

Speech of Mr. Justice Arun Mishra, Chairperson, NHRC, India on the occasion of Human Rights Day function

1. Hon'ble President, Shri Ram Nath Kovind Ji, Members of the Commission, Chairpersons and Members of various National Commissions and State Commissions, Officers of the Central & State Governments and Commission. Representatives of the UN Organisations, Diplomats, Members of the Media, Civil Society, Distinguished Invitees, Ladies and Gentlemen.
2. It is indeed my proud privilege to extend a warm welcome to the Hon'ble President of India, our Constitutional head of the country, who is known for his dignity, ethical principles and great human values. I also feel delighted to welcome all of you present and connected online.
3. The glorious "Human Rights Day" is the most auspicious day of our "Manav Dharma".
4. The day signifies the adoption of the Universal Declaration by member countries of the United Nations in 1948.
5. Human rights ethos and values prevailing in Indian culture and tradition have been codified in our "Golden Constitution", which also forms part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
6. India is the largest vibrant democracy globally, having unity in diverse religions, cultures, faiths and languages. The disparity in political, socio-economic conditions of the nations and people call for different solutions. Economic equality, social justice and participation in governance protect human rights. Our bright future depends on removing inequality, ignorance, illiteracy, diseases and poverty.

7. Today is the day for reiterating the message of constructive evolution by stopping the destructive mentality. The task is to prevent violence, combat terrorism and crime. Terrorism violates human rights. Countries advancing terrorism must be held accountable.
8. The world faces challenges caused by growing terrorism, shrinking democratic space, intimidation, reprisals and complaints of grave violation of gender rights. Aghast is migration problems, issues of refugees and that of displaced persons.
9. The theme of this year Human Rights Day is "Equality". "All Human All Equal". Equality is the essence of human rights. It requires upholding justice and dignity in every walk of life; we have to provide protective discrimination by providing compensatory justice to those who have suffered injustice and violation of their human rights.
10. The 'State' is bound to provide facilities to reach the minimum standard of health, education and economic opportunities. Part four of the Constitution containing Directive Principles of State Policy is used as a foundation to realise the goal of socio-economic justice. There is a need for a harmonious balance between the distribution of benefits and distributive justice. We need to strive to fulfil vulnerable sections' legitimate rights and aspirations by ameliorating measures. Each individual must share power, material, resources and opportunities.
11. We have to eliminate discrimination based on gender, disability and ageing. We have to make weaker-stronger and remove barriers in the path to achieving a harmonious society. To have inclusive growth, we have to take care of the factors resulting in exclusion and ensure that no one is left behind as victims of discrimination.

12. 'Tolerance' and 'inclusion' are non-negotiable human rights. Stronger institutions, knowledge exchange and maximum protection for the welfare of all are essential to nurturing a just and equitable social order.
13. The country's future belongs to the younger generation; we need to harness their inherent strength and talent. We need to instil in them the core human values, the faith in the goodness of human beings.
14. Human Rights are acquired by birth. They are not mere aspirations rather morally saved and judicially enforceable. Human Rights are violated by unfair economic structure. It is necessary to provide a remedy for victims of business-related human rights violations. Resources essential for sustainable development do not become scarce.
15. All individuals have the bare minimum right to a safe, clean, healthy environment. We see the Transborder movement of hazardous waste, e-waste, Global warming. To save the further degradation of the environment, we have to think 'globally and act locally. India has emerged as a pioneer in 'National Climatic Policy' as a catalyst to protect the environment. Our fundamental duty is to proactively save the environment, forest, flora, and fauna.
16. No one can control or manipulate available information, news and views. The extent of freedom of cyberspace, both online and offline, are a matter of debate. It has fuelled grave apprehension of its misuse. Freedom of speech is the most cherished value and fundamental right to be protected. Still, it cannot be an unruly horse, violating the sovereignty, integrity of the country, public order, decency and morality. One is obligated to be faithful to values in Article 19 of the Constitution and related laws.
17. Honesty in freedom of speech is feared most. Negativity is a form of violation of human rights that cause fear and stress. Creating 'positivity' is essential for developing individuals and the country's growth.

