak Mahindra and JP Morgan Chase are women.
- Head of Equity Division in ICICI is a woman.
- Half of Deputy Governors in RBI are women.
- Entire CBDT at one point of time comprised of women.
- 1 in 5 of India's big Bank, Insurance and many management Companies is headed by woman. – In contrast, no woman leads a Bank in US or UK.

The New York Times reported that in a country where parents still prize boys over girls and where overall female literacy rates are poor, the banking industry's wealth of women was surprising. Therefore, there can be no denial of the fact that we have in fact made a fairly good progress.

World Woman Day: 8th March, 2025

Legal and policy interventions for women and girls in India: A human rights perspective

- Dr. Kiran Bedi, IPS (Retd.)



In many traditional societies like ours, the birth of a boy is celebrated, while the birth of a girl is often met with anxiety – a stark reflection of deeply entrenched patriarchy. As boys grow, they are granted autonomy and opportunity, while girls are conditioned to seek approval even for their most basic rights.

This systemic inequality deprives women of their full potential and, in doing so, weakens the social, economic, and moral fabric of the nation. Recognising this, the Government of India has, over the years, historically and progressively enacted significant legal and policy interventions to bridge the gender gap and uphold the fundamental human rights of women and girls.

Constitutional guarantees

At the foundation of India's legal framework lies a clear commitment to gender equality:

- i.) Article 14: Guarantees equality before the law.
- ii.) Article 15(3): Empowers the state to make special provisions for women and children.
- iii.) Article 16: Ensures equal opportunity in matters of public employment.

Laws safeguarding women's rights

- I.) The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961: Criminalizes the giving and receiving of dowry, addressing a major cause of domestic violence and harassment.
- ii.) The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976: Upholds the principle of equal pay for equal work, acknowledging women's economic rights in the workplace.
- iii.) The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005: A landmark law that broadened the definition of domestic abuse to include physical, emotional, sexual, verbal, and economic abuse.

- iv.) The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013: Inspired by the Vishaka Guidelines and the Nirbhaya case, this Act mandates that workplaces implement mechanisms to prevent and redress sexual harassment.
- v.) The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006: Prohibits marriage of girls below the age of 18, recognising early marriage as a violation of health, education, and autonomy.
- vi.) The Criminal Law (Amendment) Acts, 2013 and 2018: Strengthened laws against sexual violence, expanded the definition of rape, and introduced the death penalty for rape of minors under 12.
- vii.) The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005: Granted daughters equal rights in ancestral property, ending long-standing gender bias in inheritance laws.
- viii.) The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021: Extended legal abortion limits for certain categories of women, reinforcing their reproductive rights and bodily autonomy.

Socio-economic and welfare schemes

- I.) Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (2015): A national campaign aimed at preventing female foeticide, promoting girl child education, and shifting societal attitudes toward daughters.
- ii.) Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (2015): A savings scheme to secure the financial future of girls, with a focus on education and marriage.
- iii.) Ujjwala Yojana (2016): Provides free LPG connections to women from low-income households, promoting health, hygiene, and dignity.
- iv.) One-Stop Centres (2015 onwards): Offer integrated support services—legal aid, medical assistance, shelter, and counseling—for women facing violence.
- v.) Women Helpline (181): A 24x7 national helpline for women in distress, providing emergency support and guidance.

vi.) Mahila Police Volunteer Scheme: Empowers women at the community level by linking them with law enforcement to report crimes and ensure responsiveness.

Political empowerment

I.) 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1992): Reserved one-third of seats for women in Panchayati Raj institutions and urban local bodies, significantly enhancing women's political representation at the grassroots level.

Conclusion

India's legal and policy frameworks have laid a solid foundation for gender justice. However, the real chal-

lenge lies in their effective implementation and the transformation of social mindsets. Laws can mandate rights, but it is education, awareness, and collective action that bring about lasting change.

For women and girls to truly realise the rights enshrined in the Constitution, all stakeholders—governments, institutions, families, and individuals—must actively dismantle patriarchal structures and foster environments where equality is lived, not just promised.

A society that upholds the human rights of all its members—regardless of gender, but taking care of those who need more attention, is not just fairer; it is stronger, more resilient, and better equipped to thrive.

World Water Day 2025

Water security and human rights: Building a future of equity, sustainability and dignity

- Shri Bharat Lal

Secretary General, NHRC, India

- Ms Swarna Singh

JRC, NHRC



Each year, March 22 is observed as World Water Day – a global moment to reflect on one of life's most essential and irreplace-

able resources. Water, second only to air, is vital for human survival. Historically, entire civilisations have flourished around rivers and water bodies, underscoring water's central role in human development. Today, amid growing ecological and social pressures, the assured availability of water is not merely a necessity – It is a symbol of life, dignity, and justice.

India's water paradox

India's population has grown from 361 million in 1951 to 1.44 billion in 2025, home to nearly one-sixth of humanity. As of 2019, India has 535.78 million livestock. Yet, the country possesses only 4% of the world's freshwater

resources. In 1947, per capita annual freshwater availability stood at around 6,000 cubic meters. By 2011, it had declined to 1,545 cubic meters, further dropping to 1,486 in 2021 and projected to fall to 1,367 cubic meters by 2031. In addition to a rising population, one of the major reasons for decreasing per capita freshwater availability is that it is no longer possible to construct major dams/reservoirs to store water due to anthropogenic and environmental concerns.

Several regions across India—Bundelkhand, western India and the cold deserts of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh—fall under arid or semi-arid zones. A region is classified as water-stressed when per capita freshwater availability drops below 1,700 cubic meters and water-scarce when it falls below 1,100 cubic meters. By these benchmarks, vast areas of India are already water-stressed or water-scarce. Compounding this challenge is the uneven temporal distribution of rainfall. Most of the country's precipitation occurs in just 15 – 25 days during the monsoon season, and any variation, such as a delayed or deficient monsoon, can lead to drought-like conditions.

Water security for economic development

India's economic growth depends critically on water security. Feeding a population of 1.44 billion demands reliable and sufficient agricultural output. Rising incomes and rapid urbanisation are further increasing water demand, while industrialisation and changing lifestyles are intensifying water pollution. Perennial rivers are drying, water bodies are vanishing under encroachments, and groundwater sources are depleting. Ensuring sustainable economic growth and an improved quality of life depends on the assured availability of clean, adequate water.

India's water challenges are both structural and systemic. Despite significant progress through national missions and infrastructure development, over-extraction, geogenic contamination of groundwater, unequal distribution, and climate-induced scarcity persist.

Water as a right and responsibility

Access to water is grounded in the principles of equity, safety, affordability, and non-discrimination. More fundamentally, it is recognised as a right to live with dignity. Where access is uncertain, women and girls bear the brunt, affecting their education, health, and ability to participate in the workforce. Addressing these disparities demands not just infrastructure but a transformation of governance – one that centres inclusiveness, equity, quality, and seasonal reliability. In many urban slums and informal settlements, people rely on unsafe or unauthorised water sources.

Water scarcity in India is also deeply unequal. Drought-prone regions such as Rajasthan and Bundelkhand face chronic shortages, while states like Bihar and Assam regularly deal with floods. Even within districts, disparities in infrastructure, governance, and community capital shape access. The solution lies in locally responsive, socially inclusive water strategies that reflect India's hydrological, cultural, and demographic diversity.

