



# 50% of snakebite cases in the world take place in India

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Protect NGO helping snakebite victims: HC to police

The Bombay High Court has directed the Vartak Nagar police in Thane to ensure that members of an NGO, which has been helping tribals in the district in case of snakebite, are not obstructed by anyone in carrying out their work.

A division bench of chief justice Mohit Shah and justice MS Sonak gave the directive after hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by Dr Sarita Parikh and Apoorva Agwan, both members of NGO Creative Responsible Integrated Systems

Foundation (Crisys). The court said: "Senior police inspector of the station should see that no one obstructs the petitioners and their apprentices who deal with cases of snakebite in tribal areas."

Appearing for the state, advocate GW Mattos said: "The court had directed us to file a detailed reply to the petition. I informed the court that if the NGO approaches the police with a complaint, cognizance of it would be taken expeditiously."

According to the petition, 50% of snakebite cases in the world take place in India. In Thane district alone, snakebites claim up to 10 people a day, and in the monsoon season, the toll rises to 20. A close study of the deaths has shown that it was mostly the male members of the family who had

died, bringing hardships to the family. Moreover, three of the four victims had died only because they were unable to reach a hospital in time due to lack of roads in rural areas.

The NGO had a few months back started teaching adivasis foreign languages and the nuances of computer operation. These trained adivasi apprentices were, in turn, required to help the NGO in carrying out the snakebite project by distributing safety kits developed by it.

However, some adivasis, including an ex-sarpanch and a social worker, objected to the programme. The NGO has developed a mono-wheel ambulance suited to the rough terrain and a portable low/no power ventilator that can be used in places with no electricity.

In its petition, the NGO had said that they were helping the tribals save their lives, and if an individual or an organisation hindered life-saving work (by blocking the ambulance), it amounted to an offence under section 304-A (culpable homicide not amounting to murder). The court, which issued notices to the state government, adjourned the hearing to June 23.