

NHRC/CIVIL SOCIETY - 2002

Compiled By
K. SAMU

Human Rights Documentation,
Indian Social Institute, Lodi Road, New Delhi, India

ALL HRCs must tie up: NHRC Chief (1)

NEW DELHI: The chief of National Human Rights Commission and the country's former CJI, Justice J S Verma has suggested that the government should consider tying up the central rights body with the states' commissions through networking. It shall help avoid duplication of justice and rulings when a case dealt at one level need not be handled at another in the country. While delivering the keynote address recently at the panel discussion on "Human Rights Concerns for the Marginalised Groups" at the Electronic Media Production Centre of Indira Gandhi National Open University, he also stressed upon the need for handling the rights problems through regional languages in the respective states. (Hindu 1.1.02)

NHRC chief criticizes government on new Poto (1)

New Delhi, Jan. 2: The chairman of National Human Rights Commission, Justice J.S. Verma, on Wednesday expressed the commission's displeasure over the promulgation of Poto and said that "terrorism needs to be combated under the rule of law. Talking to journalists here after releasing the NHRC calendar, the first in the eight years of its existence which contains the commission's point of view on various issues, Justice Verma said the NHRC's stand has even been corroborated by the representatives of UNHCR. He said the amended Ordinance still has provisions like those governing the granting of bail and recording of testimonials which could be misused. (Asian Age 3.1.01)

Jaitley takes on human rights activists (1)

NEW DELHI: Union law minister Arun Jaitley used the forum of an Indo-British seminar on Human Rights: A Challenge to the Legal Landscape to criticise human rights activists. He asked them not to fall for so called state repression often raised by terrorist outfits to defend themselves. Jaitley said terrorists term state and its different wings – the police and Army – instruments of suppression of human rights. But they themselves disregard the rights of civilized society, he added. He warned human rights activists that terrorists were hijacking their agenda to further their illegal acts. (Times of India 7.1.02)

Panel for enlarging scope of fundamental rights (1)

NEW DELHI, JAN: The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution has recommended providing free elementary education to children as a fundamental right under the Constitution. The Commission has suggested that a new 'clause' be added to Article 30 to ensure that "every child shall have a right to free elementary education of quality until he/she completes the age of 14 years". The same Article will have another provision to ensure that "every person shall have the right to education beyond 14 years within the limits of economic capacity and development of the State". The recommendations, to be submitted to the Government, have been finalised by the commission after the sub-committee headed by the Attorney General, Soli Sorabjee, prepared the study paper. It includes right to prevention of pollution, conservation of ecology and sustainable development as a fundamental right. (Hindu 7.1.02)

Human rights forum picks holes in POTO (1)

VISAKHAPATNAM : The Human Rights Forum (HRF) has described the repromulgation of Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) by the Central Government as 'abuse of Constitutional power.' Addressing a press conference here on Sunday, K. Balagopal, State committee member of HRF, said though the provision prescribing punishment for anyone failing to divulge to police any information relating to terrorists had been omitted under pressure from the media, other provisions of the ordinance 'equally harmful to press freedom. (Hindu 7.1.02)

NHRC modifies order (1)

NEW DELHI: The National Human Rights Commission on Wednesday modified its 1995 order on videography of autopsy in cases of custodial deaths. Commission chairperson Justice J S Verma in a letter to chief ministers and chief administrators on December 21 last year has now directed that the

requirement of videography of postmortem examination in respect of death in jail would be applicable only when the preliminary inquest by the magistrate had raised suspicion of some foul play or where a complaint alleging foul play is made. However, NHRC's instructions regarding videography of postmortem examination would remain in force as earlier. (Times of India 10.1.02)

NHRC relaxes custodial death follow-up rules (1)

New Delhi: IN A significant ruling, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has relaxed the rules regarding compulsory videography of post-mortem examination in cases of custodial deaths. The NHRC has however, made it mandatory only in cases of 'death in jails' where there is suspicion or complaint of foul play. Compulsory videography of all 'deaths in police custody' would remain in force. The NHRC Chairperson, Justice J S Verma, recently wrote a letter to the chief ministers and chief administrators of all states and union territories, regarding the commission's instructions regarding compulsory videography. (Pioneer 11.1.02)

NHRC tells Andhra to compensate 4 rape victims (1)

New Delhi, Jan. 12: The National Human Rights Commission has directed the Andhra Pradesh government to pay monetary and other compensation to four young women who were raped in the state. The NHRC had directed the state in May 2001 to pay the compensation to the women, notwithstanding the objections raised by the state. In 1998, Dr P. Pullarao, an economist and social activist from the state, had petitioned to the commission on the rape of four young girls, two of whom were mentally and even physically challenged and the other two suffered depression due to the social ostracism and pressures. (Asian Age 13.1.02)

Report denounces human rights violations in Tibet (1)

New Delhi, Jan. 15: The Dharamsala-based Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy has alleged in its annual report that the human rights situation in Tibet is very serious. "The evidence of these violations fly in the face of the Chinese government propaganda, which advertised an improvement in the living conditions and human rights situation in Tibet in 2001." According to a TCHRD-spokesperson, "Drawing primarily on testimonies of a recent batch refugees, the report, which was released recently, details massive human rights violations in the past 12 months." (Asian Age 16.1.02)

Rights panel for inquiry into vitamin deaths (1)

GUWAHATI: The case of deaths of 31 children last November, after the UNICEF-sponsored vitamin A was administered to them, took a new turn Thursday when the Assam Human Rights Commission took a prima facie cognition of the incident. While delivering the judgment, the rights panel observed that ".... there existed a strong prima facie case that some of the children died due to vitamin A administration". The panel's chairperson Justice R K Manisana Singh and a member Abdul Mazid said the statements made by the UNICEF and others that the deaths were coincidental were not wholly true as 23 of 31 dead children had been administered vitamin A. Thus it could not be wholly coincidental, the rights panel added. (Times of India 18.1.02)

NHRC issues notices on revision of textbooks (1)

New Delhi: THE NATIONAL Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notice to Ministry of Human Resource & Development (HRD) and NCERT in connection with revision of textbooks for children. Acting on a petition filed by some educationist alleging that the revision of textbooks for children's education was likely to adversely affect their development and their personality, the NHRC has issued notice to Ministry of HRD and the NCERT and asked them to file then-replies within eight weeks. The NHRC had received a complaint on January 8, from educationist asking the commission to look into printing of history textbooks which they felt were undemocratic, non-secular. The petitioner said that the old textbooks should be continued for 2002 till historical reality and facts were brought into rewriting of history textbooks. (Pioneer 23.1.02)

Civil rights body urges probe into attack (1)

Ahmedabad: The Police lathi-charge on earthquake victims and arrest of leaders of NGO at Bachau on the eve of Republic Day is snowballing into a major issue with the People's Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL) demanding a judicial inquiry into the incidents of police repression and widespread corruption in Kutch earthquake relief work. In similar letters to the President, Union Home Minister, the National Human

Rights Commission (NHRC), the Gujarat Governor and others, the PUCL has demanded that the probe should be conducted by a retired Supreme Court judge. The PUCL has also demanded that the Kutch District Collector be transferred as he is reported to have threatened to book the NGOs workers under PASA. (Hindustan Times 7.2.02)

NHRC to Railways: Protect women (1)

New Delhi, Feb. 9: The National Human Rights Commission has issued directions to the railway ministry for protection of women in trains against sexual harassment. The commission has called for a report on the issue from the chairman, railway board, with full particulars for further consideration by the commission. Meanwhile, it has directed the railway board to ensure that FIR forms are easily available and public is provided complete information about the procedure to be followed in filing FIRs in running trains. FIR forms should also be made available in all the languages relevant to the routes concerned. (Asian Age 10.2.02)

Acid-burn victim may move NHRC (1)

New Delhi, February 15: ANIL KUMAR Singh, the acid-burn victim who lost his left eyeball during a plastic surgery at Safdarjung Hospital, is planning to file a petition with the National Human Rights Commission. Singh, recuperating at his Khanpur residence, said he would also approach his seniors at the Indo-Tibetan Border Police to take up the case. Singh told the Hindustan Times on Thursday that whatever chance he had of getting back vision in the left eye had vanished. "I am not sure whether I would be allowed to carry on with my job. I have a wife and two children to feed. Sometimes, I feel there is no way but to commit suicide," Singh said. The jawan's eye surgeon, Dr M K Gupta, said the first thing to do now is to correct the vision in his right eye. (HT 16.2.02)

NHRC eye on Hardwar jail over graft (1)

ROSHANABAD Jail of Hardwar has a claim to notoriety. After Phoolan Devi's murder on July 25, 2001, in New Delhi, it had provided prime accused, Sher Singh Rana, the ultimate alibi: He had got someone lodged in the jail posing as him at the time of the murder. While no action has yet been taken on the matter, the prison is back in the news. This time it is under the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) scanner over allegations of "massive corruption" and "rampant human rights violations". For the past week, inmates of the prison have twice clashed with the jail staff, leading to injuries to many of them. Each side has levelled charges of misconduct and corruption against each other. Meanwhile, sources say NHRC has served notices on Uttaranchal, giving it six weeks to reply to complaints by an anti-corruption pressure group. It had accused jail officials of corruption and said inmates lived in inhuman conditions and faced sexual abuse. J.E Pandey of Corruption Elimination Council alleged liquor openly flowed in jail. (IE 19.2.02)

NHRC chief condemns unjustified arrests (1)

MUMBAI, FEB. 22. The National Human Rights Commission Chairperson, J. S. Verma, today came down heavily on "needless" and "unnecessary" arrests by the police "simply because they have the authority" without being accountable for them or justifying them. This was happening despite two Supreme Court judgments in 1994 and 1997 which wanted arrests to be justifiable. Delivering the 20th Kuma-rappa — Reckless Lecture at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences here today, Mr. Justice Verma spoke of how the apex court had enumerated the ways of arrests and mere "power to arrest was not enough or proper; it also needs to be justified." He linked this habit of arrests without justification to overcrowding in jails which undermined the human rights of the inmates. (Hindu 23.2.02)

NHRC help sought to save quarry workers (1)

NEW DELHI, FEB. 25. The CITU has sought the intervention of the,, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on the alleged atrocities being perpetrated by the police and district administration on the 10,000 families who depend on stone quarrying in a village in Haryana. In a complaint filed before the commission today, the CITU said the quarry workers and villagers of Kahanak-Tosham area were opposing extortion by armed musclemen. On February 2, when the quarry workers took out a peaceful procession to protest against this, they were brutally lathicharged causing injuries to several hundred workers, including women and children. (Hindu 26.2.02)

NHRC issues notice to Gujarat DGP (1)

