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NHRC Probes Assault on Student at Bihar School

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The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken suo motu cognizance of a disturbing case from Bihar's Jehanabad district, where a girl student at Kasturba Gandhi Girls Residential School was allegedly burned with a hot spatula by the school cook. The incident has raised serious concerns about the safety and welfare of children in state-run residential schools.

According to media reports that prompted the NHRC's intervention, the assault occurred when the student requested food. The cook, instead of complying, allegedly pressed a heated spatula against her skin, causing burn injuries. The case has drawn public outrage, highlighting the need for strict oversight in institutions meant to provide safe living and learning environments for children.

Following the report, the NHRC issued notices to the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police in Jehanabad. Both officials have been directed to submit a detailed account of the incident within two weeks. The commission has specifically requested updates on the student's current health condition, the investigation's progress, and any steps taken to ensure such incidents are not repeated.

What has further alarmed authorities and the public is the revelation that the same cook had faced similar accusations in the past. Reports indicate that she had been transferred to the Jehanabad school following a complaint of misconduct at another institution. This has prompted questions about the process for vetting and monitoring staff in residential schools, particularly those responsible for the care and well-being of children.

The NHRC, in its statement, emphasized that residential schools have a special obligation to safeguard students, many of whom come from marginalized or vulnerable backgrounds. It warned that failure to address systemic lapses in staff conduct and supervision could lead to repeated violations of children's rights.

Child rights advocates have also called for a thorough review of the hiring and disciplinary procedures in place for residential school staff across Bihar. Some have urged the state education department to institute mandatory background checks, stricter supervision, and periodic behavioral assessments for employees working with children.

In addition to legal proceedings against the accused, local officials are reportedly considering administrative action to prevent recurrence. This includes increased monitoring by school authorities, designated complaint channels for students, and the presence of child protection officers in such institutions.

The NHRC's intervention underscores the broader issue of student safety in boarding and residential schools across the country. Recent incidents have prompted calls for stronger enforcement of child protection guidelines and more transparent mechanisms for reporting abuse.

As the investigation continues, the victim is receiving medical care, and authorities have pledged to provide counseling and support. The commission has made it clear that it expects timely and comprehensive responses from the district administration, warning that failure to act decisively could result in further action from the national rights body. This case adds to growing concerns about gaps in the implementation of safety standards in schools, reinforcing the need for systemic reforms to protect the dignity, health, and rights of children in educational institutions.