A changing climate and the call for glacier preservation

The theme for World Water Day 2025—Glacier Preservation and Sustainable Water Management—highlights an emerging and urgent crisis: the retreat of glaciers, especially in the Himalayas, also known as the 'Third Pole.' These glaciers feed the rivers that support millions across South Asia. Their accelerated melting due to global warming poses severe risks to ecosystems, agriculture,

drinking water, and livelihoods. Preserving glaciers is not merely about conserving ice—it is about securing water for future generations.

Security, scarcity, and structural inequalities

Despite receiving substantial annual rainfall, India faces widespread water stress. The paradox lies in mismanagement—unregulated extraction, inefficient irrigation, and poor governance. Groundwater, which meets over 85% of rural drinking needs and 60% of irrigation requirements, is being rapidly depleted. Hundreds of blocks and talukas have been classified as over-exploited or critical by the Central Ground Water Board.

Policy progress in India: An emerging model

Achieving water security requires a comprehensive, integrated approach to water management—collecting and storing every drop, above and below ground, and using it judiciously and efficiently. To ensure surface water remains clean for harvesting, pollution must be tackled at its source.

In pursuance of this, in 2014, India launched the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) to make the country open defecation-free (ODF). More than 120 million toilets were constructed, and on 2nd October, 2019, Indian villages officially declared themselves ODF. Solid and liquid waste management—including Gobar Dhan (cow dung-to-energy)—has since been prioritised to ensure clean surfaces for rainwater collection.

The Namami Gange programme was also launched to rejuvenate the Ganga by curbing pollution. Following its success, 34 additional rivers have been brought under similar pollution-abatement programmes. In 2019, all water-related functions were brought under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, which launched the Jal Shakti Abhiyan in 256 water-stressed districts—later expanded nationwide through the Catch the Rain campaign. The Atal Bhujal Yojana, implemented in seven states, promotes community-driven groundwater conservation.

Jal Jeevan Mission: A paradigm shift

Announced by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 15th August, 2019 and launched on 25th December, 2019, the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)—Har Ghar Jal—aims to provide every rural household with a clean tap water connection. At the start, only 16.71% of rural homes had tap water, with Aspirational districts at 7.77% and Japanese Encephalitis/ AES-affected districts at just 2.69%.

Under the Jal Jeevan Mission:

- An integrated approach – water resource management, water supply, grey water treatment and reuse, and operation and maintenance – is followed.
- Planning, implementation, management, operation and maintenance are entrusted to the Gram Panchayat and/or its subcommittee, i.e. Pani Samiti.
- Women are at the centre of this initiative, with their capacity building, empowerment, and leadership playing a key role.
- All stakeholders, including the Union and state governments, PRIs, civil society, NGOs, academic institutions, and international agencies, work together to achieve the goal of clean tap water for every home.

JJM adopted a bottom-up, inclusive approach, ensuring 'no one is left behind.' As a result, in five years, despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the provision of clean tap water increased from 3.23 Crore (16.67%) to 15.62 crore (80.68%) households, and to 89.57% schools and 85.54% Anganwadi centres (AWCs). The increase in Aspirational districts was from 21.38 lakh (7.77%) to 217.62 lakh (79.13%) out of a total of 275 lakh households. In Japanese Encephalitis/ AES-affected districts, the number of households with tap water increased from 2.38 lakh (2.69%) to 245.95 lakh (82.65%).

The programme is a model of decentralised, community-managed development:

- Planning and implementation are led by Gram Panchayats and Pani Samitis.
- Over 24 lakh women have been trained in water quality testing.
- More than 6 lakh villages have Pani Samitis, with over 50% women and 25% representation from weaker sections.

The programme also includes:

- Hand washing facilities and piped water in toilets and urinals in all schools and AWCs.

- Rainwater harvesting and grey water collection, and treatment.

A 2022 study by Nobel Laureate Prof. Michael Kremer found that JJM saves 1.36 lakh under-five lives annually at 50% coverage. WHO estimates that nationwide tap water access can prevent 4 lakh diarrhoeal deaths annually. The mission has improved hygiene in schools and Anganwadi centers, with piped water, toilets, and hand washing facilities now widespread. JJM's transparent dashboard provides real-time data on village coverage, household access, and water quality. The 15th Finance Commission has reinforced these efforts with 1.72 lakh crore in tied grants for water and sanitation to panchayats (2019–2026), strengthening democratic, decentralised water governance.

A way forward: From control to cooperation

Hope lies in growing momentum—from government schemes and judicial orders to grassroots innovations and citizen participation. Across India, communities are reviving catchments, building check dams, and harvesting rainwater. These decentralised actions carry profound lessons in resilience and stewardship.

The path forward must be inclusive, adaptive, and justice oriented. It must centre the voices of those most affected—women, slum dwellers, marginalised communities—and empower local institutions. Real-time monitoring, participatory governance, and ecological sustainability must be the pillars of this framework. It also demands urgent climate action: protecting upstream ecosystems, enhancing glacial monitoring, and transitioning to low-carbon development pathways.

India stands at an inflexion point. With its technological expertise, strong policy commitment and purposeful leadership, and deep cultural traditions of water stewardship, it has both the opportunity and the responsibility to lead by example—at home and on the global stage. By embedding equity, inclusiveness, and dignity into water governance, India can ensure that every drop not only sustains life but also upholds the human right to thrive.

Important interventions

The media reports have been a very useful instrument for the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India, 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 March, 2025, the Commission took *suo motu* cognisance in 04 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:

Suo motu cognisance

Murder of a person due to police inaction on his complaint about death threats

(Case No. 367/22/37/2025)

On 19th March, 2025, the media reported that a retired Sub-Inspector of Police was murdered in broad daylight in the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu by a group of four persons. Reportedly, the victim was an activist fighting legal cases against the encroachment of Waqf land in the area and had been receiving death threats from some people. He had also alleged that the police was not taking proper action against them as it was hand-in-glove with them. The Commission has issued notices to the Director General of Police and the District Collector, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, calling for a detailed report in the matter.

Ostracisation of 30 people of 8 families over a land dispute

(Case No. 255/22/58/2025)

On 20th February, 2025, the media reported that a village chief ostracised all the members of a family when they

initiated a legal battle against a man over land encroachment in Sambavarvadakarai town in Tenkasi district, Tamil Nadu. Seven other families were also ostracised when they supported this family. Reportedly, the police arrested 30 people of 8 families when they protested in front of the office of the District Collector against their ostracism. Reportedly, the victim families were barred from accessing local stores, other facilities, and communicating with other residents. The Commission has issued a notice to the District Collector, Tenkasi, Tamil Nadu, calling for a detailed report in the matter.

Assault on a student

(Case No. 368/22/41/2025)

On 12th March, 2025, the media reported that a Class-XI student, belonging to the Scheduled Caste, was assaulted by some upper caste boys from his locality in Thoothukudi district, Tamil Nadu. Reportedly, the incident happened when the victim on board a bus, was travelling to appear for his exam. He was dragged out of the bus

by the perpetrators and assaulted with a sickle, severing his fingers from his left hand. Reportedly, the father of the victim who reportedly tried to intervene, was also assaulted. The Commission has issued notices to the Director General of Police, and the District Collector, Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, calling for a detailed report in the matter.

Death of a nursing student following a suicide attempt

(Case No. 124/11/6/2025)

On 23rd March, 2025, the media reported that a third-year Nursing student died after three months in a coma, following a suicide attempt in the hostel room amidst allegations of harassment by the warden in the Kasaragod district of Kerala. The victim was initially admitted to a private hospital in Mangaluru before being shifted to Kozhikode Medical College, where she remained in a critical condition till her death. The Commission has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, Kerala, calling for a report in the matter.

