



# HUMAN RIGHTS

Newsletter

A monthly publication of the National Human Rights Commission, India



## Report

Human Rights Day 2025

## Consultation

National Conference on Ensuring Everyday  
Essentials: Public Services and Dignity for All

## NHRC, India's Activities Recap

(January to December 2025)

SPECIAL EDITION

# HUMAN RIGHTS

Newsletter

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National Human Rights Commission

## Chairperson

Justice V. Ramasubramanian

## Members

Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi

Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani

Shri Priyank Kanoongo

## Secretary General & CEO

Shri Bharat Lal

## Editor

Shri Jaimini Kumar Srivastava

Dy. Director (M&C), NHRC

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► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian, flanked by Principal Secretary to PM, Dr. P.K. Mishra, Members, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani and Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal, lighting the ceremonial lamp to start the National Conference on Ensuring Everyday Essentials in New Delhi



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian welcoming the Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu to the Human Rights Day function of the Commission at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi

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# Monthly Recap

## From the desk of the Secretary General & Chief Executive

**T**he January 2026 Newsletter of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India is a special edition. It reflects NHRC, India's renewed commitment and meaningful engagement in the promotion and protection of human rights in India. The lead story is centred on the observance of Human Rights Day graced by the Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu.

In her address, the Hon'ble President emphasised that protection of human dignity is a shared societal responsibility. She reiterated the need to prioritise the rights of the most marginalised in line with the spirit of *Antyodaya* and called upon citizens to actively contribute to the nation's vision of *Viksit Bharat @2047*. The text of her insightful address is carried in this edition of the Newsletter to help readers understand her nuanced approach to raising concerns on various aspects of human rights and how deeply it resonates with common people.

On the occasion, the Hon'ble President launched the NHRC App aimed at maximising people's reach to the Commission. It is yet another milestone development in the Commission's more than 30 years' journey. Two annual publications of NHRC, India – 'English Journal' and 'Nayi Dishayein' – were also released on the occasion which carry in-depth articles by eminent writers and experts covering a comprehensive overview of various aspects of human rights.

Resonating with Human Rights Day theme of this year - '*Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials*', a National Conference on 'Ensuring Everyday Essentials: Public Services and Dignity for All' was organised. The Conference brought together senior policymakers, experts and civil society representatives to deliberate on human rights in the context of public service delivery. The insightful keynote addresses by Dr. P. K. Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister as Chief Guest of the National Conference, NHRC Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian, who chaired the conference and other eminent speakers, provided valuable perspectives on contemporary human rights discourse.

The keynote address by Dr. Mishra highlighted India's democratic ethos, progress in last-mile governance and the expanding scope of human rights encompassing socio-economic, ecological and digital dimensions, while also drawing attention to emerging challenges such as climate change, artificial intelligence, gig work and digital surveillance.

The two thematic sessions of the Conference focused on basic amenities to all and ensuring public services and dignity for all, with insights from NHRC Members and distinguished speakers on health, nutrition, education, inclusion, technology-enabled governance and environmental rights which reinforced the centrality of human dignity in nation-building.

This edition also includes an important article featuring the Chairperson's address at the National Consultation on the working of the Probation of Offenders Act, 1958 held at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai reflecting NHRC's engagement with criminal justice reform and rehabilitative justice.

Besides, there are regular columns giving an overview of NHRC's core statutory functions and interventions, including *suo motu* cognizance cases, recommendations for relief, payment of compensation to victims, case studies, spot enquiries, training programmes and field visits, demonstrating the Commission's proactive approach to addressing human rights concerns.

Capacity building remains a key focus, with the month-long in-person Winter Internship Programme of the Commission held at its premises. 80 interns from across the country were selected to attend it. The internship highlights the Commission's efforts to cultivate a new generation of human rights practitioners grounded in constitutional values, justice and public service.

In December 2025, I also had an interaction with senior IFS officers at IGNFA, Dehradun during their Mid-Career Training Programme on Leadership Development (Phase V) focused on human values, good governance and India's human rights framework. The discussion emphasised

balancing environmental conservation with development, ethical leadership in public service, constitutional principles, accessible justice and India's global contributions to human rights.

I also delivered a talk to 2025 batch IFS probationers who have just joined the academy for their training, focussing how civil services provide an opportunity to serve the country and people and make your own life meaningful by finding the true purpose of your life.

Since it is the first edition of the new year 2026, it also provides me an opportunity to reflect on some of the highlights of the Commission's work on protecting and promoting human rights in calendar year 2025 through a report at the end. For the curious, a few highlights are: From 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India registered a total of 76,252 cases of various human rights violations. Among these, 113 were *suo motu* registered cases, reflecting the Commission's proactive approach to human rights issues.

A significant portion of the registered cases pertained to custodial deaths. Specifically, these included 165 cases of deaths in police custody and 2,338 cases of deaths in judicial custody i.e. in prisons. There were 192 cases related to deaths in police encounters.

In the same period, 38,800 cases were disposed of, including those carried forward from previous years. In 145 cases, the Commission recommended monetary relief amounting to more than Rs 7.3 crore. 44,688 cases are under consideration of the Commission at different stages of disposal, reflecting its ongoing efforts to address human rights violations effectively throughout the year.

The Commission also conducted 74 spot enquiries into the cases of human rights violations. Two camp sittings and open hearings were held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha and Hyderabad, Telangana. The victims and complainants of human rights violations were heard in the presence of the concerned senior officers of the two state governments before recommending on-the-spot relief to the victims.

Throughout the year, the Commission organised an extensive range of conferences, seminars, open house

discussions, workshops, capacity building programmes, internships, among other programmes, that collectively underscored its proactive and multifaceted approach towards promoting and protecting human rights.

On international front, NHRC, India's engagements remained robust and strategic. Through Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programmes, the Commission partnered with the Ministry of External Affairs to train and support National Human Rights Institutions from the Global South, strengthening South-South cooperation and sharing best practices.

The NHRC also actively participated in international forums, including the 58<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, GANHRI meetings and the 'Human Rights in India: Course and Discourse' seminar at the Palais des Nations, where it engaged with global delegates, permanent representatives and peer institutions.

I also had an opportunity to address 'India's Equality Moonshot,' organised by the World Woman Foundation at Davos, which highlighted inclusive governance, women's empowerment and equality. Delegation visits, international exposure interactions and participation in UN processes further enhanced India's visibility and constructive engagement in global human rights discourse.

Collectively, these conferences, seminars, open houses, workshops, training initiatives and international programmes reflect the NHRC's sustained commitment during the year to dialogue, capacity building, outreach and cooperation in advancing the cause of human dignity and rights. Hopefully this special edition of the Newsletter will be an enriching read. Wishing all a wonderful year ahead.



[ Bharat Lal ]

Secretary General &  
Chief Executive Officer



## Report

# The President of India addresses Human Rights Day 2025



► The Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, flanked by NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian, Members, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal and UN Resident Coordinator in India ad interim, Ms. Areti Sianni in the Human Rights Day function at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi

**T**he National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India organised a function at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi to celebrate Human Rights Day in commemoration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on this day in 1948 by the United Nations. The Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu addressed as Chief Guest in the presence of NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian; Members, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal; UN Resident Coordinator in India ad interim, Ms. Areti Sianni; Chairpersons and Members of State Human Rights Commissions; members of judiciary; senior government functionaries; diplomats; human rights defenders; representatives of NGOs; civil society; academia among other dignitaries.

The Hon'ble President said that the Human Rights Day is an occasion to



► The Hon'ble President of India addressing distinguished national and international dignitaries in attendance





► An array of distinguished national and international dignitaries

remind us that the universal human rights are inalienable and they form the bedrock of a just, equitable and compassionate society. India played an important role in shaping a global framework of human rights. The President recalled how our freedom fighters envisioned a world rooted in human dignity, equality and justice. She spoke on various aspects of human rights, which resonated deeply. The text of her speech is as follows:

“Chairperson of National Human Rights Commission, Shri Justice V. Ramasubramanian ji, Members of National Human Rights Commission, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi ji, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal ji, UN Resident Coordinator in India ad interim, Ms. Areti Sianni ji, distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Namaskar, Johar, Good morning. I am happy to join you all for commemorating Human Rights Day. It is an occasion to remind us that universal human rights are inalienable and they form the bedrock of a just, equitable and compassionate society.

Seventy-seven years ago, the world came together to articulate a simple yet revolutionary truth that every human

being is born free and equal in dignity and rights.

India played an important role in shaping a global framework of human rights. Our freedom fighters envisioned a world rooted in human dignity, equality and justice. Hansa Mehta, one of the fifteen women members of our Constituent Assembly was also a member of the group engaged in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She suggested a foundational change to the draft. She ensured that the rights enshrined in

that global charter were expressed, not in terms of the 'rights of man', but in the inclusive and universal expression, 'rights of all human beings.' That such a historic shift was brought about by the expansive vision of an Indian woman is a matter of enduring pride for every Indian.

Thus, India embraced the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a co-creator of a universal moral covenant which resonated deeply with our civilisational ethos. Our ancient value of '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*', which means that the world is one family, is reflected in the idea of universal human rights. It is only apt that India's sustained commitment to the human rights principles has been recognised globally. It is evidenced by our unopposed election to the United Nations Human Rights Council for a three-year term commencing in 2026 for the seventh time.

Today, we also renew our ancient ideal of inclusion, captured in the words '*Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah*', which means 'may everyone be happy'. We renew this inclusive spirit of 'wellbeing of all' as a modern pledge: that no one shall be left behind; that dignity is not negotiable and that justice must remain



► Hon'ble President emphasising the important role played by India in shaping the Universal Declaration of Human Rights



the birthright of every person in India. Our commitment is clear: to build a nation where every individual can live with freedom, respect and equality and where human rights are not only protected, but celebrated.

Human rights are contained in the vision of our Constitution. Highlighting our Constitutional objectives, Babasahab Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar had said, "We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well." Human rights promote social democracy.

Human rights encompass the right to live without fear, to learn without barriers, to work without exploitation and to age with dignity. We have reminded the world that human rights cannot be divorced from development. Also, India has always adhered to the timeless truth: 'There is no peace without justice and there is no justice without peace.'

#### Ladies and gentlemen,

Since the year 2019, with a view to enabling a holistic view of human rights issues, chairpersons of the National Commissions for Minorities, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Women, Protection of Child Rights and Backward Classes along with the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities are deemed to be members of the NHRC for dealing with the core issues before the Commission. It is heartening to note that NHRC, India, the State Human Rights Commissions, along with judiciary and civil society have functioned as alert sentinels of our Constitutional conscience.

देवियो और सज्जनो,

यह बड़े संतोष की बात है कि पिछले कुछ वर्षों के दौरान राष्ट्रीय मानव अधिकार आयोग ने अनुसूचित जाति तथा अनुसूचित जनजाति समुदायों के लोगों तथा महिलाओं और बच्चों से जुड़े अनेक विषयों का स्वतः संज्ञान लिया है। मुझे

बताया गया है कि अब तक आयोग ने लगभग तीन हजार मामलों का स्वतः संज्ञान लिया है।

कारागारों में बंद विचाराधीन कैदियों से जुड़े विषय पर मैंने अपने विचार व्यक्त किए हैं। इस दिशा में कुछ प्रयास भी किए गए हैं। मुझे यह जानकारी प्रसन्नता हुई है कि इस वर्ष राष्ट्रीय मानव अधिकार आयोग द्वारा आयोजित स्थापना दिवस समारोह के अवसर पर 'ह्यूमन राइट्स ऑफ प्रिजन इनमेट्स' विषय पर व्यापक विचार-विमर्श किया गया। मैं आशा करती हूँ कि उक्त विषय पर विचार-विमर्श के उपयोगी परिणाम निकलेंगे।

महिलाओं का सशक्तिकरण और कल्याण, मानव अधिकार के प्रमुख आधार स्तम्भ हैं। 'बेटी बचाओ, बेटी पढ़ाओ' अभियान से बेटीयों की शिक्षा को बढ़ावा मिला है, विशेषकर उन क्षेत्रों में जहाँ बेटीयों की संख्या कम है। मुझे यह देखकर प्रसन्नता होती है कि सरकार की अनेक प्रभावी योजनाओं के माध्यम से महिलाओं की आर्थिक भागीदारी, सम्मान और आत्मनिर्भरता को बल मिला है। मुझे यह जानकारी अत्यन्त हर्ष हुआ कि आयोग द्वारा सार्वजनिक स्थानों और कार्यस्थलों में महिलाओं की सुरक्षा के विषय पर सम्मेलन का आयोजन किया गया। ऐसे सम्मेलनों से निकले निष्कर्ष महिलाओं की सुरक्षा और सशक्तिकरण की दिशा में महत्वपूर्ण सिद्ध हो सकते हैं। इसके लिए मैं आयोग की पूरी टीम की सराहना करती हूँ। शिक्षा, नागरिकों के सशक्तिकरण तथा उनके मानव अधिकारों की कुंजी है। एकलव्य मॉडल रेजिडेंशियल स्कूल और पीएम श्री स्कूल

जैसे संस्थान सभी के लिए गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षा की पहुंच उपलब्ध कराते हैं। इन संस्थानों से वंचित वर्गों के विद्यार्थियों की शिक्षा को विशेष प्रोत्साहन मिला है।

#### Ladies and gentlemen,

*It is a matter of great satisfaction that during the past few years the National Human Rights Commission has taken suo motu cognizance of many issues related to people of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities, women and children. I have been informed that so far the Commission has taken suo motu cognizance of about three thousand cases.*

*I have expressed my views on the issue related to undertrial prisoners lodged in prisons. Some efforts have also been made in this direction. I am pleased to know that on the occasion of the Foundation Day organised by the National Human Rights Commission this year, extensive deliberations were held on the subject of "Human Rights of Prison Inmates". I hope that positive outcomes will emerge from the deliberations on the said subject.*



▶ A section of attentive audience in the packed hall

*Women's empowerment and welfare are major pillars of human rights. The "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" campaign has promoted the education of daughters, especially in those areas where the number of girls is low. It gives me pleasure to see that through many effective schemes of the government, women's economic participation, dignity and self-reliance have been strengthened. I am extremely delighted to know that the Commission organised a conference on the issue of women's safety in public places and workplaces. The conclusions emerging from such conferences can prove important in the direction of women's safety and empowerment. For this, I appreciate the entire team of the Commission. Education plays a crucial role in empowering citizens and upholding their human rights. Institutions such as Eklavya Model Residential School and PM Shri School provide access to quality education for all. Through these institutions, special encouragement has been given to the education of students from underprivileged sections.*

देवियो और सज्जनो,

भारत के लोग अंत्योदय में विश्वास रखते हैं। अंत्योदय का मतलब है, जो मानवता के अंतिम पायदान पर खड़े हैं उन्हें हर वह सुविधा पहुंचाना जो एक नागरिक के लिए आवश्यक है। गणतांत्रिक अधिकार को समृद्ध करने के लिए हम उन तक पहुंच जाते हैं। क्या मानव अधिकार देने के लिए हम उन तक अभी तक पहुंचे हैं? यदि नहीं, तो आज से सोचना चाहिए। हम विश्वास करते हैं फर्स्ट विलेज - फर्स्ट विलेज का मतलब है, भारत की सीमा के अंत में जो गांव है- क्या उस गाँव तक हम पहुंचे हैं? यदि नहीं पहुंचे हैं तो आज से पहुंचना शुरू करें। यह केवल आयोग या सरकार का काम नहीं है, यह हम सभी का काम है! समाज के प्रत्येक नागरिक का कर्तव्य है कि उन लोगों तक भी मानव अधिकार की सभी सुविधाएं पहुंचनी चाहिए। हम लोगों का सपना

2047 तक भारत को विकसित राष्ट्र बनाना है। इन्क्लूसिव का अर्थ यह नहीं है कि बस कुछ लोगों को ही साथ में लेना है। इन्क्लूसिव का अर्थ है कि भारत के 140 करोड़ नागरिकों के पास हर वो सुविधा पहुंचनी चाहिए जो बड़े पदों पर बैठे लोगों को मिलती है। मैं समझती हूँ जो बड़े हैं, बहुत अच्छी चीज़ है। बड़ा बनना चाहिए, बड़े होने से ही तो दूसरों की सेवा की जा सकती है। लेकिन बड़े लोगों को कभी-कभी पीछे देखना चाहिए। एक अंतिम पायदान पर खड़े लोग कितनी दूर खड़े हैं और क्या 2047 तक वो हमारे पास आ पाएंगे? यदि नहीं आ पाएंगे तो आज हम लोगों को सोचना चाहिए। मैं राष्ट्रीय मानव अधिकार आयोग को धन्यवाद देना चाहती हूँ। लेकिन मानव अधिकार केवल एक दिन नहीं, बल्कि मुझे लगता है कि इसका पालन हमें 365 दिन करना चाहिए। उत्सव हो या ना हो लेकिन आत्मिक उत्सव होना चाहिए, व्यक्तिगत उत्सव होना चाहिए।

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

*The people of India believe in "Antyodaya". "Antyodaya" means that those who are standing on the last rung of humanity should receive every facility that is necessary for a citizen. To enrich democratic rights, we reach them. Have we reached them yet to give human rights? If not, then we should think from today. We believe in First Village- First Village means, the village which is at the end of the border of India- have we reached that village? If we have not reached, then let us start from today itself. This is not only the work of the Commission or the government, this is the work of all of us, it is the duty of every citizen of society that all the facilities of human rights should also reach those people.*

*Our dream is to make India a developed nation by 2047. Inclusive does not mean that only some people have to be taken along. Inclusive means that every facility should reach the 140 crore citizens of India that is available to people*

*sitting on big positions. I understand that it is a very good thing to be big. One should become big, because only then they can serve others. But big people should sometimes look back. How far are the people standing on the last rung? Will they be able to come up by 2047? If they are unlikely to make it, then we must give a thought to it today. I want to thank the National Human Rights Commission but human rights are not only for one day, rather I think that we should follow them for 365 days. Whether there is celebration or not, there should be inner celebration, there should be personal celebration.*

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

I feel especially happy that today, the NHRC, India is holding a conference on 'Ensuring Everyday Essentials.' This aligns well with this year's UN theme. It also reflects India's focus on ensuring that essential services like health, education, housing and other basic amenities are accessible to every citizen. Access to justice, especially for the poor, is given special thrust. I understand that stakeholders from diverse fields are participating in the conference to deliberate on critical issues concerning everyday essentials.

I am pleased with the launch of the NHRC's new mobile app. I have been briefed that the app will make the complaint-filing-mechanism of NHRC more accessible to all.

कुछ ऐसे स्थान भी होते हैं जहाँ ऐप नहीं पहुंच सकता है। वहाँ तक पहुंचने के लिए किस प्रकार का तंत्र विकसित किया जा सकता है, इस दिशा में भी हमें गंभीरता से विचार करना चाहिए।

*There are also some places where the app cannot reach. What kind of mechanism can be developed to reach there. We should think seriously in this direction also.*





► The Hon'ble President underscores India moving ahead from entitlement to empowerment and from charity to rights

People will also be able to track the status of their complaints. It will also enable young students to reach NHRC for internships and other opportunities of learning.

The NHRC gives expressions to certain ideals of the State and the society. The Government of India has been translating such expressions into action, on a scale never seen before. Over the last decade, we have witnessed our Nation moving ahead with a different approach - from entitlement to empowerment and from charity to rights. The Government has been working to ensure that everyday essential services like clean water, electricity, cooking gas, healthcare, banking services, education and improved sanitation become available to all. This uplifts every household and secures dignity. Over 40 million homes built for the poor have turned the right to shelter from dream into reality. The world's largest food security programme reaches approxi-

mately 800 million people. No Indian should sleep hungry is the mission of the programme.

Recently, the Government has notified the implementation of a major reform through the four Labour Codes related to wages, industrial relations, social security and occupational safety, health and working conditions. This transformative change lays the foundation for a future-ready workforce and more resilient industries.

ये बहुत अच्छी चीज़ है। मैं एक बार फिर दोहराना चाहती हूँ। केवल कमीशन या केवल गवर्नमेंट नहीं-गवर्नमेंट मशीनरी है। ऐसे भी लोग हैं जिनकी आँखें तो हैं लेकिन वो देख नहीं पाते, कान हैं सुन नहीं पाते, मुख है बोल नहीं पाते। उनकी आँखें बनना, उनकी श्रवणशक्ति बनना, उनकी आवाज़ बनना हम लोगों का कर्तव्य है। क्योंकि अधिकार हैं, सरकार दे रही है लेकिन ये अधिकार उन तक पहुंच क्यों नहीं रहे हैं? क्योंकि वो मूकबधिर हैं। हम लोगों को बोलना चाहिए और सरकार के पास इस बात को पहुंचाना चाहिए।

*This is a very good thing. I want to reiterate that it is not only the Commission or the Government; the Government machinery is there. There are also people who have eyes but cannot see, have ears but cannot hear, have mouth but cannot speak. It is our duty to become their eyes, ears and voice. Rights are there, the government is also working to ensure them, but why are these rights not reaching them? Because they are mute and deaf. We should speak up for them and take up the matter with the government.*

Together, these efforts reflect our national commitment that progress must be inclusive, reaching every corner of our country and every segment of our society.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Today, I call upon every citizen to recognise that human rights are not the



► The Hon'ble President calls for protecting rights and dignity as a shared duty

sole responsibility of governments, the NHRC, civil society organisations and such other institutions. Protecting the rights and dignity of our fellow citizens is a shared duty. This duty rests with all of us as members of a compassionate and responsible society. Let us resolve to move ahead towards building '*Viksit Bharat*' which will showcase an ideal blend of holistic development and social justice.

