

Human rights monitors to combat torture

India and the Delegation of the European Commission here have deputed district human rights monitors (DHRMs), trained to help torture victims to stand up to the perpetrators, in 47 districts across the country.

'The project is on an experimental basis. Currently it is being executed in nine states for a period of three years,' EU's executive (programmes) Mohanlal Panda said on the sidelines of a function organised on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

The initiative is being implemented in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Orissa, Karnataka, Andhra pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu and is funded by the EU delegation.

'It is very difficult to make the commoners stand up to the state agencies inflicting torture. It is the continuous work on the part of our monitors that some people come forward and these small successes are really important,' said Henri Tiphagne, executive director of People's Watch.

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) chairperson Justice (retd) S. Rajendra Babu also criticised the torture inflicted by the police during interrogation and to extract testimonies and confessions.

A report by Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) has revealed that nearly four people die in police custody every day.

In its report 'Torture in India: A State of Denial', ACHR quotes NHRC that 7,468 people have died or have been killed in prison and police custody during 2002-07.

India is a signatory to the United Nations Convention Against Torture but has not enacted national laws to ratify the convention.

'A signature to the convention implies an intention to incorporate its ethos in national laws. I exhort India to ratify the convention,' Babu said.

National Commission for Women (NCW) chairperson Girija Vyas also called for a stronger law to deal with torture.

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