Recommendations for relief

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. During March, 2025, monetary relief of more than Rs 11.5 lakh was recommended for the victims or their next of kin (NoK) in the

04 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.	25558/24/48/2023-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Uttar Pradesh
2.	1263/25/5/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	West Bengal
3.	1121/34/16/2017	Irregularities in Govt. hospitals/ primary health centres	1.00	Jharkhand
4.	443/33/14/2024	Failure in taking lawful action	0.50	Chhattisgarh

Payment of relief to the victims

During March, 2025, the Commission closed 05 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 34.5 lakh was paid to the victims or their next of kin (NoK) on the recommen-

ations 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.	1093/34/6/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	7.50	Jharkhand
2.	2173/20/10/2023-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Rajasthan
3.	12766/24/26/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	4.00	Uttar Pradesh
4.	29317/24/32/2023-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Uttar Pradesh
5.	2156/25/11/2023-WC	Indignity of women	6.00	West Bengal

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 their unlawful 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 an under-trial prisoner

(Case No. 25617/24/14/2021-JCD)

The matter pertained to the death of a 26-year-old under-trial prisoner at District Jail, Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh on 2nd September 2021. Reportedly, he was admitted to the jail on 25th August, 2021. Based on the material on record, received in response to its notices, the Commission found that there was medical negligence at the time of his initial health screening while entering the jail. It observed that since the victim was in the custody of the State, it is vicariously liable for violation of his right to life. Therefore, the Commission recommended that the

Government of Uttar Pradesh pay Rs 5 lakh as relief to his next of kin (NoK), which was paid.

Suicide by an under-trial prisoner

(Case No. 126/3/4/2023-JCD)

The matter pertained to the suicide of a 28-year-old under-trial prisoner in the District Jail, Dhubri, in Assam in 2023. Reportedly, he was found hanging inside a toilet in the jail. Based on the material on record, received in response to its notices, the Commission held that the State was vicariously liable for its failure to ensure the safety, security and protection of the life of the prisoner in its custody. Therefore,

it recommended that the Government of Assam pay Rs 5 lakh as relief to his NoK, which was complied with.

Suicide by an under-trial prisoner

(Case No. 29317/24/32/2023-JCD)

The matter pertained to the suicide of a 21-year-old under-trial prisoner in the district jail, Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh in 2023. Based on the material on record, received in response to its notices, the Commission found that there was negligence on the part of the Head Jail warden and other staff for the suicidal death of a prisoner. It was the duty commensurate with responsibility of the State to protect and prevent any

harm caused against the inmates under its custody. Therefore, the Commission recommended that the Government of Uttar Pradesh pay Rs 5 lakh as relief to the next of kin of the deceased, which was paid.

Medical negligence causing the death of a prisoner

(Case No. 1093/34/6/2021-JCD)

The matter pertained to the death of a 45-year-old under-trial prisoner in the Central Jail Ghaghidih, Jamshedpur,

Jharkhand, in 2021. Based on the material on record, received in response to its notice, the Commission found that the deceased was transferred to the Central Prison Ghaghidih, Jamshedpur on 2nd July, 2021 from District Jail, Sakchi, Jamshedpur, where he was admitted on 16th June, 2021. He visited the jail hospital with a complaint of pain and swelling in the right leg, along with fever and difficulty walking. He was admitted to the jail hospital but did not survive. Based on the report of the autopsy surgeon,

the Enquiry Magistrate concluded that the cause of death of the prisoner was not due to 'Septic Shock' as claimed by the prison authorities, but due to contusion in the brain caused by a hard and blunt impact. Therefore, the Commission held that the State was vicariously liable for the acts of negligence of its employees for not providing safety, security and protection to the life of the inmate and recommended that it pay Rs 7.5 lakh as relief to the next of kin of the deceased, which was paid.

Spot enquiry

(Case No. 134/18/28/2025-wc)

From 6th-8th March, 2025, NHRC, India Registrar (Law), Shri Joginder Singh accompanied by SSP, Shri Hari Lal Chauhan, and Inspector, Shri Avinash Kumar went for a spot enquiry into the allegations of apathy of authorities of KIIT University, Khordha, Bhubaneswar in Odisha resulting in the suicide by a girl student from Nepal.

(Case No. 384/12/25/2025)

From 10th-13th March, 2025, NHRC, India Registrar (Law), Shri Joginder Singh, NHRC accompanied by Dy. SP, Shri Rajendra Singh, and Inspector, Shri Sanjeev Kumar, visited Khandwa and Indore in Madhya Pradesh to

conduct a spot enquiry into the allegations of inhumane treatment and torture at Khandwa District Jail.

(Case No. 3436/30/0/2023)

From 10th - 13th March, 2025, the Commission conducted a spot enquiry into the alleged police inaction in a case of abduction and murder in North Delhi.

(Case No. 2212/24/56/2025-WC)

From 19th - 21st March, 2025, the Commission conducted a spot enquiry into the allegations of abduction, torture and gang rape on a minor Dalit girl in Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh.

Field visits

The Chairperson, Members and senior officers of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India visit various places in the country from time to time to assess the human rights situation and the status of the implementation of the Commission's advisories, guidelines and recommendations by the respective state governments and their concerned

authorities. They also visit shelter homes, prisons, observation homes, etc. and sensitise the government functionaries to make necessary efforts towards ameliorating the cause of human rights. Submission of timely reports by the state authorities to help the Commission in the early disposal of cases of human rights violations is also emphasised.

Visits of the NHRC, India Members

- On 6th March, 2025, NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani made a surprise visit to the Nagarjuna Prasada Gruha, a student hostel at Andhra Pradesh University, Visakhapatnam. She observed that its upkeep may serve as a model for other educational institutions and hostels.



► NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani inspecting the Nagarjuna Prasada Gruha at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh



► NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani with the students of the Seva Bharati Girls hostel at Indore, Madhya Pradesh

- On 8th March, 2025, NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani visited the Seva Bharati Girls' Hostel and ST Hostel at Indore, Madhya Pradesh. The facilities and food at the Seva Bharati Girls' Hostel were satisfactory, whereas these facilities were not up to the mark at the ST hostel near the Collector's Office.

- On 28th March, 2025, NHRC India Member, Shri Priyank Kanoongo, made a surprise visit to a before Special Jail, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, to assess the facilities and the human rights situation in the prisons.

Special Rapporteurs and Special Monitors

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has designated 15 Special Rapporteurs to monitor human rights conditions across various regions of the country. They conduct visits to shelter homes, prisons, observation homes, and similar institutions, compiling reports for the Commission that detail their observations and suggestions for future action. Additionally, the Commission has appointed 21 Special Monitors tasked with overseeing specific thematic human rights issues and reporting their findings to the Commission. Throughout March, 2025, both Special Rapporteurs and Monitors conducted visits to numerous locations.

Special Rapporteurs

- From 23rd - 27th March, 2025, Shri Mahesh Singla visited adoption centre and Old Age Home in Faridabad and Gurugram to assess the human rights situation.



► NHRC, India Special Rapporteur, Shri Mahesh Singla inspecting an adoption centre in Faridabad, Haryana

- From 26th-31st March, 2025, Dr Ashok Kumar Verma visited District Jail, Dharamshala and Chamba, in Himachal Pradesh. He also visited Locomotor Children Home, Child Care Institute, old age home in Dharmashala and Child Care Institution in Chamba to assess the human rights situation.

3. From 24th - 30th March, 2025, Shri Umesh Kumar visited and inspected the Jail and an Anganwadi Centre in Sikkim to assess the human rights situation.

