



# HUMAN RIGHTS

Newsletter

A monthly publication of the National Human Rights Commission, India



President of India addresses Human Rights Day function

## Reports

- Navigating Stress from Classroom to Workplace
- SHRCs, Special Rapporteurs and Monitors
- Ageing in India: Actionable solutions

## Consultations

- Environment, climate change & human rights
- The rights of gig workers

# HUMAN RIGHTS

## Newsletter

Volume 32 | Number 01 | January, 2025

### National Human Rights Commission

#### Chairperson

Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian

#### Members

Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi

Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani

Shri Priyank Kanoongo

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Shri Bharat Lal

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▶ NHRC, India Chairperson, Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian with Members, Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani and Shri Priyank Kanoongo and senior officers on assumption of charge

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# National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India

## Composition

### Chairperson

#### Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian



Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian, former Judge of the Supreme Court of India assumed the charge of the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2024. He completed his B.Sc. in Chemistry from Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda College, Chennai, and later pursued law at the Madras Law College. He was enrolled as a member of the Bar on 16<sup>th</sup> February, 1983, and practised for 23 years in the Madras High Court. Justice Ramasubramanian served as an Additional Judge of the Madras High Court in 2006 and was made a permanent judge in 2009. He was transferred to the High Court of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh in 2016, and after bifurcation, continued his tenure in the Telangana High Court.

In 2019, he was appointed Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court and, later that year, became a Judge of the Supreme Court of India. He retired from the Supreme Court on 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2023, after authoring 102 judgments, including landmark cases such as the 2016 Demonetization policy and matters involving the validity of circumstantial evidence in bribery cases.

### Members

#### Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi



Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, former Chief Justice of Chhattisgarh High Court joined as a Member of the National Human Rights Commission, NHRC, India on 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2024. Justice Sarangi holds an LL.B. and LL.M. from M.S. Law College, Cuttack, and a Ph.D. in Law from Sambalpur University. Dr. Sarangi began his legal career in 1985, practising in civil, criminal, constitutional, and administrative law for over 27 years.

On 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2013, he was appointed as a permanent judge of the Orissa High Court, where he disposed of over 152,000 cases and authored nearly 1,500 judgments. In July, 2024, he became the Chief Justice of the Jharkhand High Court.

Justice Sarangi has contributed to various legal and administrative committees, including the Odisha State Legal Services Authority and the Juvenile Justice Committee, and is an active member of several national and international legal organisations.

#### Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani



Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani joined as a Member of the National Human Rights Commission, (NHRC), India on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 2023. She also served as the Acting Chairperson of the NHRC, India from 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2024 till 29<sup>th</sup> December, 2024. Prior to joining the NHRC, she was practicing as an Advocate at the Telangana High Court. Besides handling civil and criminal matters, she is widely known for dealing with cases of women harassment and dowry and providing pro bono legal aid to those belonging to the economically weaker sections of society.

She has served several professional and social organisations in various capacities including, among others, Anjani Matha Seva Trust, Samvardhinee Nyas, and Pragna Bharati NGOs focusing on holistic and multi-dimensional empowerment of women.

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## Shri Priyank Kanoongo



Shri Priyank Kanoongo, a native of Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh, joined as a Member of the National Human Rights Commission, NHRC, India on 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2024. He holds a B.Sc. in Microbiology and has been a dedicated advocate for child rights and education in India. He served as Chairperson of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) for two terms from 2018 to 2024. During his tenure, Shri Kanoongo emphasised the need for child welfare systems tailored to India's unique cultural context, advocating for “Indian solutions to Indian problems” rather than adopting foreign models. He authored the book ‘Pinjara-The Cage’, which comprehensively explores the lives of children in care institutions.

Under his leadership, NCPCR launched several initiatives to protect children's rights, including regulating OTT platforms to safeguard children from inappropriate content. He also introduced multiple portals to improve stakeholder engagement and resolved over 100,000 complaints during his tenure.

## Deemed Members

The Chairperson of the National Commission for Backward Classes, the National Commission for Minorities, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, the National Commission for the Scheduled Castes, the National Commission for the Scheduled Tribes, the National Commission for Women and the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities are the deemed Members of the NHRC, India.

## Secretary General & Chief Executive Officer



### Shri Bharat Lal

**Shri Bharat Lal** assumed the charge of the Secretary General and Chief Executive Officer of the National Human Rights Commission, India on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2023. Shri Lal joined civil service in July, 1988. Before joining the NHRC, he served as the Director General, National Centre of Good Governance (NCGG), an autonomous institution of the Government of India.

Prior to joining the NCGG, he served as Secretary to the Lokpal of India, the anti-corruption body of the country. He has also served as the Founder Mission Director, National Jal Jeevan Mission – a flagship programme started in August 2019 to ensure clean tap water to every household in the country by 2024. He was a member of the care team managing Covid-19 pandemic. For long, he has worked on water and sanitation, tribal rights, environment, poverty alleviation, water security. He has also served as Additional Secretary to the then President of India.

During his tenure as the Resident Commissioner of Gujarat, he was responsible for investment promotion in Gujarat and its diplomatic outreach. He has vast experience in policy making at the highest level, both in the state as well as at the Centre. He believes in 'out of box' thinking and finding solutions to solve complex problems.

## A new Chairperson and Members join the NHRC



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

On 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2024 the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India marked Human Rights Day, commemorating 76 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on this day in 1948. The UDHR, one of the most widely referenced and respected documents in the world, has served as a guiding light for nations striving to uphold the dignity and equality of all human beings. India's influence was pivotal in the finalisation of the UDHR.

The Indian delegation, led by Dr Hansa Mehta from MS University, Vadodara, was instrumental in ensuring that the declaration truly reflected universal values. Dr Mehta's successful advocacy for the phrase 'All human beings are born equal and free,' replacing the original 'All men are born equal and free,' was a powerful testament to the inclusivity and egalitarian ethos at the heart of India's civilisational and cultural values. This subtle yet profound change not only aligns with India's principles of equality but also highlights its commitment to gender neutrality, a concept that has gained increasing importance in the modern discourse on human rights.

The NHRC, India's programme at the Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi marking Human Rights Day showcased its unwavering commitment to protecting, promoting, and raising awareness of human rights. The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. The President of India delivered a memorable address that resonated deeply with the audience. She spoke eloquently about the meaning of human rights, the collective global efforts to advance them, and India's civilisational ethos of empathy and compassion. The President's words were a powerful reminder of the enduring relevance of human rights in contemporary society, urging us all to reflect on our shared responsibilities in advancing these ideals. The lead report of this edition of the Newsletter is focused on her address.

As the institution tasked with safeguarding these rights in India, the NHRC stands as a beacon for those who are marginalised, vulnerable, and voiceless. Human rights are not a luxury; they are the very soul of society and civilisation. Every individual has a role to play in ensuring that these rights are protected. The Commission continues to advocate for India's ethos of '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* - the whole world is one family', promoting global human rights through empathy, compassion, and justice.

On Human Rights Day, the Commission also organised a National Conference on 'Mental well-being: Navigating Stress from Classroom to Workplace'. It brought together experts, policymakers, and stakeholders to discuss the relationship

between mental health, stress, and well-being and suggest measures as policy initiatives to translate on the ground. The month also saw a conference of State Human Rights Commissions (SHRCs), Special Rapporteurs and Special Monitors to enhance collaboration and to promote and protect human rights in the country.

The Commission in partnership with the Sankala Foundation organised a seminar on 'Ageing in India: Actionable solutions' with various stakeholders. A core advisory group meeting on environment, climate change and human rights and an open house discussion on the Rights of gig workers were also held. The reports on these consultations are included in the Newsletter which would give an informative reading.

The month also witnessed the final round of the Commission's annual debate competition for the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), which it organised this year in collaboration with the Border Security Force (BSF) with CISF lifting the overall trophy. A report on this is also included in the edition.

NHRC, India's month-long Winter Internship – 2024 began in December, 2024 wherein 61 students from different parts of the country participated. The programme provides an opportunity to learn about various aspects of human rights and values and imbibe them for the common good. The Newsletter also carries reports on the other engagements and activities of the Commission in December, 2024 which hopefully may provide an engaging reading.

Another significant development during December, 2024 was the appointment of Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian, a former Judge of the Supreme Court of India, as the Chairperson of the NHRC, India, along with Justice (Dr) Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi and Shri Priyank Kanoongo as Members, by the President of India to further strengthen the human rights protection framework at the national level. This edition highlights the present composition of the NHRC, India.

This edition of the Newsletter will be the first of the New Year 2025. It is a moment for each of us to reflect on how we make a meaningful impact by protecting and promoting the rights of every individual, particularly vulnerable and marginalised people. I wish to end this column by wishing everyone a wonderful new year ahead.



[ Bharat Lal ]

Secretary General &  
Chief Executive Officer

## President of India addresses Human Rights Day function



► The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu flanked by NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal, lighting the ceremonial lamp on the Human Rights Day function

“I am happy to be here with you all on the occasion of Human Rights Day – a day of profound significance for humanity. On this occasion, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the fellow citizens whose belief in equality, justice, liberty and fraternity is the cornerstone of our democratic ethos.

It is a day to remember the institutions that strive to protect and promote the rights of the most vulnerable sections of society. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the State Human Rights Commissions (SHRCs), various other Commissions, the judiciary, and other key stakeholders have worked tirelessly to be the voice of the voiceless. I compliment them for their steadfast commitment and untiring work towards ensuring human rights for all.