New Delhi: The National Human Rights Commission has taken suo motu cognisance of the escalating communal violence in Gujarat and issued a notice on Friday. While taking suo motu cognisance on the communal violence in Gujarat, the commission comprising Chairman Justice J.S. Verma, members Justice K. Ramaswamy, Justice Sujata V. Manohar and Virendra Dayal Said: This matter is registered for suo motu action on the basis of media reports both print and electronic. In addition a request on email has also been received requesting this commission to interfere. (Pioneer 2.3.02)

Shock therapy shocks rights watchdog (1)

Kolkata, March 6: UNLIKE IN Tamil Nadu, West Bengal's mental hospitals do not put patients in chains and allow them to get roasted alive. They only apply electric shocks to patients without anaesthetising them first. West Bengal is one of six states pulled up by the National Human Rights Commission for using Electro Convulsive Therapy (ECT) on mentally ill patients in state-run asylums. The rights body has submitted its report to the Supreme Court. In ECT - shock therapy in common parlance - an electric current is passed through the patient's scalp. Doing so without anaesthesia may cause fractures, transient amnesia, memory loss and even death. All three government asylums in the state - the Institute of Psychiatry and Lumbini Park Hospital in Kolkata, and Berhampur Mental Hospital in Murshidabad - have been found to recklessly use ECT without conforming to medical guidelines. The NHRC survey of quality assurance in mental health came after the NGO Sarthak moved the Supreme Court in the wake of the Tamil Nadu incident. (Hindustan Times 7.3.02)

NHRC pulls up Gujarat for failing to file a report (1)

New Delhi, March 7: The National Human Rights Commission has expressed its displeasure over the attitude of the Gujarat government on the notice served to it a few days back. After a full commission meeting held here on Wednesday which took stock of the Gujarat developments and also analysed the reported remarks of chief minister Narendra Modi and other senior officials on the carnage, which have been reported in the media, the commission said: "The NHRC has been constrained to record its disappointment that even a preliminary report indicating the action so far taken by the Gujarat government has not yet been sent to the commission in a matter of such urgency and significance, even when the unfortunate incidents have led the Prime Minister also to describe the happenings as a matter of national shame." (Asian Age 8.3.02)

NHRC seeks report on DNA fudge (1)

NEW DELHI: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought an action taken report from the Jammu and Kashmir government on the allegedly fudged DNA samples of five persons killed by security forces after the Chittisingpora massacre in Anantnag in March 2000. In a notice to both the Centre and the state government, the NHRC has described the media reports on the incident as disturbing. It has asked the government to submit the report within two months. The media reports appear to suggest that the action taken earlier for collection of samples for DNA testing was defective for which the persons taking the samples were supposed to be responsible the NHRC said. (TOI 15.3.02)

NHRC still waiting for state govt riot report (1)

NEW DELHI, MARCH 14: DESPITE the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) directing the Gujarat government to do so several times, it has not submitted a comprehensive report on the recent communal riots yet. The Commission had noted on March 6 that it was "constrained to record its disappointment" on the matter "even when the unfortunate incidents have led the Prime Minister to describe the happenings as matter of National shame". A preliminary report has been sent after NHRC rapped the Government and directed the Chief Secretary to file it. A full Commission including chairman J.S. Verma, members Justice K. Ramaswamy, Justice Sujata Manohar and Virendra Dayal met to discuss the preliminary report, the contents of which have not been disclosed so far. The NHRC had taken a suo motu note of the media reports which it found "distressing" and pointed out that "the needful has not been done completely by the administration". A notice had been issued to the Gujarat government on March 1 asking the Chief Secretary and Director General of Police for their reply within three days indicating the measures taken and in contemplation to prevent further escalation of the situation in the State "which is resulting in continued violation of human rights". (Indian Exp 15.3.02)

Amnesty blasts US for human rights violation (1)

March. 15. — Amnesty International has accused the United States of violating the human rights of many of the foreigners arrested in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. In a highly critical report, the human rights group said six months after the attacks, a significant number of people detained continue to be deprived of some of their basic rights under international law and many "appeared" to have been detained arbitrarily. Amnesty said its report was based on numerous interviews with attorneys, detainees, relatives and visits to two jails. The Amnesty said it is concerned that detainees are routinely shackled when taken to court. Detainees in the Metropolitan Detention Centre in New York are made to wear full shackles when appearing before immigration judges (during hearings which take place within the facility) - in "direct contravention of international standards". (Statesman 16.3.02)

UN rights chief concerned (1)

New Delhi, March 16: United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson has expressed concern over the Gujarat carnage, maintaining that she would monitor the situation to see how the violence was being handled by the Indian authorities. Ms Robinson's "I have been very concerned about the killings in Gujarat" comment was made during a three-day visit to Pakistan. She said, "I will take the opportunity while I am in the region to closely see how it (violence) is being dealt with by the authorities in India." It is not clear, however, whether the carnage will figure in the 58th human rights talk show beginning in Geneva from April. The violence in Gujarat has made headlines the world, over with leading newspapers in the US, UK and in Islamic countries devoting considerable space to the carnage. The Indian foreign office, which is aware of the media blitz, has been unable to counter it effectively although denials and clarifications are being issued, by the missions abroad to specific news items. (Asian Age 17.3.02)

Gujarat mob attacks NHRC delegation (1)

Ahmedabad, March 20: A delegation of the National Human Rights Commission, on a three-day visit to the state to probe the communal riots in the wake of the Godhra carnage, was attacked on Wednesday by a mob that allegedly belonged to the Sangh Parivar. Justice J.S. Verma's car was gheraoed on the premises of Circuit House Annexe C around 7 pm after the delegation concluded a meeting with representatives of various non-government organisations. According to eyewitnesses, saffron-clad activists, about 20-30 in number, gheraoed the car as it was about to leave for a visit to one of the relief camps in the city. "They shouted slogans against the representatives of the commission and demanded that they be heard," said one of the representatives of the NGO. Human rights activist Father Cedric Prakash, who was also present on the spot, expressed shock over the incident. (Asian Age 21.3.02)

NHRC team takes stock of situation in Ahmedabad (1)

AHMEDABAD: Tears, anger and helplessness were written all over Ahmedabad on Tuesday when the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) team arrived here, three weeks after the communal violence first started. While a jittery state officialdom tried to explain to the NHRC team that it did all it could to contain the riots, the victims of the riots narrated quite another story — that of collusion among the political leadership, the rioters and the police. In an emotionally-charged atmosphere which brought forth an absolute lack of faith in the state machinery, the three-member NHRC team—retired chief justice of the Supreme Court J.S. Verma, commission's secretary-general P.C. Sen and special rapporteur Chaman Lal — spent its first day in the city holding closed-door meetings with officials, meeting delegations, holding an open-house session and visiting camps. Significantly, the members also met some victims of rape during the riots at a relief camp. (Times of India 21.3.02)

NHRC rejects Gujarat Govt. report (1)

AHMEDABAD, MARCH 21. Observing that a sense of insecurity still prevailed among the people in Gujarat, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) today rejected as "perfunctory" the preliminary report of the State Government on the recent violence and demanded a "more comprehensive" document in the next few days. "The situation in the State is far from normal. There is a sense of insecurity among the people," the NHRC Chairman, Justice J.S. Verma, told a news conference here. Mr. Justice Verma, who is on a three-day visit to the State, said he had told the Chief Minister, Naren-dra Modi, that the preliminary report was not comprehensive and was done perfunctorily. "We expect the State Government to file a comprehensive report on the situation in the next few days." He said the Commission would come

out with recommendations outlining measures to ensure that such incidents did not recur anywhere in the country. (Hindu 22.3.02)

Justice Verma to Modi: Where is the normalcy? (1)

AHMEDABAD, MARCH 21_: NORMALCY was still not visible in Gujarat despite the perception projected outside, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) said today, and rejected the "perfunctory report" of the Gujarat government on the recent violence in the state. It gave the government another four days to file a "more" comprehensive one. "We took suo motu notice of the developments in Gujarat after the incidents of violence began. We sent a notice to the state government on the basis of reports in the media. But the preliminary report was not comprehensive, it had lot of gaps and was done perfunctorily," NHRC chairman Justice (Retd) J S Verma told reporters here. (Indian Exp 22.3.02)

NHRC wants arrest break-up to probe bias in Gujarat govt (1)

NEW DELHI, MARCH24: THE National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has asked the Gujarat Government to give a detailed break-up of the number of people arrested from each community for allegedly inciting violence in order to "assess the impartiality of the administration." According to a senior NHRC official who accompanied chairman Justice J.S. Verma to Gujarat, the commission was told that the figures weren't available with the government, but would be provided to the NHRC soon. The Gujarat government's reply will shape the NHRC's response to the government's report, which the commission is expecting within the next four-five days. (Indian Exp 25.3.02)

Rights leader cries foul (1)

Calcutta: The International Human Rights Organisation has lodged a complaint against police high-handedness with the chairman of state Human Rights Commission and senior CPM leaders, including state general secretary Anil Biswas. According to Biplab Halim, general secretary of the Forum for West Bengal Voluntary Organisations and son of noted communist Abdul Halim, the incident took place early on Thursday. "At about 4.15 am, six men in police uniform and three others knocked on my main door. I was sleeping on the second floor. When asked what they wanted, the men told me they had come from Sonarpur police station as a warrant was pending against me." Initially, Halim refused to open the door because he thought they might be dacoits in police uniform. At this, the men abused him and threatened to come back. (Telegraph 30.3.02)

NHRC to submit preliminary report soon (1)

NEW DELHI: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) will first come up with a preliminary report on the Gujarat government's handling of the communal massacres in its state by the middle of next week. According to official sources, the commission members are still going through the "voluminous report." "Since NHRC chairperson Justice J S Verma and member Virender Dayal are going to Geneva next Friday to attend an international conference of human rights organisations, we will come up with only a preliminary report on the Gujarat government's response," said one official. The final report will come out only after Justice Verma returns. Commenting on the contents of the state government's report, the official said, "The Gujarat government has tried to justify everything that they did — be it the (late) deployment of army or police. They have also criticised the media for fomenting trouble." (TOI 31.3.02)

1st May 2002

Rights group slams Sangh Parivar for Gujarat riots (1)

WASHINGTON: Alleging that police personnel in Gujarat were directly involved in the killings of hundreds of Muslims, the New York-based Human Rights Watch organisation has urged the international community to put pressure on the Indian government to end "orchestrated violence against Indian minorities." In a searing 75-page report, released on Tuesday, Human Rights Watch also named the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Bajrang Dal, the RSS and the BJP, collectively known as the Sangh Parivar, as the "groups most directly involved in the violence against Muslims." The report said the Gujarat administration has been engaged in a massive cover-up of the state's role in the massacres and that of the Sangh Parivar. The HRW said numerous police reports filed by eyewitnesses after the attacks have specifically named local VHP, BJP and Bajrang Dal leaders as instigators or participants in the violence. (Times of India 1.5.02)