Special Monitors

1. From 26th - 28th March, 2025, Shri Yogesh Dube visited Rehabilitation Centres, District Administration, One Stop Centre, etc. in Hyderabad, Telangana, to assess the human rights situation.
2. From 24th - 29th March, 2025, Dr. Pradeepta Kumar Nayak met the district officials of the Health and Leprosy programme, Social Welfare, Mental Health and other Departments, Hospitals, Community Health Centres, Primary Health Centres, General Communities and Leprosy Colonies in the Rayalaseema districts of Kadapa, Annamayya, Nandyala, Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh.

3. From 26th - 31st March, 2025, Shri Balkrishan Goel visited Old Age Homes, Childcare institutions District Jail and Observation Homes in Gurugram, Hissar, Sirsa and Ambala in Haryana for an on-the-spot inspection and data collection.



► NHRC, India Special Monitor, Shri Balkrishan Goel interacting with the inmates at Hissar District Jail, Haryana

Capacity Building

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India is mandated to protect and promote human rights and build awareness about the same. For this purpose, it has been conducting internship programmes, collaborative training and various other activities to expand its outreach and human rights sensitisation. Internships are conducted in person as well as in online mode. The online internships are organised to ensure that students from remote areas can join without any expenses for their travel and stay in Delhi. In addition, the Commission also organises a tailored human rights training programme for the officers of various services as its mission of upholding and safeguarding human rights across all institutions, ensuring that the rights and dignity of every individual is protected.

Online Short-Term Internship (OSTI)

The two-week Online Short-Term Internship (OSTI) programme organised by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India concluded on 13th March, 2025. It commenced on 3rd March, 2025. 67 students from various universities in different regions and far-flung areas of the country completed it.

NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi in his valedictory address, congratulated them. He highlighted the programme's rigorous selection process, emphasising the painstaking effort to choose the individuals passionate about human rights. The programme was designed as a foundational course to enable the students to learn, grow, and evolve as human rights defenders. He commended the interns for their commitment to learning, which is a lifelong endeavour that never ends.

Justice Sarangi underscored the crucial role the Human Rights Institutions play globally in promoting and protecting human rights and encouraged the

interns to utilise their newly acquired knowledge to serve humanity. This could be irrespective of any specific human rights issue they may choose to follow.

Earlier, in the inaugural address of the online internship, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal urged the students to view this period not merely as an addition to their curriculum vitae but as a critical phase in their personal and professional development. He emphasised that the true value of the internship lies in the deep, lasting knowledge offered for the transformation of the interns' think-



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressing the inaugural session OSTI

ing, behaviour, and sensitivity to the challenges confronting society. In an era when information is readily accessible on laptops and mobile devices, the real challenge is bridging the gap between digital access and internalisation, followed by application.

The Secretary General stressed that the two-week programme is designed to foster sensitivity to suffering and injustice, along with instilling a deep sense of responsibility. He noted that true transformation lies not merely in observing injustices but in taking decisive action, and that cultivating responsiveness to rights violations—from subtle indignities to overt abuses—is paramount. This



► NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi addressing the valedictory session of the OSTI

programme aspires to instill these qualities, ensuring that education transcends mere knowledge to cultivate a more humane and engaged individual.

Presenting the internship report, NHRC, India Director, Lt Col Virender Singh said that besides the sessions on different aspects of human rights by the senior NHRC officers, experts and civil society representatives, the interns were also taken for virtual tours to the Tihar Jail, Police Station and Asha Kiran Shelter Home in Delhi. They were given an understanding of how different government institutions function, the mechanisms to protect human rights, the realities on the ground, and the necessary steps to protect the rights of vulnerable sections of society. He also announced the winners of the book review, group research project presentation, and declamation competition.

Other training programmes

- On 25th March, 2025, NHRC, India organised a training programme on the RTI Act for its officers holding the charge of Public Information Officer, Central Public Information Officer, and First Appellate Authority. Shri Bimal Julka, Former Chief Information Commissioner, addressed them. He spoke about the importance of transparency in official functioning in compliance with the RTI Act.



► Shri Bimal Julka, former Chief Information Commissioner addressing the training programme on the RTI Act in progress

- From 27th - 28th March, 2025, the Commission also organised a two-day Capacity-Building Programme for the officers in its Investigation Division. The sessions by Dr Manish Kumath, Director Professor, Forensic Medicine, Safdarjung Hospital and Dr Arvind Kumar, Director Professor, Forensic Medicine, Lady Harding Medical College, New Delhi covered the subjects of various injuries, Post Mortem Report, Medical Treatment Record, suicides in police custody, etc.

Workshops

During March, 2025, the Commission also supported 12 collaborative human rights awareness workshops. These included; Haryana Police Academy, Karnal, Haryana, MKLM's B. L. Amlani College of Commerce & Economics, M. R. Nathwani College of Arts, Mumbai, Maharashtra, St. Teresa's Institute of Education, S.V. Road, Santa Cruz, Mumbai, Maharashtra, Sri Krishna Arts and Science College, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, K.V.N.Naik Shikshan Prasarak Sanstha's Arts, Commerce and Science College,

Nashik, Maharashtra, Kodagu University, Karnataka, Shrimati Indira Gandhi College, Trichirappalli, Tamil Nadu, Indian Law Institute (ILI), New Delhi, North Eastern Police Academy, Meghalaya, Police Headquarter (Training), Gomti Nagar, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Centre for Social Justice and Equality, Administrative Training Institute, Mysuru, Karnataka, Office of The Superintendent of Police, Pune Rural, Maharashtra, and Vivekanand Gramodyog Maha-vidyalaya (PG) College, Bela Road, Dibiypur, Auraiya, Uttar Pradesh. More than 1,000 participants attended these workshops.



Haryana Police Academy, Karnal



MKLM's B. L. Amlani College and
M. R. Nathwani College of Arts, Mumbai



St. Teresa's Institute of Education,
Mumbai



K.V.N. Naik Shikshan Prasarak Sanstha's Arts,
Commerce and Science College, Nashik



Kodagu University, Karnataka



Shrimati Indira Gandhi College,
Trichirappalli



Eastern Police Academy, Meghalaya



Police Headquarter (Training),
Lucknow



Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Centre for Social Justice and
Equality, Administrative Training Institute, Mysuru



Sri Krishna Arts and
Science College, Coimbatore



Indian Law Institute, New Delhi



Training programme for
police officers of Pune rural

Exposure visits

To promote human rights awareness among college-level students and their faculties, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India invites them to visit the Commission to understand human rights, their protection mechanism, and its functioning for this purpose in line with the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993.

During March, 2025, 562 students and their faculty members from 14 colleges and universities visited the Commission and were briefed by senior officers about human rights and the functioning of the Law &

Investigation Divisions and Complaints Management System. Nine colleges were from Maharashtra including, VPMS TMC Law College, Thane, New Law College Matunga, Mumbai, Rajarshi Shahu Law College, Mumbai, Navjeevan Law College, Nashik, Lords Universal College of Law, Mumbai, N B Thakur Law College, Nashik, Shree L. R Tiwari College of Law, Thane, Mahatma Gandhi Vidyamandir's Sph Law College, Panchavati. Two colleges were from Delhi including, Faculty of Law and National Forensic Sciences University. The others were IMS Law College, NOIDA, Uttar Pradesh, O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat, Haryana, Law Centre-II, and Sureswar Dutta Law College, Howrah, West Bengal.