Today, as we reflect on the ideals enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted on this day in 1948, we reaffirm our collective resolve to contribute to building a world where justice and human dignity are the bedrock of society. India today stands as a shining example where great initiatives are being taken by the government for poverty alleviation, eradication of hunger by providing free food to underprivileged and offering equal opportunities to youth to realise their dreams. India, with its civilisational heritage spanning over 5,000 years, has long upheld the values of empathy, compassion, and the interconnectedness of individuals within a harmonious community.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India celebrated Human Rights Day to commemorate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on this day in 1948 by the United Nations. The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. She spoke on various aspects of human rights, which resonated deeply. The text of her speech is as follows:



► The President of India addressing the gathering



► A section of audience

Based on these values, institutions such as the NHRC and SHRCs along with civil society, human rights defenders, Special Rapporteurs and Special Monitors, have been working to ensure the protection of human rights for all. I commend the proactive role played by the NHRC in addressing violations, raising awareness and recommending policy changes to uphold the rights of the marginalised. It also gives me immense pleasure to receive the first copies of three significant publications: 'Nayi Dishayein', the 'NHRC English Journal', and a compendium of its Advisories. These publications reflect the Commission's dedication to advancing human rights discourse and fostering greater awareness.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

India is firmly committed to ensuring civil and political rights to all its citizens. The general elections held in the country are a reflection of this commitment to ensure free and fair voting by people from all sections of society.

The government also guarantees a number of socio-economic and cultural rights for all, from housing, clean drinking water, improved sanitation, electricity, cooking gas and financial services to healthcare and education. It is notable that the provision of basic necessities is seen as a right. An excellent example of this new thinking is the 'Swachh Bharat Mission', which sees sanitation as a basic right. This year, on 19<sup>th</sup> November, World Toilet Day, India launched a campaign 'Our Toilets: Our Respect'. The campaign, which ends today, emphasises the relationship between sanitation and human rights. It emphasises that access to safe toilets is important for privacy, safety and health, especially for women and girls.

In addition, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016; Progressive laws such as the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017; and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, reflect our vision to empower vulnerable communities and enable them to lead a life of dignity. I would also like to commend the proactive measures taken by the NHRC to ensure the welfare of smaller and more vulnerable groups, including members of the LGBTQ community, persons affected by leprosy, beggars, sex workers and manual scavengers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we progress into the future, we are confronted with emerging challenges. Cybercrimes and climate change are new threats to human rights. The digital era, while transformative, has brought with it complex issues such as cyberbullying, deepfake, privacy concerns, and the spread of misinformation. These challenges underscore the importance of fostering a safe, secure, and equitable digital environment that protects the rights and dignity of every individual. The Information Technology Act (IT Act) of 2000, the IT Rules, 2021, and the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, address the challenges of privacy in the digital age, balancing technological advancement with individual rights.

Artificial Intelligence has now entered our day-to-day life, solving many problems and creating several new ones too. The human rights discourse so far has been centred on human agency, that is, the violator is assumed to be a human being, who would have a range of human emotions such as compassion and guilt. With AI, however, the culprit could be a non-human but intelligent agent. I leave the matter for you to ponder upon.

The case of climate change too forces us to review human rights thinking at the global level. Polluters of a different place and a different era are affecting the lives of people in another place and another period. India, as the voice of the Global South, has rightly taken up the leadership in climate action. The government's initiatives, such as the 2022 Energy Conservation (Amendment) Bill, the Green Credit Initiative, and the Lifestyle for Environment, or LiFE, Movement, are clear demonstrations of India's commitment to building a clean and green planet for future generations.



Ladies and Gentlemen,

India's elderly population was around 150 million in 2022, and it is projected to reach 350 million by 2050. The invaluable insights and life experiences of older people are assets that enrich our communities. We must address the critical challenges they face, including access to quality healthcare, financial security, safety and social inclusion. It is imperative that we formulate policies and take measures that preserve their dignity and ensure their well-being, empowering them to live full lives as valuable members of our society.

In recent years, mental health has become a critical issue, especially for our children and youth. I am glad to note that the NHRC has recognised the gravity of the issue. I appeal to all stakeholders to initiate adequate measures to reduce the stress affecting our children and youth. I urge industry and business leaders to ensure that the growing gig economy does not adversely impact the mental health of gig workers. As we adopt new economic models, we must ensure that the well-being of all individuals, especially those in vulnerable sectors, remains our priority. We must all work towards removing any stigma associated with mental illness, creating awareness and providing support to those in need.

On this Human Rights Day, I congratulate all of you for your unwavering commitment, dedication and service to the welfare of others. Let us renew our collective commitment to the values of justice, equality and dignity that define our nation. As we face the challenges of our time, we must uphold the fundamental rights of each individual and ensure that no one is left behind. Together, through sustained effort and solidarity, we can build a future in which every individual, regardless of age, background or circumstance, is empowered to live a life of dignity, opportunity and fulfilment.

Thank you, Jai Hind! Jai Bharat! ”

## Human Rights Day celebration

Before the address by the President of India, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, Acting Chairperson in her remarks said that Human Rights Day serves as a powerful reminder of the fundamental rights inherent to every individual, irrespective of

their identity or background. Globally, we are witnessing an escalation in conflicts, leading to the displacement of millions and creating severe humanitarian crises affecting vulnerable and low-income communities.

She said that in this era of rapid change and complex social dynamics, the role of the NHRC, India has never been more critical. We remain committed to advocating for the rights of marginalised communities through significant national and international initiatives, striving to build a society where everyone can enjoy their fundamental freedoms, free from fear or discrimination.

On the occasion, the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr António Guterres, in his message, read out by Mr Shombi Sharp, UN Resident Coordinator in India, said that this year's theme reminds us that human rights are about building the future - right now. All human rights are indivisible. Whether economic, social, civic, cultural or political, when one right is undermined, all rights are undermined. We must stand up for all rights - always. UN Resident Coordinator in India also lauded India as a champion of human rights and its outreach to the Global South for cooperation.

The NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal in his address said that the Indian Constitution imbibes the values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and our governance is guided by the principle of *Antyodaya*-uplifting the last and the least. NHRC, India plays the role of a 'conscience keeper' of society on behalf of and for the citizen. We are steadfast in our resolve to ensure no one is left behind and that the most vulnerable sections of society enjoy the same privileges as others.



► NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani addressing the gathering



► UN Resident Coordinator in India, Mr Shombi Sharp reading the message of UN Secretary-General

He highlighted some recent initiatives and activities of the Commission towards promoting and protecting human rights. These included advisories bringing to attention the plight of the smaller and more vulnerable groups, core group meetings on themes like human rights defenders, business and human rights, health and mental health, visits by Special Rapporteurs and Monitors to shelter homes, prisons, schools, and other institutions, conferences, open house discussions, and meetings with stakeholders to address the needs of vulnerable groups, national symposium on women's safety, and a national conference on the rights of older persons, capacity building programme for the NHRIs of



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

the Global South and SHRC of Arunachal Pradesh, among others. On the occasion, three NHRC publications were issued. These included - Annual Hindi and English Journals, carrying scholarly articles on human rights issues by the experts, and a compendium titled 'Advisories issued by the NHRC to protect human rights' in the country.

Members of State Human Rights Commissions, members of the Judiciary, diplomats, NHRC senior officers, Special Rapporteur & Monitors, senior government functionaries, civil society representatives, and human rights defenders, among other national and international dignitaries, attended the programme.

► NHRC, India publications being issued



# National conference on mental well-being: Navigating stress from classroom to workplace

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India organised a day-long National conference on 'Mental well-being: Navigating stress from classroom to workplace' at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2024. The conference gathered experts, policymakers, and stakeholders to explore the connection between mental health, stress, and well-being. It focused on the psychological effects of stress at different life stages—education, employment, and beyond—and aimed to propose recommendations for promoting mental well-being across various sectors.



► NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani addressing the conference

Delivering the keynote address in the inaugural session, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani called for creating a world where mental health is not an afterthought but a fundamental aspect of how we live, work, and thrive. Teachers and administrators must also be trained to recognise signs of distress and provide timely support to students. While digital tools have revolutionised education, they also bring challenges such as the distractions of social media, cyber-bullying, and the overwhelming exposure to information. The always-online culture often leaves little room for reflection or mental rest, further amplifying stress.

Referring to workplace stresses, the NHRC, India Acting Chairperson said that organisations must go beyond wellness programmes and foster a genuine culture of empathy and care. She emphasised that the pressures of work are not limited to employees at the beginning of

their careers but across all levels of the professional hierarchy. The role of families and communities cannot be understated. Supportive relationships are the cornerstone of mental well-being. By acknowledging that mental health is a shared responsibility, we can collectively build a society that values well-being as much as it does achievement. She also underscored the significance of Indian scriptures about the relevance of following the principles of mental discipline and self-awareness in achieving mental peace.

Dr V. K. Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, said that mental stress and well-being need a thorough understanding. Discourse among the various stakeholders is the key to finding solutions to this serious problem impacting different segments of our society.

Before this, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal in his address gave an overview of the mental health



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



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

challenges in India, citing data from various studies. According to a report 'Student suicides: An epidemic sweeping India' based on the data of NCRB and published by IC3 Institute, over 1.7 lakh suicides were reported in 2022 alone, with 41% of victims under the age of 30. This data underlines the urgent need for systemic change and multi-sectoral collaboration to address the crisis. According to another study titled 'Youth Suicide in India: A Critical Review and Implication for the National Suicide Prevention Policy', people aged 15 to 24 years have the highest suicide rate in India, which is consistent with international trends in youth suicide. 35% of the recorded suicides in India occur in this age group.