2ND May 02

NHRC gives Modi Govt time to file more specific reply (1)

NEW DELHI, MAY 1: NOT satisfied with Gujarat's response to its initial report, the National Human Rights Commission today gave it two more weeks to file a "more specific" reply, failing which the initial findings of the NHRC Would be deemed correct. In its reply to the commission, submitted on April 13, Gujarat had rejected one of the key NHRC recommendations — of letting the CBI investigate Godhra and the killings in Gulbarga Society in Chamanpura, Naroda Patiya, Best Bakery in Vadodara and Sardarpura in Mehsana. The State contention was that it would be a waste of time since the Shah Commission was already looking into these incidents. The Ministry of Home Affairs, which also failed to meet April 30 deadline, finally filed its report this evening after it too was given another two weeks by the NHRC. (Indian Exp 2.5.02)

U.S. human rights officials meet NHRC member (1)

NEW DELHI, MAY 21. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has told U.S. top human rights officials that India was "quite capable" of looking after its minorities and, in fact, America should have a similar commission. A delegation of U.S. human rights officials, including the Assistant Secretary, Michael Parmly, dealing with racial affairs and human rights today met the NHRC member, Viren-der Dayal, the NHRC sources said. Besides discussing about the functioning of the Commission, the delegation wanted to know about the status and issues pertaining to the minority communities in the country, the sources said. Mr. Dayal made it clear that India was quite capable to deal with problems, if any, of the minorities and could take care of their interests and welfare. (Hindu 22.5.02)

22nd May

NHRC tells US: We can protect our minorities (1)

New Delhi, May 21: The National Human Rights Commission has categorically conveyed to the West that India is fully capable of looking after the interests of the country's minorities and there is no need for foreign intervention on the alleged human rights violations in the strife-torn state of Gujarat. While this message was clearly conveyed by the commission members present in Delhi to a visiting delegation of the US human rights officials at a meeting held here, the same was also aired by the commission chairperson Justice J.S. Verma (Retd.) in Chennai. It is learnt that the commission in Delhi had pointed out that due to pro-active judiciary and vibrant democracy in the country, India was capable of dealing with the issue of minorities. It was also suggested that since there is no country where human rights violations do not take place, a Human Rights Commission also be set up in the US. (Asian Age 22.5.02)

29th May

Amnesty blames police, armed groups (1)

New Delhi: Increasing vulnerability of socially and economically marginalised sections of society, Prevention of Terrorism Act, harassment of human rights defenders by police and abuses by armed groups — these are some of the issues for which India's human rights record has been severely criticised by the Amnesty International's 2002 annual report. The report also mentions the December 13 attack on Parliament and praised for taking an independent view in favour of the inclusion of caste discrimination as a form of racism at the Durban Conference as well as for criticising the enactment of Poto. The report, which was released on Tuesday, notes that "inter-caste and inter-religious tensions were often politically exploited, leading to a several violent incidents throughout the country in which police were believed to have taken a partisan role". (Times of India 29.5.02)

29th May

NHRC is just a post office on rights: Noorani (1)

New Delhi, May 28: India's stand over the reactions of some nations to the Gujarat carnage — that external interference is not called for — came in for a scathing attack by eminent jurist and columnist A.G. Noorani at a function marking the release of the annual report of Amnesty International in New Delhi on

Tuesday. Speaking on the topic "Human Rights and India's International Accountability," Mr Noorani said India has been practising a dual policy on the issue of human rights. He attacked National Human Rights Commission chairperson Justice J.S. Verma for his statement at Chennai recently that there was no need for foreign intervention on the alleged human rights violations in the strife-torn state of Gujarat. "Criticism is not intervention," Mr Noorani said. He also criticised Justice Verma for having gone to Geneva "almost" as a part of the government and having tried to persuade the international community for passing a resolution on Gujarat. (Asian Age 29.5.02)

4th June

Rights panel summons over Civic neglect (1)

JAIPUR, JUNE 3. The Rajasthan State Human Rights Commission today summoned the Chief Executive Officer of Jaipur Municipal Corporation, P.S. Mehra, to appear before it in person on June 18, while taking suo motu cognisance of a report about squalor and filth in Jawahar Nagar here. The report - revealing the utter neglect of this prime residential colony of the Pink City by the municipal authorities - was published a local daily today. This is, perhaps, the first instance of the Human Rights Commission taking suo motu cognisance of a case of negligence by civic authorities. Developed by the Rajasthan Housing Board in the eastern part of the city in early 1970s as the first well-planned colony in the State, Jawahar Nagar is today marked by heaps of garbage, overflowing drains, squalor, illegal constructions and damaged roads. (Hindu 4.6.02)

8th June

Peace activists protest against anti-personnel mine usage (1)

New Delhi, June 7: Peace activists affiliated to Indian and Pakistani chapters of Amnesty International, Greenpeace India and Pakistan-India Forum for Peace and Democracy have protested against the use of antipersonnel landmines by the two nations and have charged both the governments of violating international law. A statement issued by the activists said: "While neither government has actually released figures regarding the scale of mining operations, an attempt at mining the 2,897-km long Indo-Pak border may amount to one of the largest mine-laying operations in the world since 1997 when the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty came into being."

The statement added: "In many areas, mines have been laid in agricultural or pastoral lands and civilians have' been evacuated from these areas. (Asian Age 8.6.02)

9th June

Rights group criticizes politics in police forces (1)

New Delhi, June 8: Despite the fact that problems of the Indian police have been examined extensively by various commissions and committees, the quality of policing has continued to deteriorate and most of the recommendations made by the expert bodies have not been implemented. Observing that no government has taken any initiative to introduce reforms in the police, the Commonwealth human rights initiative, headed by a senior police officer G.P. Joshi, said: "The fact that the rule of law is gradually being replaced by the rule of politics is a cause of concern." The human rights body after examining the Padmanabhaiah Committee report on police reforms, submitted some time back, said, "It appears that the committee missed the basic idea underlying the British model of policing. The success of the British model is essentially due to the very fine distinction made and maintained between the police as an organisation and policing as a set of functional activities. (Asian age 9.6.02)

10th June

Gujarat Jesuits form rights unit (1)

New Delhi, June 9: The Gujarat Education Society, a trust set up and run by Gujarat Jesuits to deal with the educational, social and developmental needs of the most vulnerable sections of society, recently launched a new centre to focus on human rights, justice and peace called Prashant. Prashant has been working round-the-clock since the Godhra carnage . in February to deal with the situation at all levels, including relief, and rehabilitation work. The centre has also been involved in the creation of think tanks and other public fora in order to highlight the seriousness of the situation. With 10 staff members and over 100 volunteers and associates, 'Prashant has been working for the rights of the poor and other

marginalized groups with a special focus on tribals, dalits, women and children, since October 2001. During the current crisis the center has been active in fostering an atmosphere of peace and communal harmony; meeting key individuals and groups from all communities bringing in people from all walks of life to reflect on and respond to what is happening bringing together legal luminaries and human rights activists, both locally and nationally, collecting and documenting facts and the dissemination of a daily Gujarat Update to several people across the world via email and fax. (Asian Age 10.6.02)

10th June

Amnesty slams Delhi apathy in rights cases (1)

New Delhi, June 9: The Indian government has come under severe criticism by international human rights watchdog Amnesty International for failing to act on reports of various commissions of inquiry probing human rights violations by the police and security forces. In its annual report released in New Delhi recently, the Amnesty International said, "The government failed to act on the recommendations made by various commissions of inquiry after identifying the involvement of the police and security forces in human rights violations." "The recommendations of the Shrikrishna Commission over the communal riots which had taken place in Mumbai in 1992 and 1993 following the destruction of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya were implemented extremely slowly. Seventeen police officers had been issued with chargesheets by the end of the year for having taken sides with violent Hindu groups during the riots which claimed 1,788 lives," the report pointed out. It further said, "Similarly, the recommendations of the Pandian Commission on the unlawful killings in April, 2000 of protesters at Barakpore in J&K were not implemented by the government. The report was not made public." (Asian Age 10.6.02)

13th June

Fr. Pallath forcefully administered medication (1)

In a swift move today, Fr. Pallath was administered glucose saline by force by the medical college authorities assisted by the Police. Earlier in the day, the doctors requested Fr. Pallath to co-operate, as his health condition on the 34th day of fasting had turned alarming. This was politely turned down by Fr. Pallath. By around 2:30 p.m. the doctors requisitioned the help of the police who held him down through the period of the drip being injected in to the system. While the forceful medication was not entirely anticipated, the timing did raise eyebrows here in Calicut. With public action springing up before several Jesuit institutions in Kerala, pressure was mounting on the Jesuit authorities to do something urgently to save Fr. Pallath's life. Protests spread and massive public meeting at Calicut Yesterday, utilizing the occasion of a civic reception accorded to the newly appointed Bishop of Calicut, Mr. Theruvath Raman and several other prominent citizens of Calicut had requested the intervention of the Bishop to make the Jesuit authorities see reason. This was in fact a sequel to the ardent plea of Justice (Retired) Krishna Iyer to the Bishop to intervene. It is reliably learnt that the Bishop is seriously considering initiating a reconciliatory effort. More than that, the large turnout at the public meeting held at the Devagiri corner yesterday seem to have worked as an eye opener to the authorities. Several human rights and cultural activists spoke on the occasion to a large audience that remained in rapt attention for well over three hours. Anxiety about the threat to Pallath's life and anger at the unrelenting attitude of the Jesuits was all too evident at the meeting. Close on heel today morning was the action before the Jesuit house at Pachilakkad in Wayand that was virtually stormed by around 40 odd civic and human rights activists who demanded that justice be done to Fr. Pallath. They presented a memorandum to the Jesuit superior there and warned of continued action before the Jesuit house if immediate action is not initiated to save Fr. Pallath's life by implementing the terms of the agreement entered in to with him. (ua@ahrchk.org)

14th June

Amnesty move for tainted cops (1)

Chandigarh, June 13: The Punjab government is considering moves to make amnesty available to some policemen facing charges of alleged human rights violations during the terrorism era.