Thank you,

Jai Hind!  
Jai Bharat!"

Before the Hon'ble President's address, the NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian said that celebration of Human Rights Day is intended to prompt us to have introspection and to encourage us to redeem our pledge to promote human rights as inalienable, indivisible and interdependent human values. It is only when human rights are elevated to the level of human values that this celebration will achieve its purpose. His speech is as follows:

"The most revered Hon'ble President of India, Hon'ble Members of the National Human Rights Commission, the Secretary General, distinguished invitees,

A very happy Human Rights Day to all of you. At the outset, I thank the Hon'ble President of India from the bottom of my heart for graciously accepting our invitation to preside over this year's Human Rights Day function. Madam, your presence here, as the first citizen of this country, is a morale booster for the National Human Rights Commission of India and we are indebted to you for this gesture.

Out of 365 or 366 days of a year, some are of special significance. While some days may be festival days of importance for a section of the society, some may be of regional and some others of national importance. But if there is one day which is of international importance for the people of all countries, irrespective of religious, cultural, racial, linguistic and ethnic differences, it is December 10. It is not just another day in the calendar of a year. It is a day which gave wings to the dreams, liberation to the thoughts, freedom to the expressions, courage to the convictions and dignity to the very existence of the human race.

In Delhi, the month of December is associated with winter, if not pollution. But interestingly it is a matter of coincidence that the month of December, at the international level, has always been associated with human rights. The English Bill of Rights received the Royal Assent on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1689, the first 10 Amendments to the U.S. Constitution known as US Bill of Rights



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian addressing the gathering



got ratified on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1791 and the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S Constitution abolishing slavery was ratified on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1865.

There are 9 core international human rights instruments, of which 8 were adopted in the month of December of various years. Therefore, there appears to be a strange connection between December and human rights. There are different ways of celebrating an event. We can cut cakes, distribute sweets, fire-crackers, have a feast and make ourselves happy. But a celebration associated with an important event in history, such as this, is not meant for entertainment. It is intended to prompt us to introspect and to encourage us to redeem our pledge to promote human rights as inalienable, indivisible and interdependent human values. It is only when human rights are elevated to the level of human values that this celebration will achieve its purpose.

On 27<sup>th</sup> March, 1958, Eleanor Roosevelt delivered a speech at the United Nations to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). In this speech, she sought an answer to a fundamental question: where do human rights begin?

She said, human rights begin in small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal

opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere."

Therefore, let us make use of this opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the cause of protecting and promoting human rights. Thank you, Jai Hind."

On the occasion, the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, in his message, read out by the UN Resident Coordinator in India ad interim, Ms. Areti Sianni, said that our rights should never take second place to profit or power. The text of the message is as follows:

"Nearly eighty years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights defined what every person needs to survive and thrive. It was a philosophical and political breakthrough - and it has been the bedrock of our global community ever since.

Human rights - civil, political, economic, social and cultural - are inalienable, indivisible and interdependent. But recent years have brought a shrinking of civic space. We have grave

violations that signal a flagrant disregard for rights and a callous indifference to human suffering.

Together, we have the power to confront these injustices: by protecting the institutions that make human rights a lived reality.

Every day, the United Nations helps people around the world realise their most basic rights. Together with civil society and governments, we deliver food and provide shelter; support education and elections; clear mines; defend the environment; empower women; and strive for peace.

But we cannot do it alone. This work depends on all people, everywhere, taking a stand. When we protect the most vulnerable, when we refuse to look away, when we speak up for the institutions that speak up for us, we keep human rights alive.

Our rights should never take second place to profit or power. Let us unite to protect them, for the dignity and freedom of all."

The NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal in his welcome address said that the Commission is a people's



► UN Resident Coordinator in India ad interim, Ms. Areti Sianni reading the message of UN Secretary-General



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

institution. It always stands with the people, especially the most vulnerable, who need it most. Here is his address:

“Good morning to all of you, Namaskar!

On behalf of the National Human Rights Commission, India it is my privilege to extend a very warm welcome to each one of you as we gather here to celebrate Human Rights Day.

We are deeply honoured by the gracious presence of the Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu. Madam President, thank you for joining us today! Your presence underscores the nation's collective commitment to protecting the dignity, freedom and rights of every individual.

Hon'ble President Smt. Droupadi Murmu's life is a remarkable reflection of India's spirit and our civilisational values. Born into a humble tribal family in rural Odisha, she experienced the aspirations and struggles of communities at the margins. These lived experiences shaped a lifelong dedication to justice,

compassion and equal opportunity to all.

From her early years as a school-teacher to her distinguished public service in Odisha, she championed improving the life and dignity of people by focussing on rural development, education, women's empowerment and the rights of tribal communities with exceptional sensitivity. As Governor of Jharkhand, she upheld constitutional morality with integrity and courage.

Now, as President of India, she continues to guide the nation with a clear moral compass - reminding us that human rights are not abstract principles but everyday lived experiences of people and duties of each one of us that strengthen the fabric of our democracy. Thank you, Madam President!

I extend a warm welcome to the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission, Justice V. Ramasubramanian. His distinguished judicial career and steadfast commitment to constitutional and moral values con-

tinue to steer the Commission with clarity and resolve. His guidance and leadership at the NHRC have been shaping the human rights discourse.

I also welcome the Hon'ble Members of the Commission – Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi and Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani. Hon'ble Members are pillars of strength in our collective endeavour to protect and promote human rights of all.

I also welcome Ms. Areti Sianni, United Nations Resident Coordinator in India ad interim, who is present here. Thank you very much for your gracious presence.

On behalf of the NHRC, I welcome Hon'ble Chairpersons and Members of National Commissions; Members of Lokpal; State Human Rights Commissions; Members of the diplomatic community; former Judges; senior officers, civil society; academia; the legal fraternity and human rights defenders. Your presence enriches this occasion.

As we all know, Human Rights Day is to commemorate the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 - a most referred document that continues to inspire humanity's collective pursuit of equality and justice. This year's theme, '*Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials*,' reminds us that rights must be lived, practiced and protected every day, by everyone, everywhere.

We are grateful to Dr. P. K. Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, who delivered the keynote address at this morning's National Conference on 'Ensuring Everyday Essentials: Public Services and Dignity for All'.

Today's conference coinciding with Human Rights Day is having





► The Hon'ble President of India launching the NHRC Mobile App

two sessions – Basic Amenities to all: A Human Right Approach; and Ensuring Public Services and Dignity for All, wherein eminent persons and domain experts will be sharing their insight. I welcome all eminent speakers for sparing their time and be with us. Thank you very much.

The conference is to translate principles into action, leading to everyday lived experiences.

The National Human Rights Commission is a people's institution. It always stands with the people, especially the most vulnerable, who need it most – it is for them.

ये हम सब का अटूट विश्वास है कि राष्ट्रीय मानव अधिकार आयोग भारत के लोगों की संस्था है, ये लोगों के लिए है और हमेशा लोगों के साथ है।

*It is our firm belief that the National Human Rights Commission is an institution of the people of India, it is for the people and is always with the people.*

Towards this end, it continues to focus on strengthening accessibil-

ity. Today, Hon'ble President of India will be launching the NHRC Mobile App, enabling easy complaint filing, real-time tracking and access to Commission's various IEC - Information, Education and Communication resources.

Also, our annual Journal in English and *Nayi Dishayein* in Hindi are being released today. With eminent persons penning their thoughts in these journals, it will further deepen public understanding of human rights issues.

As we mark Human Rights Day 2025, we reaffirm that human dignity is our shared responsibility.

Madam President, guided by your inspiring presence, today we collectively renew our commitment to building a just, inclusive and equitable society - a society where every person is treated with respect and lives with dignity - should be proud of daily experiences at home, public spaces and workplaces. Collectively, we need to create an environment and facilitate rather ensure that everyone realises their full potential.

With these words, once again I welcome you all to this Human Rights Day celebration. Thank you for being with us."

On the occasion, the President also launched the NHRC Mobile App, enabling easy complaint filing, real-time tracking and access to the Commission's various IEC - Information, Education and Communication resources.

Besides, two NHRC publications were also released. These included Hindi and English Journals carrying articles by eminent experts to further deepen public understanding of human rights issues.



► NHRC, India publications being released

## Consultation

# National Conference on Ensuring Everyday Essentials: Public Services and Dignity for All



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian, flanked by the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Dr. P.K. Mishra and Commission's Members, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal and Joint Secretary, Smt. Saindingpuui Chhakchhuak in the National Conference

On 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India organised a National Conference on 'Ensuring Everyday Essentials: Public Services and Dignity for All' to commemorate Human Rights Day resonating with its theme this year- '*Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials*' at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. Delivering the keynote address in the inaugural session, Dr. P. K. Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister reflected on Human Rights Day as a reaffirmation of India's democratic values. Citing Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, he highlighted India's remarkable progress in the past decade in improving standards of living through housing, nutrition, clothing, medical care and livelihood security. His speech is as follows:

"Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission, Justice V.

Ramasubramanian; Members of the Commission; Chairpersons of State Human Rights Commission; Representatives of National Commissions; Colleagues from the Government of India; UN officials and diplomats; members of civil society and academia; and distinguished guests, I am delighted to join you today as we commemorate the World Human Rights Day – a day of profound significance for democratic nations such as ours, where constitutional ideals, democratic institutions and societal values work together to protect and promote human dignity.

Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948 says: "*Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services and the right to security in the event of unemployment,*

*sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.*"

Human Rights Day is not simply a commemoration of a historic declaration. It is an invitation to reflect deeply on the lived experience of human dignity. This year's theme, '*Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials*' places the spotlight where it matters most – on public services, on institutions and on the systems through which citizens interface with the State.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 gave the world a shared vocabulary of dignity. India contributed significantly to this process. Our delegation led by Dr Hansa Mehta ensured that the Declaration stated that all human beings are born free and equal. This was a decisive step for gender equality and helped guide global thinking on human rights. The notion that rights must be realised through





► Dr. P.K. Mishra delivering the keynote address in the inaugural session of the National Conference

access to food, water, shelter, education and justice remains at the core of the human rights movement.

Human rights thinking has since evolved. What began with civil and political rights expanded to include social, economic and cultural rights. It is now taking shape in new areas influenced by technology, digital systems, environmental concerns and

changing forms of vulnerability.

Today, dignity is shaped not only by the freedoms we have long recognised, but also by access to privacy, mobility, clean environment and digital inclusion. The world continues to refine what it means for every person to live a life of dignity.

India's civilisational ethos has long placed dignity and duty at the centre of

public life. Concepts such as **dharma**, **nyaya**, **karuna** and **seva**, emphasised righteous conduct and a commitment to the welfare of others. Ahimsa guided restraint, **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** encouraged a sense of belonging to a larger human family.

These principles influenced a great deal in framing our Constitution, from universal adult franchise and enforceable fundamental rights to the directive principles that prioritised education, health, livelihood and social welfare, because our directive principles reflect a very fundamental aspect of human rights and human dignity. In this context, I would like to say a few words about our approach to human rights: our approach to human development in the recent years.

In the decade prior to 2014, India focused on a rights-based approach to development. Legislations such as Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 and the National Food Security Act 2013, sought to transform basic developmental needs into legal rights: the right to education, the right to work and the right to food.



► Discerning audience listening to Dr. P. K. Mishra tracing India's civilisational ethos placing dignity and duty as core values

However, as we look back, several academic assessments underlined an anomaly or deficiency in this rights-based approach: enacting a right is one thing, implementing it is another. When promised legal rights are not delivered in practice, it can adversely affect the credibility of the State and deepen citizen's frustration. After 2014, the government placed primary emphasis on what is known as a 'saturation approach' and 'effective delivery'. The idea was to reach every eligible person and close the long-standing gap between law, policy and actual delivery. The focus was on actual delivery, how the rights or benefits arising from the rights actually reach the last mile and the last person.

Saturation implies that “not a single eligible beneficiary should be left out.” It also means that the scope of discretion is eliminated and social justice enhanced.

The Prime Minister feels that we must identify the beneficiaries or the people who are eligible to get the benefits and try to cover all of them in different villages and areas. In other words, there should not be any discrimination. There should not be any targeting. Every individual who is eligible must get the benefit. Of course, there is a system of delivery, which I will briefly mention later.

Academic and policy literature increasingly characterises this shift as moving from 'paper rights' to 'implemented rights' (rights which are actually implemented) – from a phase where many guarantees existed in law but did not consistently reach the last mile; to a phase where administrative systems, digital infrastructure and field campaigns are designed to ensure that entitlements reach every eligible person. The three things I mentioned, the administrative system has to be more attuned to the people, more empathetic and more efficient. The



► Dr. P. K. Mishra emphasises India registering a historic decline in the multidimensional poverty index

digital infrastructure also helped and field campaigns, awareness generation and so on.

The saturation approach does not abandon the rights-based framework; rather it grounds it in implementation. The legal and ethical commitment to education, food security, work, health and housing remains, but it is now pursued through:

- Time-bound targets for full coverage,
- Real-time monitoring and digital platforms,
- Nation-wide outreach campaigns such as the **Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra**, explicitly aimed at identifying and enrolling every remaining beneficiary.

Today, the focus is on ensuring that a bank account is actually opened, a water tap connection is actually provided, an LPG cylinder is actually delivered and a health card is actually usable at the point of care. What I am trying to say is that it is not merely stipulating a particular right but seeing that it is actually delivered.

The success of this approach can be seen on the ground and is backed by

hard data. Poverty is a critical element that deprives individuals of their human rights. Therefore, poverty alleviation is the most effective human rights intervention.

India has registered a historic decline in the multidimensional poverty index. About 25 crore Indians – a population larger than many countries – have come out of the clutches of poverty during the last decade.

Our latest Household Consumption Expenditure Surveys have also brought out similar results. In fact, Household Consumption Expenditure Surveys 2022-23 and 2023-24 reveal a similar decline in the level of poverty and people below poverty line. This shows the effectiveness of the delivery system and focused approach.

## Realising Everyday Essentials: A Decade of Transformation

I would like to say a few words about what sort of transformation that has taken place during the last decade.

I will highlight four key pillars through which everyday essentials and therefore everyday human rights - have been





► A section of attendees

progressively secured for crores of Indians over the last decade.

#### A. Ensuring Dignity at Home by provision of Housing, Water, Sanitation, Electricity and Clean Fuel

- **PM Awas Yojana** enabled about four crore families to own pucca houses, giving them not just shelter but a sense of security and pride. 4 crore houses actually built and lived by people.
- **Jal Jeevan Mission** has provided tap water connections to over 15.78 crore rural households.
- **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan** achieved wide - ranging sanitation access, such as construction of over 12 crore toilets and cleanliness – profoundly impacting health, dignity and safety, particularly for women and girl children.
- **The Saubhagya scheme** resulted in the electrification of unelectrified houses.
- **Ujjwala Yojana** transformed the lives of women by providing clean cooking fuel to about 10 crore households.

#### B. Ensuring Social Protection through Food Security and Health Assurance

- It is well known that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the **PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana** provided free food grains to over 80 crore people.
- Through **Ayushman Bharat – PMJAY**, the world's largest health assurance programme, offering coverage to about 42 crore people, providing assurance when there is an ailment, requiring indoor medical facility. The amount is paid through an assurance scheme to the people who are really needy.
- Health and Wellness Centres, telemedicine systems and **Jan Aushadhi** outlets have also helped in providing medical services and medicines.
- Implementation of schemes which provide insurance and pension coverage for informal sector workers. The newly enacted labour laws provide for social benefits to gig workers, which were earlier outside any social protection.

- Reforms such as the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 have also helped.
- International organisations, including the International Labour Organization (ILO), have acknowledged that India's social protection coverage has expanded widely in the last decade. ILO noted that our social protection coverage rose from just 19 per cent in 2015 to 64 per cent in 2025.

#### C. Ensuring inclusive economic growth through Financial Inclusion and Economic Empowerment

- The **JAM Trinity - Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile** - has revolutionised direct benefit transfers, ensuring transparency, efficiency and dignity in public service. Over 56 crore **Jan Dhan** accounts have brought the unbanked into formal finance. The money / benefit goes directly into their account so that leakage is minimal.
- Schemes such as **PM Mudra Yojana, PM SVANidhi, PM Vishwakarma** are to help people who are masons, who work with their own tools. The idea is how to not only give them some financial assistance but also improve their skills, give them better implements, better training.
- Large number of Self-Help Groups have been encouraged – there are over two crore “**Lakshpati Didis**” – self-employed women earning more than one lakh rupees.
- A central pillar of our development journey has been women's empowerment. Measures such as **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Naari Shakti**. Our Prime Minister has



► Dignitaries attending the Conference

repeatedly emphasised that “**Naari Shakti** is the biggest strength of our nation.” When women lead, families rise, communities change and institutions become more empathetic. A historic legislation was brought recently that one-third of the seats in the legislatures and Parliament will be reserved for women.

- There has been massive increase in the infrastructure budget. The capital budget has been enhanced substantially and a lot of reforms took place even during the COVID - 19 pandemic when many countries focused more on stimulus. FDI expanded, the space sector was opened. Consequently, we have high economic growth rates. The latest quarterly result showed 8 per cent, preceded by 7.2 per cent growth.

#### D. Ensuring Justice, Safety and Protection of Vulnerable Communities

- The Criminal Law Codes have been transformed to make them more citizen friendly.

- There have been stronger provisions in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and soon.
- **PM-JANMAN** focuses on marginalised within the marginalised in the sense that some tribal areas where people

– the particularly vulnerable groups are facing developmental issues – how to provide them housing, clean water and other benefits.

**Aspirational Districts and Aspirational Blocks Programme** – with focus on districts and blocks which are less developed – aimed for clear improvements in health, education, nutrition,



► Dr. P. K. Mishra highlights massive increase in the infrastructure budget in India



infrastructure and public service delivery to bring them to the level of other districts by using real-time data, outcome-based monitoring and collaborative administration. These efforts show how governance can be redesigned to make outcomes more equal. This is the spirit of **Antyodaya** which places those at the margins at the centre of development and dignity. There have been a lot of efforts and focused attention to bring the blocks and districts which are below the average state – level parameters to the overall average level of the state, thereby improving the economic and social conditions and dignity of people who are much behind in the development journey.

Our humanitarian assistance – from providing COVID-19 vaccines to more than 100 countries under **Vaccine Maitri**, to disaster relief across regions – demonstrates our belief in the universality of human rights.

Driven by the Prime Minister's call for **Jan Bhagidari**, nature of public service

delivery has changed. The State is moving from prescribing to responding, from delivering schemes to delivering dignity and from viewing people as beneficiaries to seeing them as partners in nation-building.

India's recent election to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) reflects global confidence in our democratic institutions and commitment to inclusive development.

I have argued that Rights are important, a rights-based approach is necessary, but it is not sufficient. What is important is how to ensure last-mile delivery, how to ensure that all those who are eligible are actually covered. That is the most important thing and that is what was achieved during last decade.

## Moving Forward

As India moves toward **Viksit Bharat 2047**, the National Human Rights Commission will need to examine emerging issues of concern and adapt its frameworks so that dignity is

protected in domains that are evolving quickly:

- Climate and environment raise urgent questions. Climate change is already causing displacement and greater pressure on shared resources. We must consider how the rights of communities are affected by climate change and how environmental justice will be ensured for those who bear disproportionate pollution burdens.
- Technology and data bring their own challenges. Issues of data protection, algorithmic fairness and responsible AI require a new framework to address issues of human rights. When automated systems influence decisions on loans, jobs or criminal justice, safeguards are essential to prevent discrimination.
- New forms of work such as gig and platform employment create vulnerabilities that do not fit traditional labour protections.



► A packed audience in the National Conference

With no fixed workplace and algorithm-driven tasks, employers need to develop frameworks that protect their dignity and security.

- Finally, digital surveillance is another area that needs oversight. As digital tracking, facial recognition and predictive tools generate and store extensive data on citizens, we must ensure that technology serves empowerment and does not erode personal freedoms.

## Concluding Observations

We need to recognise that good governance is an essential right. It includes efficient systems, transparent processes and institutions that treat people with respect and empathy. It includes grievance redressal that functions effectively, policing that protects dignity and public service delivery without delay and disrespect.

Our aspiration for the coming decades is clear. We are striving for a developed nation where every citizen enjoys dignity through capable institutions and compassionate governance. A nation modern in its capabilities, grounded in enduring values, inclusive in its outlook and united in purpose. This vision extends to liveable cities and vibrant villages where mobility, sanitation, digital connectivity, public transport, safe public spaces and efficient urban services uphold dignity in everyday life.