He said that mental health is disproportionately affecting the youth, women and elderly. Referring to the NHRC's proactive measures to improve mental healthcare in the country, he also mentioned its various concentrations and the seven key areas for action in this regard recommended in its advisory.

Earlier, giving an overview of the national conference, NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Shri Devendra Kumar Nim said that there will be three sessions: 'Stress among children and adolescents,' 'Mental health challenges in institutions of higher learning' and 'Stress and burnout at workplace.'



► Dr V. K. Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog chairing the first session on 'Stress among children and adolescents'

Chairing the first session on 'Stress among children and adolescents', Dr V. K. Paul, Member, NITI Aayog said that health is a human right, and by extension, it includes mental health also. He said that today children and adolescents are faced with devastating mental health conditions. Referring to an NCERT survey among 4 lakh students, he said that 81% of them were affected by anxiety about exams. 43% of them had mood swings, were in the habit of excessive use of technology-driven communication tools, mobile phones etc; and 60% of workplace professionals felt extreme or high stress. The size of the problem is huge, requiring a societal response. It is necessary to find ways to create a mental healthcare system to pinpoint issues causing distress due to bullying, ragging, use of drugs, behaviour of bosses, etc.

The session was co-chaired by Dr Rajesh Sagar, Prof. of Psychiatry, AIIMS. The expert speakers included Shri Rahul Singh, Chairman, CBSE, Shri Subodh Kumar Singh, Former DG – NTA, Dr Geeta Malhotra, Country Director, READ India, Dr Nand Kumar, Prof. of Psychiatry, AIIMS, New Delhi, Dr Charu Sharma, Principal, Dr Rajendra Prasad Kendriya Vidyalaya, Presidents State, Ms Vijayalakshmi Arora, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF and Shri Anand Rao Patil, Additional Secretary, PMPY and Digital Education.

The second session on 'Mental health challenges in institutions of higher learning' was chaired by Smt Preeti Sudan, former Chairperson, Union Public Service Commission, and co-chaired by Prof. Abhay Karandikar, Secretary, Department of Science & Technology. The speakers, while recognising the ongoing efforts of the state, emphasised the need for better

counselling services, mental health curriculum, awareness campaigns, and other similar steps that would help promote the overall mental well-being of youth. The speakers included Dr B. N. Gangadhar, Chairperson, National Medical Commission, Dr M. C. Mishra, Emeritus Professor, Dr Randeep Guleria, Former Director, AIIMS, Prof Manindra Agarwal and Dr Meet Ghonia, National Secretary, Federation of Resident Doctors' Association.

The third session on 'Stress and burnout at workplaces' was chaired by Shri Rajiv Kumar, Former Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog, and co-chaired by Shri Deepak Bagla, Former CEO & MD, Invest India. The speakers included Shri Manoj Yadav, DG, Railway Protection Force; Dr R. K. Dhamija, Director, IHBAS, Delhi, Ms Gopika Pant, Head, Indian Law Partners, Shri Mukesh Butani, Founder & Managing Partner, BMR Legal Advocates and Shri D. P. Nambiar, VP - HR, Tata Consultancy Services. They emphasised work-life balance, particu-

larly among younger employees. They underscored the need for practical implementation of stress management policies, urging leaders to actively enforce strategies that reduce burnout and support mental health.

The Commission will further deliberate upon the various suggestions to finalise its recommendations to the government to improve the mental well-being of individuals in the country.



► A section of participants

## Reports

# Conference of SHRCs, Special Rapporteurs and Monitors

**T**he National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has been very consistent in dialogue with various institutional bodies/ authorities in the country to develop synergy in promoting and protecting human rights. With the same spirit, it organised a conference with the State Human Rights Commissions (SHRCs), Special Rapporteurs, and Monitors in New Delhi on 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2024. The goal was to enhance collaboration between the NHRC, its Special Rapporteurs and Monitors, and the SHRCs.

In the inaugural session, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani emphasised the importance of collaboration in assessing improvement in the human rights situation in the country. She highlighted the need for addressing

challenges in complaint management, disseminating NHRC advisories at the state level, and sharing best practices. SHRCs were encouraged to visit facilities like Ashramshalas, mental health institutions, and shelters for vulnerable groups to bridge implementation gaps and ensure actions reach grassroots levels.



► NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani chairing the conference in the presence of Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal and other senior officers

NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal stressed that the NHRC and SHRCs need to continue working in tandem to strengthen the human rights institutional framework in the country. He also pointed out the importance of SHRCs supporting NHRC Special Rapporteurs and Monitors in coordinating with local as well as senior authorities at the State level to assess situations and suggest corrective measures. He reiterated the importance of onboarding the HRCNet portal of the NHRC by all the remaining SHRCs to overcome duplication of interventions and the wastage of manpower.

The first session, chaired by the NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, focused on complaint management, the status of follow-up actions on NHRC advisories, sharing best practices, and capacity building of SHRCs. It also discussed suggestions from SHRCs for more effective collaboration with the NHRC in promoting human rights.



► The conference in progress

The second session, chaired by Shri Bharat Lal, focused on the visits and reports of Special Rapporteurs and Monitors. It was emphasised that their reports should be crisp and on fixed parameters to help the Commission make necessary recommendations to the concerned Government authorities. Expanding the areas of assessment visits and prioritising a calendar of their activities to get SHRC support was also stressed.

The discussions led to several ideas for improving cooperation between the NHRC, its Special Rapporteurs and Monitors, and SHRCs to assess the human rights situation on the ground and to suggest necessary measures to the Government agencies in the country.

The conference was attended by the Chairpersons, Members and senior officers of the respective State Human Rights Commissions, senior officers of the NHRC and its Special Monitors and Rapporteurs.

## Seminar on Ageing in India: Actionable solutions

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India works with various stakeholders for promoting and protecting human rights. They include centre and state governments and their parastatal organisations, NGOs, human rights defenders, and researchers among others. The Commission also collaborates with them for organising national level conferences on a wide range of human rights themes to discuss the issues and bottlenecks to suggest measures for improvements.

With the same spirit, the Commission, in partnership with the Sankala Foundation, organised a day-long seminar on 'Ageing in India: Actionable Solutions- Drawing insights from Global, Regional, and National Best Practices' along with the active participation of NITI Aayog and the Union Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment in New Delhi on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2024. The seminar concluded with several important suggestions regarding the healthcare and nutrition needs of the elderly and their economic security, social inclusion, and quality of life. This seminar was the follow-up to the national conference held by the NHRC, India on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024 wherein various challenges faced by the elderly were discussed to find solutions.

Addressing the inaugural session, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal spoke about the evolving role of old age homes and the necessity for change and improvement in their functioning. He emphasised that the Commission is working closely with civil society organisations, Special Rapporteurs and Monitors and human rights defenders to assess and advocate for elderly rights. He said that it is time to work on an action-oriented model including the best practices for replication towards the overall welfare of the elderly population in the country. He urged for synergy among all organisations. He also said that an effort is on to develop a platform to provide elderly individuals with opportunities to engage and contribute to society, meaningfully.

Ms Monali P. Dhakate, Joint Secretary, Union Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, elaborated on various government schemes and policies aimed at improving the quality of life of older persons and the ageing population in India. She also highlighted the provisions of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY), to name a few.

Shri Devendra Kumar Nim, Joint Secretary, NHRC, India highlighted the pressing issues elderly citizens face today and spoke about the ongoing initiatives by the National Human Rights Commission for elderly care.

Dr Abha Jaiswal, Visiting Fellow, Sankala Foundation, welcoming the participants, said that India may be facing the concerns of a growing ageing population and therefore, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive care mechanism for them. She underscored how addressing these needs could present significant opportunities for both economic



▶ NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal, Dr V. K. Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog and NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Shri D.K. Nim in the inaugural session

growth and societal well-being. Chairing the first thematic session on the health and nutrition needs of the elderly, Dr V. K. Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, while sharing the concerns on the present and future challenges related to the well-being of the ageing population, commended the NHRC, India for its various initiatives in this regard. Shri Amit Yadav, Secretary, Union Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, chaired the second thematic session on economic security, social inclusion, and quality of life. Several domain experts and eminent people, representatives of NGOs, academia, researchers, start ups and the medical fraternity attended the meet. After the speakers in each session, an open house was held to discuss the questions from the participants from various sectors including the organisations like WHO, UNFPA and TATA Trusts.



► Dr V. K. Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog chairing the first session on the health and nutrition needs of the elderly

Some of the suggestions were as follows:

- i.) Develop a comprehensive health and nutrition package for the elderly;
- ii.) Create specialised services to address the needs of elderly women;
- iii.) Promote home and family-based care initiatives;
- iv.) Strengthen existing government schemes and models for elderly care;



► Shri Amit Yadav, Secretary, Union Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment chairing the second session on economic security, social inclusion, and quality of life

- v.) Explore partnerships with the private sector to make elderly care affordable and sustainable;
- vi.) Encourage greater health insurance coverage for the elderly;
- vii.) Learn from global best practices to firm up India's approach to dealing with elderly care;
- viii.) Develop a comprehensive and integrated family medicine vertical in the healthcare sector;
- ix.) Ensure participation of the elderly population in society with dignity, good health, and independence;
- x.) Have a segregated database on the elderly population for targeted intervention;
- xi.) Explore the scope for involvement of local bodies, including municipalities, as well as both public and private stakeholders in ensuring the rights of the elderly;
- xii.) Make sure that the voices of the elderly are heard with due attention for their well-being.

