

{ CUSTODIAL DEATH }

Human rights panel seeks detailed report from Sitamarhi DM, police

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PATNA: National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Friday issued a notice to Sitamarhi DM Abhilasha Sharma and SP Anil Kumar Singh in connection with a death case in police custody in

Punaura police station on September 6. The commission has sought detailed status report, and action taken against the erring police officials and steps taken to prevent such incidents, within eight weeks.

The NHRC took cognizance of the matter after one Brajesh

Singh lodged a complaint that a 50-year-old man, Nageshwar Rai, who was arrested in a 12-year-old case, died in police custody after he was assaulted brutally.

Deceased's brother Ajay Kumar had also alleged that Rai died due to police torture.

Identify vulnerable areas, make local evac plans: Report on Anaj Mandi fire

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New Delhi: Based on a notice sent by National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the town planning department of South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) has submitted an interim report to a special task force (STF) proposing a host of measures for preventing a repeat of fire incidents like the one that occurred at Anaj Mandi last December.

The report recommends checking unauthorised constructions, identifying vulnerable areas in a fixed time-frame and forming neighbourhood evacuation and disaster management plans to curb such hazards. Formation of a larger committee with officials from all town planning departments, traffic police, DDMA, DDA, fire department and discoms has also been proposed to ensure a plan on which action can be taken.

Located near Filmistan along Rani Jhansi flyover in the heart of Old Delhi, Anaj Mandi houses several illegal industrial units. One such building caught fire on the night of December 9, 2019 and 43 labourers living there died in their sleep.

Taking suo motu cognisance, NHRC had issued a notice to Union ministry of housing and urban affairs, which entrusted the responsibility of a probe into the incident to the STF in January. A committee headed by the SDMC chief town planner having members from other agencies was formed and asked to submit a report.

A senior corporation official said that the report presented to the STF mentioned that the pro-

LESSONS FROM TRAGEDY

Plan to prevent repeat of Anaj Mandi fire

- Identify vulnerable areas
- Make neighbourhood evacuation plan

Dec 9, 2019 | 43 people dead, 56 injured in Anaj Mandi fire; illegal factory became a deathtrap for labourers

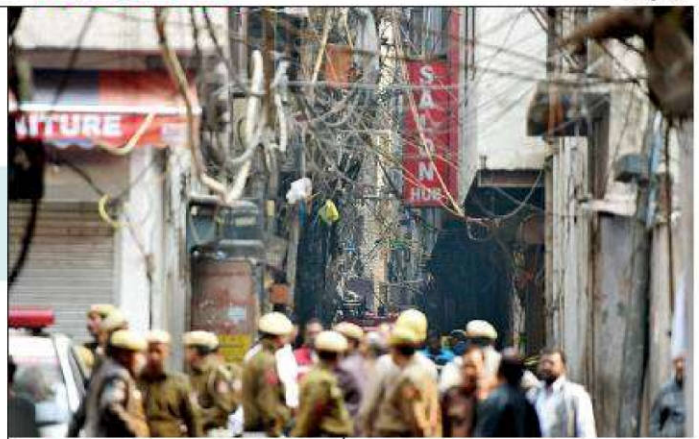
NHRC sought report

Key highlights of plan submitted by chief town planner



1 Identification of vulnerable spots and making neighbourhood evacuation plans in fixed time; Interim measures to avoid tragedy in consultation with fire department

2 Banning new hazardous industrial activities in such areas



File photo

3 Incentivise redevelopment in such special areas with rampant violations to encourage hazard reduction

4 Profiling of unauthorised and illegal construction and division in various categories

a) Regularisation to be based on

safety philosophy

b) Identification of construction without sanction that could be regularised

c) Priority removal of unauthorised construction where safety limits surpassed

d) Heritage area to be protected

MPD 2021 also envisaged redevelopment of Old Delhi and Karol Bagh special area, but it never materialised

Anaj Mandi probe was to be finished in 6 weeks but it is still not over, no accountability fixed



files and categorisation of unauthorised construction needed to be worked out. "These categories can be subdivided further, urgently removing those that fall beyond permissible safety norms. Regularisation of unauthorised construction can be a different category. The regularisation process must be guided by safety norms. Redevelopment must be given incentives to reduce hazards in such areas," he added.

Master Plan of Delhi 2021 had also envisaged a redevelopment plan for special areas, such as the Walled City and Karol Bagh, but it never came to fruition.

The report recommended that regularisation of illegal construction should ensure that the character of heritage areas was protected. There should be a complete ban on any new hazardous industrial or commercial activity in such areas.

However, the snail's pace of

action in this case inspires very little confidence. The report was to be submitted within six weeks in January, but it is still being finalised 10 months on. While the incident generated public outrage and highlighted how poorly migrant labourers were treated with respect to working conditions, the probe saw the administration falling in the same old habits. Meanwhile, no accountability among officials has been fixed for the disaster till date.