The way forward lies in deepening citizen-centred governance, using technology responsibly, strengthening institutional foresight and ensuring that dignity remains the guiding principle of every public service.

Let us build a country whose values are rooted in our civilisation, but vision is modern, futuristic, compassionate and aspirational.

Let us join hands and work together – government, institutions, civil society

and citizens – to build an India where development and justice go hand in hand, where rights and duties reinforce one another and where every individual can live with dignity.

I thank the Chairperson NHRC, Members and the Secretary General for providing me with an opportunity to interact with all of you on this momentous occasion.

I wish today's conference all success. Thank you."

Chairing the inaugural session, NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian said that the Commission has looked at the theme of this year's Human Rights Day from the perspective of public services in India and the dignity of the citizens. The reason why we chose public services and dignity of the individual as 'everyday essentials' is that our country is a welfare State, as seen from the Directive Principles of State Policy. Here is his speech:

"Dear Dr. P.K. Mishra, Hon'ble Members of the National Human Rights Commission, the Secretary General, the

Director General (Investigation), the Registrar, the Joint Secretaries, officers and staff of the Commission, distinguished invitees, representatives of the print and electronic media, good morning and a happy Human Rights Day to all of you.

This year, United Nations has chosen "*Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials*" as the theme for the Human Rights Day. The purpose of choosing this theme, according to the United Nations, is to reaffirm the values of human rights and to show that they remain a winning proposition for humanity. According to the United Nations, the theme of this year's Human Rights Day is aimed at bridging the gap between human rights principles and everyday experiences, so that we spark awareness, inspire confidence and encourage collective action.

The words 'everyday essentials' have different connotations for different categories of people. If you happen to visit the website of the United Nations, you will find that in the recent past, lot of people have been sharing what makes up their everyday essentials - the moments, values and rights that matter



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian addressing the Conference



most to them. Peace, freedom of expression, non-discrimination, equality, food, shelter and dignity are some of the rights that people have indicated in the United Nations website as their everyday essentials.

But we, at the National Human Rights Commission, have looked at the theme of this year's Human Rights Day from the perspective of public services in India and the dignity of the citizens. The reason why we chose public services and dignity of the individual as 'everyday essentials' is that our country is a welfare State, as seen from the Directive Principles of State Policy. Article 38 of the Constitution enjoins upon the State to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may, a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life.

The State in India is administered through a bureaucracy, which has a history of say about 170 years dating back to the submission of Lord Macaulay's Report of the Select Committee of the British Parliament, under which the concept of a merit-based modern Civil Service in India was born in 1854.

While policies are framed by elected representatives, purportedly for the welfare of the people, they are implemented through officers who are in the civil services of the Union or the State. Persons who are in the civil services of the Union or the States and persons who hold civil posts under the Union or the States are not under any contract of employment. Holders of civil posts and those in the civil services are granted protection under the Constitution because their position is one of status and not of just employment. Therefore, persons in the civil services of the Union or the States must consider the members of the public, whom they are chosen to serve, their masters. This is the reason why they are called public servants.

Enabling and assisting an elected Government to frame policies for the welfare of the people and ensuring that the benefits of those policies reach the common man is the task assigned to public servants. On public policy and its implementation, there is a very interesting shloka in the *Ramayana*. In the 100<sup>th</sup> sarga of *Ayodhya Kanda*, Rama gives a piece of advice to Bharata on public policy.

कश्चिद अर्थम विनिश्चित्य लघु मूलं महा उद्यम क्षिप्रं  
आरभसे कर्तुं न धीरगायसि राघव

(kaschid artham vinishchithya laghu moolam  
maha udayam Kshipram aarabhase karthum na  
dheergayasi Raghava)

*O, Bharata! I hope considering your interest fully, you launch an undertaking, which has maximum benefit with minimum cost and implemented without delay.*

(3 ideals for an undertaking: maximum benefit, minimum cost and without delay).

The achievement of these 3 goals or ideals, depends upon the efficacy of the public services and the commitment and integrity of public servants. In fact, with a view to ensure the prompt delivery of public services, several States have come up with laws. For instance, the Madhya Pradesh Public Services Guarantee Act, 2010 appears to be the first-of-its-kind in the country guaranteeing the delivery of public services to citizens in a stipulated time frame. This Madhya Pradesh Public Services Guarantee Act 2010 guarantees the delivery of basic public services to citizens within a stipulated time frame and sets in place accountability mechanisms for failure to do so. Under the Act, 52 key public services like issuing caste, birth, marriage and domicile certificates, drinking water connections, ration cards, copies of land records have been notified. A time has been fixed for the delivery of each service. If officials fail to perform their duties and do not provide these services on time, they must pay a fine starting from Rs 250 per day to a maximum of Rs 5,000.

This Act won the United Nations Public Service Award (UNPSA) for 2012 in the category 'improving the delivery of Public Services'. The state bagged this award from among 483 nominations from 73 countries. Other states Bihar, Delhi, Punjab, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Mizoram have introduced similar legislation. I do not know if a social audit or social impact assessment of these laws have been carried out so far.

Therefore, the objective of National Human Rights Commission in choosing public services and the dignity of the individual as the everyday essentials in India, is to initiate a dialogue on accountability so that the goals set by Part IV of the Constitution, are not distant dreams, but realisable standards and the celebration of Human Rights Day is not an empty formality packed with empty rhetoric. Thank you and Jai Hind."

Before this, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal in his welcome address said that the Commission continues to work to ensure equitable access to essential services through a wide spectrum of interventions. This year's Human Rights Day theme highlights that human dignity is shaped by people's experience of access to basic amenities and essential public services every day. Here is the speech:

"Namaskar, a very good morning to all of you. Please accept greetings on Human Rights Day.

Hon'ble Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission, Justice V. Ramasubramanian. Dr. P. K. Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister.

Hon'ble Members of the Commission - Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi and Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani. Chairpersons and Members of National Com-

missions, Lokpal and other Statutory Bodies and State Human Rights Commissions.

Eminent Speakers, senior officers; Members of the Diplomatic Corps, representatives of the United Nations and international organisations. Distinguished scholars, domain experts, civil-society representatives, human rights defenders and all esteemed delegates!

On behalf of the National Human Rights Commission, let me extend a very warm welcome to each one of you to the National Conference on 'Ensuring Everyday Essentials: Public Services and Dignity for All' on Human Rights Day. Your presence and commitment reinforce our collective resolve to strengthen human dignity and advance human rights of every individual across the country.

We are deeply honoured that the Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, will join us later today as the Chief Guest in the Human Rights Day celebration. Her presence is a great encouragement to all those who strive to uphold justice, equality, inclusion and dignity for every citizen.

I extend a very warm welcome Dr. P. K. Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, who has accepted our invitation to deliver the Keynote Address. We all know how demanding his job is. The Parliament is in session and despite demand for his time for other pressing works, he is here with us. It shows his commitment to human rights.

Dr. Mishra is widely respected for his commitment to governance reform, last-mile delivery and people-centric public administration. He has held several key positions - including Union Agriculture Secretary and has played a pivotal role in national programmes such as the National Food Security Mission and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana.

With a PhD in Development Studies from the University of Sussex, he has combined academic rigour with administrative excellence, contributing extensively to disaster-management reforms, for which he received the prestigious UN Sasakawa Award.

As Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, his administrative leadership has been pivotal in ensuring that people experience improved quality of life and government must provide good governance and efficient public service delivery. His focus on ensuring basic amenities and essential services reaching the last mile is reinforcing the idea that dignity must be embedded in every aspect of governance.

His leadership - spanning disaster management, agricultural transformation, human resource management, public-service delivery and institutional reform - has had a transformative impact on millions, especially the most vulnerable. His insights today will enrich our deliberations. Thank you, Sir, for being with us today.

I extend a warm welcome to Hon'ble Chairperson, NHRC Justice V.

Ramasubramanian under whose stewardship, NHRC is proactively reaching out to various stakeholders especially the most vulnerable, to strengthen protection of human rights in every part of the country. His sensitivity and ethical leadership are shaping the working of the NHRC.

I also extend a warm welcome to Hon'ble Members of the Commission - Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi and Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani and to all participating institutions and experts whose collective wisdom and experience guide the human rights discourse in India.

On behalf of the Commission, I also welcome Chairpersons and members of the National Commissions, State Human Rights Commissions, distinguished speakers in the conference, Jurists, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Senior officers, United Nations officials, eminent scholars, Human Rights Defenders, members of civil society, domain experts and distinguished delegates.

The theme of Human Rights Day this year, *'Human Rights, Our Everyday*



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



*Essentials,*' speaks to a simple yet profound reality: human dignity is shaped every day by experience people have about access to basic amenities and essential public services. These are not administrative conveniences - they are fundamental entitlements.

Our conference theme, 'Ensuring Everyday Essentials: Public Services and Dignity for All,' reflects this core principle. The two sessions today:

- Basic Amenities for All: A Human Rights Approach and
- Ensuring Public Services and Dignity for All' bring together eminent experts and key government officials to discuss practical pathways to further strengthen access to basic amenities and service delivery systems and ensure equity, accessibility and dignity for everyone.

Guided by India's deeply rooted ethos of *Antyodaya* - reaching the last person - and the spirit of *Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah* – May all be happy, the NHRC continues to promote and protect human rights of every individual, especially the most vulnerable people.

NHRC continues to work to ensure equitable access to essential services through a wide spectrum of interventions.

These include strengthening healthcare and nutrition in institutions, ensuring timely pensions and welfare benefits, protecting migrant and unorganised workers, promoting child rights and inclusive education, improving access to housing, water, sanitation, electricity and urban services and expanding digital grievance-redressal systems.

This conference is grounded in ongoing work. NHRC is actively promoting human dignity through:

- Advisories to protect human rights of vulnerable groups.
- Monitoring access to critical public services in hospitals, mental health institutions, childcare institutions, prisons, shelters and old-age homes.
- Interventions for the rights of migrant workers, sanitation workers, forest dwellers and disaster-affected communities.

- Expanding access to justice through HRCNet, e-complaints and virtual hearings, reaching citizens in remote regions.
- Engagements with students, training, regional workshops, national conferences and partnerships with NGOs and academic institutions to deepen human rights awareness.
- Reports, thematic studies and recommendations that inform national policy on disability rights, trafficking, access to justice and service-delivery reforms.

Through these efforts, NHRC strives to ensure that essential services and the dignity they guarantee reach every individual, particularly those most in need.

Human rights are upheld not only by institutions but also by collective responsibility, empathy and moral commitment. In our country, it is not only the state, but communities also play a huge role in human rights of individuals. On Human Rights Day, we reaffirm the essential principle that



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian chairing the first session

rights flourish when supported by duties, by fraternity and by fairness in governance, sensitivity in administration and compassion in public service.

Once again, I welcome all the distinguished delegates and extend my sincere gratitude to all dignitaries, speakers and participants for joining us today. Let us continue to work together to build a nation where every individual or families have all basic amenities and essential public services are accessible, equitable and dignified - a nation where no one is left behind. Thank you!"

NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian chaired the first session on 'Basic Amenities for All: A Human Rights Approach.' Speaking as a panellist, NHRC Member, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani said that there must be clear standards of service delivery, monitoring and grievance redressal. Her speech is as follows:

"Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished panellists, senior officials and honoured guests,

It is my privilege to welcome you to the first session of this National Conference on the theme 'Ensuring Everyday Essentials: Public Services and Dignity for All'. As we gather on the occasion of Human Rights Day, we are reminded that human rights are rooted not in extraordinary situations but in the simple, everyday essentials that enable individuals to live with dignity and purpose.

Providing basic amenities to every human being is not merely an act of social welfare; it is a fundamental expression of human rights. The idea that every individual deserves dignity, equality and a decent standard of living forms the foundation of modern human rights principles. Basic amenities such as safe drinking water, nutritious food, housing, education, healthcare, sanitation and a clean environment are not luxuries - they are

essential conditions for life, health and human dignity.

These frameworks recognise that without basic amenities, individuals cannot enjoy their full civil, political, social or economic rights. Human rights are interdependent - denial of basic amenities leads to denial of equality, development and freedom.

## Human rights are not just constitutional terms

They are visible in our daily lives- in the food a family gets, in the water a household receives, in the health services a citizen can access, in the respect a human being receives from public institutions.

Our Constitution guarantees life under Article 21, which includes dignity. But dignity is not a one-time right. It is something that must be felt every day, through essential services.

### 1. Public Services are the Foundation of Human Rights

When a poor person gets clean water, when a child is able to go to school without fear, when a patient is treated with respect in a hospital, when a

woman walks safely on the road - that is when human rights become meaningful.

Human rights start not in courts, but in homes, schools, hospitals, ration shops, police stations and public offices.

Every citizen should be able to access public services without discrimination, without humiliation, without fear.

### 2. Chanakya's Vision of Public Welfare

More than two thousand years ago, Chanakya / Kautilya laid down powerful principles in the *Arthashastra*. Those principles are still relevant for modern governance.

Chanakya said,

*"Prajasukhe sukham rajyasya."*

*The happiness of the people is the happiness of the State.*

If the people are deprived, the nation cannot progress.

He also said,

*'Raja prajānām sevaka.'*

*The ruler is the servant of the people.*



► NHRC, India Member, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani addressing the Conference



This one sentence tells us what public service should look like. It should be accountable, accessible and respectful. He emphasised that officials should never intimidate, insult or neglect the people. Discipline, honesty and humanity were the core of governance.

Chanakya warned that when officials ignore people's needs, the downfall of the State begins. This ancient wisdom fits perfectly with our modern human rights framework.

### 3. Essentials for Daily Life are Non-Negotiable Rights

Let us look at the essentials that form the minimum dignity of life:

#### Food Security

No one in this country should go hungry.

PDS, nutrition programmes, anganwadis must be transparent, efficient and universal.

#### Clean Drinking Water

Water is elixir of life. Access to safe and adequate drinking water is a human right.

#### Health

Affordable, timely and respectful medical care is essential. Health services must be particularly sensitive to women, children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities and transgender persons.

#### Education

Swami Vivekananda said, 'Education is the manifestation of perfection in men.'

Education is the most powerful tool of empowerment and enlightenment. Schools must be safe, inclusive and capable of nurturing every child - regardless of caste, gender, income or region.

#### Shelter and Sanitation

Habitable shelter, toilets, drainage and waste management are not luxuries.



► A view of the attentive participants

They are fundamental to a healthy and dignified life.

### 4. Dignity Must Be at the Heart of Service Delivery

Public service is not just about giving services; it is about how those services are given. A public servant is not doing charity to the man who approaches him. The man who approaches him is his master.

A citizen should not be made to run from counter to counter.

They should not be spoken to harshly.

They should not be humiliated because of poverty, caste, gender, disability or identity.

**Dignity is not only a matter of policy; it is a matter of attitude.**

A police station should inspire trust, a hospital should give comfort, a school should give confidence, a government office should exhibit empathy.

This is the culture of dignity that we must build.

### 5. Inclusion of Vulnerable and Marginalised Communities

As a nation, we are responsible for those who need our support the most:

- i. Women and children, Elderly persons
- ii. Persons with disabilities, transgender persons
- iii. Migrant labourers, SC/ST communities
- iv. Homeless persons, Daily-wage workers

Chanakya clearly said that a State is judged by how it treats its weakest people.

NHRC stands firmly for the protection of these communities, ensuring they receive essential services, protection and respect.

### 6. Accountability and Transparency

For public services to be effective:

There must be clear standards of service delivery

There must be monitoring and grievance redressal

There must be zero tolerance for corruption or negligence

Accountability is not to punish but to ensure that service reaches the person who needs it most.

## 7. Technology must Include, Not Exclude

Digital governance is a powerful tool, but it must not leave behind rural communities, elderly people or those without smartphones.

We must create digital systems that are simple, multilingual and accessible to all.

Online portals, helplines, information desks - all must aim to empower citizens, not trouble them.

## 8. Community Participation

Real change happens when communities are educated, aware and involved.

Gram Sabhas, local committees, youth groups and women's collectives - all play a vital role in monitoring service delivery and ensuring dignity for everyone.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has played a crucial and transformative role.

### a. Protecting Basic Amenities of Vulnerable & Marginalised Communities

NHRC has proactively issued *suo motu* notices and interventions on issues such as:

water scarcity, starvation deaths, lack of healthcare in remote regions, unsafe living conditions of labourers, migrants and urban poor.

These actions push governments to ensure minimum standards of living for every citizen.

### b. Public Health as a Human Right

NHRC strongly upholds that health is a fundamental human right. It has investigated inadequate hospital facilities, recommended improvements in maternal care and emergency services, monitored access to medicines and essential healthcare.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, NHRC guidelines and monitoring mechanisms were crucial in safeguarding vulnerable communities.

### c. Education, Sanitation and Child Rights

NHRC has intervened when schools lacked toilets, drinking water or safety measures, ensuring children's dignity and access to education.

It has worked consistently on reducing school dropouts, eliminating child labour, improving child protection systems.

### d. Special Focus on Transgender Persons, Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly

Through expert committees and consultations, NHRC has recommended:

safe housing and shelters, inclusive healthcare, equal educational opportunities, anti-discrimination measures in employment.

In the area of transgender rights, NHRC's guidelines, studies and recommendations have significantly shaped policy discussions and public awareness - a domain in which many of us, including our organisation, are actively engaged.

### e. NHRC's Vision for Inclusive and Sustainable Development

NHRC firmly states that development is not complete unless basic amenities reach the last person.

Infrastructure alone is not development. Human development happens only when clean water, sanitation, health and social protection are accessible to all.

NHRC's periodic reports on migrant workers, rural health and urban homelessness reflect this strong commitment.

Before I conclude, I want to highlight one more important point, every nation has a culture, a living force, life that guides its values. It is essential for us to reflect on what our own culture teaches us regarding our today's topic.

**Vedas – Rigveda (Well-being & Health for All) Verse:**

‘Sarve bhavantu sukhinah,  
sarve santu niramayah’

*May all be happy; may all be free from illness.*

The Vedas emphasise health, well-being and security for every human being. A foundation for basic amenities like health care, food, water and safety.



► A section of participants



**Upanishads – says**

‘Isha vasyam idam sarvam’

*The entire world's resources belong to all and are to be shared by all.*

No one should monopolise resources. Everyone has the right to food and water, shelter and equal access.

**'Rama Rajya' in Ramayana talks about**

‘Ramo rajyam upāsita dharme a’

*Rama governed the kingdom with righteousness and ensured the welfare of all.*

A righteous government must ensure food security, safety, shelter, sanitation and peaceful living for all citizens.

**Mahabharata (Food as a Fundamental Duty)**

‘Annadanam param danam’

*Giving food is the highest form of service.*

Mahabharata considers food a sacred right and feeding the hungry a moral obligation. Affirms the right to nutrition and basic sustenance.

**Bhagavad Gita (Equality & Human Dignity)**

‘Samo’ham sarva-bhuteshu’  
(Gita 9.29)

*I am equal in all beings; no one is superior or inferior.*

Every human being deserves equal dignity and equal access to essential services. Basis for non-discrimination in health, housing, education and livelihood.

Dignity for all is the real indicator of national progress. A nation can build big roads and tall buildings, but true progress is seen only when even the poorest person feels respected in every public place.

When an elderly woman gets her pension without struggle, when a child gets a meal in school, when a pregnant woman receives proper healthcare, when a transgender person is treated with dignity, when a migrant worker receives shelter and safety - that is when human rights are alive.

**Let us remember Chanakya's words:**

‘The king has no higher duty than the welfare of his people.’ As NHRC, our role is not only to protect rights, but to ensure that every citizen, every day, in every corner of this country feels the dignity they rightfully deserve.

Thank you.”

Dr. V. K. Paul, Member, NITI Aayog speaking as a panellist in the first session, highlighted the WHO definition of health as complete physical, mental and social well-being, noting that while the Constitution does not explicitly guarantee the Right to Health, courts have read it into Article 21. He drew attention to persisting inequities, with poorer communities facing higher disease burdens. He said that health is shaped by biological, social, environmental and commercial determinants

like tobacco and unhealthy food marketing. Here is the gist of his speech:

I would like to highlight that poor communities face a much greater burden of communicable diseases, undernutrition and anaemia, while the affluent sections face different health risks. Health, in my view, is shaped by multiple determinants - biological and epidemiological factors, social and environmental conditions and increasingly, commercial determinants such as tobacco use and the marketing of unhealthy foods.

India has made significant progress in addressing key determinants like water and sanitation. Through the *Swachh Bharat Mission*, more than 12 crore toilets have been constructed, making rural India open-defecation free and significantly reducing waterborne diseases. Estimates indicate substantial prevention of child morbidity and mortality. Under the *Jal Jeevan Mission*, rural household water connections have increased from 17% to 81% in about five years - an expansion comparable to providing water access to populations equivalent to the U.S., Brazil and the U.K. combined.



► Dr. V. K. Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog addressing the participants

We have also achieved substantial progress through *Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana*. Initially targeting the bottom 40% of the population, it now covers around 600 million people, including senior citizens above 70 years. When combined with State schemes, ESI and other initiatives, total health coverage exceeds 700 million people. Over 70,000 admissions take place daily for secondary and tertiary care and out-of-pocket health expenditure has declined from 64% to about 39%.