"Since the Congress led by Amarinder Singh has come to power, the government has been screening cases of alleged human rights violations, which could be recommended for amnesty. The final decision would rest with the Centre. It is too early to disclose the names of the policemen who have been selected," a senior official said. Chief minister Amarinder Singh was responsible for a national debate on the issue after demanding a general amnesty for policemen while speaking at a function in Jalandhar last year. At

the same function, Union home minister L.K. Advani had reportedly said that the government was considering granting amnesty to the policemen. The statement had sparked off a countrywide furore, compelling Advani to clarify in Parliament that he had only said that some kind of "relief" could be given to policemen hauled up in courts on charges of alleged human rights violations while combating terrorism. (Telegraph 14.6.02)

23rd June

Demolition on at Buddhist institute (1)

New Delhi, June 22: Tibetan human rights activists have charged that demolitions at the Serthar Buddhist Institute are continuing unabated.. A- spokespejson of. the Dharamshala-based- Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy Ms. Tenzin Chokkey told the Asian Age. According to the latest update from the Serthat Budhist Institute demolitions and evictions have still not ceased . Confirmed reports indicate a total of 18 dwellings demolished on three different dates between late April and early May 2002, five dwellings of monks were razed to the ground followed by four more being demolished on April 30. (Asian Age 23.6.02)

2nd July

NHRC tells Gujarat Govt. to watch yatras or face action (1)

NEW DELHI, JULY 1: TAKING note of the proposed Gaurav yatras and Ja-gannath rath yatra in the communally sensitive Gujarat, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) today asked the state government to take due care—both at political and administrative level— to prevent any situation that endangers lives and property. On the basis of a report from its special rapporteur in Gujarat and media reports about imminent plans of the BJP to hold a series of Gaurav yatras in the state from July 4 and the scheduled Jagannath rath yatras from July 12 in more than 70 locations, the NHRC urged "all concerned to behave in such a way that the peace is not disturbed and innocent residents of the state are not exposed, yet again, to violence or the threat of violence". "Those who are responsible for the promotion of communal harmony and the maintenance of law and order should discharge their duties in accordance with the Constitution and the relevant statutory provisions, or be answerable for such acts of omission or commission that result in the violation of the law and the right to life, liberty, equality and dignity of their fellow human beings." The NHRC has sent a copy of this order to the Prime Minister, Home Ministry and the Gujarat government for information and action. (Indian Express 2nd July, 2002)

6th July

NHRC washes hands of Bijbehara probe (1)

New Delhi: Even as relatives of the 60 people, allegedly killed by the Border Security Force jawans on October 21-22,1993, wait for the National Human Rights Commission to deliver justice, the commission has quietly washed its hands of the case. When it took up Bijbehara in the first flush of enthusiasm, after its creation in 1994, the NHRC said it would be followed by other such interventions to help end human rights abuses in Kashmir But unknown to the wider world – and certainly to the people of that town – the NHRC which at one stage had pursued the case all the way to the Supreme court, withdrew its petition in September 2000. What is more it also closed itsown file relating to the incident. (Times of India 6.7.02)

9th July

SC takes up PIL on NHRC purview (1)

New Delhi, July 8 THE SUPREME Court on Monday transferred to itself a PIL questioning the jurisdiction of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to probe the communal violence in Gujarat. The PIL pending before the Gujarat High Court said the NHRC could not exercise its jurisdiction to look into matters which were being investigated by a judicial commission.

A bench comprising Chief Justice B.N. Kirpal, Justice K.G. Balakrishnan and Justice Arijit Pasayat passed the order on a transfer petition by the NHRC. Solicitor General Harish Salve, representing the state government, agreed that the PIL, be heard by the apex court for deciding the legal question. (Hindustan Times 9.7.02)

9th July

SC accepts NHRC plea (1)

NEW DELHI, JULY 8. The Supreme Court today accepted the plea of the National Human Rights Commission and transferred to itself two petitions pending in the Gujarat and Madras High Courts pertaining to the 'Godhra riots' and the arrest of the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and DMK president, M. Karunanidhi. A three-judge Bench comprising the Chief Justice, B.N. Kirpal, K.G. Balakrishnan and Arijit Pasayat agreed with the Solicitor-General, Harish Salve, that there was a substantive question of law involved in it and that the matters be transferred to the apex court and ordered the transfer. The Bench called for the records from the respective courts and directed the Registry to fix the matter for further hearing after the receipt of the records. In July last, the NHRC had taken suo motu cognisance of the manner of arrest of Mr. Karunanidhi and called for a report from the Tamil Nadu Government. The State Government, however, took the matter to the High Court questioning the NHRC's intervention when the State had set up a Commission of Inquiry and the matter was pending in the High Court. (Hindu 9.7.002)

10th July

Dec. 13 attack trial flawed; Amnesty (1)

New Delhi: Amnesty International's (AI) London secretariat has written to Union law minister Jana Krishna-murthy that the four persons accused in the Parliament attack on December 13, 2001 should have a right to fair trial under international human rights law and the Indian Constitution.

Expressing concern, AI said, "Pre-trial proceedings appear to have been flawed and the scheduling of hearings of the trial that commenced on July 8 indicates that the speed at which the trial is to be conducted may violate the defendants' right to present a full defence. Moreover, the special legislation, Pota, under which the accused are to be tried, is flawed and is likely to facilitate an unfair trial." (Times of India 10.7.02)

11th July

Rights panel rush to review rape frame-up. (1)

West Bengal Human Rights Commission (WBHRC) members admitted on Wednesday that the registrar of the commission, Shankar Coari, had refused to accept an application filed by Uday Kant Thakur on behalf of his 11-year-old son, Sonu, framed by the Regent Park police in "a false rape case". An internal probe conducted by the rights panel, immediately after Metro reported on July 5 that Thakur was planning to take it to court for refusing to accept his application, has blown the lid off the "goof-up". (Times of India, 11-7-02)

14th July

Rights group tells Pervez to probe abuses (1)

London, July 13: Human Rights Watch has written to Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf urging him to investigate the role of tribal councils and their abuse of women in the country. Last month, on June 21, during a Mastoi tribal council meeting in the village of Meerwala, in southern Punjab, four men, one of them a tribal council member, allegedly raped Mukhtaran Bibi, a 30-year-old member of the Gujjar tribe. The rape, which occurred in the presence of a large number of villagers, was intended as "punishment" for the conduct of her brother, Abdul Shaqoor, who had been seen with an unchaperoned woman from the Mastoi tribe. The woman, Salma Bibi, is now reportedly in police custody with her mother. Mukhtaran Bibi was forced to return home naked after the rape before a crowd of Mastoi villagers, Human Rights Watch has said. (Asian Age 14.7.002)

15th July

Amnesty team to study Gujarat (1)

New Delhi, July 14: International human rights organisation Amnesty International will soon send a fact-finding team to Gujarat to take stock of the violations of human rights that have taken place in the state over the last five months. It is learnt that Amnesty activists have already appealed to the Indian authorities for grant of visas which, however, are yet to be granted to them by the government. Sources said the Amnesty team will be primarily focusing on the steps that have been taken for rehabilitating and compensating the victims. It will also be studying the functioning of the criminal justice system in the state since the Godhra incident. Earlier, the Amnesty had submitted a memorandum to the Gujarat government

in March. It has also been keenly observing the developments in the state. In its memorandum, the organisation had asked the Gujarat government to outline the terms of reference for an impartial investigation and urged protection and redress for those who had to flee their homes as a result of the riots. "As a matter of urgency, the government needs to deliver justice to the victims and protect those people who have been displaced," it said. (Asian Age 15-7-02)

19th July

Rights activists approach NHRC against police (1)

NEW DELHI: CIVIL rights activists and writers who were picked up and detained for several hours by the Special Cell personnel-about a week back when they were holding a meeting to discuss arrangements for a one-day conference on the situation in Nepal have approached the National Human Rights Commission seeking redressal of their grievances. In a petition submitted to the NHRC on Thursday, the rights activists demanded that the persons involved in the "gruesome act of undermining our basic human rights" should be asked to reveal their identity and punished for abduction. The petitioners called the incident of the Special Cell an "illegal and savagely act of highhandedness" and demanded that the authorities involved directly or indirectly in it should tender unconditional apologies, besides paying individual compensation of Rs 10 lakh each for the loss of their image, reputation and honour as also for the agony and harassment they had to suffer. (Pioneer 19.7.02)

20th July

SC directive to rights panel welcomed (1)

NEW DELHI, July 19.—Senior Delhi Police officers have welcomed the Supreme Court order asking state human rights commissions and other committees set up by the high courts to conduct surprise checks on police stations to find out whether human rights of an arrested person are being violated or not. While the commissioner of police, Mr R S Gupta, was not available for comment, the deputy commissioner of police, special cell, Mr Ashok Chand, said "the police strictly follows every guideline stipulated under the Constitution and those laid down by the Supreme Court regarding human rights of arrested persons". "Not only the senior officers but even junior subordinates are sensitised about the rights of an accused and no custodial violence is permitted during police custody," he added. The court said the surprise checks should be carried out by at least two members of the committee and the focus would be on finding out whether there was custodial violence or violation of human rights of the arrested persons. (Statesman 20.7.02)

20th July

Rights panel seeks report on torture of 18 year old (1)

New Delhi, July 19: Taking serious note of an incident in which an 18-year-old boy was allegedly "picked" up by Delhi police and "tortured unimaginable," the National Human Rights Commission on Friday issued a notice to the police commissioner seeking a report into the incident and also asked the commission's investigation officer to probe the matter. NHRC, which took suo motto cognisance of a news report published in a daily evening about JJeepak, who was allegedly picked up by the police from his grandfather's house in south Delhi in some "petty theft" case, asked the commissioner to report within one week, sources said. The commission has also asked its director-general (investigation) Y.N Srivastva to collect "facts" about the incident, sources said. The news report said, Deepak was allegedly picked up by the police who asked him to "confess involvement in a petty theft case, then demanded money to let him go. When he refused to buy his freedom, they (police personnel) and beat him up." (Asian Age 20.7.02)

21st July

BJP's latest: Rights center in Mumbai (1)

MUMBAI, JULY 20: LOOK who's talking about human rights. Still under a cloud over the Naren-dra Modi government's role in the Gujarat riots in which 1,000 people were killed, the BJP has now launched a centre for human rights studies and awareness in Mumbai. Called the Centre for Human Rights Studies and Awareness (CHRSA), it's a part of NGO, Rambhau Mhalgi Prabhodini. Union Telecom Minister Pramod Mahajan is the president of the Prahod-hini, which conducts its training programmes at the RSS campus in Bhayander. The Centre was formally inaugurated by BJP national executive member Balbir Punj at the Indian Merchants Chamber on Saturday. Set up to "create awareness about human rights and

its violations," the centre would be headed by Dr Suresh Bhamre, who worked as a Human Rights Commissioner in Suffolk County of New York from 1990 to 1999. According to Bhamre, who is the honorary director, the centre would organise seminars and conduct camps to create awareness about basic human rights. (Indian Exp 21.7.02)

21st July

Rights body slams Modi move on early polls (1)

