

India's police stations are human rights threat, says chief justice

In an extraordinary rebuke over police brutality, India's chief justice has said the most dangerous places in the country for threats to human rights are police stations.

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana said that the threat to human rights and bodily integrity are the highest in police stations.

"Cruel and inhuman and other police atrocities are problems which will prevail in our society," he said in the National Legal Services Authority in a speech on a special "degree treatment".

One of the causes of police mistreatment, he said, was that they brought in the questioning and arrest without having had to have the agency of court officers.

"The law provides the legal representation to people who cannot afford to hire a lawyer, but many poor Indians are unaware of this right."

"The lack of effective legal representation at police stations is a huge detriment to arrested or detained persons. The decisions taken in these early hours will later determine the ability of the accused to defend himself," Ramana said.

He also stressed that the right to a lawyer should not be a privilege. "For you, with you, always," he often repeated as "we are for you, never with you and never will be for you" by residents who have come to associate police stations with fear and abuse.

The statement said that work that 148 people died and 1,189 were harmed in police custody over the last three years.

Ramana urged the National Legal Services Authority, which is meant to ensure that public access is provided to the poor and marginalized, to do more to make public and police aware of their rights.

He suggested setting up legal helplines outside police stations or that, on entering, people could see a glance that they had a right to a lawyer, and that the prison service be empowered to distribute information to people in the custody.



Pakistan's top diplomat in UK hopeful of red list exit

LONDON: Pakistan's High Commissioner to the UK, Muzammar Hussain, has said he is optimistic that the British government will remove Pakistan from its red list in the coming weeks.

Mr Hussain said that his engagement with British authorities on their decision to keep Pakistan on the red list has been positive. He said that the British government has been responsive to the concerns raised by Pakistan.

He also stressed that the communication gap between the two countries in the Covid-19 crisis has been a major concern. He said that the British government has been working to improve the situation.

"We had the system they [British authorities] have adopted to assess Pakistan does not present an accurate picture of our Covid-19 situation, and this needs to be corrected," he said.

"This is not criticism, but it is important to share our point of view. There is no communication gap, we are constantly in touch with them," he said.

He said that although daily cases are high, the British authorities have been requested to look at daily deaths. "These cannot be hidden, and the demand for oxygen and ventilators too cannot be concealed," he said.

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Russia, Central Asian allies hold drills near Afghanistan

By Vladimir Isachenkov

Troops from Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on Tuesday wrapped up their drills intended to simulate a joint response to potential security threats coming from Afghanistan.

The war games that began last week involved 2,700 Russian, tank and Uzbek troops and about 300 military vehicles.

The drills, which were held at high altitude, were some 20 kilometers (about 12 miles) north of the Tajik border with Afghanistan, said the troops practice action against terrorism. As part of the exercise, Russian Su-25 attack jets struck mock targets simulating militant vehicles.

The Russian military said the maneuvers took place "against the background of the destabilization of the situation in neighboring Afghanistan, in order to work out the issues of spelling possible threats and special measures to ensure security and maintain stability in the Central Asian region."

It noted that Russian troops in the region practice using new weapons during the drills, including new sniper rifles and drone throwers.

Russia, which has a military base in Tajikistan, has pledged to offer military assistance to Tajikistan and other ex-Soviet Central Asian states if they face incursions of militants from Afghanistan. There are no reports of any incursions.

They are concerned about new variants [coming into the UK] and are our genomic surveillance is not adequate. Of course, there may be cases for more work, but our data gives us a clear picture of what is going on in Pakistan."

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Sri Lanka rejects lockdown to beat Covid 'bomb'

By Anura Kumara Dissanayake

Sri Lanka's government rejected on Tuesday mounting calls for an immediate lockdown to contain a surge in Covid-19 cases and deaths that is severely stretching hospitals and crematoriums.

A major minister for health, Chaturanga Fernando, said the island nation suffers more than 100 deaths per day on average.

"Curfew or a lockdown is the last resort, but we are not there yet," Ranaboldu told reporters.

But most activity is allowed, with shops, restaurants and offices open and public transport still operating. The number of deaths hit a record 111 on Monday with the daily average in the past week crossing 100 - more than double the average of 40 in the previous week.

The number of infections also more than doubled to nearly 3,000 this week.

At one meeting in Colombo Tuesday morning, workers heard 11 corpses for Covid-19 and then cremated them to clear the way for more bodies.

A Covid response ordered the immediate disposal of 40 corpses that cremated simultaneously by the rest of the city.

The Colombo Municipal Council began mass cremations Sunday to clear a backlog after hospital mortuaries ran out of refrigeration space for bodies.

But over 11.2 million people out of the population of 21 million have been given at least one vaccine jab, while 1.2 million had received both as of Monday.

Sri Lanka has recorded 5,222 deaths to date and almost 33,000 infections, according to official data. AFP

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More warnings of abuse after rights groups urge end to Uzbek use of rectal exams

Local activists have warned of further persistent use of compulsory rectal exams to abuse detainees and other prisoners in Uzbekistan.

International rights groups last week urged President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to immediately order officials to abandon such humiliating procedures by prosecuting cases of suspected homosexuality.

Khan, among past human rights and justice commissioners from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, said that such practices are a violation of international human rights law.

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Uzbekistan is one of only a very few countries to use compulsory rectal exams to abuse detainees and other prisoners in Uzbekistan.

Mirziyoyev, who took power in 2016, has reportedly pledged to reform Uzbek justice and end allegedly widespread torture in custody.

Rights groups and two Uzbek human rights activists with knowledge of the situation said the U.S. State Department has been urged to end such practices as well as to end the use of compulsory rectal exams to abuse detainees and other prisoners.

Mirziyoyev, head of the Parliament-based Association for Human Rights in Central Asia, said that such practices have been used in at least three cases where the individual being tested was a minor, and in at least one case the subject later attempted suicide.

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