



# Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

New Delhi, India. London, UK. Accra, Ghana

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NGO with Special Consultative Status with the Economic & Social Council of the United Nations

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## Commonwealth Day 2020

### Make protection of Human Rights Defenders, Whistle Blowers and Journalists top priority: CHRI

New Delhi, March 9: The protection of human rights defenders, whistle blowers and journalists, as well as freedom of expression, information and assembly must be priorities for leaders of the 54 Commonwealth countries who need to work for transparency, good governance and rule of law, said the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI).

In a statement issued on Commonwealth Day, which falls today, CHRI noted that the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) is taking place in Rwanda in June 2020, with a focus on 'Delivering a Common Future'. Heads of government will review how they are 'innovating, connecting and transforming' to realise critical goals such as adherence to governance and rule of law principles, protecting natural resources and boosting trade.

However, CHRI International Director Sanjoy Hazarika, underlined that a number of Commonwealth members appeared to be in breach of democratic principles, enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter to which all members are pledged, with crackdowns on peaceful protests, frequent disruptions of digital spaces, assaults on minority groups and intimidation of human rights defenders.

In addition, he raised issues which came up at the last CHOGM 2018 in London, urging "member countries to implement effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end child and forced marriage, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour in all its forms by 2025."

Hazarika added, "We also call on the member countries to work towards reducing pre-trial detention rates in their jurisdictions; adopt and implement effective legal frameworks, conforming to international standards; prevent the overuse of pre-trial detention; and consequently reduce the rate of imprisonment to uphold the principle of the rule of law."

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