Our Health and Wellness Centres now provide expanded services, including care for non-communicable diseases, mental health, elderly care, eye and ENT services, palliative care, dental care and school health programmes. Today, nearly two-thirds of deaths in India are due to non-communicable diseases. We are, therefore, planning annual screening for every citizen above 30 years for blood pressure and diabetes, with free treatment through the public health system. Our objective is not just screening but effective control to reduce disease prevalence.

India is also moving steadily towards the elimination of Tuberculosis, Leprosy, Lymphatic Filariasis, Kala-azar, Measles, Rubella and Malaria with focused last-mile efforts underway.

Mental health challenges are rising and demand a whole-of-government and whole-of-society response. I welcome the initiatives taken by the National Human Rights Commission and emphasise the need for a new National Mental Health Programme.

India's major health transformation, I believe, rests on strengthening primary healthcare, ensuring universal access, building strong preventive systems, controlling non-communicable diseases and safeguarding the Right to Health through comprehensive implementation. Continued collaboration in this shared journey is vital.



► Dr. Shamika Ravi, Member, Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (EAC- PM) addressing the first session

Dr. Shamika Ravi, Member, Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (EAC- PM) spoke about several areas where improved access has strengthened everyday dignity. She said that India now produces enough food for all. She said that the challenge is nutrition rather than scarcity. Here is a gist of her speech:

I firmly believe that a true democracy must ensure that basic services reach every single citizen, especially the last and most vulnerable. This is the essence of what I describe as the *saturation policy* - a commitment to deliver essential amenities to everyone, everywhere. As India grows and becomes more prosperous, the definition of these basic amenities naturally expands.

Let me share how improved access to essentials is enhancing dignity in everyday life.

In the area of food and nutrition, India today produces enough food for all. The challenge is no longer scarcity but nutrition-what people are actually consuming. Even the poorest households are now eating fewer carbohydrates and more fruits, milk and diverse foods. This shift reflects rising well-being and improved dignity.

Sanitation has had a transformative impact on both health and safety. The construction of over 120 million toilets has not only improved public health outcomes but also made women significantly safer. Evidence shows a sharp decline in assaults and rapes in areas where toilets were built, as women no longer have to step out at unsafe hours. I see this as one of the strongest examples of dignity being restored.

Everyday essentials such as bank accounts, clean drinking water, electricity and LPG connections once unreliable are now becoming a normal part of life for most households. As prosperity rises, so do expectations for quality of life. Over the last 12 years, about 302 million people have moved out of moderate poverty and this progress has been broad-based, cutting across regions and major social groups.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that everything comes with a cost. Not every public service can simply be converted into a legal "right," because resources are finite. Programmes such as minimum wage laws or MNREGA show that while rights may exist on paper, financial and capacity constraints can limit full delivery.





► NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi chairing the second session

I would also emphasise that rights must be balanced with duties. Many households, for instance, spend more on tobacco and gutkha than on health or education. These choices eventually increase the burden on public healthcare systems, raising costs for society as a whole.

If India is to achieve its goals for 2047, we must focus not only on rights but equally on responsible behaviour, community awareness and shared duties.

Chairing the second session on 'Ensuring Public Services and Dignity for All' NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi said that food, clothes and housing meet basic needs, but true nation-building requires going beyond minimum entitlements to ensure dignity, empowerment and meaningful well-being for every individual. He highlighted the need for introspection and collective action to build a stronger and more humane Bharat.

Shri Sudhansh Pant, Secretary Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment highlighted various initiatives of the Ministry and skill development opportunities with scholarship and

financial support to various segments of students to ensure their right to dignity through education and enterprise. Here is the gist of his speech:

I would like to underscore the importance of the day's theme and emphasise that the pursuit of human rights must be firmly rooted in justice, inclusivity and equity. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, which I represent, works with some of the country's most vulnerable and marginalised communities - Scheduled Castes,

Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, Economically Weaker Sections, de-notified tribes, transgender persons, beggars, sanitation and septic tank workers, waste pickers and senior citizens. For these groups, access to documentation, opportunities and essential services forms the very foundation of true empowerment.

I strongly believe that we must move from a framework of mere entitlement to one of capability enhancement. Empowerment becomes meaningful when a child from a marginalised community receives a scholarship that sustains education or when a sanitation worker is supported to become an entrepreneur. Education, in my view, is the first and most critical bridge to dignity. Through government scholarship schemes, we ensure that children from disadvantaged backgrounds do not drop out of school or higher education. It is a matter of pride that students from SC, ST and OBC communities are increasingly joining premier institutions such as IITs, IIMs and leading universities. With many even receiving support to study at Ivy League institutions abroad, it clearly demonstrates that aspirations among marginalised communities are no different from those of any other group.



► Shri Sudhansh Pant, Secretary Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment addressing the participants

At the same time, we need both job seekers and job creators. Initiatives such as the *Swachhata Udhyaami Yojana* show how livelihood-linked programmes can generate new opportunities and sustainable income. I would also like to highlight the transformative role of technology in enhancing dignity. Online banking, Aadhaar-enabled services and grievance redressal portals such as *Sampark* have removed intermediaries and enabled citizens to access services directly. The zero-interface portal for transgender persons is a powerful example of how technology can promote social empowerment for communities that have historically faced stigma and exclusion.

I would also draw attention to initiatives such as the *Jal Jeevan Mission*, which has provided drinking water to over 15 crore people, the *Ujjwala Yojana*, the *PM Awas Yojana*, the distribution of over 7.5 lakh assistive devices to senior citizens and strengthened legal protections for vulnerable groups. I conclude by recalling the words of Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam which remind us that uplifting the disadvantaged is not a one-time effort, but a continuous commitment that defines the moral strength of a nation.

Shri Bhuvnesh Kumar, CEO, UIDAI highlighted the utility of Aadhaar for authentication to get various services. He clarified common misconceptions and said that Aadhaar is a unique identification number- not proof of citizenship, domicile or date of birth. The gist of his speech is as follows:

I would like to focus on the role of Aadhaar as a powerful tool for empowerment and dignity. It is important to clarify that Aadhaar is not a card but a unique 12-digit identification number designed to provide a foundational identity to residents. I would also like to address some common misconceptions: Aadhaar is not proof of citizenship, domicile or date of birth. It serves



► Shri Bhuvnesh Kumar, CEO, UIDAI addressing the participants

solely as proof of identity. Any individual who has resided in India for more than twelve months, including foreign nationals, is eligible to obtain an Aadhaar number.

Let me briefly explain how Aadhaar works. The enrolment and authentication processes involve secure biometric capture and robust database management to ensure accuracy and reliability. Today, the scale of Aadhaar reflects its impact. Over 1.42 billion Aadhaar numbers have been generated with around 74,000 new enrolments taking place every day. Since its inception, the system has carried out more than 154 billion authentications with nearly nine crore authentications occurring daily. Aadhaar-based verification has helped eliminate almost 87 per cent of fake or duplicate beneficiaries across various service delivery systems thereby clearly demonstrating its effectiveness in preventing leakages and fraud.

Aadhaar plays a foundational role in India's digital governance architecture, particularly through the *JAM trinity*-*Jan Dhan* accounts, Aadhaar and mobile connectivity. Together, these have enabled universal financial inclusion, streamlined service delivery and significantly reduced administrative inefficiencies. I see Aadhaar as the

identity layer of India's Digital Public Infrastructure, enabling seamless digital payments, targeted welfare delivery and data-driven governance.

I would like to conclude by highlighting the cost-effectiveness of Aadhaar-enabled systems, which, when compared with traditional mechanisms, have proven to be more efficient, transparent and scalable.

Ms. Sunita Narain, Director General, Centre for Science and Environment emphasised the importance of right to a clean environment in realising a dignified life. The gist of her speech is as follows:

I would like to note that India has progressively recognised many basic needs as fundamental rights. However, these rights must be effectively implemented on the ground if they are to truly ensure a life of dignity. I am particularly concerned about environmental challenges such as Delhi's air pollution and I strongly believe that the right to breathe clean air is a core human rights issue.

I would like to emphasise that development cannot be called sustainable if it is neither affordable nor inclusive. Unless we change the underlying approach to



development, it will be difficult to genuinely safeguard dignity for all. Issues such as air quality, energy systems and pollution management must be examined more carefully. Only a small proportion of the population owns and uses private vehicles, yet environmental policies often end up focusing disproportionately on this segment.

It is therefore essential to design energy and sanitation systems that are affordable, accessible and effective for people, particularly those at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid. We need innovative and resource-efficient solutions, because dignity can only be upheld when these systems work every day, for every person.

I would also like to underscore the importance of strengthening public institutions. The delivery of rights-based infrastructure depends heavily on institutional competence and capacity. I thank the National Human Rights Commission and reaffirm my commitment to advancing sustainable, inclusive and dignified development for all.

NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt. Saidingpuii Chhakchhuak delivered the vote of thanks.



► Ms. Sunita Narain, Director General, Centre for Science and Environment addressing the second session

## Article

# Working of the Probation of Offenders Act, 1958

**- Justice V. Ramasubramanian**  
Chairperson, NHRC, India

*(Based on his address at the National Consultation meet at TISS Mumbai held on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2025)*



“S ince the history of evolution of the law of probation is quite interesting, let me begin with a real-life story, which some of you might have heard.

John Augustus was born in 1785 in Woburn, Massachusetts. He became a shoemaker and was a member of the Washington Total Abstinence Society. One day, in the year 1841, Augustus witnessed the plight of a common drunkard brought before the court. Moved by compassion, he offered bail with a promise that he will reform the man before sentencing. In 3 weeks, the drunkard returned to court, a sober man with a

dignified demeanour. This marked the beginning of an 18-year career for John Augustus as a voluntary probation officer. Ever since then, the name John Augustus became synonymous with probation and he is known as the father of probation.

In the article on 'History of Probation' published by the New York City Department of Probation, it is reported that from 1841 to 1858, John Augustus had provided bail for 1,946 men and women. Reportedly, only 10 of this number forfeited their bond, which is considered a remarkable accomplishment when measured against any standard. Therefore, the first probation statute, enacted in Massachusetts shortly after his death in 1859, was widely attributed to his efforts.

In an anonymous letter that documented Augustus's efforts, an interesting offshoot of his philanthropy is noted. It appears that during those days, police and other officers received a fee of less than a dollar if there was a conviction in a case where they had testified, as well as an extra fee for a warrant or writ resulting in the incarceration of a defendant. In as much as Augustus would bail out many defendants who would otherwise have been imprisoned, officers often suffered financially from his labours. Therefore, officers would sometimes wait until Augustus was outside of the courtroom before calling a case in which he was likely to bail out the defendant. Through this subterfuge, a defendant would be hurried before the judge, often convicted and thereby enabling the officers to collect small fees.

Whether inspired or otherwise by Augustus, another person by the name Frederick Rainer, a printer from Hertfordshire (England), who wanted to help individuals prosecuted for alcohol-related offences before the London police courts, approached the Church of England Temperance Society in 1876 with a donation. With the money so donated, the Church of England Temperance Society appointed a 'police court missionary'. They were entrusted with the task of interviewing drunks in the court cells and evaluating which of them is likely to respond to help and suggesting to the court a plan for putting the offender on the 'straight and narrow.' Thereafter, the Probation of First Offenders Act 1887 was passed in England.

Coming to the Indian context, the Criminal Procedure Code, 1898 was perhaps the first law that enabled the release of persons upon probation of good conduct, instead of sentencing them to punishment. Section 562, 563 and 564 of CrPC 1898 were replica of sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Probation of First Offenders Act 1887 of England. But section 562 was confined in its application only to 5 types of offences namely theft, theft in a building, dishonest misappropriation, cheating or any other offence under the Indian Penal Code of 1860 punishable with not more than two years' imprisonment. A person convicted of any of these crimes, to be entitled to the benefit of section 562, must have had no previous conviction and the court convicting him must be convinced that having regard to the youth, character and antecedents of the offender, to the trivial nature of the offence and to any extenuating circumstances under which the offence was committed, it is expedient that the offender be released on probation of good conduct.

Even before the passing of the Criminal Procedure Code of 1898, the British administration in India was concerned about the administration of jails in India and the increasing costs that the British government was made to bear. Therefore, several successive committees appointed by the

Government in the years 1838, 1864, 1877 and 1888-89 examined the issue. Eventually, the Imperial Legislative Council passed a resolution in the winter of 1913-14 for the appointment of a committee to investigate the whole subject of jail administration and to suggest improvements in the light of the experience of the West. Thus, a committee under the Chairmanship of Sir Alexander G. Cardew, Member of the Executive Council, Madras was constituted in April 1914. It was perhaps the first committee which also took up, along with other issues, the question of probation. The report of this committee submitted in 1919-20 contained a separate chapter in Section III of Chapter XV on Probation. This report running to more than 500 pages, contains lot of insights into how the system of administration of penal law worked in different countries at that time. While dealing with the system prevalent in US, the report says that there were objections to persons convicted of crimes relating to property walking away with the benefits and profits after serving a probationary period. Therefore, the administration came up with a system of restitution whereby the offender will be asked to work under the supervision of a probationary officer and earn money for payment of the amount ordered to be recovered from him. Paragraph 422 of the Report says that in America, probation officers are largely used to collect the contributions ordered by the court to be made by defaulting husbands to support their families. The report says that in 1918, an amount of 485,339 dollars was collected in the State of Massachusetts alone through probationary officers.

This report stated that 3 purposes were achieved through such a system namely i.) salvage of the offender at the beginning of this criminal career ii.) saving to the State by keeping him out of prison and iii.) possibility of investigating into causes of crime and delinquency. But the report also noted the criticism that the system received in the US itself. According to the report, one experienced magistrate with whom the committee had an interview denounced the system in strong terms by saying it seemed to him that every man is entitled to one crime as he is to one wife and that there was more crime in his State than ever before and that not 10 per cent of it is detected. According to him, the system worked well with the young but with the adults it was a failure. In the year 1928, a committee known as the United Provinces Jails Inquiry Committee was constituted and the committee commenced work in 1929. In its report, this 1929 committee compared the continental system of probation with the English system and made an interesting observation in para 309 which is as follows:

"The Committee is, however, of the opinion that the Continental system is better than the English system in respect of probation. Under the Continental system, the



offender on conviction is sentenced to a substantive sentence, but the sentence is suspended and he is placed under the charge of a Probation Officer for a certain period. If during this period he leads an honest life, does not get into bad society and does not relapse into crime, the sentence is cancelled. The reasons why the Committee prefers the continental system to the English system are these. When a probationer does not know what sentence will be passed on him, if he falls again into evil courses, he is more inclined to treat the consequences of his actions lightly. When he knows what the sentence will be and is in a position to dread a known consequence, he is more likely not to relapse.

Based on the recommendations of the 1919 Committee headed by Sir Alexander G. Cardew, a draft of a bill known as the "Probation of Offenders Bill" was prepared by the Government of India in 1931. This Bill was circulated to the provincial governments, but the provincial governments did not take steps. Therefore, the Government of India informed the provinces that they are free to enact their own legislation on probation of offenders.

This enabled some of the provinces to come with laws. The province of Punjab was perhaps the first one to enact a law known as Good Conduct Prisoners Probationary Release Act 1926. In fact, after partition, Pakistan continued to have the same law until 1960, when they passed a new law relating to probation. Once the province of Punjab passed a legislation, the other provinces followed suit. In the year 1936 alone, 4 provinces enacted laws, namely the Madras Probation of Offenders Act 1936, the CP and Berar Probation of Offenders Act 1936, the Bombay Probation of Offenders Act 1938 and the United Provinces First Offenders Probation Act 1938.

Post-independence, the Parliament enacted the Probation of Offenders Act of 1958. The States were given the leverage to make the Act come into force on a date notified by them. Therefore, the State of UP notified the Act only in 1981 as it continued to follow the U.P. First Offenders Probation Act, 1938 till 1981.

The 1958 Central Act repealed Section 562 of CrPC of 1898, in States in which the Act was brought into force. Section 3 of this Act closely followed the language of section 562 of CrPC. But CrPC 1898 was replaced by CrPC 1973 and section 562 took a new avatar as section 360. However, section 360 made it clear that nothing in the section shall affect the provisions of the Probation of Offenders Act, 1958 (20 of 1958) or the Children Act, 1960 (60 of 1960) for the treatment, training or rehabilitation of youthful offenders. Now, this section 360 of CrPC 1973 is retained as section 401 of BNSS 2023.

Having seen the history of evolution of the law of probation, let us now see the criticisms that it has received the world over and the correctional measures taken by a few countries to address these criticisms.

In 1966, an American sociologist and criminologist by the name Robert Magnus Martinson, undertook a study, along with Lipton and Wilks, which covered 231 cases dating from 1945 to 1967. His report, which was initially suppressed because of the negative results projected therein, later came to the public domain. In an interview in 1975, Martinson asserted that "Nothing works" in prison rehabilitation. His work was embraced by politicians and it inspired a wave of strong sentencing and cancellation of rehabilitation programmes. He himself committed suicide in 1979 after creating a movement which came to be known as "Nothing works" movement.

But this movement drew severe criticism from academics who conducted research on offender treatment with renewed vigour that led to a counter movement called "What works" movement. This "What works" movement made correctional agencies make significant investments, but the results were not on expected lines. Therefore, it was realised that programme design, the integrity of implementation and the evaluation of the effectiveness mediators were crucial. Designing effective programmes and services for offenders, implementing them and evaluating them in a manner that provides insights into the development, delivery and evaluation was identified as a considerable challenge for clinicians, programme managers, administrators and researchers alike.

Then came Mark Lipsey, whose meta-analyses in 1989 confirmed that offender treatment often led to reductions in recidivism, whereas "get tough" sanctions showed little impact on recidivism. Subsequently, a group of researchers namely Andrews, Bonta and Hoge formulated a set of principles in the year 1990, for effective intervention, which came to be known as RNT model. These principles are (1) Risk (direct services to higher-risk offenders), (2) Need (target criminogenic needs in treatment) and (3) Responsivity (use cognitive-behavioural treatment methods and tailor the intervention to the offender's learning style, motivation, abilities and strengths).

All studies so far conducted by scholars identify two problematic areas. They relate to the conditions imposed for the grant of probation and the commitment of the probationary officer concerned. Even seasoned people like Martinson ask (a) Is probation a "privilege" or a "right"? (b) Is a probation officer an "officer of the court"? (c) If so, what

does it mean in his dealings with the court and his client? (d) What are the evidential and ethical limits of confidentiality? (e) How can the relationships between the judge and the probation officer be regulated?

In an article “One Size Fits None: How ‘standard conditions’ of probation set people up to fail,” published in October 2024, its author Emily Widra, a Senior Research Analyst at the Prison Policy Initiative states:

“More than 1 in 10 people admitted to state prisons every year have committed no new crime but have simply broken one or more of the many conditions or rules of their probation. All this unnecessary incarceration is the predictable result of widely adopted probation conditions that are so vaguely defined, so burdensome and so rigidly applied that they actually broaden the scope of what counts as “recidivism.” Through these conditions, courts and

probation authorities create punishable offenses that go far beyond criminal law setting people up to fail. And because the vast majority of people under correctional control are on probation - 2.9 million people, far surpassing the 1.9 million people incarcerated – these trap-like conditions make probation a major driver of mass incarceration, not the “alternative” it's supposed to be.”

Emily concludes by saying “Where probation is used as a true alternative to incarceration and where revocations are minimised, probation can keep people who are involved in the criminal legal system from the harms of imprisonment. But too often, it is used as a default sanction that sets people up to fail and revocations frequently result from understandable “violations” that are unrelated to public safety concerns. In this way, probation has the effect of “widening the net” of people under correctional control and even driving up incarceration.”

## Suo motu cognizance

**T**he media reports have been a very useful instrument for the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to know about the incidents of human rights violations. Over the years, it has taken *suo motu* cognizance of many such issues and brought succour to the victims. During December 2025, the Commission took *suo motu* cognizance of 02 cases of alleged human rights violations reported by the media and issued notices to the concerned authorities to send action taken reports. Summaries of these cases are as follows:

### Death of four labourers in illegal building collapse

(Case No. 24327/24/30/2025)

On 20<sup>th</sup> November 2025, the media reported that four labourers died and several others were injured when a three-storey under - construction building collapsed in Nagla Hukum Singh village of Jevar in Gautam Budh Nagar district, Uttar Pradesh on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Reportedly, 1 out of the 10 labourers working at the site was missing. The building was being constructed without any permission. Therefore, the Commission has issued a notice to the District Magistrate and the Commissioner of Police, Gautam Budh Nagar, calling for a detailed report on the matter. The report is expected to include the health status of the injured persons. It is also expected to include the compensation, if any, provided by the concerned authorities to the next of kin (NoK) of the deceased and to those injured. According to the media report, the building collapsed from bottom to top within seconds as the shuttering for the third floor was being removed.

