



Asia Pacific Forum on Human Rights

For Prelims: Asia Pacific Forum on Human Rights (APF), [UDHR](#), [NHRC](#)

For Mains: Human Rights in India, Issues in the working of NHRC

Source: [PIB](#)

Why in News?

President of India inaugurated the **annual general meeting** and **Biennial Conference** of the **Asia Pacific Forum on Human Rights** in New Delhi celebrating the landmark **75th anniversary** of the [Universal Declaration on Human Rights \(UDHR\)](#).

What was the President's Perspective on Human Rights?

- **Balancing Human Rights and Environmental Concerns:** The President emphasized on addressing human rights issues while protecting the environment.
- **Concerns Over Man-Made Environmental Destruction:** The President expressed concern about human actions' destructive impact on nature.
- **Moral Obligation to Safeguard Human Rights:** She highlighted the moral duty of the international community to protect human rights beyond legal frameworks.
- **India's Commitment to Gender Justice:** She reiterated India's Constitution has supported universal adult franchise rights, leading to gender justice and dignity protection.
- **Openness to Global Best Practices:** She said India is willing to learn from global best practices to improve human rights.
- **Nurturing Mother Nature:** She urged not to isolate human rights issues and equally prioritize the protection of the wounded Mother Nature.

What is the Asia Pacific Forum on Human Rights?

- **Background and Mission:**
 - Founded in 1996
 - Unites National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) across the Asia Pacific region
 - Aims to address significant human rights challenges in the region
- **Membership and Growth:**
 - The APF has 17 full members and eight associate members.
 - To be admitted as a full member, a National Human Rights Institution must fully comply with the minimum international standards set out in the Paris Principles.
 - National Human Rights Institutions that partially comply with the Paris Principles are granted associate membership.
- **Goals:**
 - Promote the establishment of independent NHRIs in the Asia Pacific region
 - Support member NHRIs in their effective functioning
- **Functions and Services:**

- Offers a comprehensive range of programs and services
- Represent members' collective voice on regional and international human rights issues
- Form partnerships with various international agencies, governments, and non-government organizations
- Collaborates with organizations such as [OHCHR](#), [UNDP](#), [UN Women](#), and [UNFPA](#)

Why are Human Rights Important?

- **Protection of Individual Dignity:** Ensures the preservation of the inherent dignity and worth of every human being.
- **Social Justice and Equality:** Promotes social justice and equality by safeguarding the rights of marginalized and vulnerable populations.
- **Rule of Law:** Fosters the rule of law by establishing a framework for accountability and justice.
- **Peace and Stability:** Contributes to peace and stability within and among nations by addressing grievances and conflicts.
- **Development and Prosperity:** Facilitates economic and social development, leading to improved living standards.
- **Global Cooperation:** Promotes international cooperation and diplomacy to address human rights abuses on a global scale.
- **Preventing Atrocities:** Acts as a deterrent against human rights abuses and atrocities.
- **Human Dignity as a Universal Value:** Upholds human dignity as a universal value transcending cultural, religious, and political boundaries.
- **Individual Empowerment:** Empowers individuals to claim their rights and participate in decision-making processes.
- **Accountability and Justice:** Holds governments and institutions accountable for human rights violations and seeks justice for victims.

What is the NHRC?

- **About NHRC:**
 - Ensures protection of rights related to life, liberty, equality, and dignity of individuals.
 - Upholds rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution and international covenants enforceable by Indian courts.
- **Establishment:**
 - **Established on 12th October 1993**, under the **Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993**.
 - Established in accordance with the **Paris Principles** for promoting and protecting human rights.
- **Role and Function:**
 - Possesses **powers of a civil court** with judicial proceedings.
 - Empowered to **use the services of central or state government officers** or investigation agencies for probing human rights violations.
 - Can **investigate matters** within one year of their occurrence.
 - Functions are primarily **recommendatory** in nature.
- **Limitations:**
 - Cannot inquire into any matter after one year from the date of the alleged human rights violation.
 - Limited jurisdiction in cases of human rights violations by armed forces.
 - Lacks authority to act in cases of human rights violations by private parties.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains

Q. Though the Human Rights Commissions have contributed immensely to the protection of human rights in India, yet they have failed to assert themselves against the mighty and powerful. Analyzing their

structural and practical limitations, suggest remedial measures. (2021)

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