VPMS TMC Law College, Thane



New Law College Matunga, Mumbai



Rajarshi Shahu Law College, Mumbai



Navjeevan Law College, Nashik



Lords Universal College of Law, Mumbai



N B Thakur Law College, Nashik



Shree L. R Tiwari College of Law, Thane



Law Centre-II, Howrah



National Forensic Sciences University, Delhi



IMS Law College, NOIDA



O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat



Sureswar Dutta Law College, Howrah

Awards

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has instituted some awards to encourage the participation of citizens in promoting and protecting human rights and human values. The human rights short film competition is one such scheme instituted in 2015. Since then, several people from different parts of the country have participated and contributed to the Commission's repertoire of some quality short films, including documentaries on various aspects of human rights, which are uploaded on its website for awareness purposes.

NHRC, India Short Film Competition Awards presentation

On 26th March, 2025, the National human Rights Commission (NHRC), India organised a function at its premises in New Delhi to felicitate and present awards to the seven winners of its Short Film Competition on



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian addressing the Short Film Competition Awards function

human rights in 2024. Addressing the gathering, Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian, Chairperson, NHRC, India, said that the objective of the Commission is to create awareness to promote and protect human rights. Its short film competition on human rights has been very effectively fulfilling this purpose for a decade. NHRC, India Members, Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, and Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal and other senior officers were present.



► A section of attendees

Justice Ramasubramanian said that in the inaugural run of this competition in 2015, only about 40 entries were received. In its tenth year, in 2024, more than 300 entries were received from different parts of the country. This shows how significantly the human rights awareness has grown and this event has gained traction with people from Kashmir to Kanyakumari choosing to make films in various Indian languages on various human rights and make people aware about them, which is heartening to know.

Congratulating the seven award winners, Justice Ramasubramanian said that the awarded films have touched a range of human rights issues, including river water pollution, the value of potable water, child marriage and education, rights of older persons, rights violations due to certain religious practices, women's rights and domestic violence. He appreciated all the participants and described them as the brand ambassadors of human rights. He expressed the hope that next year they would make more films on human rights and win awards.

Before this, NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, in his remarks said that all the seven films carried different messages. He said that the films are an effective medium to promote and protect human rights among masses. He particularly highlighted the documentary Doodh Ganga, which indicates how the pollution has changed the landscape of the valley that needs to be addressed.

NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani said that the winners



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Members and senior officers viewing the poster exhibition of various awarded films

have worked tirelessly to bring the stories to life to challenge stereotypes, break societal barriers, and empower people to think, feel and act. She said that their dedication is not just about filmmaking but about advocacy, courage and commitment to a better world. Every frame they have captured, and message delivered contributes towards a greater cause where human dignity is respected, voices are heard, and justice prevails.

Earlier, the NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal, in his opening remarks, gave an overview of the short film competition of the NHRC, which started in 2015, each year with an increased number of entries with quality films. He said that for the tenth edition of the competition in 2024, a total of 303 entries were received. After initial scrutiny, 243 went into the fray for the awards decided by three rounds of rigorous jury process, including the final round chaired by the NHRC Chairperson, and Members, and senior officers decided the seven winners. He said that all the awarded films will be uploaded on the website of the Commission, like in previous



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian, Members Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi and Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal and other senior officers with the winners of the Short Film Competition

years. These are open to screening for human rights awareness purposes by government departments, training and academic institutions, as well as civil society.

NHRC, India Director, Lt Col Virender Singh announced the names of the prize winners. Er. Abdul Rashid Bhat's film 'Doodh Ganga- Valley's Dying Lifeline' was awarded the first prize of Rs 2 lakh, a trophy and a certificate. The documentary film from Jammu & Kashmir raises concerns about how the free flow of various wastes into the pristine water of the Doodh Ganga River has polluted it and the need for its restoration for the overall good of the people in the valley. The film is in English, Hindi and Urdu with subtitles in English.

The second prize of Rs 1.5 lakh, a trophy and a certificate were given to 'Fight for Rights' by Kadarappa Raju from Andhra Pradesh. The film raises the issue of child marriage and education. It is in Telugu language with subtitles in English.

The third prize of Rs 1 lakh, a trophy and a certificate was given to 'GOD' by Shri R. Ravichandran from Tamil Nadu. The silent film, through an old protagonist, raises the value of potable water.

The four films were awarded 'Certificate of Special Mention' with Rs 50,000 each. These included: 'Aksharabhyasam' by Shri Haneesh Undramatla from Telangana; 'Vilayilla Pattathari (An inexpensive graduate)' by Shri R. Selvam from Tamil Nadu; 'Life of Seetha' by Shri Madaka Venkata Satyanarayana from Andhra Pradesh and 'Be a Human' by Shri Lotla Naveen from Andhra Pradesh.

The award-winners also shared the thoughts behind the making of their award-winning short films. A poster exhibition of the NHRC, India awarded films was also mounted on the occasion.

NHRC, India on the international stage

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India continues to play an active and constructive role on the global stage, engaging in a wide range of international programmes and dialogues that promote the exchange of ideas and best practices in the field of human rights. The Commission frequently hosts foreign delegates keen to understand its working mechanisms in safeguarding human rights, while its Chairperson, Members, Secretary General and other senior officials regularly participate in global forums to represent India's perspectives, share experiences, and collaborate with fellow National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) on shared challenges in a rapidly changing world.

In March, 2025, Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian, Chairperson, NHRC, India, accompanied by Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal, led the Commission's delegation to a series of high-level meetings at the Palais des Nations, United Nations Headquarters in Geneva. These included the annual meetings of the Asia Pacific Forum (APF) of NHRIs, meeting of the Bureau and the General Assembly of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), the Commonwealth Forum of NHRIs (CFNHRI), and other important engagements.



► APF of NHRIs meeting in Palais des Nations, Geneva

Regional collaboration - APF

On 10th March, 2025, Justice Ramasubramanian and Shri Bharat Lal participated in the Asia Pacific Forum's regional network meeting. A key outcome of the meeting was the election of the Philippines' NHRI as the Asia-Pacific region's alternate representative on the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA), underscoring the importance of regional cooperation in strengthening human rights institutions.

GANHRI Bureau

The NHRC delegation also took part in the GANHRI Bureau meeting, comprising 16 members with participation from UNDP and UNHRC as special members. Shri Bharat Lal, in his capacity as Chairperson of GANHRI's Finance Committee, presented the Committee's financial report. Justice Ramasubramanian, a Bureau member, was also present, reaffirming NHRC, India's active leadership role within the global human rights community.

The Finance Committee — comprising NHRIs from the UK, Malawi, El Salvador, and India—reviewed key financial matters including budgetary allocations, expenditure, project funding, and audit outcomes.



► NHRC, India Secretary General and GANHRI Finance Committee Chairperson, Shri Bharat Lal, presenting the report to the GANHRI Bureau

GANHRI General Assembly

The General Assembly of the GANHRI convened on 11th March, 2025, focusing on key organisational matters such as the adoption of the draft agenda, review of previous decisions, election of new leadership, and approval of financial statements. Shri Bharat Lal presented the Finance Committee's comprehensive report, detailing budget forecasts, fund mobilisation, fee waivers, and audit findings. The report was unanimously adopted by the Assembly.

In the General Assembly, a leadership was also elected: Ms Amina Bouayach, Chairperson of Morocco's National Human Rights Council, was appointed Chairperson of GANHRI, while Mr Alyson Kilpatrick, Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, was named Secretary.