Ahmedabad, July 20: Human right activists and secularists in Gujarat are stunned with Modi's decision to dissolve the state Assembly and has dubbed it as a slap on Gujarat's democracy. "We always knew that Modi is a fanatic. The party high command should have acted sensibly and not given a green signal to Modi. When Gujarat was burning and there was a demand for a President's rule, nothing was done. 'And' now just for political advantage, the Assefnbly Jjas' been dissolved. NQjyseuroidi hope is; w.ifh rthe ,election ComrrtisSidti "which 'we wish' does not play on BJP's tunes," Fr Cedric Prakash of Prashant, a human rights centre, said. (Asian Age 21.7.02)

22nd July

Panel seeks report on flesh trafficking (1)

Bangalore, July 21:, The National Human Rights Commission has asked the Institute of Social Sciences to conduct a study on the illegal trafficking of women and children in the state and present a report within six months. Regional co-ordinator of ISS Dr K. Shubha told The Asian Age on Saturday that other than Kamataka, the sample study is being conducted in other Southern states like Tamil Nadu, Goa and Pondicherry." "The study will be conducted in two villages in each district," Dr Shubha said, adding, "Since we cannot work in isolation, we will try and get data from government departments and also identify non governmental organisations working on the issue." (Asian Age 22.7.02)

23rd July

Rights panel asks Govt. to ban pan masala (1)

JAIPUR, JULY 22.The Rajas-than State Human Rights Commission has directed the State Government to put a ban on the use and consumption of "pan masala" and "gutka". A full bench of the Commission, presided over by its chairman, Justice Syed Sagheer Ahmed, today asked the Government to issue necessary notification to prohibit the manufacture, sale, display and advertisement of "pan masala" and "gutka". The Commission had taken suo motu cognizance on the issue after an article published in a local Hindi daily on August 2, 2001 and called for a report from the Principal Secretary, Medical and Health, Rajasthan. However, no report was furnished by the department despite repeated reminders, opportunities and adjournments given, it is being pointed out. (Hindu 23.7.02)

23rd July

Visa issue irks Amnesty (1)

New Delhi: Amnesty International has expressed "deep regret" at the "de facto refusal of the Indian government" to grant its team from London visas to visit Gujarat. According to Amnesty, "The team was planning to carry out investigations into recent massacres and human rights violations and monitor the progress made in bringing the perpetrators to justice." Sources said that the Indian High Commission in London told Amnesty that since it had a number of local associates who would have acted on their behalf, it "had direct access to what was happening through them". The High Commission offered to provide "any additional information on any given situation". It also said that since the media, the NGOs and the judicial institutions were completely seized of the matter, the Indian government did not see how a visit from the team would in any way add to this. (Times of India 23.7.02)

24th July

India brushes aside Amnesty criticism (1)

LONDON, JULY 23: Brushing aside Amnesty International's criticism for not allowing it to visit Gujarat, India today said events in the State were already under the independent scrutiny of its own organisations such as the National Human Rights Commission and other national commissions and NGOs. "We did not see what value a visit by a few London-based members of Amnesty International would add (to their findings), the Indian Deputy High Commissioner, Satyabrata Pal, said when contacted. "We had told

Amnesty that we understand the legion of local associates they had in India were active on their behalf, collecting information first hand....

If, over and above what their local associates provided, Amnesty wanted fresh information from the Indian Government or to check out any facts with us, we would be glad to do what we could do to help," Mr. Pal said. (Hindu 24.7.02)

29th July

RLEK staff to go as J&K poll observers (1)

DEHRA DUN, JULY 28. Activists of the Human Rights Centre of the Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra (RLEK) here will act as independent observers during the Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir. Disclosing this here today, the RLEK chairperson, Avdhash Kaushal said, the activists -- staff and students of the Human Rights course will fan out in different districts on the polling day and try to find out whether the polling process was free and fair to all or not.

The findings would be made public after the activists return to Dehra Dun. (Hindu 29.7.02)

2nd July

Relief rules different for civilians, Army: NHRC (1)

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1: THE National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has made a distinction between the rights of an Army personnel and a civilian by rejecting a captain's demand for compensation following the death of his daughter in an attack in Jammu and Kashmir. Ram Niwas Sharma told the NHRC his daughter Leena was blown up while travelling in an Army vehicle to "terrorise people and send a message that anyone associated with the Army would be eliminated". He claimed parity with the "innocent victims of the mindless violence. The MoD acknowledged the death in an IED explosion in JK's Pulwama district but rejected the claim for compensation. It said compensation, according to the rules, is restricted to those cases where the death of the service personnel was directly caused by actual field operation or was killed by militants, terrorists and extremists after being kidnapped. (Indian Express 2.8.02)

4th Aug

Rights groups apologise for 1971 excesses (1)

DHAKA, AUG. 3. Civil society leaders and human rights activists in Pakistan have made a public apology to the people of Bangladesh for the "excesses and atrocities" committed by the Pakistani forces during that country's War of Liberation in 1971. The public apology comes within days after the Pakistani President, Parvez Musharraf, who was on a visit here earlier this week, expressed "regret" over the "excesses committed during that unfortunate period" 32 years ago. While Mr. Musharraf's statement was understandably diplomatic, in that he did not blame his country's armed forces for committing crimes against humanity, the joint statement issued on behalf of 51 civil society organisations was more categorical. "We feel sad and burdened by what we know was a violation of the people's human rights," said the statement faxed from Pakistan. "We deeply feel that a message from us is necessary to acknowledge the historic wrongs, to express sincere apology and to build a bond based on honest sentiments. (Hindu 4.8.02)

17th Aug

Kashipur deaths not due to starvation: NHRC (1)

BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 16. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has said that the deaths reported from the Kashipur block in Orissa's Rayagada district last year were not due to starvation. The NHRC report assumes significance because it was exactly a year ago that the whole country was shaken by allegations of hunger deaths in the tribal-dominated pocket of Kashipur. Taking suo motu cognisance of the media reports on the alleged hunger deaths, the NHRC initiated a probe last year and the findings of the NHRC's special rapporteur, Chaman Lal, has discounted the theories of starvation deaths. "I am inclined to agree with the State Government that the reported deaths were not due to starvation. This has also been supported by the findings of the medical team which has visited the affected villages and examined the post-mortem reports," Mr. Lal said in his 10-page report after he visited Kashipur. "The medical examination has confirmed the cause of death as food poisoning." He, however, said that poverty was backbreaking in Kashipur; the tribals lacked the purchasing power and the public healthcare facilities

were not functioning satisfactorily. 'The issue of poverty of the majority of people in Kashipur who are landless and without any sustain-able means of wage employment does not seem to have been appreciated by the Orissa Government while probing the matter," he said. (Hindu 17.8.02)

20th Aug

NHRC tells Madhu Sharma it can't help (1)

New Delhi: The Delhi Police had to face Madhu Sharma's wrath for the third time in less than a fortnight on Monday evening. This time Madhu, whose husband R K Sharma, a senior Haryana police officer is wanted for the murder of Shivani Bhatnagar, alleged that the police were not only harassing her daughters and her but also their relatives. As with the previous tirades, this one too was unleashed in the presence of a number of television crews and media persons, who, much to the discomfort of the Delhi Police aired the vitriolic outburst live. (Times of India 20.8.02)

20th Aug

Advertisements appear slamming EC and NHRC (1)

Despite the BJP's claims, political observers feel the party is using the agency as a front to put forward its opinion on the EC and NHRC. One of the ads, which appeared on the back page of a few local dailies today, also gave some "statistics". It pointed out that there are 30,000 Hindu refugees in Mizoram but elections can be held there; three lakh Kashmiri Pandits have been displaced from the Valley, but elections can be held there; however, elections cannot be held in Gujarat where 5,000 people are living in relief camps. "Why this injustice to Hindus," queried the ad. The ads have drawn sharp criticism from Opposition parties, particularly the Congress, which has accused the BJP of projecting the EC and NHRC as pro-minority agencies. State PCC president Shankersinh Vaghela said that the BJP, using the Gujarat Gaurav Samiti as a front, was maligning the two constitutional bodies. "We will take legal action against whoever is issuing these advertisements," he added. (Indian Express 20..8.02)

21st Aug

Daughter moves NHRC. (1)

New Delhi: Pragati Sharma, daughter of R K Sharma, approached the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Tuesday. Though the commission had rejected her mother's application on Monday, Pragati has almost repeated her request asking the NHRC to look "into the victimisation, terrorisation and harassment" of her mother, sister and herself. Pragati said the three were being "pressurised from all quarters to hamper any attempt to seek justice". She alleged that all phones, including that of her lawyer, were being tapped. The application will be put up before NHRC chairman Justice J S Verma on Wednesday. (Times of India, 21.8.2002)

22nd Aug

NHRC holds army responsible for disappearance of man. (1)

NEW DELHI, AUG. 21. In an unprecedented move, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has held the armed forces responsible for the violation of the human rights of a man who 'disappeared' while in its custody and his family which has been rendered destitute by his disappearance. The NHRC recommended that the Defence Ministry and the Ministry of Home Affairs pay Rs. 3 lakhs interim relief to Meena Khatoon, whose husband Mohammed Tayab Ali was last seen on July 25,1999, being picked up near Imphal by a unit of the 17 Assam Rifles. Eyewitness saw him being driven in an unmarked van into its Battalion Headquarters. The complaint made by Ms. Khatoon to the State Human Rights Commission was referred to the NHRC since it related to the armed forces. Invoking Section 19 of the Protection of Human Rights Act 1993, the NHRC called for a report from the Defence Ministry and the Home Ministry. The Defence Ministry's report claimed that a person identified as Mohammed Tayab Ali had been killed in "retaliatory fire" by the armed forces and the body had been handed over to the local police, he NHRC found that the Defence Ministry's report was inconsistent with an earlier report of the DGP, Manipur, in which the Assam Rifles had denied any knowledge of a person named Mohammed Tayab Ali. (Hindu, 22.8.2002)

25th Aug

Rights panel hands down a landmark verdict (1)

JAIPUR, AUG. 24. In a landmark verdict, the Rajasthan State Human Rights Commission has recommended to the State Government to make reimbursement of medical expenses worth Rs. 1.42 lakhs incurred by a Government school teacher, who was earlier denied payment on the ground of not following the prescribed procedure. The Commission held, in its decision over the week-end, that the claim for medical reimbursement could not have been legally rejected on the ground that the procedure prescribed under the Rajasthan Civil Services (Medical Attendance) Rules, 1970, was not followed for taking treatment outside the State. This is the first instance of recognition of a Government employee's right to get medical reimbursement as his human right. The verdict will set a precedent for bringing succour to a large number of Government officials who get themselves treated in emergency in the private hospitals or outside the State, which the rules do not allow in the normal course. (Hindu 25.8.02)

27th Aug

HC tells Centre to consider plea filed by gay rights group (1)

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 26: A DIVISION bench of the Delhi High Court today observed that the government should be open and may consider the demands of gay rights activists that sex between two consenting adults be legalised. A bench comprising Justices Vijnender Jain and R.S. Sodhi gave the Centre a last chance to respond to a public interest litigation seeking amendment to the IPC's Section 377 which prohibits unnatural (sexual) offences, including homosexuality. The government had not submitted a reply on the issue on three occasions. The Centre today opposed the PIL, filed by Naz foundation in December last year, to legalise homosexuality. "We have to take into consideration the morality in society as a whole. Such a relationship is not accepted in our country. (Indian Express 27.8.02)

28th Aug

NHRC Orders relief to rape victims (1)

NEW DELHI, AUG. 27. The National Human Rights Commission has reiterated its recommendations made in May 2000 directing Andhra Pradesh Government to pay a compensation of Rs. 50,000 each to four rape victims who belonged to the Scheduled Caste.

