GANHRI's ratings for India

Why in news?

Recently the UN recognised Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) has deferred National Human Rights Commission's accreditation for the second time in the row.

What is Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions?

- **Launch year**- In 1993 at Tunis, Tunisia as the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions, it later got changed to GANHRI in 2016.
- **Headquarters-** Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Vision-** A world where everyone and everywhere fully enjoy their human rights.
- **Tripartite partnership**- GANHRI-UNDP-OHCHR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) aims to strengthen NHRIs in their capacity to promote and protect human rights, individually and through their regional and global networks resulting in increased fulfilment of human rights for all people.
- **Members-** 115 National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) from all regions of the globe and provides leadership and support in the promotion and protection of human rights.
- **Uniqueness-** It is the *only non-UN body* whose internal accreditation system is based on *compliance with the 1993 Paris Principles* that grants access to UN committees.
- **Paris Principles, 1993**- It is the set of international standards which frame and guide the work of NHRIs, it was adopted by UN General Assembly (UNGA).
- **Rating-** The rating is based on the subcommittee consisting of one A status NHRI representative from each of the regional networks.
- **Sub-Committee on Accreditation**- It is a *peer review process* for initial accreditation, and re-accreditation every five years is managed by the subcommittee.

Status	About
A status	• It is granted to NHRIs that are in *full compliance* with the Paris Principles • They are entitled to *vote or hold office* in the GANHRI or its regional groups
B status	• It is given to NHRIs that *partially comply* with the Paris Principles. • Institutions with B status can participate in GANHRI meetings but are *unable to vote* or hold governance positions

- **India's status-** GANHRI has deferred National Human Rights Commission's reaccreditation due to concerns regarding its compliance with the Paris Principles.

India being accredited in 1999 had retained its A ranking in 2006 and 2011,

while its status was deferred in 2016 and restored after a year

What are the concerns raised by GANHRI?

- **Lack of diversity**- There is a lack of representation from marginalized groups, and the selection process does not maximize the inclusion of candidates from various backgrounds.
- **Gender disparity**- Despite recommendations to ensure at least 1 woman in its leadership, the NHRC has historically failed to achieve significant gender representation.
- **Opaque appointment process**- The process for appointing members to the NHRC is not transparent, raising questions about the fairness and integrity of the selections.
- **Limited cooperation**- The commission has been criticized for not engaging constructively with NGOs and Human Rights Defenders (HFDs) which is essential for effective human rights advocacy
- **Conflict of interest-** The involvement of police personnel in investigations may lead to biases and conflicts of interest.
- **Inadequate response-** NHRC is perceived as being ineffective in addressing and responding to increasing human rights violations.

Consequences of losing 'A' rating

- **Lose voting rights-** The NHRC would no longer have voting rights within GANHRI.
- **Loss of representative role-** It would also lose its role as a representative at the United Nations Human Rights Council.
- **Diminish influence**- It would reduce India's influence in international human rights forums.
- **Impact on credibility**- The credibility and effectiveness of human rights protections within India could be undermined.

What lies ahead?

- The need of the hour is to address the key concerns raised by GANHRI as it is crucial for India to maintain its 'A' rating and ensure robust protection and promotion of human rights.
- Substantial reforms in the appointment process, greater independence from government influence, enhanced engagement with civil society and improved diversity are the essential steps towards restoring the credibility and functionality of the NHRC.

Quick facts

National Human Rights Commission

• **Established year**- 1993
• **Governed by-** The statute under which it is established is the *Protection of Human Rights Act* (PHRA), 1993 as amended by the Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Act, 2006.
• **Paris Principles**- It is in conformity with the Paris Principles, adopted as the 1st international workshop on national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights held in Paris in 1991, and endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 1993.
• **Section 2(1)(d)-** PHRA defines human rights as rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individuals guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by the courts in India.
• **HRCNet portal-** It is developed by NHRC with technical assistance from *National Informatics Centre*, it can be used by all Human Rights Commissions in the country for online complaints lodging/tracking systems and handling of complaints received offline(by hand, by post etc.,)

References

1. The Hindu- NHRC is under review
2. NHRC- About NHRC