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal presenting the Finance Committee's comprehensive report to the GANHRI General Assembly



GANHRI Annual Conference on Gender Equality

On 12th March, 2025, the NHRC India delegation attended GANHRI's annual conference focused on 'Human Rights of Women and Girls: Promoting Gender Equality – The Role of NHRIs.' The event served as a platform to exchange innovative strategies and discuss actionable approaches to dismantling legal and societal barriers to women's and girls' rights. The Indian delegation contributed actively.



► GANHRI Annual Conference on Gender Equality in progress



Commonwealth Forum of NHRIs (CFNHRI)

On 13th March, 2025, the NHRC delegation also participated in the Annual General Meeting of the CFNHRI. Discussions centred on member updates regarding the implementation of the 2024 Apia Declaration, Commonwealth Secretariat (COMSEC) support for CFNHRI (2024-2026), and the strategic roadmap for the forum's future activities.



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal attending the Annual General Meeting of the CFNHRI

Seminar on “Human Rights in India: Course and Discourse”

Justice Ramasubramanian delivered an insightful lecture titled “Human Rights in India: Course and Discourse” at an event organised while UN Human Rights Council session was ongoing in Geneva. The address, delivered to a full house, highlighted India's democratic ethos, its complex social fabric, and the institutional mechanisms—such as NHRC and State Commissions—that safeguard human rights. The session, moderated by Ambassador Arindam Bagchi, Permanent Representative of India to the UN in Geneva, included a vibrant Q&A session and was attended by dignitaries from NHRIs, diplomatic missions, NGOs, civil society organisations, and the United Nations. An excerpt of the Chairperson address is on page 9-10 of this issue.



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri V Ramasubramanian addressing a seminar on 'Human Rights in India Course and Discourse' flanked by Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal and India's PR to UN organisations, Ambassador Arindam Bagchi to a packed audience



High-level bilateral meetings

The NHRC delegation also engaged in several key bilateral meetings during their visit:

- With Mr Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: The delegation, accompanied by Ambassador Arindam Bagchi, discussed global human rights developments and India's ongoing efforts and priorities.



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri V Ramasubramanian and Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal interacting with Mr Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

- With Ms Heba Hagrass, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: The meeting focused on the challenges and strategies for advancing the rights of persons with disabilities, both in India and globally.



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri V Ramasubramanian, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal and India's PR to UN organisations, Ambassador Arindam Bagchi interacting with Ms Heba Hagrass, UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities

- The Indian delegation had meetings with several NHRIs and exchanged best practices as well as shared NHRC, India's work with a larger audience. The delegation also interacted with other experts and civil society organisations preset there.
- Detailed discussion with India's Permanent Representative to UN organisations Ambassador Arindam Bagchi, Deputy PR Ambassador Priyanka Chauhan, and other senior Indian diplomats based at Geneva.

Interaction with the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA)

On 18th March, 2025, the NHRC, India delegation held an in-depth dialogue with the Sub-Committee on Accreditation regarding the Commission's ongoing accreditation process. Led by Justice V Ramasubramanian and Shri Bharat Lal, the discussion reflected NHRC's commitment to meeting the highest international standards in promoting and protecting human rights.

Through its sustained engagement with global human rights platforms, NHRC, India reaffirms its commitment to upholding the values of dignity, equality, and justice—at home and abroad. The Commission's active participation in international dialogues reinforces India's voice in shaping inclusive, collaborative, and rights-based global governance.

58th Session of UNHRC at Geneva

During the 58th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva from 24th February to 4th April, 2025, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India through its Members and Secretary General made three pre-recorded video statements in the interactive sessions with the Special Rapporteurs on Environment, Rights of persons with disabilities and Human Rights Defenders. They gave a brief insight into the proactive approach of the NHRC, India and the work being done on these matters in the country.

Environment

On 14th March, 2025, NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi said that the Constitution of India provides the fundamental rights to life, which include a clean and healthy environment. Therefore, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India is duty-bound to protect the same by taking plausible measures.

He said that in 2022, the Commission issued an advisory to address the impact of pollution on human rights. It focused on five key areas, namely punishing the polluters, reducing vehicular pollution, transparent environmental law approvals, promoting cost-effective pollution prevention measures and strengthening local bodies' capacity. The efforts have been taken by the respective states for the implementation thereof.

Justice Sarangi said that on verifiable records, it is observed that 8,916 cases related to environmental degradation have been initiated by the Commission based on complaints and *suo motu*. Necessary instructions have been issued to the authorities to take appropriate measures in the greater interest of human rights, more particularly of the vulnerable population. Therefore, there is an active participation of NHRC, India with a

commitment to provide a good environment to the citizens to protect the constitutional safeguards providing for the protection of right to a clean and healthy environment within the ambit of the right to life.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities

On 10th March, 2025, NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani said that India's commitment to disability rights is strongly reflected in its progressive legislation, particularly the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, which champions inclusion across various spheres. This Act, aligned with the UNCRPD, provides a robust framework for disability inclusion.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India plays a pivotal role in raising concerns ensuring the protection of the rights and welfare of persons with disability. With an estimated 2.21% of India's population living with some form of disability, the NHRC, besides monitoring the RPWD Act's execution, also actively investigates violations of disability rights, fixing accountability of the public functionaries and ensuring justice for those facing discrimination.



► NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi giving a video statement on Environment



► NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani delivering a statement on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani said that the Commission's advocacy extends to policy intervention, collaborating with the government to refine and strengthen disability-inclusive policies. Through awareness campaigns and public engagement, the NHRC fosters a more inclusive society. It has a dedicated Core Group on disability issues consults that with diverse stakeholders, translating lived experiences into actionable policy recommendations. The NHRC's proactive approach, from investigating individual complaints to shaping national policy, is crucial in ensuring that the rights of persons with disabilities are not just enshrined in law but also realised in practice.

Human Rights Defenders

On 6th March, 2025, Shri Bharat Lal, Secretary General, NHRC, India said that India recognises the critical role played by the Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in the protection and promotion of human rights. He highlighted Mahatma Gandhi as the foremost champion of civil and political rights to follow as a role model for the people working as HRDs.

Highlighting the human rights recognised by the Indian Constitution, he mentioned that India remains committed to upholding these basic rights irrespective of religion, colour, gender and socio-economic conditions.



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal giving a statement on Human Rights Defenders

The Judiciary and the NHRC, India play a pivotal role in ensuring protection of HRDs. In fact, the concept of Public Interest Litigation (PILs) in the Indian Judiciary enables HRDs to institute proceedings. He emphasised that the NHRC works closely with NGOs, civil society and HRDs and has an enduring partnership with them. He further added that the NHRC, India gives primacy to the HRDs and has established a focal point for them, a core group to address their issues and a robust investigation mechanism to enquire into the matters related to HRDs in order to fix accountability. He reaffirmed that NHRC, India stands by the HRDs in their endeavours to protect human rights.

Secretary General's address at the high-level policy dialogue at Geneva

On 26th March, 2025, Shri Bharat Lal, Secretary General, NHRC, India delivered a keynote address at the high-level policy dialogue on 'Fostering Collaborative Efforts to Protect Receding Glaciers' in Geneva organised by the India Water Foundation. Shri Lal emphasised that water availability is not just a necessity but a fundamental human right. Ensuring water security is directly linked to national security, as scarcity hinders socio-economic development, disrupts livelihoods and exacerbates geopolitical tensions.

He further highlighted that globally, over two billion people rely on glacier-fed water sources. He said that in South Asia, the Ganga, Indus and Brahmaputra river basins rely heavily on the Himalayan glaciers. However,



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal delivering a keynote address at the high-level policy dialogue on 'Fostering Collaborative Efforts to Protect Receding Glaciers' at Geneva

rising temperatures are causing these glaciers to melt, leading to initial floods followed by severe droughts. This requires urgent attention.