### Blood transfusion renders six children HIV positive

(Case No. 3724/12/38/2025)

On 16<sup>th</sup> December 2025, the media reported that after blood transfusion, at least six children became HIV positive at Satna District Hospital, Madhya Pradesh. Reportedly, they were being treated at the hospital for Thalassemia, a disease which requires blood transfusion periodically. The children were found to be HIV positive between January and May 2025 and the matter has come to light now. The Commission has observed that the contents of the news report, if true, raise serious issues of violation of human rights of the victims. Such incidents occurring in different parts of the country have also come to the Commission's notice. Therefore, the Commission has issued notices to the Chief Secretaries of all the States and Union Territories, calling for detailed report on the matter which is expected to include action taken or proposed to be taken by them to deal with the issue.



# 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 cases and gives directions and recommendations to the concerned authorities for relief to the victims. In December 2025, an amount of Rs 36 lakh was recommended for the victims or their next of kin (NoK) in seven 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 NHRC, India website by logging the case number given in the table below:

S. No.	Case Number	Nature of complaint	Amount (Rs in lakh)	Authority
1.	51/2/13/2019-AD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh
2.	1814/34/24/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	3.00	Govt. of Jharkhand
3.	18/16/1/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	3.00	Govt. of Mizoram
4.	19465/24/62/2024-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Govt. of Uttar Pradesh
5.	618/34/12/2022-PCD	Death in police custody	5.00	Govt. of Jharkhand
6.	1390/10/15/2021-PCD	Death in police custody	10.00	Govt. of Karnataka
7.	1803/34/20/2022	Death in police custody	5.00	Govt. of Jharkhand

# Payment of relief to the victims

During December 2025, the Commission closed four cases, either on receipt of compliance reports and proof of payment from public authorities or by giving other observations/ directions. An amount of more than Rs 8.5 lakh was paid to the victims or their next of kin (NoK) on the recommendations of the Commission. The specific details of these cases can be downloaded from NHRC, India website by logging the case number given in the table below:

S. No.	Case Number	Nature of complaint	Amount (Rs in lakh)	Authority
1.	582/4/1/2023	Negligence by Electricity Dept. leading to fire breakout	2.00	Govt. of Bihar
2.	1594/12/31/2024	Assault by police personnel	0.50	Govt. of Madhya Pradesh
3.	19253/24/1/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Govt. of Uttar Pradesh
4.	33872/24/12/2021	Death due to poisoning by in-laws	1.00	Govt. of Uttar Pradesh

# Case studies

In many cases, the Commission, contrary to the claims of the concerned State authorities, found that human rights of the victims were violated due to State authorities’ unlawful action, inaction or omission. Therefore, on a case-to-case basis, the Commission issued show-cause notices to them to respond as to why monetary relief should not be recommended to be paid to the victims of human rights violations or their next of kin (NoK) and action should not be taken against the erring / negligent officials. The merits of the States’ approach to responding to their show cause notices prompted the Commission to recommend monetary relief to the victims of human rights violations or their next of kin. The Commission also received reports of compliance with recommendations by the respective State authorities. Summaries of such cases are as under:

## Burning of houses due to Electricity Department's negligence

(Case No. 582/4/1/2023)

The matter pertained to the burning of four houses and irreparable loss to the house owners due to fire caused by high - tension wire in Araria District, Bihar in 2023. Based on the material received from the concerned authorities in response to its notices, the Commission found that there was negligence on the part of the Electrical Inspector and his subordinates in the Department of Power in preventing violation of human rights. Therefore, holding the State vicariously liable for the negligence of its employees, the Commission recommended that the Government of Bihar pay Rs 2 lakh as relief to each of the four house owners, which was eventually paid.

## Suicide by undertrial prisoner

(Case No. 19253/24/1/2021-JCD)

The matter pertained to the suicide of a 25-year-old undertrial prisoner in District Jail, Agra, Uttar Pradesh in 2021. Based on the material received from the concerned authorities in response to its notices, the Commission found that he committed suicide due to fear of not getting out of the prison. His suicide clearly indicated negligence of jail officials and hence, the State was vicariously liable for the acts of negligence of its employees. Therefore, the Commission recommended that the Government of Uttar Pradesh pay Rs 5 lakh as relief to the next of kin (NoK) of the deceased, which was eventually paid.

## Assault by police

(Case No 69/35/12/2024)

The matter pertained to the alleged assault on a man at Police Station Jaspur, District Udham Singh Nagar, Uttarakhand in 2024. Based on the material received from the concerned authorities in response to its notices, the Commission found that the accused police official took the key of the Complainant's motorcycle without justification and asked him to collect it from Police Station Kashipur. When he reached the police station, he was allegedly abused and assaulted by the police officials resulting in injuries. The Commission observed that the accused Constable had misused his authority and that such conduct amounted to a

violation of the complainant's fundamental right to life and liberty. Therefore, the Commission recommended that the Government of Uttarakhand pay Rs 50,000 as relief to the victim, which was eventually paid. Disciplinary action was also taken which resulted in a warning to the then Circle Officer, Kashipur and a strict warning to the erring Constable.

## Death in police firing

(Case No. 1340/34/10/2019)

The matter pertained to the death of a 28-year-old villager who died in a police force firing where a clash took place between police and villagers during the voting for Assembly Elections in Jharkhand at Sisai, Gumla in 2019. Reportedly, some miscreants tried to snatch weapons from the Police Personnel which resulted in an accidental firing. The Commission found that clash between the villagers and the On-Duty Law Enforcement Officials on the voting day could have been dealt with more sensitivity and responsibility. The Judicial Magistrate ruled that the use of force was disproportionate, violating human rights. Therefore, the Commission held that the state was liable for paying compensation. Accordingly, the Commission recommended that the Government of Jharkhand pay Rs 5 lakh as relief to the NoK of the victim, which was eventually paid. Departmental action was also taken against the erring officers.

## Death in judicial custody

(Case No. 1921/25/10/2020-JCD)

The matter pertained to the death of an undertrial prisoner in judicial custody of Jalpaiguri Central Correctional Home, Jalpaiguri district, West Bengal in 2020. Based on the material received from the concerned authorities in response to its notices, the Commission found that the victim did not have any previous crime record and was attacked by another inmate inside the jail which resulted in his unnatural death. This clearly indicated poor vigilance and negligence on the part of jail staff to prevent violence inside jail. Therefore, the Commission recommended that the Government of West Bengal pay Rs 5 lakh as relief to the NoK, which was eventually paid. Departmental proceedings were initiated against the concerned Head Warder and On-Duty Warders. They were awarded with penalties of stoppage of two annual increments.

# Spot enquiries

T

he National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India deutes its own team of Investigation Officers from time to time to conduct spot enquiries into cases of human rights violations.



## Case No. 133/36/9/2025

From 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> December 2025, a spot enquiry was conducted into the allegation that the land of people belonging to Scheduled Tribe (ST) community in Rangareddy district, Telangana, is being forcibly grabbed by the revenue authorities denying the land ownership rights to the ST people who are cultivating the land for generations.

## Field visits



► NHRC, India Member, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani visiting a One- Stop Centre in Kurukshetra, Haryana

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 human rights situation and status of implementation of Commission's advisories, guidelines and recommendations by State Governments and their concerned authorities. They also visit shelters, prisons and observation homes to raise awareness among government officials and to encourage them to take necessary actions to improve human rights

conditions. During these visits, the importance of state authorities submitting timely reports is also highlighted to the officials, as it aids the Commission in promptly resolving human rights violation cases.

On 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India Member, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani interacted with Anganwadi Teachers in Adhon, Kurukshetra in Haryana. She found issues similar to other places, such as heavy workload, high stress, low salaries and limited access to government welfare schemes. She met

the CDPO, CWC Member and Protection Officer and interacted with children, parents and the village Sarpanch. She also visited a One- Stop Centre in Kurukshetra, Haryana and interacted with the beneficiaries beside holding discussions with the concerned officials. She discussed operational and support aspects with officers to ensure effective assistance for all. She also visited the CWC Office and interacted with the Chairperson and Members to discuss key issues and strengthen coordination and ensure effective functioning.

## Capacity Building

The National Human Rights Commission, 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 including moot courts to expand its outreach and human rights sensitisation especially for university-level students. Internships are conducted in-person as well as online. The Online Short Term Internship Programmes (OSTIs) are organised to ensure that students from remote areas join the programme without incurring any expenses for their travel and stay in Delhi. The month-long in-person internships are also organised.

## Winter Internship Programme

The four-week in-person Winter Internship Programme (WIP) - 2025 of the NHRC, India began at its premises in New Delhi from 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025. A total of 80 university-level students from diverse academic backgrounds attended the programme. They were shortlisted from 1,485 applicants representing various institutions across 19 States and Union Territories of the country.

Inaugurating it, NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian said that the internship is one-of-a-kind in-person platform for peer learning in a nation as diverse as India. He said that it aims to provide meaningful insights into the human rights discourse and urged the interns to internalise these values in their daily lives at home, in the workplace and within the community, so that they may contribute effectively towards nation building.

In his keynote address, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal emphasised the critical role of youth in advancing the cause of human rights. He urged the interns to cultivate a deep sense of empathy and compassion, rooted in the values enshrined in the Constitution of India and the country's civilisational ethos. He urged them to utilise the internship to broaden their perspectives and work towards building an inclusive, equitable and just society.

Earlier, giving an overview of the internship programme, NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt. Saidingpuii Chhakchuak said that beside interactive sessions with subject experts, the interns will have group research projects, book review and declamation contests aimed at enhancing their understanding of human rights issues and fostering innovative approaches to address them.

NHRC, India Director, Lt. Col. Virender Singh delivered the vote of thanks. Registrar (Law), Shri Joginder Singh was present.



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian addressing the valedictory session of the Winter Internship Programme



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



► The interns attending the valedictory session



## Training programmes

Following are the training programmes, which were addressed by the Chairperson, Members, Secretary General and senior officers of the NHRC, India. These were organised by different institutions with the support of the Commission:

- On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian addressed the National Consultation on Implementation of Probation of Offenders organised at TISS, Mumbai, Maharashtra in the capacity of Chief Guest. His speech has been carried in the previous pages of this edition of the Newsletter. Presenting Officer, Shri Anjane Anuj also chaired a session on PO Act in the Consultation.
- On 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressed a National Seminar on 'Human Rights in Culture, Philosophy and Arts: The Indian Experience', organised by the Department of Public Policy and Governance, B. K. School of Professional and Management Studies, Gujarat University. Shri Lal emphasised the need to reconnect with India's ancient

civilisational values of equality, dignity for all and non-violence to navigate through several challenges especially the ones posed by technology's displacement of human roles. About 200 participants attended the seminar

- On 4<sup>th</sup> December 2025, a two-day conference on 'Sustainable Development Goals and Human Rights for an Equitable Future: A Prismatic Perspective' was organised by the Law School, University of Jammu and supported by NHRC, India. In his inaugural message, NHRC Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian said that achieving SDGs means recognising intersecting discrimination like caste, gender, disability, economic status and viewing climate action, digital access and economic growth as issues of justice and dignity. He said that the SDGs reflect core human rights. He hoped the deliberations would boost inclusion, uplift marginalised voices to a more equitable and sustainable future.



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressing the National Seminar



► Conference on 'Sustainable Development Goals and Human Rights for an Equitable Future: A Prismatic Perspective' in progress

- On 5<sup>th</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi addressed as Chief Guest the National Seminar on 'Right to mental health: Bridging gaps in access, awareness and advocacy' organised by the Guru Kashi University, Talwandi Saho, Bhatinda, Punjab.



► NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi addressing the National Seminar

- On 5<sup>th</sup> December 2025, Dr. N.G.P. Arts and Science College, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu conducted a one-day training programme on Human Rights and Values: Promotion and Protection for Students. Smt. Ilakkiya Karunakaran, Sr. Superintendent of Police, NHRC was the Chief Guest. The programme organised in collaboration with the NHRC saw the participation of about 100 students.
- On 6<sup>th</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt. Saidingpuii Chhakchhuak virtually addressed the inaugural session of a one-day training programme on 'Women Rights,' organised by Jagannath Kadwadas Shah Adarsh Mahavidyalay in Dhule, Maharashtra.



► NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt. Saidingpuii Chhakchhuak listening to the queries of the participants



- On 8<sup>th</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi addressed as Chief Guest the one-day seminar on 'Reimagining Child Rights and Juvenile Justice for a Brighter Tomorrow' organised by Mother Nirmala Foundation, Farrukhabad, Uttar Pradesh.
- On 18<sup>th</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi was Chief Guest in the one-day sensitisation cum training programme for Human Rights Defenders organised by Human Rights Front India (NGO), Bhubaneswar, Odisha.



► NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi addressing the seminar



► NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi addressing a training programme for HRDs

## Other capacity building programmes

- On 11<sup>th</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressed senior IFS officers on Human Values, Good Governance and India's institutional framework for the protection and promotion of human rights in the IFS Mid-Career Training Programme (MCT Phase V) at Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA), Dehradun. He said that protecting the environ-

ment, conserving forests, wildlife, water bodies and land and addressing climate change have emerged as some of the most defining challenges of our generation. For IFS officers working on the ground, the task is to maintain ecological balance while enabling development and economic growth so that the benefits of progress reach all, especially the most marginalised and vulnerable communities.





► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressing the senior IFS officers in their Mid-Career Training Programme at IGNFA, Dehradun

Shri Lal said that at senior leadership levels, governance is about enabling teams to deliver intended outcomes - mobilising resources, motivating people and standing with them, especially in challenging times. Effective leadership begins with selflessness: public service is ultimately about serving people, not oneself.

He also highlighted the role of public servants in balancing development and conservation, drawing from real-life experiences and field insights. The discussion also traced the evolution of India's human rights protection framework - rooted in a civilisational ethos of empathy, non-violence, dignity and peaceful coexistence, which has profoundly shaped our constitutional values. He reflected on India's contribution to global human rights, including the role of Dr. Hansa Mehta and Lakshmi Menon in securing gender-inclusive language in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

The constitutional pillars of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, the role of the Supreme Court and High Courts, judicial independence and the guiding significance of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) were examined. India's accessible justice system, particularly Public Interest Litigation (PIL) and the work of institutions like the NHRC were also discussed. The session concluded with reflections on India's international human rights commitments and the importance of sustained public engagement.

In yet another session on the same day, Shri Bharat Lal addressed the 2025 batch of 125 Indian Forest Service probationers along with two foreign trainees at IGNFA. He said that their work will not only shape the quality of clean air and water which are the two of the most fundamental necessities of life but also climate mitigation and prevention of natural disasters.

He shared the larger ecological context: India, home to over 17% of the world's population and the largest



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressing the 2025 batch of 125 IFS probationers along with two foreign trainees at IGNFA, Dehradun

livestock population, has only 2.5% of the world's landmass and about 4% of global freshwater resources. Yet, to ensure ecological and water security and to mitigate climate change, India today maintains over 23% forest and tree cover, with a long-term national goal of bringing one-third of the country under green cover.

In recent years, India has also made notable gains in wildlife conservation, mangrove restoration and green cover expansion - a momentum the young officers will now be entrusted to sustain. True leadership requires putting people before self. Public service is not about power or privilege, but about responsibility and sacrifice.

- On 19<sup>th</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal attended the valedictory session of the 8-week 100<sup>th</sup> Special Foundation Course for 18 officers of the IPS, IFS and IP&TAFS from the 2020 and earlier batches. The programme was conducted at the Haryana Institute of Public Administration (HIPA)-under the guidance of its Director General, Shri Manoj Yadava, a distinguished civil servant.



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressing the valedictory session of the 100<sup>th</sup> Special Foundation Course for 18 officers of the IPS, IFS and IP&TAFS from the 2020 and earlier batches at HIPA, Gurugram



► Shri Bharat Lal urges officers to use laws and rules as instruments to improve lives, not to rule over people

Shri Lal said that at the heart of governance must lie the Indian values of empathy, compassion and service. Through sensitivity, responsiveness and proactive administration, we must work to realise the constitutional vision of dignity, justice, human rights and improved quality of life for all. He said that a civil servant must be reflective rather than reactive, thoughtful rather than mechanical and always lead by example.

He said that we must simplify processes so that citizens are not burdened in accessing basic services, ensure that no one feels denied justice and never miss an opportunity to help. There is a clear distinction between firmness and rigidity - one can be polite, compassionate and helpful, yet firm. Laws and rules must be instruments to improve lives, not to rule over people.

## 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 protection mechanism and its functioning in accordance with the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993. They are briefed by senior officers about the functioning of the Law Division, Investigation Divisions and the Complaints Management System of the Commission. The students and faculties of the following institutions visited the Commission:



On 8<sup>th</sup> December 2025, a batch of 42 students and 2 faculty members from Kingston Law College, North 24-Pargana, West Bengal visited NHRC. They were briefed about the functioning of the Law Division, the Investigation Divisions and the Complaints Management System of the Commission.



On 16<sup>th</sup> December 2025, a batch of 4 IRPFS probationers visited NHRC, India and paid a courtesy call on Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal. They were briefed about various aspects of human rights and the functioning of the Commission by Joint Secretaries, Shri Samir Kumar and Smt. Saindingpui Chhakchhuak and other senior officers.



## IT initiative

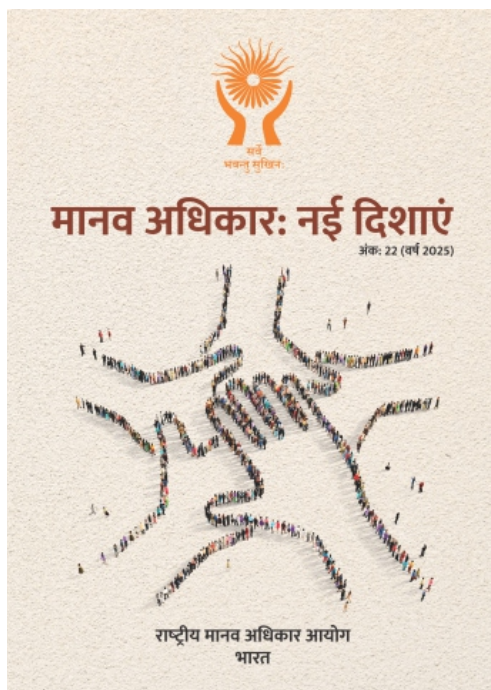
### NHRC, India App

**T**he NHRC, India launched a mobile app on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025. This digital initiative is aimed at enhancing public access to human rights services. The app enables users to file complaints directly with the Commission, track their status in real time and receive updates on case progress. It also offers access to key human rights resources, including educational materials, newsletters and official publications. With a user-friendly interface and streamlined processes, the app serves as a one-stop platform for engagement with the NHRC. By improving transparency, encouraging public participation and facilitating timely redressal of grievances, the app reflects the Commission's commitment to using technology to strengthen human rights awareness and responsiveness.

## Latest NHRC publications

### NHRC India English Journal 2025

The English Journal of the National Human Rights Commission, India (Volume 24) covers a wide range of contemporary and emerging human rights issues. The publication carries 20 insightful articles by eminent writers and subject experts, exploring various facets of human rights. It explores India's civilisational values and their link with constitutional democracy, human dignity, equality and justice. Key themes include digital health and the right to health, ageing and elderly care, disability rights, gender justice, maternal and child healthcare, nutrition security, financial inclusion, access to water, sanitation and energy, environmental and cultural rights, prison reforms, human trafficking, urban dispossession, free speech and platform ethics in the digital age, religious and personal laws and India's role in advancing global human rights and South - South cooperation.



### Hindi Journal Nayi Dishayein 2025

NHRC's Hindi Journal Nayi Dishayein (Volume 22) is published annually since 2004. Like the English Journal, it also carries articles in Hindi on various aspects of human rights. The publication has 28 insightful articles from eminent writers and experts. The themes of the articles are based on Indian ethos and human rights, women's safety and gender justice, workplace harassment, care and rights of elderly, child rights, mental health, food security, environmental rights, transgender rights, digital-age human rights violations, rights of sanitation workers, ragging, migration, displacement and human rights, media and human rights. The journal also includes perspectives on global human rights challenges, along with poems and short stories, offering both analytical and humanistic reflections on dignity, equality and social justice.

## NHRC in the International arena

**T**he National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India continues to engage with various international programmes to foster the exchange of ideas on various aspects of human rights. Several foreign institutional delegates visit the Commission and meet the Chairperson, Members and senior officers to understand its functioning for promoting and protecting human rights. The Commission's Chairperson, Members and other senior officers also visit various international forums to share their thoughts on the Commission's achievements, interact with other NHRIs and discuss the challenges to human rights in the fast-evolving world.

### Visits to the NHRC, India

- On 8<sup>th</sup> December 2025, Mr. Lars Castellucci, Federal Government Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Aid at the Federal Foreign Office, Germany met NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal as part of the Committee on Internal Affairs and Community of the German Parliament visiting India.
- On 12<sup>th</sup> December 2025, Ms. Isabelle Tschan, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP India and Ms. Nusrat Khan, Business and Human Rights Specialist visited NHRC and met with NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Shri Samir Kumar.
- On 16<sup>th</sup> December 2025, Ambassador/Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, Geneva, Shri Arindam Bagchi visited NHRC and met with the Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian and Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal.



