

‘Covid-19 pandemic poses new challenges on human rights front’

KU’s NSS organises webinar to mark Human Rights Day

Srinagar, Dec 11: Academics and legal experts have called for raising levels of public awareness to ensure that human rights of marginalised sections of society are protected with greater seriousness amid new challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

They were addressing a webinar, organised by Kashmir University’s National Service Scheme (NSS), to mark the Human Rights Day, observed every year on December 10.

In his keynote address, Prof M Afzal Wani, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University Delhi, asserted that respect for human rights is imperative to lay foundations of a peaceful society.

He suggested that district judges should be given the powers to entertain petitions under the Constitution’s Article-32, which gives the right to individuals to move the Supreme Court if they feel their right to justice has been “unduly deprived”.

“This would ensure accessibility of weaker sections of the society to justice and make human rights more meaningful,” he said.

Dr Khalid Hassan, Coordinator, Department of Politics and Governance, Central University of Kashmir, critically evaluated the influence of western philosophical thought on human rights jurisprudence.

“The human rights discourse was essentially elitist in its approach and this was the primary reason for its failure to address the needs of the marginalised sections of the society,” he said.

Dr Mir Mubashir Altaf from KU’s School of Law highlighted, from the constitutional law perspective, the issue of women’s rights in the country. He said that while the Constitution provides a rights-based framework in this regard, reality on the ground is different.

In his message for the webinar, Coordinator NSS Dr Musavir Ahmed said the Covid-19 pandemic has posed new challenges vis-à-vis protection of human rights of marginalised sections of society. He said this year’s theme for Human Rights Day—‘*Recover Better—Stand Up for Human Rights*’—has been chosen accordingly to end discriminations, address inequalities and encourage solidarity for a better post-Covid19 world.

Dr Heena Basharat, organiser of the webinar, said Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated how greatly interconnected and interdependent the entire world is.

“Therefore, respect for human rights has to be fostered universally,” she said.

The webinar was, among others, attended by Dr Waqar Amin, Dr Yasir Hamid, Dr Shazia Malik—co-organisers of the webinar—apart from students and scholars of the University of Kashmir.