The participants included Dr Manashvi Kumar, Joint Secretary, Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare; Shri C. K. Mishra, Former Secretary, Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare; Dr K. Madan Gopal, Advisor, National Health Systems Resource Centre; Dr Sanjay Wadhwa, Professor and Head, Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, AIIMS, New Delhi; Prof Rama Baru, Professor, JNU; Prof (Dr) Manohar Agnani, Azim Premji University, Bhopal; Dr Tanuja Nesari, Former Director, All India Institute of Ayurveda; Shri Manohar Lal Baharani, All India Senior Citizens Forum; Shri Puneet Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary, Social Justice Department, Kerala; Ms Uma Devi, Joint Director, Social Justice Department, Tamil Nadu; Ms Kajari Biswas, Director, Ministry of





► Presentations during the seminar in progress

External Affairs; Ms Anupama Dutta, Helpage India; Ms Pavithra Reddy, COO, Vayah Vikas; Shri Piyush Kumar, Founder, Khyaal App; Shri Asheesh Gupta, Co-founder, Samarth Elderly care, and Dr G.P. Bhagat, Founder, SHEOWS, Shri K. Srinath Reddy, Honorary Distinguished Professor, Public Health Foundation of India, Ms Amrita Kansal, Public Health Specialist, Healthy Ageing Vertical, WHO South East Asia Region and Dr Manjari Chaturvedi, CEO, Healthy Aging India, among others.

## Consultations

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has constituted several core groups on various thematic issues related to human rights to hold discussions with the domain experts, academicians and senior government functionaries representing concerned ministries. Besides these core group meetings, the Commission also organises open house discussions with different stakeholders on various issues of human rights. The Commission, from time to time, also holds national seminars to address the obstacles in existing laws and suggest amendments. In December, 2024, the Commission organised two such consultations.

### Core advisory group meeting on environment, climate change & human rights

A core advisory group meeting on environment, climate change and human rights was organised by the Commission on 'Climate Change and Human Rights'



► NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani chairing the meeting

in hybrid mode at its premises in New Delhi on 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2024. Inaugurating it, the Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani emphasised that climate change is impacting vulnerable communities, particularly tribal people whose traditional livelihoods are directly tied to the environment. She highlighted the ancient wisdom embedded in the Indian texts, which underscores the deep connection between humanity and nature, to find solutions to deal with the challenges posed by climate change.

She called for urgent action in strengthening disaster preparedness and building resilient systems. Urging businesses to adopt sustainable practices respecting the environment and human rights, she stressed the need for corporate accountability in mitigating climate change impact.



► NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal delivering keynote address

Before this, the NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal, in his opening remarks, said that it is necessary to have a human rights perspective while addressing climate change and environmental concerns. He said that a clean, healthy, and functional environment including the right to clean air and water is essential for the enjoyment of basic human rights like the rights to life, health, food, and a decent standard of living.

Shri Lal emphasised the urgency for strengthening monitoring systems and promoting coordinated action by all stakeholders to deal with climate change concerns. He urged the participants to share concrete advice, and actionable suggestions, to enable the NHRC to make necessary recommendations to the government.

Shri Devendra Kumar Nim, Joint Secretary, NHRC, India gave an overview of the meeting divided into three agendas for discussion. These were: 'The impact of climate change on indigenous populations', 'Extreme weather events and their effects on lives and livelihoods', and 'Corporate accountability in the context of climate change'. He highlighted the NHRC's ongoing efforts to



► A scene from the discussions

address human rights violations related to environmental degradation, including the disposal of over 8,900 cases. He also emphasised the Commission's advisory issued to the State Governments and Union Territory administrations on mitigating the impacts of environmental pollution, which has led to significant actions such as the notification of special environmental courts in Karnataka.

Some of the suggestions which emanated from the discussions were as follows:

- i.) Collecting data on climate change at the district level to understand its dimensions, and collaborate with local communities to develop expertise with sustainable solutions to mitigate its impact necessary;
- ii.) Promote research into the reasons and effects of climate change on migration from rural to urban areas in India;
- iii.) Identify areas prone to climate change to create a climate risk Atlas and mitigate potential impacts;
- iv.) Ensure the effective implementation of "The Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996" (PESA Act) and the Forest Rights Act (2006);
- v.) Re-align Corporate Social Responsibility subjects with environmental issues to re-focus from urban to rural areas;
- vi.) Encourage plantation in arid regions using a 1-litre water technique for agroforestry in addition to crops;

The Commission will further deliberate on the various suggestions to finalise its recommendations to the Government on addressing various challenges aggravated by climate change.

The speakers included Shri Neelesh Kumar Sah, Joint Secretary, Union Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change, Shri Bharat Kumar Sharma, Member Secretary, Central Pollution Control Board, Shri Amitabh Agnihotri, NHRC Special Monitor on Environment, Climate Change & Human Rights, Shri Sundaram Verma, Environmentalist; Smt. Patricia Mukhim, Social Activist and Editor, The Shillong Times, Dr B. S. Adhikari, Scientist – G, Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dr Padma Rao, Chief Scientist, National Environmental Engineering Research Institute, Shri Ram Kumar Agrawal, Director, Commission on Air Quality Management, Col. Ravindra Yadav, Director, National Rainfed Area Authority, Shri Vinay Kumar (IFS), Deputy Director, Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education, Prof N. H. Ravindranath, Retired Professor, IISc Bangalore, and Shri Niranjana Deo Bharadwaj, Dr Promode Kant, Shri Honey Karun and Shri Imad Malik, Climate and Sustainability Initiative.

## Open house discussion on rights of gig workers

On 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India organised an open house discussion on the rights of gig workers in hybrid mode at its premises in New Delhi. In her keynote address, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani said that there is a need for targeted efforts through regulatory frameworks to address gig worker's challenges, including long working hours, financial strain, and physical exhaustion. She said that over 83% of app-based drivers work more than 10 hours daily. This puts them under the physical and mental strain added by policies like 10-minute deliveries and unrealistic targets, which also result in avoidable accidents. Women face additional challenges such as safety risks, erratic schedules, and physical demands, discouraging their participation and raising concerns about their well-being.

Before this, triggering the discussions, the NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal said that it is crucial to check the implementation of laws such



▶ NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani chairing the open house discussion

as the Social Security Code 2020 and the various other labour laws in India to ensure Gig Workers' welfare. He also noted that some states like Karnataka, Rajasthan and Jharkhand are focusing on providing social security to gig workers but more needs to be done to address their other major concerns relating to health insurance, minimum wages, stress-free working conditions protecting their dignity.

The discussions were held in three technical sessions – 'Informality of the Gig workers' social security benefits and their legal ambiguity', 'Deprivation of health, mental health, safety and security of gig workers' and 'Gender disparity and financial instability for women gig workers'.

Some of the suggestions emanated from the discussions included:

- i.) There is a need for targeted efforts and regulatory frameworks to address the challenges faced by gig workers including long working hours, financial strain, and physical exhaustion;
- ii.) All the Companies engaging should provide general and specific welfare schemes, including health benefits, accident insurance, old-age protection, and unemployment safeguards in case of accidents, etc.;
- iii.) Support women gig workers with maternity benefits, crèche facilities, and the establishment of rest points through public-private partnerships;
- iv.) Explore and expand the e-Shram portal as a valuable tool in aiding gig workers;
- v.) Set up a grievance redressal mechanism, particularly for women gig workers and build

- awareness around POSH (Prevention of Sexual Harassment) policies to ensure a safer work environment;
- vi.) Build financial literacy of gig workers to promote transparency besides providing opportunities to upscale their skills through vocational training programmes;
  - vii.) Ensure minimum wage enforcement and income transparency in all sectors engaging gig workers by the aggregators to bridge gender disparities;
  - viii.) Develop schemes addressing the risks posed by climate challenges and ensure worker safety during extreme weather conditions by employing companies; and
  - ix.) Review the rating system of gig workers' service, which is arbitrary without providing any forum for them to hear the Gig workers' point of view.

The participants included NHRC, India Registrar (Law), Shri Joginder Singh, Joint Secretary, Shri Devendra Kumar Nim, Dr K. Rajeswara Rao, Former Special Secretary, NITI Aayog, Shri Nikhil MR, Assistant Labour Commissioner Labour Department, Government of Karnataka, Shri O.P. Sarhan, Joint Secretary and Additional Labour Commissioner, Labour Department,

Government of Rajasthan, Dr Vinay Kumar Chauhan, Managing Director, National Labour Cooperative Federation of India Ltd, Ms Bhavya Sharma, Director, Corporate Communication and ESG at Urban Company, Shri Akash Gupta, Co-founder & CEO, Zypp Electric, Ms Tannaz Ahmed, Manager – Public Policy, Zypp Electric, Shri Prashant Kumar, Senior Head - Public Policy Ola Electric, Shri Rohit Kumar, General Counsel, Ola electric, Shri Shaik Salauddin, President-TGPWU IFAT-NGS, Ms Nadiya Sarguroh, Associate Partner, MZM Legal LLP, Shri Swapnil Srivastava, Senior Associate, MZM Legal LLP, Shri Harish Chander, Deputy Director, NCVET, Dr Dhanya, M.B. Faculty, V.V. Giri National Labour Institute and Shri Rahul Jain, Head-HR, Big Basket.

## Important interventions

The media reports have been a very useful instrument for the National Human Rights Commission, (NHRC), India to know about the incidents of human rights violations. Over the years, it has taken *suo motu* cognisance of many such issues and brought succour to the victims of human rights violations. During December, 2024, the Commission took *suo motu* cognisance in 05 cases of alleged human rights violations reported by the media and issued notices to the concerned authorities for reports. Summaries of these cases are as follows:

### *Suo motu cognisance*

#### **Abduction of an infant from a footpath and her sexual assault**

(Case No. 3130/25/5/2024)

On 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, the media reported that a seven-month-old baby was allegedly abducted from a footpath and sexually assaulted by some miscreants in Kolkata, West Bengal on 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2024. The girl is reported to be the daughter of a homeless couple. She was seen lying on the pavement when some people spotted her and informed the police.