He highlighted India's proactive efforts to safeguard its natural resources, including preserving forests and carbon sinks while involving local communities through initiatives like Pani Samitis and water management committees. He mentioned that people-powered action

is crucial to safeguarding water resources. He said the key to saving our glaciers lies in collective action, innovative financing, and regional cooperation. We must act together to protect our planet's most vital water sources. He said that as the world faces the alarming impact of climate change, it's time to unite for the preservation of our glaciers and water resources. Water security is not just a local issue, it's a global responsibility.

Delegation visits to NHRC, India

On 26th March, 2025, the Ambassador of Denmark to India, H.E. Rasmus Abildgaard Kristensen, paid a courtesy visit to NHRC, India and had an



▶ NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian and Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal interacting with the visiting Ambassador of Denmark to India, H.E. Rasmus Abildgaard Kristensen

insightful discussion with the Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian and Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal. Ambassador Kristensen, who started his professional career with Denmark's Human Rights institution, brought some valuable perspectives to the discussion. Their discussion covered several topics of common interest, particularly the Green Strategic Partnership between India and Denmark – a landmark collaboration aimed at fostering sustainable development, clean energy and climate resilience. Since both countries face comparable emerging challenges in the field of human rights, the discussion sought to explore opportunities for mutual learning and the exchange of experiences.

News from State Human Rights Commissions

The promotion and protection of human rights is always a work in progress, given the ever-expanding dimensions of human life and related challenges. In India, besides the democratically elected governments constitutionally committed to ensuring the welfare of the people by protecting their basic human rights, there are institutions of legislature, judiciary, a

vibrant media, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and State Human Rights Commissions (SHRCs), as well as the other National Commissions and their state counterparts working as watchdogs of rights and issues of various segments of society. This column intends to highlight the exceptional activities of the SHRCs undertaken to protect and promote human rights.

Haryana State Human Rights Commission

During the month of March, 2025, the Haryana State Human Rights Commission (HSHRC) Chairperson, Justice Lalit Batra, visited Shardhanand Child Care Home in Karnal. He found that the home was clean, well-maintained, with excellent boarding facilities. It also has dedicated educators assisting them academically, psychologist for counselling and a Yoga Meditation Hall.

Besides, the HSHRC took *suo motu* cognisance in four cases of human rights violation. These included: Neglect of public parks in Shivalik Colony, Ambala City; Ragging incidents at Jindal Global University; poor drainage in Ambala; and adoption of Green Crematoriums.

Punjab State & Chandigarh (UT) Human Rights Commission

In March, 2025, Justice Sant Parkash, Chairperson, Punjab State & Chandigarh (UT) Human Rights Commission (PS&C SHRC), visited for an inspection at the Nari Niketan and the Institute for Blind in Sector 26, Chandigarh. He discussed with residents about women's empowerment, legal support, and the importance of dignity, protection, and opportunities for them. At the Institute for the Blind, he interacted with visually impaired students and highlighted the importance of inclusive education and equal opportunities for differently-abled individuals. He also underscored the need for collective responsibility in ensuring justice, dignity, and equality for women, children, and divyangjans.



► PS&C SHRC Chairperson, Justice Sant Parkash interacting with the inmates of Nari Niketan, Chandigarh

The SHRC has also taken *suo motu* cognisance of imposition of a property tax of Rs 33,00,000 by the Municipal Corporation of Chandigarh on the Institute, which is facing financial difficulties and has sought reports from the Chief Secretary, Chandigarh, and the Additional Chief Secretary to the Governor of Punjab to address the issue at a policy level.

Karnataka State Human Rights Commission

In March, 2025, the Karnataka State Human Rights Commission (KSHRC) conducted an enquiry into a suspected food poisoning incident resulting in the death of one inmate and illness to 57 others at the Mangaluru prison.

On 27th March, 2025, the KSHRC visited the Chitradurga District and conducted an open hearing of the cases of human rights violations in the presence of senior officers and the complainants. 15 cases were resolved, and 10 new complaints were received. In addition to the open hearing, the KSHRC held an interactive session with over 350 district-level officers, including Deputy Commissioner Shri T. Venkatesh, the Superintendent of Police, and the Chief Executive Officer of Zilla Panchayat, for their sensitisation on human rights and related issues. The KSHRC also visited the district prison, bus stand, government hostels, and other public facilities in the Chitradurga District.

The KSHRC disposed off more than 380 cases during the month of March, 2025, and recommended the payment of Rs 1 lakh as relief to a victim of illegal detention in addition to a departmental enquiry against the erring police personnel of the Pulakeshi Nagara Police Station, Bengaluru.



► KSHRC officers conducting an open hearing of the cases of human rights violations in Chitradurga, Karnataka

News in brief

On 3rd March, 2025, NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani attended the first annual celebrations of Nivedita Gurukulam in Unguturu, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh as the Chief guest. Around 500 people participated in the event. She highlighted students' rights in India and the role of the NHRC in protecting them. She also highlighted the challenges in hostels and institutions.



On 4th March, 2025, NHRC, India Member, Shri Priyank Kanoongo attended an orientation programme for the Dalit Community in Shankar Nagar, Partapur, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh.

From 5th to 7th March, 2025, NHRC, India Member, Shri Priyank Kanoongo visited Guwahati, Assam, to attend the concluding session of an awareness programme on 'Human rights and the role of civilians for Vikasit Bharat' at Panikhaiti, Guwahati. He was also the Chief Guest at another human rights awareness programme in Guwahati.

From 5th – 9th March, 2025, NHRC, India Director General (Investigation), Shri R Prasad Meena, visited Jaipur, Rajasthan, for a discussion with the senior officers of the State Government as well as with the officers of the State Human Rights Commission.

On 5th March, 2025, Smt Ilakkiya Karunakaran, Senior Superintendent of Police, Investigation Division, NHRC, delivered a lecture during a one-day workshop on human rights for Constables and Assistant Sub Inspectors at Specialised Training Centre (STC) of the Delhi Police Academy (DPA), Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi.

On 6th March, 2025, NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani was the Chief Guest at a workshop 'Accelerate Action' organised in connection with International Women's Day at YVS Murthy Auditorium, AU Engineering College in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The event, organised by the Durga Bai Deshmukh Centre, ABRSM, and the Lady Teachers' Association, focused on women's education and rights. She stressed the importance of education, parental guidance, and knowing one's skills. She highlighted equal rights for men and women, legal protections, and the need to balance rights with responsibilities. Encouraging the youth to be role models, she urged them to keep learning, protect human rights, and work towards a bright future inspired by Swami Vivekananda.

On 8th March, 2025, NHRC, India organised a function to celebrate International Women's Day. Chairperson, Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian, Members, (Dr) Justice Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi and Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani addressed the officers and staff to emphasise women's significant role in society. They gave examples of several historical and contemporary women who, through their struggles and endeavours, significantly impacted people's lives to draw inspiration from them. Lauding efforts for women's empowerment in the country, Justice Ramasubramanian said that in India, women are in leadership roles in several sectors, indicating that self-determination can be a driving force to overcome challenges and succeed in life. Women officers of the Commission, including DIG, Smt. Kim and SSP, Smt Ilakkiya Karunakaran, also addressed the gathering.



On 8th March, 2025, NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani participated as Special Guest and Panelist for the discussion in an event titled 'Panchakanya - The Story of Indian Womanhood,' organised by Panchakanya Welfare Foundation to commemorate International Women's Day at Ravindra Natya Grah, Indore, Madhya Pradesh.