The Commission rejected the stand of the State Government seeking review of the order on the ground that "such cases are covered by IPC and Cr.P.C. and there is absolutely no caste angle to the incident. Therefore, (here is no case for any special compensation from the State Government in this regard". The Commission said "there is no valid reason to review the recommendation and it expects prompt compliance of the earlier directions" and submit a report within eight weeks. The Commission took cognisance of a complaint from the human rights activist, P. Pullarao of West Godavari district in November 1998 about the four rape incidents committed on young women and the resultant miseries and sufferings. (Hindustan Times 28.8.02)

6th September

UN appeal for Gujarat displaced (1)

Geneva: Sept. 5: A top UN human rights official Ms Mary Robinson called on India today to provide humanitarian assistance to thousands of people displaced by religious violence in Gujarat and to enable them to exercise their right to vote. In a statement, Ms. Robinson warned of the risk that those who had fled the mainly anti-Muslim violence which began in February could be cut off from aid following the closure of virtually all 121 relief camps causing many to flee to inadequate shelters elsewhere. (Statesman 6.9.02)

NHRC takes up cause of Bihar Musahars with Govt (1)

New Delhi: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has decided to take up the pitiable condition of Musahars (rat-eaters) in Bihar with the state government and the Union social justice ministry. The move comes in the wake of a research done by the A N Sinha Institute of Social Studies, Patna, and sponsored by the NHRC. The final report submitted on May 17 recommends that an all-round integrated development programme is required to bring in socio-economic changes among the Musahars. But the report says changes should be brought in consultation with the community members. The most important

suggestion made by the institute is that bhoodan land and surplus land be distributed among Musahars. The report suggests that social forestry be introduced on a priority basis within a given time-frame as the soil and climate of the areas where the Musahars live is conducive for planting coconut, palm and date trees. This will enable them to earn a livelihood. (Times of India 6.9.02)

NHRC help sought for Geelani (1)

New Delhi, Sept. 5: The chairperson of All India Defence Committee for Syed Abdul Rehman Geelani has written to the National Human Rights Commission seeking its chairperson Justice J.S. Verma's intervention on the issue pertaining to the security of the Delhi University lecturer who was arrested for his alleged involvement in the Parliament attack case. In her letter Prof. Rajni Kothari has written, "We, concerned citizens, have formed ourselves into a Committee to express our concern over the way that the trial of the four accused in the Parliament case has been proceeding. While we, each of us, are fully aware of the seriousness of the charge against the four accused we are disturbed by the fact that the four accused have been denied both the protection of the ordinary criminal procedure and the safeguards in the POTA " (Asian Age 6.9.02)

7th September

UP rights panel ruckus (1)

Lucknow, Sept. 6: The Opposition has taken the Mayavati government to task for dilly-dallying on the constitution of the human rights panel in the state despite the directives by the National Human Rights Commission and the Supreme Court. Raising the issue, Samajwadi Party leader Reoti Raman Singh said the rights panel must be constituted immediately if the government was serious about checking atrocities on women, Dalits and the poor, which were continuing unabated in the state. Congress Legislature Party leader Pramod Tiwari alleged the government was deliberately ignoring the Supreme Court directive. "If 11 states can set up commissions abiding by the directives of the National Human Rights Commission and the Supreme Court, then why not Uttar Pradesh?" asked Tiwari. Opposition MLA Sanjay Garg said he failed to understand why the government was against setting up the panel. The previous government had even sought a panel of judges to select a chairman, chosen a place for the office in Jawahar Bhavan and also decided to employ 50 persons to man the office, he pointed out. • Out of 71,685 human rights cases reported from all over the country, 41,984 were from the state, the MLA said. "Still the government was not in mood to set up the commission. Had the commission been set up, the state would not have topped in human rights violations," Garg said. (Telegraph, 7.9.2002)

15th September

NHRC notice to T.N. Govt on temple ritual (1)

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 14. The National Human Rights Commission which has already issued suo motu notice to the Tamil Nadu Government relating to the temple ritual of burying children for a minute near Madurai has issued a fresh notice to the State on a complaint from two lawyers for taking criminal action against the organisers. In their complaint, Ashok Agarwal and Aurobindo Ghose said that in the ritual in Perayur village to propitiate Goddesses Muthukuzhi Mariamman and Kalamman, children were first rendered unconscious and then lowered into makeshift graves and covered completely for 60 seconds before being pulled out. All this happened in the presence of a State Minister, C. Durairaj (who later resigned). They said they were agonised that such grossly criminal, irrational, inhuman and undoubtedly cruel and barbaric acts reminiscent of archaic, superstitious religious practices were allowed to continue in the State even after 55 years of Independence. (Hindu 15.9.02)

NHRC chief for ratification of convention against torture (1)

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 14. The Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission, Justice J.S. Verma, today called upon the Government to ratify the Convention Against Torture. Inaugurating a conference on "reparation for torture victims in India, Sri Lanka and Nepal," Mr. Verma said given the present Indian law which prescribed punishment against torture, the standards of scrutiny set and implemented by the Supreme Court and the NHRC, non-ratification of the Convention was only giving everyone an argument against the Government. He said the degree of torture might differ from place to place but the need to address the issue, seek acceptable standards of treatment and reparation for survivors of torture was universal. The three important components in the fight against torture were restitution, rehabilitation and

guarantee of non-repetition, he said. He was of the view that by using counter-terrorism, you might fight a terrorist but not terrorism. "Every act of torturing an innocent person sows the seeds of further terrorism", he added. The conference was organised by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHR1), a Delhi-based human rights NGO and REDRESS, a London-based NGO. (Hindu 15.9.02)

NHRC urged to probe misuse of children for yatra (1)

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 14. The National Human Rights Commission has been moved to order an inquiry into the alleged misuse of the State machinery in forcibly closing schools and mobilising children to line them along the route of the 'gaurav rath yatra' of the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi. Two lawyers, Ashok Agarwal and Aurobmdo Ghose, have brought to the notice of the Commission the September 9 incident of school children being asked to wear saffron scarves and wave BJP flags and raise communal slogans to welcome Mr. Modi for "partisan political and electoral purposes". They said as per the reports, in Kalol about 300 girls from the local K.G.M. School waited for the Chief Minister in the sun, balancing pots on their heads. In Dhamasana village, boys from H.S. Patel High School were reported to have been asked to cheer and wave. (Hindu 15.9.02)

18th September

Rights activists join the race to play govt envoy to Veerappan (1)

BANGALORE, SEPTEMBER 17: HUMAN rights activists from Tamil Nadu Prof P Katyani and G. Sugumaran today told Karnataka Home Minister Mallikarjuna Kharge that they were ready to negotiate with Veerappan as official emissaries. "It is not enough for Karnataka alone to recognise us as official emissaries. Even Tamil Nadu should follow," they said. While Kharge assured them that the state government would decide soon, the duo charged the state security agencies with human rights violation against jailed Tamil nationalist leader Kolathur Mani. As functionaries of Federation for Peoples' Rights, Kalyani and Sugumaran presented Kharge with a memorandum seeking a CBI probe into torture inflicted on Mani by the state STF. "During our discussion with Mani (in Bellary yesterday), we came to know he was slapped with five false cases, including a TADA case. (Indian Express 18.9.02)

20th September

Social activists seek removal of Modi (1)

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19. Several social activists, theatre artistes, academicians and human rights workers today demonstrated in front of the BJP's central office here, demanding the immediate removal of the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, for his "continuing tirade" against the minorities. The demonstrators included Nirmala Deshpande, Praful Bidwai, Shabnam Hashmi, Zafar Agha, Aditya Nigam, Nafisa Ali, Shakil Ahmad Khan and Syed Naser Hussain. They said it was shameful that Mr. Modi, who as a Chief Minister should be protecting the people of his State, was making anti-minority remarks during his "gaurav rath yatra". This was further vitiating the already volatile communal atmosphere of Gujarat and destabilising the minorities, alleged the activists who were raising slogans and carrying anti-Modi and anti-BJP placards. (Hindu 20.9.02)

22nd September

Peace mission contingent on CBI or NHRC probe (1)

CUDDALORE, SEPT. 21. The human rights activists, P. Kalyani and G. Sugumaran, today made it clear that they would undertake a mission to secure the release of the former Karnataka Minister, H. Nagappa, held hostage by the forest brigand Veerappan, only if a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation or the National Human Rights Commission was ordered into the alleged "human rights abuse" against some persons who were part of the mission to rescue the Kannada thespian, Rajkumar, from the clutches of Veerappan, two years ago. Prof. Kalyani, treasurer of the Federation for People's Rights-Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry, and Mr. Sugumaran, its secretary, who had been "approached by the Karnataka Government to go on a rescue mission", jointly released a statement at a press conference here laying down the conditions for undertaking the task. (Hindu 22.9.02)

Citizens forum files intervention plea in SC (1)

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 21. The Bangalore Citizens Forum has filed a petition in the Supreme Court, seeking intervention in the suit filed by the Tamil Nadu Government to direct Karnataka to implement the interim

award of the Cauvery Tribunal. It is expected to be taken up for hearing on Monday along with Tamil Nadu's application. In its petition, the forum has said that it was vitally interested in the outcome of the present proceedings. The Bangalore city, with a population of about 65 lakhs, required about 1.2 tmc ft of water every month, if water was to be released every alternate day. (Hindu 22.9.02)

26TH September

NHRC calls for communal harmony (1)

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25. The National Human Rights Commission today condemned the "outrageous" terrorist attack on the Akshardham temple in Gujarat and urged all sections of the society to maintain law and order. At a meeting presided by the chairperson, Justice J.S. Verma, the commission said: "Such criminal acts are, in any circumstances, unjustifiable, whatever reasons may be invoked to justify them... They are violative of every conceivable human right. The full force of law must be brought to bear in dealing with such acts of terrorism and in bringing to justice those who perpetrate or abet them". The Commission appreciated the statements of leaders of political parties, as well as leaders of various communities, urging inter-communal harmony. (Hindu 26.9.02)

28th September

NHRC helps rape victim get justice (1)

