

Rise in police torture

SHOCKING India witnesses 42 per cent increase in custodial deaths since 2000

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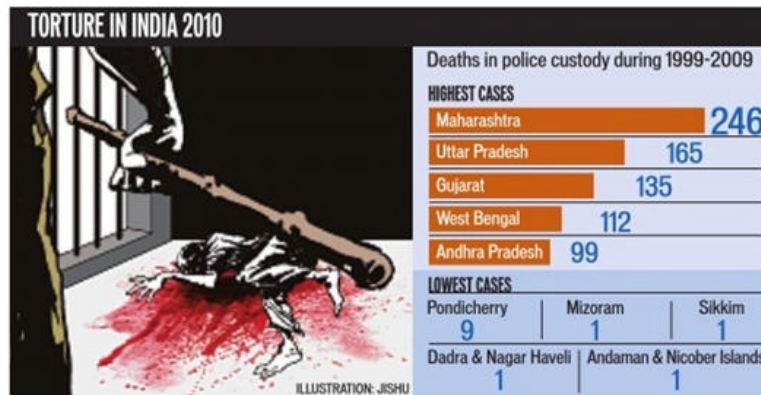
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NEW DELHI: Deaths in custody in India have risen by 42 per cent in the last decade, a human rights group said on Tuesday.

According to a report released by Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR), since 2000 prison custody deaths have increased by 54.02 per cent by 2008 while police custody deaths during the same period increased by 19.88 per cent.

The report — “Torture in India 2010” — comes at a time when the UPA Government is pushing for an anti-torture law. Last week the union cabinet approved the Prevention of Torture Bill, 13 years after the country signed an international treaty against torture.

The total number of deaths in judicial custody (jail) between 2000 and 2008 was 10,721 while 1,345 people died in police custody, the report, based on figures released by National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and other government



departments, said.

Among the armed opposition groups, the Maoists were the worst human rights violators, who regularly resorted murders of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture in blatant violation of International Humanitarian Law, it said.

ACHR Director Suhas Chakma said the Central Government cannot absolve

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SUHAS CHAKMA, Director, Asian Centre for Human Rights

itself of its responsibility simply by saying that law and order was a state subject.

Citing the April 8 *HT* report

on alleged custodial torture of one Vinod Sharma of Delhi and the alleged torture of US journalist Joel Elliot by the Delhi Police in October 2009, Chakma said: “It is the *aam aadmi* (common man) who is the victim of torture and other inhuman and degrading treatment in most of the cases.”

While praising the UPA government for legislative meas-

ures such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, the ‘Unorganised Workers’ Social Security Act and the Right to Education Act to address the economic rights of the *aam aadmi*, he lamented that it failed to show a similar commitment to the law against torture.

“Though the Cabinet approved the decision to introduce the Prevention of Torture Bill, 2010 before Parliament and ratify the UN Convention Against Torture, the Bill is being treated as state secret.

“If government of India can hold public discussion on the Food Security Bill, why is it treating the Prevention of Torture Bill, 2010 as a secret document?” Chakma asked.

He demanded scraping of the law requiring sanction to prosecute police and other government officials and implementation of the Law Commission’s report on ‘Custodial Crimes’ to shift the burden of proof on the police in all custodial death cases.

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