

NHRC, India asks 21 states and NCT-Delhi to take advance action to protect the lives of the vulnerable population from heat waves

Highlights risks faced by economically weaker sections, outdoor workers, the elderly, children, newborns and especially the homeless due to heat waves amid inadequate shelter and resources

Calls for action taken reports to mitigate the impact of heat waves and prevent casualties as per the existing SOPs in the states or the NDMA guidelines

Posted On: 28 APR 2026 11:54AM by PIB Delhi

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has asked the 21 states and NCT-Delhi to take advance action and implement relief measures to protect the vulnerable population during heat waves in the country. The states are Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

The Commission has observed that the rise in the frequency, duration and intensity of heat waves, disproportionately affects the marginalised, economically weaker sections, outdoor workers and the homeless due to the lack of adequate shelter and resources. The elderly, children, infants and newborns are especially susceptible to the health impacts of extreme heat. Additionally, heat waves can lead to the loss of livelihoods and an increased risk of fire accidents.

Therefore, the Commission, in a letter to the Chief Secretaries of these states and the union territory of Delhi, has emphasised the urgent need for integrated and inclusive measures. Highlighting the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data about the reported death of 3,712 people in India due to heat or sunstroke between 2019-23, the Commission has urged them to plan and facilitate seamless implementation of relief measures as per their existing Standard Operating Procedures or guidelines issued by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to mitigate the impact of heat waves and prevent casualties.

The Commission has called for consolidated action taken reports from the districts at the state/ UT level.

NSK

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