18. India is a responsible member of the International community with the necessary obligation and commitment. We gave Vedanta Philosophy to the world. By adopting its spirit of learning for the benefit of humanity, India has become a "Knowledge Power" Indians are trusted to hold important assignments and positions in different fields in various countries. Indian scientists successfully invented Covid 'vaccines', administered free of cost to all and shared with other countries. Indians, during the worst ever human crisis, stood together with the entire humanity. We shall remain indebted to front-line workers for their exemplary contribution. They saved lives at the cost of their own.
19. Health coverage to all at affordable cost is a facet of the right to life. Covid-19 has brought to the fore the scarcity and the ever-existing plight of the poor to afford costly life-saving drugs, medicines, vaccines. In this scenario, the Right of Patent holders must succumb to the right to life—prompt collective action by various countries is needed in current times.
20. The recovery process from the shock of the pandemic is an opportunity to set the stage at the global level for a more inclusive, equitable and friendly world-anchored in human rights. We have to ensure that everyone is able to reap the fruit of one's hard work. Small vendors do not starve. No infringement of civil liberties takes place.
21. As a necessary concomitant to meet the challenge caused by Covid, Health Care infrastructure expanded, technology helped the world stand together. We have adopted digital technology. However, we have to address the effect of the digital divide.
22. Justice is a source of a peaceful society. Due to delayed justice, people take the law into their own hands. The rule of law requires the delivery of speedy justice. We must avoid imprisonment of a suspect without trial. There is no room for fake encounters.

23. The Government is accountable to its people. The Commission ensures that State observes human rights responsibilities. The laws and policies framed for welfare and sustainable development are duly observed and not rendered mockery. The functioning of the Commission is of bridging gaps, ironing out the creases and helping in good governance by providing motions.
24. The Commission has adopted a complete online system of Complaint Management. It received approximately 98 000 cases and decided 95,000. The Commission launched its Twitter handle in 2020; it has thirty-one one thousand followers.
25. The Commission has at its disposal a pool of high-level experts in Core Groups, its research wing, which does data collection and analysis to accelerate and ensure benefits of welfare schemes reach the needy.
26. The Commission issued 22 advisories in the last 14 months, including the dignity of the dead and the safety of workers involved in hazardous work, bonded labour. The priority concerns are civil liberties, the right to food, water, health, migrants, human trafficking, prisons, and shelter.
27. The Commission communication strategy includes disseminating human rights, information, and education.
28. The Commission sponsored more than 50 research projects on Human Rights issues. It held various conferences, meetings and webinars. We conducted five online Internship Programmes for 500 students, 19 online workshops with Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) and NSS, also held the competition on Short Films on Human Rights with 190 entries.
29. The Commission has its dedicated investigation team headed by the Director-General of Police. The Commission recommends monetary compensation and punitive action in any violation of Human Rights.

30. Civil Society, Human Rights Defenders and media play a crucial role in advancing human rights. We look for their co-operation which is valuable to fulfil our pledge. There is a need to provide them with a protective umbrella from victimisation.
31. It has a prominent position at global forums, Member of GANHRI, founder of Asia Pacific Forum (APF) and made its presence felt on various international platforms.
32. Advancement and protection of human rights is our pious duty. However, while finding the truth, we have to guard against being swayed away by sponsored propaganda beyond authenticity. Advocacy of human rights should not be a monopoly of few.
33. We are at the threshold of a better future. There is no room for complacency. On this momentous occasion, let us pledge to rededicate ourselves to work relentlessly to ensure a life of meaning and dignity to everyone. To create a just and equitable society, to make the planet earth a beautiful world, to protect and promote human dignity and the inviolable rights of all, we have to wipe tears from every eye by upholding the principles and ideals enshrined in our Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That will be our gratitude to humanity that would truly fulfil the purpose of celebrating "Human Rights Day". I am reminded of a famous Quote from Vedanta, popularly used by Swami Vivekanand, "Arise, awake and stop not, till the goal is achieved."

Jai Hind

Thank you.