

NHRC, India takes suo motu cognizance of a media report about school students risking their lives by hopping on check dam pillars to cross the Betwa River to reach school in Madhya Pradesh's Vidisha district

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The Commission observes lack of a safe mode of transport for the children to reach school amounts to a negation of their fundamental right to education with dignity

Issues a notice to the Madhya Pradesh Chief Secretary, calling for a detailed report on the matter within two weeks

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The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has taken *suo motu* cognizance of a media report that school students of Kakraua village are risking their lives by hopping on check dam pillars to cross the Betwa River to reach school in Madhya Pradesh's Vidisha district. They reportedly take this dangerous route because it cuts the distance from 13 km by road to just 1.5 km. Reportedly, nine students from the village cross the river in this manner every day, including five girls.

The Commission has observed that the contents of the news report, if true, raise serious issues of violation of human rights. It noted that Article 21A of the Constitution of India guarantees free and compulsory education to be provided by the state to children aged 6 to 14 years. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 also makes education a right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14 years. Further, the Apex Court, in *Avinash Mehrotra v. Union of India* (2009), has held that the Right to Education necessarily includes the Right to a safe school and safe infrastructure.

Therefore, the Commission has held that the absence of a safe mode of transport for children to reach school amounts to a negation of their fundamental right to education with dignity. Accordingly, it has issued a notice to the Madhya Pradesh Chief Secretary, calling for a detailed report on the matter within two weeks.

According to the media report, carried on 4th August 2026, a video of the children hopping perilously across the wide gaps in the exposed check dam pillars has gone viral on social media. The villagers reportedly express their inability to drop their children off at a faraway school as they have to work in the fields. The option they have is to either stop sending them or continue this way.

Reportedly, a student failed her final exams after missing school because she could not cross the pillars due to her short height. The District Education Officer has visited the spot and informed the District Collector about the issue. However, a timeline for the construction of a safe passage to cross the river has not been mentioned.

NSK

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