► Visiting German delegation

oral presentation to the Bureau Members GANHRI Sub-Committee on Accreditation.

- On 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India SSP, Shri Yuvraj attended an online meeting organised by the University of Padova Human Rights Centre and the Network of African NHRIs on “National Enquiries and Economic and Social Rights Monitoring.”
- On 16<sup>th</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt. Saidingpuii Chhakchhuak, Research Consultant, Ms. Varsha Apte and Junior Research Consultant, Ms. Stuti Joshi attended a virtual meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group for elaboration of a legally binding instrument on the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons (OEIGWG–Older Persons).

### Online engagements

- On 4<sup>th</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal attended online

## News from the State Human Rights Commissions

**G**iven ever-expanding dimensions of human life and related challenges, promoting and protecting human rights always remains a work in progress. In India, democratically elected governments are committed to ensuring people's welfare and protecting human rights with the help of executive machinery. Additionally, there are institutions such as the legislature and the judiciary. The country also has a vibrant media. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and State Human Rights Commissions (SHRCs) play important roles. Other national commissions are assisted by state-level commissions at the regional level. These institutions work as watchdogs for rights and welfare measures. They focus on various segments of society. This column intends to highlight the exceptional activities of SHRCs undertaken to protect and promote human rights.



## Haryana State Human Rights Commission

The Haryana State Human Rights Commission (HSHRC) took *suo motu* cognizance of six cases of human rights violations in December 2025. These included public safety and administrative negligence, such as a five-year delay in procuring essential fire-fighting equipment, leading to risks in high-rise and densely populated areas; the electrocution death of a minor in Panipat due to unsafe



► HSHRC felicitating a differently abled person on the occasion of World Disability Day seminar in Karnal

electrical infrastructure; and the assault of a minor student during school transportation, highlighting institutional responsibility for child safety. The Commission also took cognizance of environmental and public health violations, including illegal dairies causing sanitation hazards, illegal mining, deteriorating air quality and non-compliance by polluting industrial units. Matters concerning custodial rights and police accountability, particularly allegations of custodial torture and deficiencies in medico-legal examinations, were addressed through strict



► HSHRC recognising the achievers for exemplary accomplishments

directions to police and health authorities. Further, the Commission intervened in cases involving basic livelihood rights, including denial of irrigation water, emphasising the right to life, dignity and water under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Additionally, HSHRC organised a Human Rights Awareness Camp in Kurukshetra from 15<sup>th</sup> November to 5<sup>th</sup> December 2025. The Commission also organised a World Disability Day seminar in Karnal on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2025, focusing on rights, dignity and inclusion of persons with disabilities. Justice Lalit Batra emphasised the importance of building a compassionate, inclusive and equal society, reiterating that persons with disabilities are entitled to the same constitutional and human rights as all other citizens. He highlighted the progress made in accessibility, inclusive education, supportive workplaces and rehabilitation services and stressed the need for sustained collective efforts for effective implementation of these rights. The Conference saw participation of dignitaries, experts and around 250 specially-abled students from across Haryana.

## Karnataka State Human Rights Commission

The Karnataka State Human Rights Commission (KSHRC) commemorated Human Rights Day on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025. An essay writing competition for all law colleges in the state and Government First Grade Degree Colleges in Bengaluru was organised by KSHRC. The topic for law students was 'The Protection of Human Rights in the Context of the Constitution and the Views of the Hon'ble Apex Court.' The topic of First Grade Degree Colleges was 'The Role of Citizens in the Protection of Human Rights and Prevention of





► KSHRC observing Human Rights Day

Human Rights Violations.' More than 180 colleges participated in the competition, with prizes awarded to the winning students.

As part of Human Rights Day celebrations, the Commission requested all Deputy Commissioners to observe the Day on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025 across districts and talukas to raise public awareness on human rights and remedies, involving officials, NGOs, students and public. Informative booklets were distributed. On 13<sup>th</sup> December 2025, KSHRC Member, Shri S. K. Vantigodi addressed students at Dr. G. M. Patil Law College, Dharwad and administered the Human Rights pledge. He emphasised students' role in human rights advocacy and measures to prevent human rights violations at the grassroots level.

## Madhya Pradesh State Human Rights Commission

The Madhya Pradesh State Human Rights Commission (MPSHRC) marked Human Rights Day with a seminar on 'Women's empowerment and human rights' at Bhopal on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025. The event was addressed by the State Assembly Speaker,

Shri Narendra Singh Tomar, Minister for Women and Child Development, Ms. Nirmala Bhuria and MPSHRC Member, Dr. Awadhesh Pratap Singh. Senior officials, experts and stakeholders participated, reaffirming the collective commitment of institutions, government and society towards advancing women's rights and human dignity in the state.

On Good Governance Day, a pledge ceremony was held at the conference hall of the MPSHRC on 24<sup>th</sup> December 2025. The pledge was administered by Member, Dr. Awadhesh Pratap Singh with senior officers and staff of the Commission participating.

The Member also met lawyers and social workers. He inspected the Commission's Divisional Office and Complaint Cell. On the matter of misuse of the name of the MPSHRC by certain NGOs, he said that they should be contacted and advised to refrain from such activities. Even after this, if they continue to indulge in such activities, a written complaint may be sent to the Commission for further appropriate action.

Following *suo motu* cognizance of media reports and follow up proceedings, the Commission ensured payment of Rs 80 lakh as relief in 11 cases to the NoK of the victims. The incidents



► MPSHRC Member, Dr. Awadhesh Pratap Singh addressing the seminar



included deaths due to drowning, electrocution, wild animal attack, snakebite and death of a sanitation worker.

Following the Madhya Pradesh Government's order Dr. Awadhesh Pratap Singh, Member assumed the charge of the Acting Chairperson, MPSHRC on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2025.

## Telangana State Human Rights Commission

The Telangana State Human Rights Commission (TSHRC) undertook several significant interventions in December 2025 to strengthen protection and promotion of human rights. The Commission took *suo motu* cognizance in two cases including one about a stray-dog attack on a speech-disabled child and the

other about the plight of an elderly man living on a footpath, directing authorities to ensure shelter, healthcare and protection under senior citizens' welfare laws. The TSHRC also took cognizance of allegations about illegal detention, custodial torture and death in police custody. It also recommended compensation of Rs 5 lakh and corrective action in a case involving the custodial death of a 10-year-old boy at a government Tribal Welfare Residential Hostel. It also recommended regularisation of job of the victim's mother.

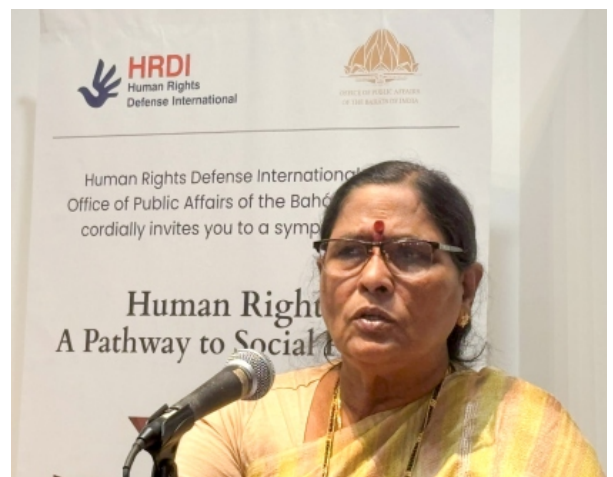
## News in brief

- On 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal virtually addressed as Chief Guest the National Seminar on Human Rights in Culture, Philosophy and Arts: The Indian Experience organised by the Department of Public Policy and Governance, Gujarat University.

- From 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India Junior Research Consultant, Ms. Prerna Hasija, participated in the three-day training programme on 'Leadership for Sustainable Development' held at Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.



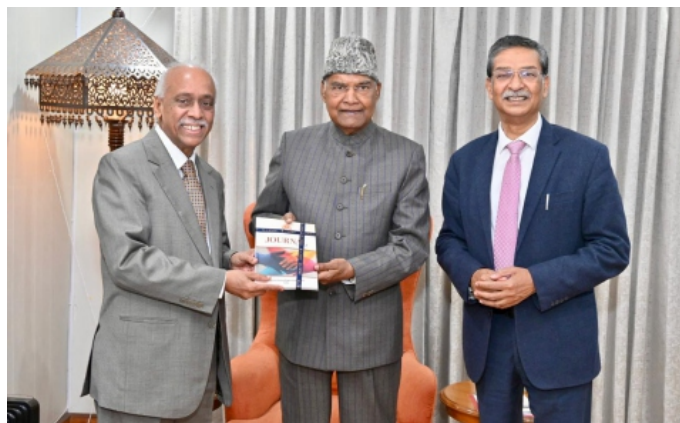
- On 13<sup>th</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India Member, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani was Chief Guest at a symposium on 'Human Rights – A Pathway to Social Progress' organised by HRDI and Office of Public Affairs of Bahá'í House of Worship, New Delhi. She said that the true development of a nation lies in how well it safeguards the dignity, freedom, security and fundamental rights of its people. She said that the condition of marginalised and vulnerable sections is the real indicator of social progress and reiterated that human rights are universal and include access to clean water, nutritious food, housing and healthcare. She highlighted the role of the NHRC, India in addressing human rights violations, spreading awareness and strengthening protections at the grassroots. She emphasised that human rights must form the foundation of inclusive and sustainable development.



- On 14<sup>th</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi was Chief Guest at the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Anatomical Society of India, Odisha State Chapter, 2025 organised by the Department of Anatomy, Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital, Balangir in Odisha.



- On 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025, Justice V. Ramasubramanian, Chairperson, NHRC along with Shri Bharat Lal, Secretary General called on the Hon'ble Former President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind and presented copies of the NHRC Annual Journal (English) and Nayi Dishayein (Hindi).



## Forthcoming events

**9<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

The NHRC, India will hold the valedictory session of its four week in-person Winter Internship Programme for university-level students at Manav Adhikar Bhavan, New Delhi.

**22<sup>nd</sup> January 2026**

NHRC, India will organise the first meeting of its newly appointed Special Rapporteurs and Special Monitors at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

**27<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

NHRC, India will organise a meeting of its Core Group on Disabilities on the theme 'Human Rights Violations emerging from re-verification and re-assessment of certificates of Government Employees with Disability' at Manav Adhikar Bhavan, New Delhi.

**28<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

NHRC, India will host a delegation of senior officers of the Government of Sri Lanka undergoing Capacity Building Programme organised by the National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), an apex level policy institution of Government of India, under the International Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

## Complaints in December 2025

Number of fresh complaints received	4,646
Number of cases disposed of including old cases	3,839
Number of cases under consideration of the Commission	44,688



# NHRC, India's Activities Recap (January to December 2025)

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India established on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Act, has served as a steadfast guardian of human rights for over three decades. As the country's apex human rights institution, the Commission has played a pivotal role in safeguarding the rights and dignity of all sections of society.

Through prompt enquiries, effective resolution of human rights violations and proactive initiatives, the NHRC works tirelessly to uphold justice. Its efforts extend beyond national boundaries, as it organises national conferences, engages with international forums and fosters global dialogue to exchange ideas and share best practices in the pursuit of a more humane world.

Rooted in a legacy of justice, compassion and action, the NHRC, India continued to serve as a beacon of hope and a voice for the voiceless during the period under review from January to December 2025. The Commission was strengthened with the joining of a new Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian and two Members, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut

Ranjan Sarangi and Shri Priyank Kanoongo just before the beginning of the New Year 2025. They, along with the Member, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani who till then served as the Acting Chairperson, gave a fresh impetus and momentum to the Commission's continued all-round activities promoting and protecting human rights with the active support of the team led by the Secretary General and CEO, Shri Bharat Lal. The year also saw the joining of new Director General (Investigation), Shri Anand Swaroop and the two Joint Secretaries, Shri Samir Kumar and Smt. Saidingpuui Chhakchhuak, among other officers.

The Commission pursued a dynamic and impactful agenda marked by swift interventions, complaint redressal with relief to victims, spot enquiries, guidelines, officer sensitisation and capacity building, as well as sustained engagement with NGOs, civil society organisations, State Human Rights Commissions, ex-officio members of the Statutory Full Commission and the media. Through each initiative, the NHRC, India reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to human rights, ensuring dignity, justice and accountability for all.

## Foundation Day

Apart from various activities for promoting and protecting human rights of all, the Commission organised two major commemorative events to mark its 32<sup>nd</sup> Foundation Day and Human Rights Day. The Foundation Day function was graced by the Former President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind as Chief Guest. In his address, the

Former President said that India has built a robust and comprehensive framework of human rights. Since its inception in the year 1993, the NHRC, India has evolved into one of the most respected human rights institutions in the world.

He said that commemorating its 32<sup>nd</sup> Foundation Day is more than just an institutional milestone. It is an occasion to reaffirm our collective commitment to the timeless values of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity enshrined in our Constitution. He said that through its interventions, including investigations, advisories and advocacy, the Commission has given voice to the voiceless and brought human rights concerns into the heart of governance. It has reaffirmed India's civilisational ethos that the true measure of a society lies in how it treats its most vulnerable member.



► Former President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind addressing the Foundation Day function of the NHRC, India as Chief Guest in New Delhi



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

Chairperson and Members of State Human Rights Commissions and other Commissions, judges of High Courts, senior government officers, academia, NGOs, human rights defenders, researchers, senior prison officers, among others were present during the event.

NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian said that the Commission with the able guidance of the Hon'ble Members and the effective assistance of the staff has been striving to live up to the standards set by our illustrious predecessors and to fulfil the legitimate expectations of the victims of human rights violations.

In his welcome address, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal stated that the Commission has sought to serve as the conscience keeper of human rights in our democracy through its various interventions to protect human rights of all, particularly the dignity of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in the country.

## Human Rights Day

Human Rights Day function was graced by the Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu as Chief Guest on 10<sup>th</sup> December. Chairpersons and Members of State Human Rights Commissions; members of judiciary; senior government

functionaries; diplomats; human rights defenders; representatives of NGO; civil society; academia among other national and international dignitaries were present.

Addressing the gathering, she said that Human Rights Day is an occasion to remind us that the universal human rights are inalienable and they form the bedrock of a just, equitable and compassionate society. India played an important role in shaping a global framework of human rights. Our freedom fighters envisioned a world rooted in human dignity, equality and justice. The President emphasised that human rights must be ensured for all including the person in the last mile in keeping with the philosophy of *Antyodaya*. She stated that every citizen should be an active participant in the nation's development journey towards building a *Viksit Bharat* by 2047.

The Hon'ble President also launched NHRC Mobile App. The App aims to enhance public access to human rights services, allowing users to easily file complaints, track their status in real time and stay updated on case progress. It also provides access to educational resources, official publications and newsletters, promoting a more transparent and responsive approach to human rights in India.

Addressing the gathering, NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian said that it is important to have introspection and encourage ourselves to redeem our pledge to promote human rights as inalienable, indivisible and interdependent human values. It is only when human rights are elevated to the level of human values that this celebration will achieve its purpose.

In his welcome address, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal said that the Commission is a people's institution. It always stands with the people, espe-



► The Hon'ble President of India addressing the Human Rights Day function of the NHRC, India in New Delhi





► A section of dignitaries attending the Human Rights Day function

cially the most vulnerable, who need it most. Collectively, we need to create an environment and ensure that everyone realises their full potential by building a just, inclusive and equitable society where every person is treated with respect and lives with dignity in daily experiences at home, in public spaces and workplaces.

NHRC Journal and Nayi Dishayein, two collections of scholarly articles in English and Hindi by eminent persons and subject experts were also released on the occasion.

The insightful articles in these annual journals cover a range of contemporary human rights issues such as gender justice, environmental rights, digital-age challenges and the rights of marginalised communities. Together, the app and the publications reflect NHRC's ongoing efforts to use technology and knowledge dissemination to raise awareness, encourage public participation and address human rights issues in India.

## Addressing complaints of human rights violations

From 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India registered a total of 76,252 cases of various human rights violations. A significant portion of the registered cases pertained to custodial deaths. These included 165 cases of deaths in police custody and 2,338 cases of deaths in judicial custody i.e. in prisons. There were 192 cases related to deaths in police encounters.

Among these, 113 were *suo motu* registered cases, reflecting the Commission's proactive approach to human rights issues. Most common of the *suo motu* cases pertained to the deaths of sanitation workers cleaning hazardous waste manually and without protective gear, incidents of rape and sexual assault, medical negligence and hospital mismanagement, assault on journalists, corporal punishment, suicides by students, among others. Some of the major incidents included fake doctor working as a Cardiologist at the Mission Hospital in Damoh, Madhya Pradesh, death of a nursing student following a suicide attempt amidst allegations of harassment by her hostel warden in Kasaragod District, Kerala, 38 students of a government-run school falling ill after inhaling poisonous odour from a cement factory in Baloda Bazar district, Chhattisgarh.

In the same period, 38,800 cases were disposed of, including those carried forward from previous years. In 145 cases, the Commission recommended monetary relief amounting to more than Rs 7.3 Crore. 44,688 cases are under consideration of the Commission at different stages of disposal, reflecting its ongoing efforts to address human rights violations effectively throughout the year.

The Commission also issued a statement condemning the killing of several people by terrorists in Pahalgam. It said that time has come to act against those aiding, abetting, supporting and advancing terrorism and to hold them accountable for this menace. Otherwise, it may result in shrinking of democratic space, intimidation, reprisals, harmony among communities and grave violation of various human rights, including right to life, liberty, equality, fraternity and livelihood. It expected that the state will take all the necessary steps to fix accountability; bring the perpetrators to justice and provide succour to the families of the victims in all possible manner.

Thus, through timely notices and active engagement with the concerned authorities, the NHRC, India pushed for accountability and justice.

Besides the judicial interventions in the matters of human rights violations, the Commission also held discussions with various stakeholders on different pressing issues of human rights concern through the National Conferences, open house discussions, core group meetings, collaborative conferences and workshops. These forums served as powerful platforms to bring together senior government officials, national and state commissions, legal experts, academics, civil society voices and the NHRC's own Special Monitors and Rapporteurs.

# National Conferences: Dialogue for Change

During the year, the NHRC, India hosted three National Conferences to spotlight pressing human rights issues and spark meaningful dialogue. The aim was to evaluate existing laws, bridge implementation gaps and craft actionable solutions to safeguard human rights across the country. These were chaired and addressed by the NHRC, India Chairperson, Members and Secretary General besides the government representatives, experts and other key stakeholders including those representing the NGOs and civil society organisations.

## Key themes addressed

### Rights of Transgender Persons: Revamping Spaces, reclaiming Voices

A National Conference on the 'Rights of Transgender Persons: Revamping Spaces, Reclaiming Voices' was organised at India Habitat Centre in New Delhi on 4<sup>th</sup>



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Jitsi V. Ramasubramanian addressing the inaugural session of the National Conference on the rights of transgender persons in New Delhi

September 2025. It aimed at discussing and addressing documentation barriers faced by the Transgender community and to underscore the need for inclusive measures that ensure care, dignity, protection and equal access to welfare, justice and employment opportunities for them. The conference was divided into three technical sessions and a panel discussion. These were 'Strengthening Garima Greh Shelters', 'Institutional Care for Gender Non-Conforming Children and Elderly Transgender Persons' and 'Building a Fair and Inclusive Law Enforcement Framework.'

The speakers included NHRC, India's former Members, Dr. D. M. Mulay and Smt. Jyotika Kalra; Secretary, MoSJE, Shri Amit Yadav; Ms. Shalini Singh, Director General of Police, Puducherry; Chief Commissioner, Income Tax Department, Smt. Anita Sinha; Joint Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Smt. Latha Ganpathy; Joint Secretary, National Commission for Women, Smt. B. Radhika Chakraborty; Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP, India, Ms. Isabelle Tschan; Project Director, Dostana Safar, Patna Ms. Reshma Prasad; Co-Director, Tapish Foundation, Shri Nikunj Jain; Additional Secretary, MWCD and Chairperson, NCPCR, Smt. Tripti Gurha; NHRC Special Monitor and Core Group Member, Ms. Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, Managing Director, Tweet Foundation, Ms. Abhina Aher; Intersex and Gender queer activist, Founder, Srishti Madurai, Shri Gopi Shankar Madurai; Dy. Commissioner Police, Delhi, Shri Ram Dulesh; Founder, Sahodari Foundation, Ms. Kalki Subramaniam; Transgender Rights Activist, Ms. Shreegauri Sawant; Managing Director, Pride Business Network Foundation, Ms. Zainab Patel and Manager, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, Ms. Nishtha Nishant.