The incident indicates sheer lawlessness. Accordingly, it has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, West Bengal calling for a detailed report. It is expected to include the status of the FIR, the health of the baby victim, and compensation, if any provided to the aggrieved family.

#### **Five-year-old boy after being trapped in 150 feet deep borewell**

(Case No. 2012/20/11/2024)

On 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, the media

reported that a five-year-old boy died on 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2024 after being trapped in a 150 feet deep borewell for nearly 56 hours in the Dausa district of Rajasthan. Reportedly, the boy fell in the borewell while he was playing in a field. The Commission observed that seemingly the guidelines issued by the Supreme Court and the Centre are not being followed by the authorities to prevent such unfortunate incidents/fatal accidents of small children falling into open/ abandoned borewells and tubewells. This apparent negligence not only amounts to dereliction of

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duty on their part but also tantamount to violation of the right to life of the people.

Accordingly, the Commission has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, Rajasthan calling for a detailed report in the matter. It is expected to include the status of the FIR registered in the reported matter, action taken against the responsible public authorities and compensation, if any, provided to the next of kin (NoK) of the deceased.

### **Wrong blood transfusion**

(Case No. 2013/20/14/2024)

The media reported that a 10-year-old child was transfused with blood of two different groups while undergoing treatment at the JK Lon Hospital of the Sawai Man Singh Medical College (SMS), Jaipur, Rajasthan. He is reported to be in a critical condition with ventilator support. Allegedly, the incident happened in the hospital twice on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2024 and 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2024.

Reportedly, in a similar case, a 23-year-old patient lost his life at the same hospital only a few months back, which the Commission noted as a matter of concern about the violation of the right to health and life of the patients. Accordingly, it has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, Government of Rajasthan calling for a detailed report. It is expected to include the status of health of the victim child, FIR, action taken against the responsible persons and compensation, if any, provided to the aggrieved by the authorities.

### **Death due to electrocution**

(Case No. 2293/22/36/2024)

The media reported that two persons,

working as contract labourers with the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (TANGEDCO) died due to electrocution while repairing a high-tension overhead power line near Olaiyur Ring Road in KK Nagar, Tiruchi in Tamil Nadu on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2024. According to the media report, as per the preliminary investigations, the power supply to the cable was not fully turned off during the repair work. The workers were on the job without any protective gear. Reportedly, in a similar incident, a worker was electrocuted to death while repairing a transformer in the Thoothukudi district of the state last year. Last month, a migrant worker was electrocuted during the Cyclone Fengal and his body was found near an ATM in Muthialpet.

The Commission has observed that the contents of the media report, if true, indicate gross negligence on the part of the electricity department. Accordingly, it has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, Tamil Nadu calling for a detailed report in the matter. It is expected to include the status of the FIR registered in the matter and compensation, if any provided to the next of kin of the two victims. The Commission would also like to know the steps taken/proposed by the State government and TANGEDCO to ensure that such incidents do not recur.

### **Spurt in suicides by the Tribals in Kerala**

(Case No. 727/11/12/2024)

The media reported on 25<sup>th</sup> December, 2024 that there is an alarming increase in suicides among tribal people settled in the outskirts of Thiruvananthapuram district in Kerala with about 23 deaths reported in 2024 itself. Reportedly, as per rough estimates, around

138 suicides happened mostly in Peringammala Panchayat in the district during 2011-2022. Now, after 2 years of relative calm, the string of suicides has returned to haunt the tribal settlements in the district. A majority of those who ended their life belonged to the 20-30 age group.

Quoting the victims' families and tribal activists, the media reports said that there is tremendous stress due to extreme social scenarios coupled with pressure and harassment due to marriages and relationships outside the community, along with burgeoning liquor and sex rackets, contribute to these suicides.

The Commission has observed that the contents of the media report, if true, indicate a serious issue relating to the right to life and the social, economic and cultural rights of the persons belonging to Scheduled Tribes residing in the particular region in Kerala. Suicides by young people belonging to a vulnerable section of society are indeed an issue relating to the violation of human rights which requires immediate attention of the government agencies. The State is duty-bound to ensure the safety and security of every citizen under its jurisdiction.

Accordingly, it has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and Director General of Police, Kerala calling for a detailed report in the matter. The comprehensive report is expected to include the status of the FIRs registered in the issues as well as the arrest of the perpetrators. The Commission would also like to know the status of compensation, if any provided to the next of kin of the deceased persons. The state government is also expected to inform about the steps taken/ proposed to ensure such incidents do not recur.

## Recommendations for relief

One of the primary responsibilities of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India is to address cases of human rights violations, listen to the grievances of victims, and recommend appropriate relief in such instances. It

regularly takes up various such cases and gives directions and recommendations to the concerned authorities for relief to the victims. In December, 2024, monetary relief of more than Rs 100.5 lakh was recommended for the victims or their next of kin (NoK) in the

21 cases, wherein it was found that public servants had either violated human rights or been negligent in protecting them. The specific details of these cases can be downloaded from the NHRC website by logging the case number given in the table below:

S. No.	Case Number	Nature of complaint	Amount (Rs. in lakh)	Authority
1.	281/33/6/2023-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Chhattisgarh
2.	5174/30/9/2019-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Delhi
3.	2007/7/11/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Haryana
4.	945/7/1/2023-JCD	Death in judicial custody	7.50	Haryana
5.	1275/11/2/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	7.50	Kerala
6.	868/11/2/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Kerala
7.	129/36/11/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Telangana
8.	2166/36/10/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Telangana
9.	5884/24/69/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Uttar Pradesh
10.	1194/25/11/2020-JCD	Death in judicial custody	7.00	West Bengal
11.	4428/25/11/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	7.50	West Bengal
12.	585/34/2/2021-AD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Jharkhand
13.	104/10/4/2021-PCD	Death in police custody	5.00	Karnataka
14.	2497/25/13/2023-PCD	Death in police custody	5.00	West Bengal
15.	5/25/2/2023-PCD	Death in police custody	5.00	West Bengal
16.	677/34/11/2022-AD	Death in police custody	5.00	Jharkhand
17.	1176/10/14/2021-DH	Death in other Government run children's home	5.00	Karnataka
18.	3460/30/1/2023	Abuse of power	0.50	Delhi
19.	69/35/12/2024	Abuse of power	0.50	Uttarakhand
20.	595/18/10/2023	Medical negligence	2.00	Odisha
21.	216/36/18/2024	Irregularities in Govt. hospitals/ primary health centres	3.00	Telangana

## Payment of relief to the victims

During December, 2024, the Commission closed 25 cases, either on receipt of the compliance reports and proof of payment from the public authorities or

by giving other observations/ directions. An amount of Rs. 90 lakh was paid by the concerned state authorities 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 the NHRC website by logging the case number given in the table below:

S. No.	Case Number	Nature of complaint	Amount (Rs. in lakh)	Authority
1.	2515/30/9/2020-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Delhi
2.	174/7/15/2020-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Haryana
3.	312/7/5/2023-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Haryana
4.	945/7/1/2023-JCD	Death in judicial custody	7.50	Haryana
5.	432/13/16/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Maharashtra
6.	1277/18/17/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Odisha
7.	191/20/19/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Rajasthan
8.	5055/20/19/2022-JCD	Death in judicial custody	7.50	Rajasthan
9.	7857/24/30/2021-JCD	Death in judicial custody	5.00	Uttar Pradesh
10.	115/3/0/2018-PCD	Death in police custody	3.00	Assam
11.	77/3/17/2021-PCD	Death in police custody	5.00	Assam
12.	80/34/5/2021-PCD	Death in police custody	5.00	Jharkhand
13.	26610/24/47/2021-PCD	Death in police custody	5.00	Uttar Pradesh
14.	18714/24/48/2020-AD	Death in police custody	1.00	Uttar Pradesh
15.	156/3/34/2022-ED	Death in a police encounter	7.50	Assam
16.	39455/24/8/2021-WC	Gang rape	0.50	Uttar Pradesh
17.	30547/24/15/2022	Illegal arrest	3.00	Uttar Pradesh
18.	37032/24/30/2018	Abuse of power	0.50	Uttar Pradesh
19.	1480/25/5/2020	Atrocities on demonstrators	2.00	West Bengal
20.	2543/1/21/2021	Inaction by the state/ central govt. officials	0.25	Andhra Pradesh
21.	1318/1/5/2021	Non-payment of pension/ compensation	0.50	Andhra Pradesh
22.	678/4/38/2023	Denial of family pension	0.25	Bihar
23.	216/36/18/2024	Irregularities in Govt. hospitals/ primary health centres	3.00	Telangana
24.	19645/24/75/2021	Malfunctioning of medical professionals	0.50	Uttar Pradesh
25.	420/18/12/2023	Death due to electrocution	3.00	Odisha

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## Case studies

In many cases, the Commission, contrary to the claims of the concerned State authorities, found that the human rights of the victims were violated due to their unlawful action, inaction, or omission. Therefore, the Commission, under the Protection of Human Rights Act, not only recommended punitive action against erring officials on a case-to-case basis but also recommended monetary relief to the victims of human rights violations or their next of kin. The Commission also received reports of compliance with its recommendations by the respective state authorities. Summaries of some of these cases are as under:

### Rat biting a patient in an ICU of a government hospital

(Case No. 216/36/18/2024)

The matter pertained to the rat biting an unconscious patient in the intensive care unit of the Government General Hospital, Kamareddy, Telangana on 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2024. Based on material on record, received in response to its notices to the concerned public authorities, the Commission found the allegations true. The hand fingers and toes of the unconscious patient, who eventually died, were bitten by the rats. Departmental action was taken against the negligent doctors and nurses by suspending them. The Commission recommended that the Government of Telangana pay Rs 3 lakh to the next of kin of the deceased, which was paid.