On 10th March, 2025, NHRC, India Member, Shri Priyank Kanoongo attended an event on 'Human rights challenges and the role of legal professionals in safeguarding them' at Ghanaiya Law College, Moga, Punjab.



On 11th March, 2025, NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani addressed as the Chief Guest at the Mahila Shakti Sammelan organised by the Jayaprada Foundation in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh. She said that India has a history of many women enduring challenges in shaping its history with their leadership. They are inspirations to work for justice-based governance, safeguarding our cultural and civilisational ethos of righteousness for the overall development of society. The Member said that through its various initiatives, the Government has prioritised women empowerment for nation-building. About 150 participants attended.

On 12th March, 2025, NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, addressed as the Chief Guest of an event 'Girls on human rights and child rights' organised by Vaidevi Seva Samithi, Krishna Nagar, Saidabad, Hyderabad in Telangana.

On 17th March, 2025, NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani inaugurated the two-day national conference on 'Right to skill & Right to employment: Skills for all, jobs for all- bridging gaps, building futures', organised in collaboration with the Kodagu University, Karnataka. She said that the right to skill and the right to employment are not just policy concerns but fundamental human rights concerns. She mentioned that India is at a unique cross-roads. With 65% of our population under the age of 35, we possess an unparalleled demographic advantage. This vast pool of human capital can be our greatest strength if we equip our youth with the necessary skills to meet the demands of an evolving job market. Recognising that access to skill development and fair employment opportunities are crucial to upholding human dignity, the Member highlighted the NHRC, India's role in advocating fair wages, safe working conditions, and social security, particularly for marginalised communities, women and migrant workers. About 200 participants attended.



On 17th March, 2025, NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi addressed as the Chief Guest at the 9th Annual function- JUSTICIA 3.0 2025, organised by the Siksha 'O' Anusandhan in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.



On the eve of World Water Day i.e. 21st March, 2025, Shri Bharat Lal, Secretary General delivered the keynote address on 'Glacier Preservation & Sustainable Water Management' at TERI's 4th Water Sustainability Awards 2024-25, emphasising water as a basic human right. Delivering the keynote address, Shri Bharat Lal, Secretary General, emphasised the urgent need to preserve glaciers and ensure sustainable water management practices across the country. He spoke extensively on the profound impacts of climate change—particularly rising global temperatures—on glaciers.



Shri Lal underscored how the rapid melting of glaciers leads to short-term flooding and, eventually, long-term droughts due to decreased water flow, which in turn severely affects livelihoods and ecosystems. Focusing on India, Shri Lal referred to the Himalayan glaciers, often termed the 'Third Pole', as vital lifelines that feed major river basins including the Indus, Ganga, and Brahmaputra. These glaciers support the water needs of over 2 billion people across the region. He stressed that glacier preservation is not only an environmental necessity but also a humanitarian and development imperative.

Shri Lal noted the significance of the International Day of Forests, which coincides with the period, by drawing attention to the role of forest conservation in mitigating climate change and protecting glacier systems. He remarked, "Forests and glaciers are interlinked ecosystems, and their conservation is crucial for a water-secure future." Highlighting challenges in the water sector such as groundwater depletion, surface water pollution, inefficient usage, and inequitable distribution, Shri Lal pointed out that earlier assumptions about groundwater being an unlimited resource have been debunked. With glaciers retreating and water scarcity looming, he called for urgent and integrated action. He commended government initiatives including the creation of a unified water ministry, Swachh Bharat Mission, Namami Gange, Jal Jeevan Mission, Jal Shakti Abhiyan, and Atal Bhujal Yojana, aimed at strengthening water governance and improving access to clean and adequate water. Shri Lal said community-driven efforts like traditional water harvesting in Himachal, glacier monitoring in Nepal, and ice stupas in Ladakh show a way forward. He called for collective action to ensure a water-secure future.

On 20th March, 2025, NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani was the Guest of Honour in the valedictory session of the international seminar on 'Nature, Faith, Climate Change and Human rights', organised by the Central University of Punjab in Bathinda. She said that the bond between human life and nature is inseparable. Our life, security, food and very existence are all deeply interconnected with nature. We must nurture nature & not exploit it. The Chipko Movement of 1970 was a powerful reminder of this responsibility. She said that the right to live in a clean and healthy environment is not just a privilege but a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. The Supreme Court of India has consistently upheld that environmental protection and human rights are deeply interconnected. She said that the NHRC has been at the forefront in integrating environmental concerns within the human rights framework, emphasising the vital connection between a healthy environment and the protection of fundamental rights. The Member said that the Earth provides enough to satisfy everyone's needs but not everyone's greed. We must embrace our ancient reverence for nature and integrate it with modern environmental governance to ensure a just, sustainable and equitable future for all.



On World Water Day i.e. on 21st March, 2025, Shri Bharat Lal, Secretary General, NHRC, India, delivered a keynote address at an event organised by WWF-India to mark Earth Hour 2025. He emphasised the urgent need for collective action to conserve water and protect our planet's resources. In his speech, Shri Lal highlighted that water is finite and essential for life. With India's population soaring from 37 crore in 1951 to 144 crore in 2025, the

demand for water continues to grow due to expanding economic activity and food security needs. The per capita freshwater availability in India has drastically decreased from 5,100 cubic meters in 1951 to 1,400 cubic meters today, pushing the nation into a water-stressed category.

He highlighted that groundwater, which was once seen as safe and abundant, has been over-extracted, leading to depletion. He further mentioned that surface water pollution, inefficient use and inequitable distribution have worsened the water crisis. In addition, the melting of glaciers due to climate change is posing a risk of water shortage to around 2 billion people. Shri Lal emphasised the immediate action required to address this critical issue and secure long-term water security. With only 15-25 erratic rainy days annually, large-scale water storage & efficient use are vital; rainwater harvesting and aquifer recharge are key; climate change mitigation is essential to protect glaciers. Access to clean water stands safeguarded as a basic human right by the NHRC.

Shri Lal shared the transformation story of Gujarat, where strategic water management has turned scarcity into abundance. This model of water security and growth is an inspiration for other regions across India to follow. The event also honoured water heroes for their exceptional conservation efforts. Their inspiring stories remind us that community action and national initiatives like Jal Shakti Abhiyan, Jal Jeevan Mission, Namami Gange are crucial to ensuring water security and combating climate change.



On 23rd March, 2025, NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi addressed a National Conference on the 'Issues and challenges faced by State Commissions & Tribunals' organised by the Bihar Institute of Public Administration & Rural Development (BIPARD) at Gaya, Bihar.

On 28th March, 2025, NHRC, India Member, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani was the Guest of Honour of the one-day workshop on 'Funding the Future: Public Policy & Finance for Tribal Welfare and Inclusive Growth' organised by Policy Samvad at Malviya Smiriti Bhawan, New Delhi.



Forthcoming events

13th - 23rd May, 2025

The Commission will organise its two-week Online Short-Term Internship for university-level students.

Complaints in March, 2025

Number of fresh complaints received	3,772
Number of cases disposed of including old cases	2,622
Number of cases under consideration of the Commission	10,621

Human rights and NHRC in news



सर्वे
भवन्तु सुखिनः

National Human Rights Commission

Important telephone numbers of the NHRC for filing complaints

Toll Free No.: 14433 (Facilitation Centers) • Fax No.: 011-2465 1332

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

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

Focal point for Human Rights Defenders

Indrajeet Kumar, Deputy Registrar (Law)

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