## Human Rights of Prison Inmates

A National Conference on the 'Human Rights of Prison Inmates' to celebrate 32<sup>nd</sup> Foundation Day of the Commission was organised at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2025. The Conference aimed to deliberate on the human rights issues faced by prison inmates and to formulate practical recommendations for improving prison conditions, rehabilitation and correctional systems. The conference was divided into three technical sessions. These included 'Enhancing quality of life of Inmates: Ensuring Dignity, well-being and human rights behind bars', 'Female inmates and their children: Strengthening institutional framework for gender-sensitive prison reforms' and 'Undertrial inmates: Tackling judicial delays, strengthening legal aid and promoting alternatives to incarceration.' The speakers included

Secretary (Justice), Ministry of Law and Justice, Shri Niraj Verma; Chairperson, NCPCR, Smt. Tripti Gurha; Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Shri Rakesh Kumar Pandey; Former DG, BPRD and Core Group Member, NHRC, Smt. Meeran Chadha Borwankar; Former DGP, Haryana, Dr. K. P. Singh; NHRC Core Group Member and Project Director, Prayas, Professor Vijay Raghavan; Former DG (I), NHRC, Shri Manoj Yadava; Co-founder and Lead, India Justice Report, Shri Valay Singh; Indian Prison Reformer, Media Educator and Commentator, Prof (Dr.) Vartika Nanda; Director of Mitigation, Mental Health and Criminal Justice, Square Circle Clinic, Ms. Maitreyi Misra; Director, India Vision Foundation, Ms. Monika Dhawan; and National Executive Director, SPYM, Dr. Rakesh Kumar.



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian addressing the National Conference on Human Rights of Prison Inmates

## Ensuring Everyday Essentials: Public Services and Dignity for All

A National Conference on 'Ensuring Everyday Essentials: Public Services and Dignity for All' to commemorate Human Rights Day was organised at Bharat

Mandapam, New Delhi on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025. Dr. P. K. Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister delivered the keynote address in the inaugural session chaired by Justice V. Ramasubramanian, Chairperson, NHRC, India. The Conference aimed to highlight the importance of ensuring equitable access to everyday public services as a fundamental aspect of human rights and dignity and to foster dialogue on strengthening service delivery and governance so that essential amenities reach all citizens fairly and effectively.



► Inaugural session of the National Conference on Ensuring Everyday Essentials in progress

The two thematic sessions included 'Basic Amenities for All: A Human Rights Approach' and 'Ensuring Public Services and Dignity for All'. Eminent

persons including NHRC Members, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi and Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani: Member, NITI Aayog, Dr. V. K. Paul; Member, EAC- PM, Dr. Shamika Ravi: Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Shri Sudhansh Pant; Chief Executive Officer, UIDAI, Shri Bhuvnesh Kumar and Director General, Centre for Science and Environment, Ms. Sunita Narain addressed and participated in the discussions.



► Dr. P.K. Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister delivering the keynote address in the National Conference on Ensuring Everyday Essentials



## Open house discussions

Besides these core group meetings, the Commission also organised three open house discussions with different stakeholders on various issues of human rights during the financial year, which were as under:

### Dignity and rights of the individuals engaged in manual cleaning of hazardous waste

Focus of discussions was on emerging challenges, dignity and human rights of sanitation workers involved in cleaning of septic tanks and sewerage manholes by physically entering them. The three technical sessions included - 'Addressing the issue of deaths in septic and sewer tanks in India', 'Need for a

complete ban on manual scavenging' and 'Rehabilitation measures for manual scavengers: A path towards dignity and empowerment and the way forward.'

### Ensuring privacy and human rights in the digital era: A focus on corporate digital responsibility

Focus of discussions was on an important emerging issue in the digital era in including regulatory frameworks, data privacy culture, threat identification and best practices, user empowerment and digital literacy. The three technical sessions included- 'Establishing a proper regulatory framework and compliance mechanism', 'Building a culture of data privacy' and 'Identifying threats and best practices'.



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian chairing the open house discussions in the presence of Members and senior officers





## Re-examining ragging in higher educational institutions: Creating safer campuses through awareness, accountability and action

Focus of discussions was on understanding the challenges and impact of ragging in Indian campuses, review the existing legal and institutional anti-ragging frameworks and explore ways to strengthen prevention through awareness, action and inclusion. The three technical sessions included 'Understanding the challenges and impact of ragging in Indian campuses', 'Reviewing the existing legal and institutional anti-ragging frameworks' and 'Exploring ways to strengthen prevention through awareness, action and inclusion.'

The suggestions emanated from the deliberations during national seminars, core group meetings and open house discussions were further given a thought over by the Commission to finalise its recommendations to the Centre and State governments. Compliance reports from states are being followed up.



► Open house discussion on re-examining ragging in higher educational institutions in progress

## Core group meetings

The NHRC, India has constituted several core groups on various thematic issues related to human rights and holds discussions with domain experts, academicians and senior government functionaries representing concerned ministries. During the year under review, the Commission organised three core group meetings to discuss and understand the challenges facing human rights to firm up its recommendations to the government for improvements on the following subjects:

### Human rights of children in conflict with law

Focus of discussions was on various issues pertaining to the children in conflict with law and make suggestions to address



► Core group meeting on human rights of children in conflict with law in progress

them. The technical sessions included 'Juveniles in Adult Prisons', 'Juveniles in Correctional Homes' and 'Measures for Rehabilitation of Children in Conflict with Law.'

### Recognising progressive disabilities - Adopting a holistic approach to disability rights

Focus of discussions was on addressing disabilities and promoting inclusive and equitable support services. The three technical sessions included 'Defining and classifying progressive disabilities', 'Legal and policy framework for addressing disabilities' and 'Promoting inclusive and equitable support services.'



► A scene from the meeting

### Empowering ASHAs: Securing the right to work with dignity

Focus of discussions was on identifying the problems such as low honorarium, excessive workload, insufficient resources and the ways to address them. The three technical sessions included 'Evolving Nature of Challenges faced by ASHA', 'Role of the Government in Protecting and Promoting the



► A scene from the core group meeting on Empowering ASHAs



Rights of ASHAs' and 'Way Forward: Ensuring the Right to Work with Dignity for ASHAs.'

## Statutory Full Commission meeting

To enhance the synergy and cooperation among the Commissions to promote and protect human rights, the NHRC, India organised a Statutory Full Commission meeting of all 7 deemed member Commissions and Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities in New Delhi on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025. Chairing the meeting, Justice V. Ramasubramanian, Chairperson, NHRC, India emphasised the importance of collaborative functioning among the Commissions.



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian chairing the Statutory Full Commission meeting, flanked by Members, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani and Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal



► NHRC Chairperson, Members, Secretary General with the Chairperson, Members and senior officers of 7 deemed member Commissions and Chief Commissioner for PwDs

## Camp sittings

From time to time, the Commission holds camp sittings in various state capitals to hear the complaints of human rights violations concerning the state in the presence of the complainants/ victims and the concerned senior officers for on-spot recommendation of relief and necessary directions to the authorities. In the month of July, the NHRC, India held two camp sittings in Bhubaneswar, Odisha and Hyderabad, Telangana.

The NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian and the Members, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi and Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani heard 144 cases in Bhubaneswar and 109 cases in Hyderabad recommending a total of Rs 77.65 lakh as relief to the victims. Besides the disposal of cases, the officers were sensitised about the significance of the promotion and protection of human rights as part of good governance measures.





► NHRC, India camp sitting and open hearing in Bhubaneswar, Odisha



The officers were also reminded about the need to ensure the timely submission of reports to help in promptly deciding the cases of human rights violations. The status of submission of the action taken reports on the Commission's advisories was reviewed. The representatives of civil society organisations and human rights defenders were encouraged to bring to the

notice of the Commission the issues requiring its intervention to ameliorate the cause of human rights. The regional media representatives, through their coverage of the two camp sittings, gave further impetus to spreading human rights literacy and awareness about the Commission's interventions.



► NHRC, India camp sitting and open hearing in Hyderabad, Telangana



## Collaborative programmes and other supported events

The Commission also collaborated with different organisations for seminars and activities that focused on various facets of human rights to create awareness and sensitisation. Some of the important collaborative programmes organised with the Commission's support were:

### Combating Human Trafficking in the Digital Era

National Conference on 'Combating human trafficking in the digital era' was organised by the Hidayatullah National Law University, Raipur, Chhattisgarh on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2025. This conference aimed to explore the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies and other actors seeking to intervene in human trafficking cases and devise how human rights-based, gender-responsive and child-sensitive strategies can be developed to address the nexus between technology and trafficking in persons.



► National Conference on combating human trafficking in the digital era in progress in Chhattisgarh

## Women's Safety at Work & Public Spaces

A National Symposium on 'Women's Safety at Work and Public Spaces' was held in Lucknow on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2025. It was organised by the Lucknow University in collaboration with the NHRC, India. Delivering the keynote address virtually, NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian reflected on the contrast between India's cultural reverence for goddesses and the grim reality of violence against women, citing that nearly 51 FIRs related to such crimes are registered every hour. He urged for enhanced awareness, stronger enforcement mechanisms and systemic changes to ensure their safety and dignity.

Smt. Saindingpuii Chhakchhuak, Joint Secretary, NHRC, India explained the necessity of organising the symposium, sharing personal experiences to highlight how, despite comprehensive legal frameworks, daily reports of gender-based violence persist. She said that the Commission takes proactive measures to promptly address such issues of human rights violations. She expressed the hope that future generations would be more vocal and action-oriented regarding women's rights. She also called upon educators to be more sensitive to gender issues to uphold the dignity of all, noting that not all crimes are overtly violent. She urged a strong focus on policy, enforcement and public awareness.

Speakers discussed systemic injustices, gender stereotypes and institutional inertia that hinder the realisation of constitutional guarantees. The need for legal awareness, proactive state interventions and greater representation of women in decision-making bodies was emphasised. The evolution of human and women's rights globally and within India was also discussed, as well as how the Indian constitutional provisions align with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Existing mechanisms and initiatives such as SHE-Box, One Stop Centres and Pink Police Booths were also highlighted by several speakers.



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian virtually addressing the National Symposium on 'Women's Safety at Work & Public Spaces' in Lucknow



► NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt. Saindingpuii Chhakchhuak addressing the National Symposium



## Ageing in India: Emerging Realities, Evolving Responses

National Conference on 'Ageing in India: Emerging Realities, Evolving Responses' was held in New Delhi on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2025. It was organised by the Sankala Foundation, supported by NITI Aayog and the Union Ministries of Social Justice & Empowerment and Health & Family Welfare. It aimed to address challenges like health, economic security and digital exclusion by fostering dialogue, promoting innovative policies and reframing ageing as an opportunity with discussions covering integrated care, economic inclusion, digital literacy and building age-inclusive societies for a projected 347 million elderly population by 2050. On the occasion, the Sankala Foundation released a very insightful report 'Ageing in India: Challenges and Opportunities' highlighting both vulnerability and potential of the elderly.



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian addressing the National Conference on 'Ageing in India: Emerging Realities, Evolving Responses' in New Delhi

## Tribal Arts and India's Conservation Ethos: Living Wisdom

A National Conference on 'Tribal Arts and India's Conservation Ethos: Living Wisdom' was organised in New Delhi on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2025 as a dialogue on heritage, culture and conservation. NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian delivered the valedictory address. On this occasion, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal delivered the keynote address. It was organised by the Sankala Foundation, a non-profit organisation, in partnership with the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Ministry of Culture, Government of India and Confederation of Indian Industries.



► A scene from the National Conference on 'Tribal Arts and India's Conservation Ethos: Living Wisdom' in New Delhi

## Significant Reports and Guidelines

During the calendar year, the Commission came out with a significant report emphasising better facilities to transgender persons and upkeep of their Garima Greh shelters besides two letters to the authorities in states and union territories underlining implementation of guidelines to ensure wellbeing of homeless and vulnerable segments of society during extreme hot and cold weather events.

## Report post Garima Greh visits

In 2024-25, NHRC team visited 12 Garima Greh Shelters established in the first phase to gather ground level insights and develop evidence-based future course of actions. The findings have been compiled in the form of a report, 'Transgender persons: Revamping spaces, reclaiming voices – Insights from Garima Greh Shelters and Beyond'. This report was released in the National Conference on 'Rights of transgender persons' held on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

The report emphasises strengthening of Garima Greh initiative besides suggesting several key reforms. It urges all states to activate Project Monitoring Committees (PMCs), with clear delegation of responsibilities to district officials and appointment of police focal points for transgender issues. Timely release of funds must be ensured along with revised allocations for food and beneficiaries, context-specific financial models for urban and rural shelters and infrastructure support through one-time grants. Staffing structures should align with market standards and rationalised roles to prevent overburdening. Shelter heads must be empowered to assist with transgender ID card issuance through simplified, privacy-sensitive processes. In healthcare, broader medical expenses should be covered, hospital partnerships established and the rollout of Ayushman Bharat TG Plus expedited, alongside stronger mental health and HIV/ AIDS services.

The report also recommends employment and skill development, extension to shelter stay for those pursuing higher education or exams, expand vocational training access and link shelters with job portals while ensuring workplace protection under the POSH Act. Legal amendments are needed to support gender non-conforming minors with the establishment of childcare and elderly homes for transgender persons supported by NGOs. Greater transparency through updated data, strong monitoring and a dedicated ministry desk is also recommended as an essential essential. These reforms can transform Garima Greh into a foundation for dignity, empowerment and inclusion.



► The report on 'Transgender persons: Revamping spaces, reclaiming voices – Insights from Garima Greh Shelters and Beyond' being released

## Pre-emptive steps during cold and heatwaves

In 2025, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India sent two letters to various states and union territories (UTs) urging them to take preventive and responsive measures against extreme weather conditions, including cold waves and heatwaves. The NHRC highlighted human rights violations caused by these severe climate events, such as loss of life, health risks and displacement. The Commission emphasised the need for timely relief, awareness campaigns and the establishment of heat action plans and instructed them to diligently refer to the guidelines of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in this regard. It also urged states to ensure that vulnerable segments of society, like the elderly and low-income groups, receive adequate support during such events.

## Field visits

In addition to research, the NHRC, India conducts field visits to assess human rights situation and implementation status of its advisories, guidelines and recommendations by state governments and relevant authorities. The Members, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani and Shri Priyank Kanoongo and senior officers visited various locations such as shelter homes, prisons, observation homes, hostels, schools, etc. to sensitise government functionaries and urge efforts towards improving human rights situation in the country. During the year, about 27 such inspection visits were made by them.



► NHRC, India Member, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi visiting the Regional Mental Hospital in Pune, Maharashtra





► NHRC, India Member, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani interacting with the officers and locals on the upkeep of a graveyard in Matchha Bollaram, Alwal, Secunderabad, Telangana

The NHRC, India designated 15 Special Rapporteurs to monitor human rights conditions across various regions of the country. It also appointed 21 Special Monitors tasked with overseeing specific thematic human rights issues and reporting their findings to the Commission. They conducted various visits to shelter homes, prisons, observation homes and similar institutions, compiling reports for the Commission that detail their observations and suggestions for future action.

## Capacity building

The Commission 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. It 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.

During the year under review, the NHRC, India conducted multiple workshops, exposure visits and capacity building programmes during the year. 6 two-week online short-term internships and 2 in-person four-week summer and winter internships were organised. The interns were exposed to different aspects of human rights in various sessions by the NHRC Chairperson, Members, senior officers and subject experts. They were also taken on virtual as well as physical field visits to prisons, police stations, NGOs etc. to understand their functioning.

Training and sensitisation programmes were organised for officers of All India Services of Indian Forest Service, Indian Police Service and Prison and Correctional Administration officers in collaboration with their respective training academies reinforcing the integration of human rights principles into governance and public administration.

About 2,100 students and faculty members were given orientation on human rights awareness and the functioning of the Commission during the exposure visits from 52 universities and colleges. Besides, the Commission collaborated with various educational institutions for 5 moot courts, 19 seminars, conferences and workshops. The Commission also supported 30 training programmes organised by Administrative Training Institutes, Judicial Training Institutes, central universities, colleges, NGOs in which about 3,000 people participated. In addition to these programmes, the Commission also collaborated with the Indian Law Institute, New Delhi for human rights awareness and capacity building of various specialist officers including judicial officers in 5 such programmes.



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian addressing the Indian Forest Service (IFS) probationers at IGNFA, Dehradun, Uttarakhand





► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressing the visiting officers of the Academy for Prison and Correctional Administration (APCA) Vellore, Tamil Nadu

## Research

The NHRC, India continued to promote research studies on various aspects of human rights as per its mandate under the PHR Act. It provided more impetus to this activity during the calendar year by focusing on pursuing and monitoring the progress in the 22 research studies commissioned by it in 2023 and 2024. These are being conducted by different institutions with the support of the Commission on its approved themes as follows:

- Caring about the rights of healers – Analysing human rights violations related to frontline doctors in India
- Social Barriers that Children of Women Engaged in Intergenerational Prostitution Face in Access to Education
- Skilling for Enhancing Access to Labour Market and Employment among Women with Disabilities, particularly migrant household
- Access to Employment by Persons with Disabilities: Status, Identification of Barriers and Associated Factors
- Compensating victims of crime: A Pan India Study of Victim Compensation Schemes and their Effectiveness
- A Study to understand the reasons for the rising number of cases among the Children in Conflict with Law and Undertrials in observation Homes and Under Trial/Convicts under the NDPS Act lodged/ languishing in CCI/ Observation Homes and Prisons and exploring the existing legislative Policy and Schematic Response in sample states i.e. Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh
- Children in the Shadows: Unveiling dimensions of organised begging in Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata
- A study of the Socio-legal aspects of the Adoption Process in India with special reference to Delhi- NCR
- Review of Drinking Water Situation in India vis-a-vis Government Policy and Action - Ground Reality, Challenges and the Way Forward
- A Study on the Mechanisms Adopted by Sports Bodies to Combat Human Rights Abuse and an Examination of the Legal Policy Framework Along with the Status of Implementation in Kerala
- Life Satisfaction and Quality of Life of the Elderly Living in Old- Age Homes: A Comparative Study of Western India and North-East India
- Optimal design of questionnaire survey on awareness of clinical trials among different stakeholders
- Impact of Ekalavya Model Residential Schools on ST Children in fifth and sixth schedule areas of India with reference to Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tripura and Mizoram
- Study of quality of life of the elderly persons living in old age homes with special reference to the North region
- Promotion of Human Rights in Local Self Governance – A study of Selected Village Panchayats from Tamil Nadu and Kerala States in India
- Pandemic, Human Rights and the Future of Livelihood: An Empirical Evidence from Indian Economy
- Forest Rights Act, 2006 – Assessment of Ground Reality
- Inclusive Education for Persons with Disabilities in Punjab: Prospects and Challenges
- Reintegration and Rehabilitation of acid attack victims



- Prevalence of Girl Child Labour in the Indian Textile and Garment Industry
- Analysis of Trends and patterns of Death in Prison and in Police Custody: An analytical study of such deaths in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi
- Status of Manual Scavenging and Sewerage Water Workers in the Hyderabad-Karnataka Region – Policy and Practice

## International arena

The NHRC, India has continued to make a meaningful impact through active participation and thoughtful engagement in international human rights forums. Its global outreach in 2025 reflects strong leadership in advancing human rights worldwide. Through effective representation at GANHRI and APF, capacity-building initiatives for the Global South and high-level strategic dialogues, the Commission has emerged as a key contributor to inclusive, rights-based governance at both national and international levels. Guided by the ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam-the world is one family-NHRC, India remains committed to promoting justice, equality and dignity for all through collaboration, innovation and shared learning.

## Participation in global forums

### NHRC at Palais de Nations

In March 2025, Justice 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



► APF of NHRIs meeting in Palais des Nations, Geneva

the General Assembly of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), the Commonwealth Forum of NHRIs (CFNHRI) and other important engagements.

### 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

### Regional collaboration - APF

On 10<sup>th</sup> 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 General Assembly

The General Assembly of the GANHRI convened on 11<sup>th</sup> 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





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



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.

## GANHRI Annual Conference on Gender Equality

On 12<sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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.

## Seminar on 'Human Rights in India: Course and Discourse'

Justice V. Ramasubramanian delivered an insightful address titled 'Human Rights in India: Course and Discourse' at an



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



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 highly engaging Q&A session and was attended by dignitaries from NHRIs, diplomatic missions, NGOs, civil society organisations and the United Nations.



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice 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. In the meeting with Mr. Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the NHRC delegation, accompanied by Ambassador Arindam Bagchi, discussed global human rights developments and India's ongoing efforts and priorities.

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 in India as well as globally.

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 present there. It held detailed discussions with India's Permanent Representative to UN organisations Ambassador Arindam Bagchi, Deputy PR Ambassador Priyanka Chauhan and other senior Indian diplomats based in Geneva.

## Interaction with the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA)

On 18<sup>th</sup> 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



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



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice 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

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

## 58<sup>th</sup> Session of UNHRC at Geneva

During the 58<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva from 24<sup>th</sup> February to 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India through its Members, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi and Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani and Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal made three prerecorded 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.



► From left to right: NHRC, India Members, Justice (Dr.) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani and Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal

## UN Human Rights Council meet in Colombo, Sri Lanka

On 26<sup>th</sup> September 2025, NHRC Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal spoke on 'Corruption and Human Rights – India's Experience and Institutional Responses' at the UN Human Rights Council meet in Colombo, Sri Lanka. He said that corruption is not just a governance challenge, it is a criminal offence and a grave human rights violation. It erodes trust, weakens democracy, undermines the rule of law and disproportionately harms the poor and vulnerable. When resources are taken away, children lose education, families lose healthcare, food, housing and communities face environmental degradation.