### Death due to electrocution

(Case No. 420/18/12/2023)

The matter pertained to the death of a man due to electrocution when he had gone for fishing in a pond and came in contact with a snapped wire in the Puri district of Odisha. The complainant

alleged that the incident occurred due to the negligence of the electricity department personnel. Based on the material on record, received from the concerned state authorities in response to its notices, the Commission held that even though the victim was negligent but the partial responsibility of the electric department was not ruled out during the inquiry by the Superintendent Engineer cum Deputy Electrical Inspector, Puri. Hence, it recommended that the Government of Odisha pay Rs. 3 lakh to the next of kin of the deceased, which was eventually paid.

### Death in Police Custody

(Case No. 77/3/17/2021-pcd)

The matter pertained to the death of an accused due to suicide in police custody at Sadia police station in Tinsukia District of Assam on 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2021. Based on the material on record, received from the concerned authorities in response to its notices, the Commission noted that the Magisterial Enquiry Report (MER) has opined that the police personnel at the Sadiya P.S. had neglected in discharging their

duties responsibly. Therefore, the Commission recommended that the Government of Assam pay Rs. 5 lakh as monetary relief to the next of kin of the deceased, which was paid.

### Death in Judicial Custody

(Case No. 5055/20/19/2022-jcd)

The matter pertained to the death of a prisoner in judicial custody of Central Jail, Jodhpur, Rajasthan on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2022. Based on the material on record, received from the concerned authorities in response to its notices, the Commission found that as per the magisterial enquiry, the cause of death was Asphyxia due to hanging. The officials of Central Jail, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, committed negligence in keeping surveillance on the activities of the prisoner, and this negligence allowed him to commit suicide. Therefore, holding the state vicariously responsible for the negligence of its officials, the Commission recommended that the Government of Rajasthan pay Rs. 7.5 lakh as relief to the next of kin of the deceased prisoner, which was paid.

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## Field visits

The Chairperson, Members and senior officers of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India visit various places in the country from time to time to assess the human rights situation and the status of the implementation of the Commission's advisories, guidelines and recommendations by the respective state governments and their concerned authorities. They also visit shelter homes, prisons, observation homes, etc. and sensitise the government functionaries to make necessary efforts towards ameliorating the cause of human rights. Submission of timely reports by the state authorities to help the Commission in the early disposal of cases of human rights violations is also emphasised.



From 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani visited Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh and met with the District Magistrate and district officers and visited Government-run institutes in Vijayawada, a surprise visit and local programme and meeting with the Judges/ Members of the State Judiciary/ SHRC.

On 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, she made a surprise visit to the Government General Hospital, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh. She found the maternity ward in distressing conditions, with women sharing beds and newborns lacking basic amenities. She directed immediate action to address these issues. She also visited a local urban primary health centre and observed that it has high standards of care-spacious, clean, and sustainable, showcasing a model of quality healthcare.



► NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani visiting Government General Hospital, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh

On 28<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, NHRC Acting Chairperson also conducted a surprise visit to a night shelter home no. 629 run by an NGO near Kashmere Gate, Delhi. The NGO representatives and DUSIB officers were directed on the spot to take remedial measures to improve the facilities.



► NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani visiting a night shelter home near Kashmere Gate, Delhi

On 30<sup>th</sup> December 2024, NHRC, India Member, Shri Priyank Kanoongo inspected shelter homes for women & children at Urdu Park, Jama Masjid and Motor Market in Delhi. The inmates raised concerns about inadequate bedding facilities, poor sanitation & drainage. Rats in the facilities also posed health concerns.



► NHRC, India Member, Shri Priyank Kanoongo inspecting a shelter home for women & children near Jama Masjid, Delhi

## Special Rapporteurs and Monitors

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has designated 14 Special Rapporteurs to monitor human rights conditions across various regions of the country. They conduct visits to shelter homes, prisons, observation homes, and similar institutions, compiling reports for the Commission that detail their observations and suggestions for future action. Additionally, the Commission has appointed 21 Special Monitors tasked with overseeing specific thematic human rights issues and reporting their findings to the Commission. Throughout December, 2024, both Special Rapporteurs and Monitors conducted visits to numerous locations.

## Special Rapporteur

i.) From 12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, Dr Ashok Kumar Verma, visited the District Jail, Observation Home,



► Special Rapporteur, Dr Ashok Kumar Verma visiting an observation home in Haridwar, Uttarakhand

Place of Safety and Special Home for Boys, Haridwar, and two NGO- run set-ups for boys and girls in Haridwar, Uttarakhand. He assessed the facilities, human rights situation and status of the implementation of NHRC guidelines.

- ii.) From 17<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 2024, Smt Suchitra Sinha visited various Anganwadi Centres at Saraikela-Kharswawa district, Jharkhand to assess the human rights situation therein.



► Special Rapporteur, Smt Suchitra Sinha visiting an Anganwadi Centre in Saraikela Kharswawa district, Jharkhand

- iii.) From 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, Shri Ashit Mohan Prasad visited Mangalore, Dakshina Kannada district in Karnataka to study the condition of the children in the government-run/ aided institutions.



► Special Rapporteur, Shri Ashit Mohan Prasad visiting Prajna Centre for distressed women in Mangaluru, Karnataka

- iv.) From 25<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, Shri Umesh Kumar visited an integrated rehabilitation centre for addicts and a special school for children with hearing disability at Vijay Nagar in Kamrup district and a home for senior citizens affected with Alzheimer/dementia at Pallital in Guwahati, Assam to see the facilities and assess human rights situation.

- v.) From 27<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2024, Shri Mahesh Singla, visited Haryana Rajya Bal Bhawan for boys in Madhubhan, Karnal district of Haryana and children's home Jalandhar, Punjab to assess the facilities and human rights situation therein.



► Special Rapporteur, Shri Mahesh Singla visiting a Children's Home in Jalandhar, Punjab

## Special Monitor

- i.) From 16<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2024, Dr Pradeepta Kumar Nayak visited district-level officials of the leprosy programme, social welfare departments, medical colleges and hospitals, community & primary health & wellness centres, and leprosy colonies in Nagpur, Wardha, and Amaravati districts of Maharashtra.
- ii.) From 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, Dr Sadhana Rout visited various places in Jaipur, Kekri and Ajmer, Rajasthan to meet vulnerable groups and various stakeholders with a human rights perspective to find out their human rights challenges.
- iii.) From 19<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, Shri Balkrishan Goel visited various old age homes, childcare institutions, observation homes and Anganwadi centres in Uttar Pradesh for an on-the-spot inspection and data collection.
- iv.) From 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, Dr Yogesh Dube visited rehabilitation centres, the district administration office, and one-stop centres in Kaimur, Babhua district, Bihar for an on-the-spot inspection and data collection.

# Capacity building

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India is mandated to protect and promote human rights and build awareness about the same. For this purpose, it has been conducting internship programmes, collaborative training and various other activities to expand its outreach and human rights sensitisation. Internships are conducted in person as well as in online mode. The online internships are organised to ensure that students from remote areas can join without any expenses for their travelling and stay in Delhi.

## NHRC Winter Internship programme begins

The Commission began its month-long on-site Winter Internship - 2024 for post-graduate-level students at its premises in New Delhi on 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2024. 80 students from different academic disciplines from various universities and colleges of the country are attending. They were shortlisted out of over 1000 applicants.



► Inaugural session of the Winter Internship being chaired by NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Vijaya Bharathi Sayani in progress

Inaugurating the internship, the NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani urged the interns to reflect on their role in shaping the future of human rights in India. She encouraged them to contribute towards building a society wherein everyone has equal access to rights and opportunities and no one is left behind. Highlighting India's path to becoming a global leader, she emphasised that this journey is not just about economic growth but also about upholding the principles of justice, inclusivity, and compassion.

In his address, NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal congratulated the interns on their selection for the internship programme and encouraged them to utilise this opportunity to learn maximum and develop sensitivity towards societal problems and respond to them with compassion. He urged the

interns to internalise the core values of equality, fraternity, freedom and dignity as enshrined in the Constitution of India and to actively contribute to upholding the human rights of every individual in society.

Shri Devendra Kumar Nim, Joint Secretary, NHRC, India giving an overview of the winter internship programme, highlighted the Commission's functioning and various activities towards promoting and protecting human rights. He emphasised that the interactive sessions and various other activities including group research projects, book reviews, etc. during the internship aim to provide interns with a comprehensive understanding of human rights and related challenges to find their solutions, fostering a deeper commitment to the cause.

During the internship, the students will not only be exposed to various aspects of human rights by the subject experts



► The participants of the Winter Internship

but also taken for field visits for the functioning of various institutions and understanding of the ground realities as well as the requirements for protecting the human rights of various segments of society. The interns completing the internship will also be given a stipend of Rs.12,000/-.

## Workshops

During December, 2024, the Commission also supported 03 collaborative human rights awareness workshops. These were held by the Administrative Training Institute (ATI), Aizawl, Mizoram, Shree Mahila Vikas Seva Mandal, Rajkot, Gujarat and Arya Nadar Janaki Ammal College, Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu. About 250 participants attended the training programme.