New Delhi: Intervention by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has led to the arrest of a person accused of blackmailing and repeatedly raping a girl in Dholpur in Rajasthan for a year. The commission had received a complaint from the victim's aunt Dojo alleging that certain persons had taken obscene photographs of her niece, blackmailed the girl and repeatedly raped her. According to Dojo, though a case was registered with the police, the accused was not arrested. In the meantime, the victim's father was murdered. The accused also began threatening the victim and her family. (Times of India 28.9.02)

30th September

NHRC helps in arrest of rapist (1)

New Delhi, Sept. 29: Intervention by the National Human Rights Commission led to the arrest of a rape accused and provision of monetary compensation to the kin of the victim. The NHRC on May .9 received a complaint from Ms Dojo of Dholpur, Rajasthan, alleging that certain persons had taken obscene photographs of her niece, blackmailed her and had repeatedly raped her for over a year. A case was registered with the police but the rape accused was not arrested. Subsequently, the victim's father was also murdered. Further, the rape accused had started threatening the victim and her family for having approached the police. (Asian Age 30.9.02)

Declare Phagi tehsil as atrocity-prone: Rights' team (1)

JAIPUR, SEPT. 29. A fact-finding team of civil rights activists, which visited Chakwada village near here, today demanded continued deployment of police forces there to protect Dalits and declaration of Phagi tehsil, where Chakwada is situated, as a Dalit atrocity-prone area under Section 21 of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. The six-member team, comprising activists from the national-level bodies, talked to a cross-section of people and the State officials in Chakwada and the State Capital to reach the conclusion that the anti-Dalit mindset of the local populace and an inept handling of the situation by the administration were responsible for a violent clash between the upper caste people and the police on September 21, when a 'Sadbahava Yatra' of Dalits was to pass through Phagi. More than 50 persons, including a large number of policemen, were injured in Phagi when a 10,000-strong mob protesting against Dalits' march had clashed with the police. The yatra was organised to highlight untouchability and discrimination against Dalits in Chakwada, where an entire Dalit community is being persecuted for asserting its right to bathe in the local public pond. (Hindu 30.9.02)

4th October

Prevent crimes, says NHRC chief (1)

New Delhi: Prevention of crime is more important than trying to ensure justice after it is committed, said Justice J S Verma, chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). Justice Verma was inaugurating of a seminar on Police and Minorities: Lessons for Human Rights Education at the Indira

Gandhi National Open University's Cyan Darshan studio on Thursday. The existing laws are sufficient to cater to safety of minorities, he said. He quoted two cases from 1818 and 1882 and referred to Justice Muthuswamy Iyer and other judges' judgments to uphold the right to information and dignity. Indian laws always can address almost all problems if adequately implemented and no amendment is necessary to them, he maintained. All that is needed is that people at large should be vocal and stop being mute spectators to crime. (Times of India 4.10.02)

Experts discuss human rights at meet (1)

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 3: "POLICE needs to be freed from political interference," said National Human Rights Commission chairman J.S. Verma, speaking at a seminar on 'Police and Minorities: Lessons for Human Rights Education'. The two-day seminar, inaugurated today, is being organised by the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in collaboration with the Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai. "Recruitment of minorities in police is necessary so that the five major minority communities in the country can have proportional representation," said A.N. Sethna, member of National Commission for Minorities at the seminar today. Justice Verma stated that existing laws are sufficient to cater to the safety of minorities and no amendments are necessary. (Indian Express 4.10.02)

19th October

Amnesty wants action against Ashok Singhal (1)

New Delhi: The Amnesty International has expressed apprehension at the inflammatory statements made by VHP international working president Ashok Singhal against Muslims. Amnesty also fears for the safety of "thousands of vulnerable people if further violence is incited by Singhal's reported statements. Amnesty wrote to the Indian authorities on September 16, drawing attention to Singhal's Statement but regretted that no investigation has been initiated. Only the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) took note and asked for firm action on provocative statements. (Times of India 19.10.02)

22nd October

Killing of Dalits: NHRC notice to Haryana Govt. (1)

NEW DELHI, OCT. 21. Taking a serious view of the alleged lynching of five Dalits at Jhajhar village in Haryana, the National Human Rights Commission today directed the State Chief Secretary and the Director-General of Police to submit a report within a week. The NHRC chairman, Justice J. S. Verma, who took suo motu cognisance of media reports on the alleged lynching of the Dalits, asked the Commission to issue notice to the State Government and the DGP. Mr. Justice Verma also asked the Commission's Director-General (Investigation) to collect all the facts relating to the incident and place them before the full Commission next week. (Hindu 22.10.02)

24th October

Centre challenges NHRC's powers (1)

New Delhi: THE UNION Government has challenged the power of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to award compensation to the victims of torture, while being interrogated in the custody of an investigating agency, in the Delhi High Court. The Centre had filed a petition in the High Court challenging the award of compensation of Rs 50,000 by the NHRC, to a person who had been subjected to torture, while in the custody of the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The investigations were carried out by the ED in a hawala case, involving the accused. Arguing the matter, ED counsel Rekha Palli said that the NHRC had "overstepped" its powers by ordering Rs 50,000 as compensation to one P L Mehta in the year 2000 for alleged torture by the directorate officials, who called him for interrogation in 1997. (Pioneer 24.10.02)

Assam Rights panel seeks report on virginity test conducted on 2 girls (1)

Guwahati: Assam Human Rights Commission has asked for a report from the Nalban district administration and police on the alleged virginity test on two girls last month. The full bench of the commission that examined the petition of the girls on Tuesday has directed the Nalbari deputy commissioner and SP to submit their reports by November 8. The girls have alleged that police picked them up from their homes on September 13 after a local daily wrote they had acted in pornographic video films. (Indian Express 24.10.02)

25th October

Bihar urged to undo rights wrong (1)

PATNA, Oct. 24. — The National Human Rights Commission chairman, retired judge Mr Justice JS Verma today asked the state government to constitute a human rights body within a definite time-frame. Bihar is one of a few states, which has no human rights body. "The state human rights body should be properly constituted", the NHRC chairman said. Regarding the state leader of Opposition's remark that the Bihar government was willing to appoint a politician, who has a shady image, as head of the human rights body, Mr Justice Verma said: "I have already stated that it should be properly constituted." The NHRC chairman said it is not mandatory for a state government to take directives from the NHRC for constituting the a human rights body. "Still I've asked the state chief secretary to consult me on the issue," he said. (Statesman 25.10.02)

Rights panel notice to SP (1)

GUWAHATI, OCT. 24. The Assam Human Rights Commission (AHRC) today issued a suo motu notice to Sarat Phukan, Superintendent of Police of Nalbari, for his alleged statement that he had directed the district police to shoot and kill all militants and communal elements disrupting peace.

Mr. Phukan reportedly told Nalbari scribes on Wednesday that it had been decided to "kill extremists, their linkmen, and any person trying to create communal tension, instead of making any efforts to arrest them". He reportedly further said that the step had been taken in the interest of peace and normality and that "we are not concerned about the violation of human rights in this regard". The AHRC took suo motu cognizance of Mr. Phukan's alleged statement which was widely published in the Guwahati newspapers today and directed him to file his reply by November 7. 993. (Hindu 25.10.02)

29TH October

Rights body urges PM to protect Hrangkhawl (1)

AGARTALA, Oct. 28. — A Belgium-based body for defending human rights of the world's indigenous population wants Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's intervention to stop the "political persecution" of Mr Vijoy Kumar Hrang-khawl, chief of the INPT by Tripura's Left Front government. The KWIA's policy analyst Mr Johan Bosnian's letter to Mr Vajpayee has given rise to a fresh political controversy with the Left Front, the Opposition BJP, the Amara Ban-gali, a regional unit and some other political parties criticising the KWIA for its "inadequate understanding of Tripura's situation." "The KWIA's role is unfortunate and rather irresponsible", a spokesman of the Tripura's Left Front said. The KWIA has urged the Prime Minister to bring pressure on the Tripura government to give a guarantee for Mr Hrangkhawl's freedom of opinion and expression (Statesman 29.10.02)

NHRC seeks explanation for custodial death in Gujarat (1)

NEW DELHI, OCT. 28. The National Human Rights Commission has asked the Chief Secretary of Gujarat and Ahmedabad's Commissioner of Police to explain within two weeks the circumstances leading to the death in police custody of Samirkhan Sarfrakhan Pathan, who is alleged to have been part of a conspiracy to kill the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, and the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi. Pathan was killed on October 22 with bullets to his chest and temple. Police maintain that he was "attempting to flee after snatching a police weapon". There were seven policemen present, not one of them was injured. At the time of his death, 1.30 a.m., he had been taken to Usmanpura in Ahmedabad to reconstruct the scene of a crime committed in 1996 which had nothing to do with the alleged conspiracy to assassinate Mr. Advani and Mr. Modi. (Hindu 29.10.02)

31st October

Punjab rights panel's notice to Chief Secy (1)

CHANDIGARH, OCT. 30. The Punjab Human Rights Commission (PHRC) has directed the State Chief Secretary to file a report by November 8 about the status of the relatives of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) members whose whereabouts are not known since they were allegedly picked up by the police. Hearing a petition filed by the SGPC chief, Kirpal Singh Badungar, a Division Bench of the Commission comprising the acting Chairperson, N.K. Arora, and Member, Maninder Kaur Mattewal, also directed the State Home Secretary to ensure that "there is no interference by the police or any other governmental agency in the affairs of SGPC and its members..." The Commission has also

directed the Punjab Government through its Home Secretary to ensure that the November 12 elections to the Executive Committee of SGPC are conducted impartially and in accordance with the provisions of the Sikh Gurdwara Act. (Hindu 31.10.02)

7th Nov.

NHRC seeks protection of shoot witness (1)

New Delhi, November 6: Acting on the basis of complaints from an eyewitness, Dr. H. Krishna, and a few human rights activists, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Wednesday sought an explanation from the Delhi Police about the shootout at Ansal Plaza on Sunday. Krishna complained that his life was in jeopardy ever since he witnessed the shootout. The NHRC asked Police Commissioner R.S. Gupta, DCP Ashok Chand and ACP Rajbir Singh who were involved in the operation, to respond to its notices within a week. (Hindustan Times 7.11.02)

Rights body raps Pakistan over PoK (1)

New Delhi, November 6: THE GENEVA-based World Organization Against Torture — an influential international coalition of some 240 NGOs fighting torture, summary executions, forced disappearances and other kinds of human rights infringements — has accused Musharraf regime of repression in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK). The indictment — a rare criticism of the human rights situation in PoK by an independent Western monitor — is good news for New Delhi, used to being frequently accused of human rights violations in its part of Kashmir. (Hindustan Times 7.11.02)

Amnesty condemns executions in China (1)

BEIJING, NOV. 6. The rights group Amnesty International today condemned as 'appalling' a wave of executions around China in the lead-up to the Communist Party's vital 16th Congress. The execution of 46 people in just three towns last week "shows an appalling lack of respect for human rights, the London-based group said. China continues to go against the worldwide trend towards abolition of the death penalty and is way out of line with the rest of the world in its use of the death penalty," it said in a statement. (Hindu 7.11.02)

8th Nov.

