

NHRC, India takes suo motu cognizance of the reported death of three workers and another's condition critical due to asphyxiation while cleaning a sewage tank without safety gear at a private industrial unit, Tiruppur district, Tamil Nadu

Issues notices to the Chief Secretary, and the Director General of Police, Tamil Nadu, calling for a detailed report in the matter within four weeks

The report to include the status of the investigation of the case, as well as compensation, if any, paid to the victim's families

Posted On: 27 MAY 2025 5:54PM by PIB Delhi

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has taken *suo motu* cognizance of media report that three workers died while another's condition became critical due to asphyxiation after they entered into a sewage tank to clean it without any protective gear at a private industrial unit in Tiruppur district, Tamil Nadu on 19th May, 2025. Reportedly, they were employed at a Dyeing Mill in the Karaipudur area of Tiruppur and asked to clean the sewage tank of the factory.

The Commission has observed that the contents, if true, raise a serious issue of violation of human rights. The Apex Court, in its judgement passed in the case, Dr. Balram Singh vs Union of India (WP(C) No. 324 of 2020) dated 20.10.2023, has held that it is the duty of the local authorities and other agencies to use modern technology for cleaning of sewers etc.

The Commission has also been consistently advocating a total ban on activities of hazardous cleaning without adequate and proper protective / safety gears or equipment, and also has advocated suitable use of work-friendly and technology-based robotic machines. It issued an Advisory on 24th September, 2021 for the Protection of Human Rights of the Persons Engaged in Hazardous Cleaning to the Union, State Governments and local authorities with an objective to ensure complete eradication of such practice.

Therefore, the Commission has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, Government of Tamil Nadu, calling for a detailed report in the matter within four weeks. It is expected to include the status of the investigation of the case as well as compensation, if any, paid to the victim's families.

According to the media report, carried on 21st May, 2025, shortly after entering the tank, all four began to suffocate and then collapsed. The co-workers pulled them out and rushed them to a private hospital, but three

of them could not survive. The deceased belonged to the Scheduled Caste.

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(Release ID: 2131686)