▶ Human rights workshop at ATI, Aizawl, Mizoram



▶ Human rights workshop at Arya Nadar Janaki Ammal College, Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu



▶ Human rights workshop at Shree Mahila Vikas Seva Mandal, Rajkot, Gujarat

## Exposure visit

To promote human rights awareness among college-level students and their faculties, the

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India invites them to visit the Commission to understand human rights, their protection mechanism, and its functioning for this purpose in line with the Protection of Human Rights Act, (PHRA), 1993.

During December, 2024, 98 students and faculty members from various colleges and universities visited the Commission. These included Shri Venkateshwara University, Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh, VIT School of Law, Vellore Institute of Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu and Vaikunta Baliga College of Law, Udupi, Karnataka.

They had an interactive session with the Joint Secretary, Shri Devendra Kumar Nim and other senior officers of the Commission. They were also briefed about the PHR Act 1993, the broad contours of the functioning of the Commission including the Law and Investigation Divisions as well as the complaints management system. They were also administered the human rights pledge.



▶ Visiting students and faculties of Shri Venkateshwara University, Andhra Pradesh, VIT School of Law, Tamil Nadu and Vaikunta Baliga College of Law, Karnataka.

# 29<sup>th</sup> Annual NHRC debate competition for CAPFs



► The dignitaries attending the Debate Competition

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India organised an annual debate competition for the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) on a human rights theme in Hindi and English languages since 1996. Each year, it collaborates with one of the CAPFs for this purpose. For the 29<sup>th</sup> edition of this debate competition in 2024, it partnered with the Border Security Force (BSF). The final round of the competition was held on 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2024. The topic was 'Custodial death is not acceptable in any situation'. 16 finalists debated for and against the motion.

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) lifted the overall best team rolling trophy. Among the individual honours, the first prize for debate in Hindi went to Tina Sangwan, Constable, ITBP and in English to Rosela Sangtam, Constable, Assam Rifles. The second prize in Hindi went to Rahul Kumar, Sub Inspector, CISF and in English to Akshay Badola, Assistant Commandant, CISF. The third prize in Hindi went to Kanha Joshi, Assistant Commandant, CISF and in English it went to Bhaskar Chaudhary, Assistant Commandant, CISF. Besides the certificates and a memento, the first, second, and third prize



► NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani presenting the rolling trophy to the CISF team

winners were also given cash awards of Rs. 12,000/-, Rs. 10,000/- and Rs. 8,000/- each respectively.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion as the Chief Guest, the NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, congratulating the winners and all the participants of the debate, said that young officers' participation demonstrated their deep understanding of the concept of human rights. She appreciated the role of the CAPFs saying that they are among the first respondents to natural disasters, providing aid, rescuing civilians and ensuring that basic human rights, such as access to food, shelter and medical care are provided to the affected people during emergencies. Their involvement in rescue operations in natural calamities highlights their commitment to humanitarian service.

The NHRC, India Acting Chairperson also said that the CAPFs work in very hostile situations, maintaining peace without excessive use of force. Any misuse of power can lead to allegations against them. Therefore, despite such challenges, restraint and adherence to human rights by them is essential. Further, she said that custodial death is never acceptable, as it represents a severe violation of human rights and the legal principles of the nation.

The winners were decided by a Jury comprising Smt Jyotika Kalra, Former Member, NHRC, India, as the Chief of the Jury and Prof Dr G. S. Bajpai, Vice Chancellor, NLU, Delhi and Dr Ish Kumar, Former Director General, Vigilance & Enforcement, Telangana as members. Smt Jyotika Kalra commended the efforts of the winners

and participants for bringing out well-researched presentations on the topic, adding value to the standard of the competition. She urged the officers to use the debate presentation videos and make it part of their training programme. The BSF IG, Shri Raja Babu Singh and NHRC DIG, Ms Kim commended the participants.

She particularly lauded the CAPFs for encouraging participants from all ranks of their security personnel. She also thanked the BSF for extending support to the Commission in organising this debate competition successfully.

## Gender sensitisation programme

On 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, the NHRC, India organised a gender sensitisation programme for its employees as part of the prevention of sexual harassment at workplace week observed from 2<sup>nd</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> December, 2024. In his address, Shri Bharat Lal, Secretary General, NHRC emphasised the importance of creating an enabling environment for women at the workplace.



► From left to right: NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Shri D.K Nim, Prof Jyoti Dogra Sood, Faculty of Law, University of Delhi, NHRC, India, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal, Registrar (Law), Shri Joginder Singh, and Joint Secretary, Smt Anita Sinha

He stressed that ensuring equality, respect, and inclusivity in the workplace is essential for the empowerment of women and the overall progress of society. Prof Jyoti Dogra Sood, Faculty of Law at the University of Delhi, conducted an interactive session on 'Upholding and Protecting the Dignity of Women at Workplaces.' She engaged the attendees in meaningful discussions, highlighting the legal frameworks, challenges, and best practices for safeguarding women's dignity in professional environments.

The programme was attended by Registrar (Law), Shri Joginder Singh, Joint Secretaries Smt Anita Sinha and Shri Devendra Kumar Nim, and other officers and staff.

## NHRC, India in the International Arena

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India continues to engage with various international programmes to foster an 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 the functioning of the Commission for the promotion and protection of human rights. The Commission's Chairperson, Members and other senior officers also visit various international forums to share their thoughts on the achievements of the Commission, interact with other NHRIs, and discuss the challenges to human rights in the fast-evolving world.

### Delegation visits to NHRC, India

- i.) On 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, Ms Renata Alt, Member of the German Parliament and Chairperson of Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid met the Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal, wherein Shri D. K. Nim, Joint Secretary was also present.



► Ms Renata Alt, Member of the German Parliament and Chairperson of Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid meeting the NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal

ii.) On 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, a 14-member delegation from the New Jersey-India Commission (NJIC), USA, visited the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India and met the Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal. The delegation was led by Mr Wesley Mathews, Chair, and Mr Rajpal Singh Bath, Executive Director of NJIC.

Shri Bharat Lal highlighted India's deep-rooted ethos of valuing human rights, drawing attention to its centuries-old traditions of empathy, compassion, and non-violence. He noted that India, one of the world's oldest civilisations and the birthplace of four major religions, has consistently upheld the principles of human dignity. Emphasising the nation's belief in the concept of a global family, he remarked

that India has never initiated war, reflecting its commitment to peace.

He pointed out that equality and justice are integral to India's values, which are also reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, where India played a significant role. The Indian Constitution enshrines equal political rights and places a strong emphasis on safeguarding human rights, particularly for women, marginalised communities, and ensuring access to essential needs. Shri Lal further noted that India has a robust framework for women's empowerment, environmental protection, and a judiciary dedicated to upholding fundamental rights. He concluded by commending the National Human Rights Commission for its effective functioning in promoting and protecting human rights across the country.



► Visiting delegation of the New Jersey-India Commission (NJIC), USA with the NHRC, India Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal

## Latest NHRC publications

### NHRC India Journal 2024

The annual English journal of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India is being published since 2002 as part of the Commission's statutory responsibility to spread human rights literacy and awareness under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. It has been a treasure trove of knowledge on various human rights issues. The 23<sup>rd</sup> edition of this journal carries 13 research-based articles by eminent scholars,



domain experts, former civil servants, and others providing insights on numerous human rights issues. These include the institutional Framework for Protection of Human Rights in India, The Evolution of Transgender Rights and the Changing Healthcare Landscape in India, Knowledge-based Technologies and Human Rights, Emerging Mental Health Issues in India, Inclusive Governance and Human Rights, New Criminal Laws: Focusing on Delivery of Justice, among others.

## Hindi Journal Nayi Dishayein

The NHRC's Hindi Journal Nayi Dishayein (volume 21) is being published since 2004. Like the English journal, it also carries articles in Hindi on various aspects of human rights. Every issue of this priced publication has a theme and this year it is based on the international dimensions of human rights. The 20 research-based articles focus on various aspects which have international dimensions like water crisis, war and violence, climate and the ill effects of climate change on human rights, among others. Additionally, this publication also carries poems, stories, and book reviews on the issues of human rights.

## Compendium of NHRC advisories to protect human rights

The Commission released a compendium of its 13 advisories issued to the Centre, States & UTs during 2021-24 to protect the human rights and the welfare of various vulnerable segments of society. These include: Advisory for the Protec-



tion and Rehabilitation of Impoverished, Uneducated Children, Women, and Differently-abled Individuals Engaged in Begging, Advisory on the Protection of Human Rights of the Widows, Advisory for Protection of the Rights of Children Against Production, Distribution and Consumption of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), Advisory on Mental Health, Advisory for Ensuring the Welfare of Transgender Persons, Advisory to Mitigate Deliberate Self Harm and Suicide Attempts by Prisoners, Advisory to Prevent, Minimize and Mitigate Ocular Trauma, Advisory to Prevent Human Rights of Truck Drivers, Advisory to Prevent, Minimize and Mitigate Impacts of Environmental Pollution and Degradation on Human Rights, Advisory on Identification, Treatment, Rehabilitation and Elimination of Discrimination of Persons Affected by Leprosy, Advisory 2.0 to Identify, Release and Rehabilitate Bonded Labourers, Advisory on Right to Food Security and Nutrition, and Advisory on the Protection of Human Rights of the Person Engaged in Manual Scavenging or Hazardous Cleaning.

## Awards



► NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani addressing the awards function

In the run-up to the foundation day of the NHRC, India a painting competition was organised for the children of its employees. The winners in three categories of their academic standards were presented the awards by the Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani and Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal in the presence of senior officers.

