



Detention centres

Even as the issue of illegal migrants from Bangladesh continues to hog media limelight in the State, the presence of several thousand illegal migrants and doubtful citizens in detention camps remains another contentious matter. This is particularly worrying because there have been a lot of media reports on the poor living conditions inside the detention centres – something that had even the Supreme Court voicing serious concern last year. The National Human Rights Commission, too, had taken stern view of the prevailing situation on earlier occasions. The Centre on Tuesday clarified that during the last one year (March 1, 2019 to February 29, 2020), three teams of NHRC visited the detention centres in Assam and interacted with declared foreign nationals. One can recall that in pursuance of the order dated May 10, 2019 of the Supreme Court, the Assam Government had issued a notification on July 29, 2019 providing for conditional release of declared foreigners who have completed more than three years in detention centres. This is a humane approach which should have been adopted much earlier. Another concern stems from the fact that many persons whose citizenship status has not yet been decided by a court continue to languish in the detention camps. The apex court had earlier voiced concern over the lack of amenities in the detention camps, directing the State Government to ensure minimum living conditions for the inmates. Abysmal status of amenities in the detention centres has been an open secret for long, with the Government turning a complete blind eye to the disturbing situation. This is despite there being an official detention manual that mandates proper living conditions in the camps. The Government's dealing with the issue has been vague all along and it is still not clear whether those who have been declared as foreigners and held in detention centres would be treated as refugees pending their repatriation to their country of origin. And given Bangladesh's reluctance to accept back the legally detected foreigners – together with the fact that the number of such people will run into lakhs – it is going to be a complicated matter for both the State Government and the Centre.

Alongside detention centres, the conditions of the State's prisons merit urgent intervention by the Government. While the reformatory aspect of prisons has been universally recognized, it is a fact that our jails are far from serving their avowed purpose of being the transformation homes for criminals. Rather, the abysmal conditions prevailing in our jails often end up making hardcore criminals out of petty offenders – more so when it involves juvenile delinquents. Apart from the poor physical conditions that mark our overcrowded and ill-equipped prisons, an appalling lack of sensitization among the authorities on the rights of young offenders invariably throttles the prospects having the juveniles reformed. The circumstances warrant the State Government to take serious note of the conditions prevailing in our jails and make the necessary interventions.



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HR panel to hear only urgent cases

Hyderabad: In the backdrop of Telangana government's precautionary measures to avoid contracting the COVID-19, the Human Rights Commission took a decision to restrict adjudication of cases for dire urgent matters only. The Telangana State Human rights commission (TSHRC) to take up the cases, received through post or in-person without court hearing till April 9 starting from March 19. As a part of precautions and restrictions, the TSHRC decided to take up urgent matters only twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday, by way of court hearings. The order further stated that regular matters, which are already directed to be listed, will automatically be adjourned and the parties who received the notices from the office of the Commission need not attend before the Commission till April 9. The parties/advocates/departments' representatives may ascertain the case status, if required, through helpline number 040-24601572 during working hours.



Rajasthan SHRC recommends meditation to fight COVID-19

Chairman made infamous peahen pregnancy remarks in 2017

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

The Rajasthan State Human Rights Commission on Wednesday recommended “meditation in solitude” to fight COVID-19 which has infected over 150 persons across the country.

The Commission took up the matter suo motu, taking cognisance of the pandemic, and advised the affected persons to live in isolation.

“While those suspecting infection should immediately report to the nearest health centre and be sent to isolation for 14 days as per the World Health Organisation's guidelines, the Commission recommends that all people should meditate in solitude,” SHRC chairperson Justice Mahesh Chandra Sharma said in his two-page order.

Justice Sharma praised the



Rajasthan human rights panel chief M.C. Sharma

State government's measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 virus and especially applauded the treatment given by doctors at Sawai Man Singh Government Hospital here to three coronavirus-positive patients who have since recovered.

The treatment regimen included a combination of drugs for swine flu, malaria and HIV.

As a Judge of the Rajasthan High Court, Justice Sharma had created a flutter in 2017 with his remarks that the peahen gets pregnant after swallowing the tears of the peacock.

His comments came after he passed an order on his last working day asking the Centre to declare the cow as a national animal and increase the punishment for cow slaughter to life imprisonment.

‘Peacock a celibate’

Justice Sharma commented that the peacock was a life-long *brahmachari* (celibate) and it never had sex with the peahen to reproduce. He was appointed a member of the SHRC for a five-year term in 2018 during the previous Bharatiya Janata Party regime.