A bullet through NHRC norms (1)

New Delhi, November 7: IT IS not just the Diwali-eve shootout at the Ansal Plaza basement, what Delhi Police's Special Cell did afterward is also in question. At least a part of their follow-up action has been in clear violation of guidelines the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) laid down over five years ago. In a letter to chief ministers on March 29, 1997, Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah, then NHRC chairperson, outlined the "correct procedure" to be followed "in cases of deaths in police encounters". According to the NHRC's recommendation, the probe into an encounter should be "made over ... to (an) independent investigation agency, such as the state CID". The rights body found it inappropriate that the investigation should be carried out by the same agency whose officers participated in the encounter. (Hindustan Times 8.11.02)

9th Nov.

NHRC urged to appoint independent expert for post-mortem (1)

New Delhi, Nov. 8: The South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre has urged the National Human Rights Commission to appoint an independent forensic expert to conduct the autopsy to rule out tampering of evidence in the Ansal Plaza shootout case. Under the criminal procedure code, post-mortem can be conducted anytime after the passage of 72 hours in cases where the body is not claimed by anybody. Though it is well over 24 hours since the 72-hour deadline elapsed, the bodies of the two alleged terrorists gunned down at Ansal Plaza on Sunday, in what was termed as an encounter by the Delhi police, are still lying at the mortuary of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. (Asian Age 9.11.02)

10th Nov.

NHRC flays attacks on democratic bodies (1)

BHOPAL, Nov. 9. — The National Human Rights Commission chairman Mr Justice JS Venna today expressed his anguish over the "disturbing trend to ridicule and discredit human rights campaigners in the country. "If you talk of human rights, you are dubbed as anti-national", said Mr Justice Verma. He was delivering his key-note address on a conference on "Divisive trends in society : Role of media, State, and people" here. Mr Justice Verma deplored attacks on the Constitutional institutions established for preservation of democracy and perpetuating the rule of law in the country. He did not give any specific instance in this regard, but said that we would not need any external enemy to ruin us if this state of affairs persists. (Statesman 10.11.02)

11th Nov.

Media can help check divisive forces: Varma (1)

BHOPAL, NOV. 10. Expressing concern over the growing communal forces in the country, the chairman of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), J.S. Varma, has emphasised the role of the media in checking the divisive forces in our society. Speaking at a two-day conference here on 'Divisive trend in society and the role of mass media, state and the citizens' here last evening, he said "communalism is creating deep divisions in our pluralistic social order and people are being divided on wrong issues". Describing communalism as a "serious threat to our national unity", the NHRC chairman, also the former Chief Justice of India, said media could play an important and constructive role in such circumstances. (Hindu 11.11.02)

13th Nov.

Dr. Krishna moves NHRC, asks for independent probe (1)

New Delhi, Nov. 12: Dr Hari Krishna, who claims to be an eyewitness to the Ansal Plaza shootout, moved the National Human Rights Commission on Tuesday demanding investigation to ascertain the "true facts" of the alleged encounter even as he softened his stand over the role of the Delhi police in the episode. "How can the Delhi police, which itself is a party to the alleged encounter, be fair in investigating the matter. We have requested the NHRC to give us an opportunity to record our statement before it or direct the police to hold an independent enquiry to note the true facts of the alleged encounter," Dr Krishna told journalists after submitting his petition in the NHRC. (Asian Age 13.11.02)

Modi gets flak again in report by NHRC (1)

New Delhi, Nov. 12: The National Human Rights Commission, in its report on principal preoccupations in the year 2001-2002 presented at the seventh meeting of the Asia Pacific Forum of the National Human Rights Institutions being held here, has once again slammed the Narendra Modi-led Gujarat government for its failure in upholding the rights of Gujarat riot victims.

All 12 countries — including Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Korea, Sri Lanka and Nepal — attending the meeting of the South Asia Forum submitted reports on the role of the respective commissions in combating human rights violations. The report of the NHRC referring to Gujarat states: "The Commission has been preoccupied with events in Gujarat starting from the tragedy that occurred in Godhra on February 27. (Asian Age 13.11.02)

15th Nov.

NHRC reserves order on shootout (1)

New Delhi: While reserving its final order on the Ansal Plaza shootout case for a later date, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Thursday justified its earlier order asking the Delhi Police to furnish a report of the incident. A day after the Delhi Police submitted its report, the deal with it according to the procedure followed earlier in such cases. The commission met on Thursday, mainly to

clarify its position. It said later that issuing the order to the Delhi police "was an obvious requirement in the discharge of the commission's statutory obligation and in keeping with its practice since inception of taking cognisance of such complaints. (Times of India 15.11.02)

Need to protect human rights stressed (1)

NEW DELHI, NOV. 14. The three-day Asia Pacific region human rights conference resolved on Wednesday that national institutions should protect and promote human rights through a continuing programme of mutual cooperation. Disclosing the concluding statement adopted at the conference, the chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission, Justice J.S. Verma, said that the discussions had focussed, among other issues, on trafficking in women and children and an effort to draft an international convention on the protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. (Hindu 15.11.02)

21st Nov.

Focus on globalisation with human face (1)

NEW DELHI, NOV. 20. The Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission, Justice J.S. Verma, today said the world needed "globalisation of humanism" to make it a true global village. "Each one of us need to practise humanism as a universal creed as this would automatically lead to eradication of all inequities and end all causes of conflict thus making world one family." Delivering the inaugural address of the four-day ISA-HRRC International Conference on "Globalisation, Development and Human Rights" which began in the Capital, the former Chief Justice of India said in the changed global scenario, right to development should be one of the fundamental human rights and effort should be directed towards eradicating global inequities and inequalities. Stating that human right was not a universally accepted phenomenon, and that the distance linking of human development and human right was being acknowledged, the NHRC Chairperson said, "Human right is a matter of heart, and that is the heart of the matter -- whenever this feeling comes, we can relate human right to any part of the world." (Hindu 21.11.02)

23rd Nov.

Hunger: NHRC lashes out at Orissa Govt. (1)

BHUBANESWAR.NOV22: EXPRESSING displeasure over the non-compliance of its directives related to starvation deaths in the KBK district, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Thursday asked the Orissa government to file a comprehensive affidavit by November 30. On the basis of the report submitted by its special rapporteur Chamanlal, the Commission had heard the case on October 10 at Delhi. Although the Chief Secretary was supposed to appear before the Commission, it was Revenue Secretary R.L. Jamuda who represented the former. In his report, Chamanlal had pointed out to the Commission the lack of sensitivity to human problems by some departments. The deficiencies pointed out by the Commission in the compliance report of the state government include water supply, sanitation, health care and public distribution system. (Indian Express 23.11.02)

Prosecute Modi, ban Bajrang & VHP: Iyer (1)

New Delhi, Nov. 22: The Concerned Citizens' Tribunal has recommended the immediate prosecution of Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi and all those indicted in the National Human Rights Commission report. The tribunal, headed by retired Supreme Court judge V.R. Krishna Iyer, comprised retired Supreme Court judge P.B. Sawant, retired Mumbai high court judge Hosbet Suresh, former Tripura DGP K.S. Subramanian, PUCL president K.G. Kannabiran, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan activist Arun Roy, and JNU professors Ghanshyam Shah and Tanika Sarkar. (Asian Age 23.11.02)

26th Nov.

Rights panel moved on rape (1)

Kokrajhar, Nov. 25: The All-Bodo Students' Union today petitioned the Assam Human Rights Commission to ensure that the investigation into the rape and murder of a teenager in this district on Saturday does not peter out like many such cases. The president of the Ramfalbil unit of the Absu, Janaklal Basumatary, said the commission should take up the case and keep the police on their toes. The police have yet to trace the accused, leading many to suspect that the case has not been given the im-

portance it deserves. The findings of the post-mortem were not known till late tonight. (Telegraph 26.11.02)

30th Nov.

Delhi jails are 189% crowded: NHRC (1)

New Delhi, Nov. 29: Over 75 per cent of the jail population of India includes undertrials. Translated into numbers, it comes to a shocking 2,35,873 out of the entire jail population of 3,00,811. With a significant number of them being victims of a slow judicial process and a callous administration, this is being seen as an infringement of human rights. Largely poor, a number of undertrials are unable to furnish surety amount even after being granted bail. Hence, they continue to remain in confinement. The statistics compiled by the custodial justice cell of the National Human Rights Commission on the basis of data available till December 31, 2001 from all over India also reveal overcrowding of the jails by up to 32.33 per cent. (Asian Age 30.11.02)

12th Dec.

NHRC seeks police report on Ansal encounter (1)

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 11: THE National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has directed South District police to send their report on the investigations into the Ansal Plaza encounter on November 3 which resulted in the death of two alleged militants. In a release, NHRC said that in its proceedings on December 9, Commissioner of Police R.S. Gupta had informed them that the investigations had been transferred from the Special Cell to the South District police.

He had further told the NHRC that the outcome of the investigation is still awaited. The intimation had reached the NHRC on November 28 after the Commission's proceedings on November 14. The NHRC had then specified the correct procedure which has to be followed in cases of deaths during encounters. (Indian Express 12.12.02)

18th Dec.

PUCL awards: entries invited (1)

The PUCL invites entries from journalists for the 22nd Journalism for Human Rights Award for 2002. The best entry will get Rs. 20,000 and the second, Rs. 5,000. Reports on human rights situations published in 2002 in any language in any newspaper, magazine, journal, etc., are eligible. Reports published in a language other than English must be accompanied by an English translation. They should depict a human rights situation and not a human condition in general. The problem investigated should be of general significance. Weight is also given to follow-up. Eventual effect of the story and the risk that the writer has borne by doing the story are kept in mind. The record of the writer is considered. (Hindu 18.12.02)

31st Dec.

Rights group award goes to gangrape victim in Pak (1)

Lahore, Dec. 30: A Pakistani human rights group on Sunday presented an award to a woman who was gang-raped on the orders of a conservative village council and had the courage to publicise the crime. Mukhtar Mai, 30, reported the rape to the police — an unusual step in rural Pakistan, where violence against women is common and often goes unpunished. Six men were convicted of attacking her and sentenced to hang. She dared to file a case against the influential men of her area, and get them punished said S.M. Zafar a prominent lawyer who heads the Human Rights Society of Pakistan at the award ceremony in Lahore, the capital of eastern Punjab province. (Asian Age 31.12.02)