The meritorious students of the staff scoring more than 90% in 10th and





► Meritorious students of NHRC employees and winners of the painting and slogan writing competitions

12th standard were also felicitated besides the staff who won the slogan writing competition on the Swachhata theme.

Congratulating the award-winning children, the Acting Chairperson and Secretary General encouraged them to further excel by hard work and imbibing good values in life. On the occasion, the winners of the slogan writing competition on Swachhata were also awarded.

## News from State Human Rights Commissions

The promotion and protection of human rights is always a work in progress given the ever-expanding dimensions of human life and related challenges. In India, besides the democratically elected governments constitutionally committed to ensuring the welfare of the people by protecting their basic human rights, there are institutions of the legislature, judiciary, a vibrant media, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and State Human Rights Commissions (SHRCs), as well as the other National Commissions and their state counterparts working as watchdogs of rights issues of various segments of society. The State Human Rights Commissions organised various activities to mark Human Rights Day on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2024. This column intends to highlight the exceptional activities of the SHRCs undertaken to protect and promote human rights.

### Himachal Pradesh State Human Rights Commission

The Himachal Pradesh State Human Rights Commission (HPSHRC) was established in the year 1993. The HPSHRC is headed by the Chairperson, Justice Shri P.S. Rana. From 2020 to 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2024, the HPSHRC has disposed of 2,319 cases and has recommended compensation of more than Rs. 1 crore and 32 lakh in various cases of human rights violations.

### Punjab State Human Rights Commission

On 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, Punjab State Human Rights Commission (PSHRC) Chairperson, Justice Shri Sant Parkash conducted a follow-up visit to the Central Jail in Amritsar. The visit aimed to review progress on issues raised during his previous inspection in August, 2023. Justice Sant Parkash reviewed the conditions of 3,948 inmates, including 3,788 males, 160 females, and six minor children residing with their mothers.

He interacted with the inmates, listened to their grievances, and informed them about their legal rights. During the visit, he also inspected the jail's kitchen and tasted the food being served, expressing satisfaction with its quality. The Civil Surgeon updated the Chairperson on the jail's healthcare system, noting the presence of four permanent doctors and visiting specialists. Several inmate grievances were addressed on-site, and Justice Sant Parkash directed concerned officers to resolve the issues promptly.

On 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, the PSHRC organised an event to commemorate the Shaheedi Diwas of the Sahibzade of Guru Govind Singh. The event reflected the spirit of selfless service and reverence for their supreme sacrifices, inspiring everyone to uphold the values of compassion, humility, and humanity.

### Karnataka State Human Rights Commission

From 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2022 to 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2024, the Karnataka State Human Rights Commission (KSHRC) recommended compensation of Rs. 245 lakh in 33 cases pertaining to human rights violations. Most of the cases pertained to judicial custody deaths.

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# Voices of the victims

**T**he National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has brought succour to several victims of human rights violations or their next of kin through its interventions since its inception on 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1993. This column carries a brief extract of the voices of such victims who have been the beneficiaries of the NHRC's recommendations implemented by the different government authorities.

## Denial of college admission due to non-submission of caste certificate

(Case No. 3484/30/0/2024)

The complainant, a student from the SC category, alleged that despite scoring 91% in the 12th Class and 675 out of 800 in the CUET exam, his admission to the B.Com (Hons) program at Ramjas College, Delhi University, was unjustly cancelled stating non-submission of Caste Certificate. The complainant had

provided the acknowledgement receipt of his application for issuing the Caste Certificate to the college authorities requesting them for consideration as the certificate was delayed due to the SDM being on leave. He also requested that till his caste certificate is issued, his father's Caste Certificate may be considered as proof of his caste instead of cancelling his admission and disqualifying him for consideration by the other colleges. After the notices of the Commission to the concerned authorities in the matter, his problem has been resolved. He has conveyed his gratitude to the Commission for its intervention.

## Withholding Master's Degree for three years

(Case No. 983/36/8/2024)

The matter pertained to the non-issuance of a degree even after three years of completing her master's in

dental surgery (MDS) from the Meghna Institute of Dental Sciences, Mallaram, Telangana. The College did not issue her MDS certificate despite the directions of the High Court. The college authorities also withheld her original certificates of tenth and graduation due to which the victim student was unable to apply for jobs. The complainant, when approached the Commission on 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2024, also alleged that the college officials were demanding an amount of Rs. 2 lakh to release the certificates. After the intervention of the Commission in the matter and notices issued to the concerned authorities, her master's degree and other original certificates were released for which she has expressed her gratitude for the Commission's swift action stating that it has also helped the other students who were facing similar problem with the institution.

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# News in brief

- i.) On 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2024, NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt Anita Sinha visited Lakshya Trust Garima Greh Shelter in Vadodara, Gujarat set up under the Centre's SMILE scheme for transgender persons. The visit aimed to understand their challenges and identify areas for improvement.
- ii.) On 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2024, NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt. Anita Sinha visited Garima Greh Shelters in the state of Gujarat to evaluate/ study the functioning of the shelters.
- iii.) On 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chair-person, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani addressed a session on 'Human Rights Law- Indian Perspective' organised by Debate & Discussion Society, CLC, Delhi University in collaboration with the Bhartiya Human Rights Initiative on Marginalized (BHIM).  
Shri Joginder Singh, Registrar (Law) was also present.
- iv.) On 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, Secretary General, NHRC Shri Bharat Lal addressed the 3rd India Japan Forum by the Ananta Centre & MEA at Imperial Hotel, New Delhi.
- v.) On 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, NHRC, India Joint Secretary, Smt Anita Sinha delivered a keynote address at a consultation organised in New Delhi to mark 10 years of the landmark NALSA vs. Union of India (2014) judgment. Smt Sinha highlighted NHRC's efforts to ensure the promotion and protection of the human rights of transgender communities through Core Group consultations, advisories, and field visits to Garima Grehs to suggest improvements. The event, organised by Humsafar Trust with support from UNDP, the National Network for Transgender

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Persons, and TRANScend, brought together experts & advocates to discuss progress and challenges in advancing transgender rights.

- vi.) On 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani attended the seafarers conference at Gurajada Educational Society, Srikakulam and the Symposium Women Safety & Security organised by the Vivekananda Medical Trust, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.
- vii.) On 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani addressed a Conference on Women's Safety & Security at the Gurajada Educational Society, Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh. The event, organised by Sevabharathi, brought together 60 women from diverse sectors to discuss the challenges faced by women. The discussions emphasised the need for them to overcome their inhibitions about self-sufficiency and self-reliance, increasing institutional safety measures and family support, self-defense training and building awareness among them.
- ix.) On 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani inaugurated the 8th National Annual Symposium of Women's Mental Health, organised by the Women's Mental Health Speciality Section, Lady Hardinge Medical College & Delhi Psychiatry Society in New Delhi. She highlighted NHRC's role in bridging mental health & human rights, focusing on societal, cultural, and interventions to ensure equal access to mental health services for women, regardless of socio-economic background.
- x.) On 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, the Commission established the Krav Maga Society, which will be led by the Chairperson of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC). The Society, along with its office bearers, will function under the guidance and supervision of the ICC Chairperson. It will organise monthly or fortnightly meetings that include training sessions for those wishing to learn self-defense techniques.
- v.) On 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, Shri R. Prasad Meena joined the NHRC, India as the Director General (Investigation). He is a 1993-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre. Prior to joining the Commission, he was working as the Special Director General in the Border Security Force (BSF). He has an MBBS from the University of

Rajasthan in 1989. He has done his Master's in Police Management from Osmania University, Hyderabad and M.Sc. in Global Security from Cranfield University, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom. He has served in various capacities in his cadre states and central government. He has received the Police Medal for Gallantry, Police (Internal Security Duty) Medal, Police (Special Duty) Medal, Police Medal for Meritorious Service on Republic Day - 2009, Ati Utkrisht Seva Padak on the occasion of Independence Day - 2020, and President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service on the occasion of Republic Day - 2021.

- xi.) On 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, NHRC, Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal addressed the programme organised by the Action Aid to felicitate the community-based human rights defenders at the Vishva Yuvak Kendra, Chanakya Puri, New Delhi.
- xii.) On 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2024, NHRC, India Acting Chairperson, Smt Vijaya Bharathi Sayani delivered the inaugural address at the National Law University, Delhi as the Chief Guest of a Debate Competition, as a part of Human Rights Day, on the topic "UDHR: A Timeless Charter Or An Outdated Ideal", which was organised by NLU Delhi, Amity University, Haryana and the NGO- Call for Justice. Justice Shri M. M. Kumar, former Member, NHRC was the Guest of Honour. Students of both Universities participated in the Debate Competition.

## Forthcoming events

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2025</b> | The Commission will organise an open house discussion on 'Dignity and Liberty of the Individuals- Rights of Manual Scavengers' in hybrid mode at its premises. |
| <b>3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2025</b> | The Commission will organise the first NHRC- NLSIU Moot Court Competition at the National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bengaluru.                   |
| <b>7<sup>th</sup> January, 2025</b> | The Commission will organise a moot court competition at IIT, Kharagpur, West Bengal.  |

# Human rights and NHRC in news



## Complaints in December, 2024

Number of fresh complaints received	4,041
Number of cases disposed of including old cases	3,762
Number of cases under consideration of the Commission	7,141



सर्वे  
भवन्तु सुखिनः

## National Human Rights Commission

### Important telephone numbers of the NHRC for filing complaints

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

For Filing online complaints: [www.nhrc.nic.in](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)

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