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressing the UN Human Rights Council meet in Colombo, Sri Lanka

## APF AGM and Biennial Conference at Fiji

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India participated in the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Biennial Conference of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (APF), held in Fiji on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2025. This regional gathering brought together human rights institutions from across the Asia Pacific to discuss ongoing activities, share experiences and plan future events. The NHRC, India delegation was led by Justice V. Ramasubramanian, Chairperson and included Shri Samir Kumar, Joint Secretary. During the plenary session, NHRC, India delivered a detailed presentation on gender equality, highlighting the Commission's recent efforts to support and



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian and Joint Secretary, Shri Samir Kumar with Fiji's Acting President and Chief Justice Salesi Temo



protect the rights of girls and women. Justice Ramasubramanian also held an engaging discussion with the participating NHRIs on the progress made and challenges that remain in the sphere of women's empowerment in India. He reaffirmed NHRC, India's commitment to promoting gender equality across the country. A Senior Executive Officers (SEO) meeting was attended by Shri Samir Kumar. At this meeting, NHRC, India made a strong case for broadening the membership of the Global Alliance of NHRIs (GANHRI) to include all nations in the Asia Pacific region that are not yet members.

## Strategic international outreach

- India's Equality Moonshot:** On 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2025, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal was the Headline Speaker at 'India's Equality Moonshot' organised by the World Woman Foundation in Davos. The session focused on India's bold and inclusive vision aimed at transforming lives by addressing core socio-economic challenges. It emphasised the creation of opportunities through futuristic, climate-resilient infrastructure, efficient public service delivery and digital empowerment across the country. The discussion also highlighted India's commitment to transparent and accountable governance, empowering women with an enabling environment and ensuring they break barriers to achieve true equality. It was reaffirmed that the Indian Constitution and its values uphold the fundamental principle of equality, ensuring that women have had equal rights since the country's adoption of the Constitution.



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal delivering the keynote address at 'India's Equality Moonshot' organised by the World Woman Foundation in Davos

- High-level policy dialogue at Geneva:** On 26<sup>th</sup> 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' organised by the India Water Foundation. Addressing virtually, 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.



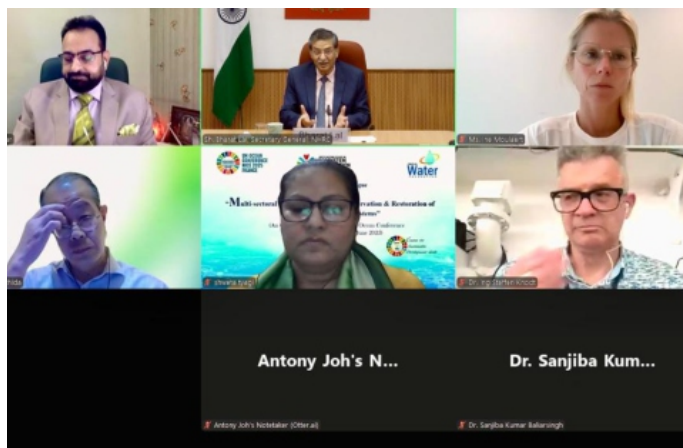
► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal delivering a keynote address at the high-level policy dialogue on 'Fostering Collaborative efforts Glaciers' at Geneva

- World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund Spring Meet:** On 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2025, at the World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund (IMF) Spring Meeting, NHRC Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal represented India in the session titled 'Empowering Cities: The Vital Role of Sub-national Financing in Delivering Urban Infrastructure and Jobs.' As a key speaker in the high-level session titled 'Empowering Cities: The Vital Role of Sub-national Financing in Delivering Urban Infrastructure and Jobs,' Shri Lal offered an insightful overview of India's remarkable journey in urban development and the critical importance of sub-national governance and financing in fostering inclusive growth ensuring people's welfare and protection of their human rights.



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal delivering a talk at the World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund Spring Meetings at Washington DC

- High-level Policy Dialogue on 'Multi sectoral Partnerships for Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Restoration':** On 11<sup>th</sup> June 2025, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal delivered the Chair Address at the High-level Policy Dialogue on 'Multi sectoral Partnerships for Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Restoration' - an official UN Ocean Conference side event by India Water Foundation in Nice, France. In his address, Shri Lal said that the dialogue builds on the momentum of the 2025 UN Ocean Conference and reinforces the urgency of implementing SDG-14: Life Below Water. He said that oceans regulate climate, sustain biodiversity and support over 3 billion people globally.



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal delivering the Chair Address at the High-level Policy Dialogue on 'Multi sectoral Partnerships for Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Restoration' in UN Ocean Conference side event

- Interactive session with the EU Ambassador and Ambassadors and diplomats of EU Member States:** On 21<sup>st</sup> November 2025, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal, accompanied by Joint Secretary, Shri Samir Kumar participated in an interactive session hosted by Mr. Hervé Delphin, Ambassador of the European Union to India with Ambassadors and senior delegates from 27 EU member countries in New Delhi. Shri Lal underscored the shared





► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal, flanked by Joint Secretary, Shri Samir Kumar, addressing the Ambassadors and senior delegates from 27 EU member countries in New Delhi

values of democracy, diversity and human dignity that continue to guide India – EU cooperation. He gave an overview of the evolution of human rights in India, beginning with civilisational ethos and freedom movement and moving to the constitutional framework, the institutional structure of national and state human rights bodies and the functioning of various sectoral commissions.

- **US-India Strategic Partnership Forum:** On 12<sup>th</sup> November 2025, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri

Bharat Lal interacted with the Board of the US India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) in New Delhi. He gave an insight into India's ongoing efforts to improve the quality of life, strengthen environmental stewardship, enhance ease of living and doing business and uphold the dignity and rights of every individual. The session was facilitated by Shri Mukesh Aghi, President and CEO of USISPF. It featured several eminent speakers, including Shri Amitabh Kant, Former G20 Sherpa and Ambassador, Shri Taranjit Singh Sandhu, among others, who shared their insights.



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal interacting with the Board of USISPF in New Delhi

## Bilateral engagements and delegation visits

Throughout the year, NHRC, India received delegations from Sweden, Germany, UNDP India, Nepal Human Rights Commission and Indonesian Minister of Human Rights. UK High Commissioner to India, Ambassador of Denmark to India also visited the Commission and met with the Chairperson and Secretary General. These interactions enabled a constructive exchange of ideas and further enhanced NHRC, India's global partnerships.



► NHRC of Nepal Chairperson, Justice Top Bahadur Magar, Secretary, Shri Murari Prasad Kharel meeting the NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal and Joint Secretary, Shri Samir Kumar



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian, Members, Justice (Dr.) B. R. Sarangi, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani and Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal & senior officers with the visiting Indonesian delegation led by Minister of Human Rights, Mr. Natalius Pigai



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian and Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal interacting with the UK High Commissioner to India, H.E Ms. Lindy Cameron



## Online meetings

### • Meeting of GANHRI Working Group on Business and Human Rights:

- On 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2025, Shri Samir Kumar, Joint Secretary, NHRC, India participated in the meeting of the GANHRI Working Group (WG) on Business and Human Rights (BHR). Mr. Marizen Santos, Division Chief, International Obligations Monitoring Human Rights Policy Linkages Offices, Commission on Human Rights (CHR) of the Philippines chaired it. Besides India, attending NHRIs included Argentina, Ecuador, Germany, Morocco, Malawi, Northern Ireland, Philippines, Portugal, France and Denmark. The agenda covered the election of the WG Vice-Chair, with Morocco NHRI elected unanimously. The group reviewed the 2025/ 2026 Strategic Plan, including the proposal submitted to the 14<sup>th</sup> UN Forum on BHR. It was also decided to have a discussion on migrant workers, gender equality and work in the subsequent meetings of the Working Group.
- On 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2025, Shri Samir Kumar, Joint Secretary NHRC, India attended the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the UN Network on Migration to launch the Network work plan for 2025- 2026 and include the Migration MPTF (Multi-Partner Trust Fund) Consultative Forum. The meeting was attended by 131 participants across the world.
- On 13<sup>th</sup> August 2025, Shri Samir Kumar, Joint Secretary along with Ms. Prerna Hasija, Junior Research Consultant attended the GANHRI Working Group on Business and Human Rights.
- From 24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> November 2025, Joint Secretary, Shri Samir Kumar and Ms. Prerna Hasija, Junior Research Consultant, NHRC, India attended the 14<sup>th</sup> United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights on the theme

'Accelerating action on business and human rights amidst crises and transformations' organised at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.

- On 8<sup>th</sup> September 2025, Ms. Varsha Apte, Consultant (Research), NHRC, India attended the 'Learning call on International Humanitarian Law (IHL): Convergence points between state-led national IHL committees and NHRIs.' It was organised by the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines.
- On 10<sup>th</sup> September 2025, NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Shri Samir Kumar attended the monthly GANHRI Working Group on Business and Human Rights.
- On 18<sup>th</sup> September 2025, NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt. Saindingpuii Chhakchhuak and Ms. Varsha Apte, Consultant (Research) attended the meeting regarding the APF Gender Strategy Reference Group to contribute towards the development of a Gender Strategy Toolkit for NHRIs.
- On 4<sup>th</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal attended online oral presentation to the Bureau Members GANHRI Sub-Committee on Accreditation.
- On 16<sup>th</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt. Saindingpuii Chhakchhuak, Research Consultant, Ms. Varsha Apte and Junior Research Consultant, Ms. Stuti Joshi attended a meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group for the elaboration of a legally binding instrument on the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons (OEIGWG–Older Persons).
- On 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025, NHRC, India SSP, Shri Yuvraj attended an online meeting organised by the University of Padova Human Rights Centre and the Network of African NHRIs on "National Enquiries and Economic and Social Rights Monitoring".



## Capacity building programmes for NHRIs

The Commission deputed its senior officers to attend various training and learning programmes abroad to broaden their understanding of human rights with a global perspective. The Commission also pursued its ITEC Capacity Building Programme on Human Rights for the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) of the Global South with the support of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

### Abroad

#### Regional blended learning course on monitoring human rights in climate-induced mobility

From 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> October 2025, NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt. Saidingpuii Chhakchhuak; SSP, Shri Hari Lal Chouhan and Deputy Registrar (Law), Shri Mukesh attended 'Regional Blended Learning Course on Monitoring Human Rights in Climate-Induced Mobility' jointly organised by the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions and the South Asian University in Colombo, Sri Lanka.



► NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt. Saidingpuii Chhakchhuak; SSP, Shri Hari Lal Chouhan and Deputy Registrar (Law), Shri Mukesh at the Workshop

#### Workshop on economic, social and cultural rights in action

From 28<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> October 2025, NHRC, India SSP, Smt. Ilakkiya Karunagaran and Deputy Registrar (Law), Shri Indrajeet Kumar attended a workshop on 'Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Action: Monitoring, Implementation and Good Practices' organised by the APF and OHCHR in Bangkok, Thailand.

programme aims to strengthen the capacities of the NHRIs and reflects the Commission's ongoing commitment to global human rights dialogue, South-South cooperation and the collective advancement of rights-based governance. It also encourages peer learning and collaboration in promoting socio-economic progress and human development to support collective well-being. The programme included interactive sessions with eminent persons and domain experts. The participants got exposure to various aspects of civic and political rights as well as socio-economic and cultural rights enjoyed by the people of India.



### In India

#### ITEC capacity building programme for the Global South

The Commission, in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs, also organised two 6-days ITEC Capacity Building Programme on Human Rights for the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) of the Global South. The



► NHRC, India and MEA senior officers with the participants of eight NHRIs of Global South in the 3<sup>rd</sup> NHRC ITEC Capacity-Building Programme on human rights in New Delhi

In March 2025, the programme saw the participation of 35 senior functionaries from 11 NHRIs of Madagascar, Uganda, Timor Leste, DR Congo, Togo, Mali, Nigeria, Egypt, Tanzania, Burundi and Turkmenistan. In another similar programme organised in September 2025, 43 senior functionaries from 12 NHRIs of Mauritius, Jordan, Georgia, the Philippines, Qatar, Fiji, Uzbekistan, Bolivia, Nigeria, Mali, Morocco and Paraguay attended.

The programme also included cultural immersion visits and concluded with inspiring remarks about global human rights cooperation. Participants highly appreciated the programmes for their tailored content; eminent speakers and the opportunities provided for exchange of knowledge. They were encouraged to share best practices and NHRC, India expressed its commitment to future collaborations with possible MoUs for deeper engagement.



► NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice V. Ramasubramanian inaugurating the 4<sup>th</sup> ITEC Executive Capacity Building Programme on human rights in New Delhi

## Publications and library

The Commission continues to build human rights literacy through its publications besides the monthly Newsletters in English and Hindi. More than 100 publications are also made available on the website of the Commission for wider consumption. During the year, two annual publications - Journal (English) and Nayi Dishayein (Hindi) - were released.

## Media interface

The Commission proactively engages in spreading awareness about various aspects of human rights through its interventions and activities since its inception. During the calendar year 2025, the Commission issued 129 press releases and over 366 significant posts and 1,020 reposts on its X handle. It further expanded the soft copy circulation of its monthly Newsletters in English and Hindi. There were more than 8,500 news clippings from various newspapers and magazines about NHRC interventions and activities underscoring the importance attached to them by the media across the country. In the run-up to Human Rights Day celebration, three interviews of the Chairperson on DD National, DD India, AIR News and two interviews of Secretary General on AIR News and RedFM were recorded and broadcast for building awareness about human rights and the Commission's activities.

## Competitions and awards

### NHRC Short Film Competition

For direct engagement of people in promoting and protecting human rights, the Commission organises various programmes for citizen's participation using alternative media platforms like short films, photography competitions etc. The 2024 Short Film Competition concluded with the selection of films and award distribution in March 2025.



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





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

The 2024 competition received a record 303 entries from across the country, of which 243 were found eligible. After a rigorous three-stage jury process, the winning films were selected by the Full Commission Jury chaired by the NHRC Chairperson. The first prize went to 'Doodh Ganga – Valley's Dying Lifeline' by Er. Abdul Rashid Bhat, which highlighted environmental degradation and the right to clean water. 'Fight for Rights' by Kadarappa Raju won the second prize for addressing child marriage and education, while the silent film 'GOD' by R. Ravichandran secured the third prize, emphasising the value of potable water.

Four films received Certificates of Special Mention at the NHRC Short Film Awards 2024 for their compelling human rights themes. 'Aksharabhyasam' by Haneesh Undramatla highlights the critical importance of child education through a silent yet powerful narrative. 'Vilayilla Pattathari (An Inexpensive Graduate)' by R. Selvam focuses on the rights, dignity and challenges of older persons. Life of Seetha by Madaka Venkata Satyanarayana draws attention to children's rights violations linked to certain religious practices and calls for social reform. 'Be a Human' by Lotla Naveen addresses violence against women, girl child abandonment and the need for societal intervention. The Commission, in addition to the three cash prizes of Rs 2 lakh, 1.5 lakh and 1 lakh to the First, Second and Third films also gave a Rs 50,000 cash prize each to four films selected for the 'Certificate of Special Mention'.

The awarded films were uploaded on the NHRC website and its YouTube channel to encourage people to screen and see these for human rights awareness.

For the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the NHRC Human Rights Short Film Competition 2025, the Commission received again a record number of 526 entries of which 438 were found valid after

scrutiny. The jury process in three stages to select the award-winning films is underway.

## NHRC debate competition for Central Armed Police Forces

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India organised the final round of its 30<sup>th</sup> annual debate competition for Central Armed Police Forces in collaboration with the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) in New Delhi. The topic was 'Human rights can be observed by paramilitary forces without compromising national security concerns.' 16 participants debated for and against the motion in Hindi and English in the final round after semi-final and zonal rounds. The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) lifted the running trophy as the best team in the competition.



► The winning team of CISF with the NHRC, India Chairperson; Member; Secretary General, DG (I); Special DG, SSB; and jury members

## Programmes for its officers and employees

The Commission organised gender sensitisation programme for its officers and staff. Various competitions were organised



► A scene from the children's painting competition

during Hindi fortnight to reward and encourage its employees to use official language in their work and strive to adopt the regional languages for written official communication to the respective regions. A painting competition for children of its employees was also held to promote human rights awareness.

Overall, 2025 remained a very eventful and successful year with the Commission's all-round and multi-dimensional activities fulfilling its mandate within the scope of the PHR Act towards promoting and protecting human rights.

## Announcement

### 5<sup>th</sup> Capacity Building Programme for NHRIs of Global South

Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)  
(23<sup>rd</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> March 2026, New Delhi)

The NHRC, India will organise the 5<sup>th</sup> Capacity Building Programme (CBP) for the senior functionaries of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) of various countries of the Global South from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> March 2026 in New Delhi. The CBP is held under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) framework, in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India.

In earlier 4 programmes, 132 participants from NHRIs of 27 countries have participated. The programme aims to foster collaboration among NHRIs, share experiences and best practices to address pressing human rights challenges across the Global South.



## Programmes sponsored by the NHRC, India till March 2026

### I. Moot Court Competitions

S. No.	Name of Institute	Dates
1.	Institute of Law, Nirma University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat	6 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> February 2026
2.	Presidency School of Law, Bengaluru, Karnataka	20 <sup>th</sup> – 22 <sup>th</sup> February 2026
3.	School of Law, Manav Rachna University, Faridabad, Haryana	12 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup> March 2026
4.	Central University of South Bihar, Gaya, Bihar	12 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup> March 2026
5.	School of Law, Fairfield Institute of Management & Technology, Kapashera, New Delhi	12 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup> March 2026
6.	Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies – Technical Campus, Delhi	13 <sup>th</sup> – 15 <sup>th</sup> March 2026
7.	Dr. B. R. Ambedkar National Law University, Sonapat, Haryana	13 <sup>th</sup> – 15 <sup>th</sup> March 2026
8.	Himanchal Pradesh National Law University, Shimla	26 <sup>th</sup> – 27 <sup>th</sup> March 2026



## II. Collaborative Training Programmes

S. No.	Name of Institute	Date	Theme
1.	The North Cap University, Gurugram, Haryana	30 <sup>th</sup> – 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2026	Reimagining Child Rights in India: Assessing the Impact of New Criminal Laws
2.	Carmel College of Arts, Science and Commerce for Women, Nuvem, Salcet, Goa	3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2025	Empowering Youth for Human Rights: Awareness and Sensitisation on the Concerns of Marginalised Groups
3.	Sneha Foundation Trust, Chennai, Tamil Nadu	25 <sup>th</sup> – 28 <sup>th</sup> February 2026	Scientific Update on Suicide 2026
4.	RIMT University, Delhi Jalandhar GT Road (NH 1) Sirhind Side, Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab	16 <sup>th</sup> – 17 <sup>th</sup> March 2026	Digital Forensics and Human Trafficking
5.	BAR Association, Odagaon at Civil Court Complex, Odagaon, Distt-Nayagarh, Odisha	Before 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2026	Role of the BAR for Protection of Human Rights

## III. Collaborative Conferences/ Seminars/ Workshops on Human Rights

S. No.	Name of Institute	Date	Theme
1.	National Law University, Cuttack, Odisha	31 <sup>st</sup> January 2026	Inclusive Higher Education as a Human Right: Addressing Gender, Age and Intersectional Inequalities in Indian Universities
2.	A.V.C. College of Engineering, Mannampandal, Mayiladuthurai, Tamil Nadu	13 <sup>th</sup> February 2026	Workshop on Ensuring Women's Right to Safety and Mental Health: Legal Awareness and Reporting Mechanisms for Sexual Harassment and Cyber Exploitation

## IV. Online Short-Term Internship (OSTI) programme

S. No.	Month	Dates
1.	OSTI – February, 2026	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 13 <sup>th</sup> February 2026
2.	OSTI – March, 2026	9 <sup>th</sup> – 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2026

## V. Gender Sensitization Programme for officers and staff of the NHRC

Date	Topic	Speaker	Objective
20 <sup>th</sup> February 2026	From Awareness to Action: Gender Sensitization under POSH	Ms. Suneeta Dhar, Founder Jagori and Core Group Member, NHRC	To help staff in unlearning the biases that deeply influence how they perceive and treat people (often reinforcing stereotypes without even realising it) and foster a more respectful, equitable workplace for all genders.

## VI. In-house training programme for officers and staff of the NHRC

Date	Topic	Detail
25 <sup>th</sup> February 2026	Cyber Security Basics	Programme is meant for officers and staff of the NHRC and a senior officer dealing with cybercrime will be the resource person.

# Human rights and NHRC in news



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# 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](http://www.nhrc.nic.in), [hrcnet.nic.in](http://hrcnet.nic.in), Common Service Centres

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

## Focal point for Human Rights Defenders

**Indrajeet Kumar, Deputy Registrar (Law)**

Mobile No. +91 99993 93570 • Fax No. 011-2465 1334 • E-mail: [hrd-nhrc@nic.in](mailto:hrd-nhrc@nic.in)

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