

**Address by Member Justice P.C.Pant on the
Human Rights Day Function, 10th December 2020**

Esteemed Chief Guest for this morning – Hon’ble Minister of State for Home Affairs Shri Nityanand Rai ji, Members of the Commission – Smt Jyotika Kalra and Dr.D.M.Mulay, Secretary General, Shri B Pradhan Ms. Shoko Noda, Resident Representative, UNDP , Registrar, Surajit Dey, Joint Secretaries, Shri Khandelwal and Smt. Anita Sinha, DIG Smt. Manzil Saini and other dignitaries present today,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2. On behalf of National Human Rights Commission, I extend a very warm welcome to all of you on this ‘International Human Rights Day’. I am grateful to Hon’ble Minister of the State for Home Affairs, Shri Nityanand Rai Ji for having spared his valuable time to join us virtually on this occasion. His presence today reflects his concern and commitment for protection of human rights of all the people. We are indeed grateful to Shri Nityanand Rai Ji for his support to the Commission.

3. This year has been very tough globally for humanity, due to COVID-19 pandemic, requiring a cohesive response from the public health care system as well as from the general public. The success of the public health care system’s response, in dealing with this grave situation, depends on how deep-rooted are our fundamentals for respecting the human rights. It is a

time to reaffirm our commitment that human rights should form the basis of all the State policies.

4. Human Rights Day, as 10th December is widely known, signifies the adoption of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. The Declaration is an embodiment of the aspirations of people across the world for ensuring Life, Liberty, Equality, Dignity of individuals and Peaceful coexistence.

5. Universal Declaration of Human Rights continues to be the most important and far-reaching of all UN declarations, and a source of inspiration for national and international efforts, for promoting and protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms. It provides a fundamental philosophy on the basis of which, several legally-binding international instruments have been adopted, by most of the countries including India. UDHR has enriched and expanded the scope of human rights and promoted dynamic outlook.

6. In addition, the core fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution to the people of India, namely, right to life, right to liberty, right to equality, right against discrimination, right to freedom of religion, rights to preserve culture and the right to constitutional remedies, form the bedrock of our constitutional democracy.

7. NHRC India, since its inception on 12th October 1993, has consistently endeavoured to broaden the ambit of human rights, with the

challenges of changing times towards the protection of the basic rights of the people, to secure goals of Justice - social, economic and political, and liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship of the citizens and encouraging fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual.

8. The Commission's constant endeavour over the last 27 years has been to make itself as much accessible to the people as possible. But extraordinary time requires extraordinary response. The Commission has also responded to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic by moving in this year most of its activities from the offline mode to the online mode.

9. It has tried to reach out to people from all walks of life, including those living in the remotest parts of the country. In order to expand its outreach, the Commission has integrated its online complaint filing system with common service portal of Government of India, which was very useful during this pandemic. It has also encouraged State Governments and authorities to submit their reports online which has helped in speedy decision making and redressal of grievances.

10. The Commission made significant contributions in mainstreaming a human rights-centred approach, in all the government policies during these testing times. As told by Secretary General, deeply concerned about the rights of the vulnerable and marginalized sections of the society, and migrants workers who have been impacted by the COVID-19 and the resultant lockdown, the Commission, based on advice of experts has issued as many as twelve advisories on key human rights issues particularly,

concerning rights of women and children, rights of prisoners, right to health, rights of informal workers, persons with disabilities, food security and nutrition, right to mental health, right of LGBTQI+ Community, and on Business & Human Rights.

11. To create human rights awareness, the Commission continues to bring out various publications such as its monthly newsletter and annual journal, both in English and Hindi. This year the Commission organized its coveted internship programmes for university students through virtual mode using online platform. The Commission also launched its Twitter handle, and got official status to it, which resulted in expanding its outreach to people. To promote and acknowledge cinematic and creative efforts in the field of human rights, the Commission like previous year, continued to give awards for Short Films under its Award Scheme.

12. All these efforts of the Commission, to create awareness in the society have shown remarkable results. The Commission which received only 496 complaints in the first year of its establishment, now during the year 2019-20 (upto 31.3.2020) it registered staggering 76,628 (Seventy-six Thousand Six Hundred and Twenty-eight) complaints for redressal of the grievances. During the period 01.04.2020 to 30.11.2020 i.e. last eight months, while various parts of the country were impacted by COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission registered 46,544 complaints, and disposed of 49,759, i.e. more three thousand more than the instituted and in 182 cases awarded compensation of Rs. 4,75,25,000/- to the families of victims. In 32 cases of human rights violation, *suo moto* cognizance is taken. Enormous increase in

the number of complaints and disposal is indicative of the awareness of Human Rights among the people and as also their growing faith in the Commission. Also, this year we attempted to clear old cases as much as possible.

13. At the international level too, our Commission which is an 'A' Accredited NHRI has continued to play an active role in the promotion and protection of human rights. The Commission is a Member of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions Bureau, which is an important policy setting body of GANHRI. National Human Rights Commission of India is also a Founder Member of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (APF).

14. On this significant day, let us pledge to rededicate ourselves to achieve a just and equitable society, by upholding the principles and ideals enshrined in our Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to protect and promote human dignity of all citizens of the country.

15. I once again extend my sincere gratitude to our esteemed Chief Guest this evening, Shri Nityanand Rai Ji, and look forward to hear his thoughts on this occasion of international importance.

Thank You

Jai Hind