Supreme Court Chronicle

Issue V | March 2024

Highlights

- Second Edition of the Supreme Court Annual Lecture Series
- The Supreme Court Legal Services Committee
- Public, Press, and Profession—3 Ps that define the Public Relations Office



Chief Justice's Corner



I am pleased to introduce the 5th edition of Supreme Court Chronicle, which has been both informative and a joy to read. This edition is packed with insights into some hidden yet crucial aspects of the Supreme Court Registry, such as the front desk. Alongside, there is an exclusive feature on the second edition of the Annual Lecture Series, featuring a distinguished guest from the International Court of Justice.

Within its pages, you will find an array of events and initiatives undertaken by the Supreme Court. Explore the section titled 'The Supreme Court Legal Services Committee,' which elaborates on efforts to streamline access to justice. Moreover, dive into summaries of significant judgments, noteworthy initiatives for the staff spearheaded by the Supreme Court, and a comprehensive roundup of Court events for the month of February 2024.

I hope this edition sparks your curiosity and inspires you to become more involved in the daily operations of the Supreme Court.

Happy Reading!

Dr Justice D Y Chandrachud
Chief Justice of India

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Fresh from the Bench

Association for Democratic Reforms v Union of India, 2024 INSC 113

Constitutionality of Electoral Bond Scheme

In its judgment dated 15 February 2024, a five-judge Constitution Bench comprising the Chief Justice of India, **Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Sanjiv Khanna, Justice B R Gavai, Justice J B Pardiwala** and **Justice Manoj Misra** held that Electoral Bond Scheme, 2018 which allows for anonymous contributions by donors to political parties is violative of the voters' right to receive information under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution and therefore, unconstitutional. The Supreme Court noted that information about funding of political parties is essential for the effective exercise of the choice of voting as there is a legitimate possibility that financial contributions to a political party would lead to *quid pro quo* arrangements because of the close nexus between money and politics. The Court held that applying the doctrine of proportionality the Electoral Bond Scheme is not the least restrictive means to achieve the purpose of curbing black money in the electoral process. The Court noted that contributions through other means of electronic transfer and through electoral trusts are alternative measures that are less restrictive and balances the right to information of voters with the goal of curbing black money. The Court noted that another purpose of Electoral Bonds was to protect the donor's informational privacy. The Court held that the citizens have informational privacy over their political beliefs. The Court applied the double proportionality test to observe that the Electoral Bond Scheme is not the least restrictive to balance fundamental right to information of voters with informational privacy of donors. The Court held that the Electoral Bond Scheme completely tilts the balance in favour of the purpose of informational privacy and abrogates the informational interests of the voters. The Court also held that deletion of the proviso to Section 182(1) of the Companies Act, 2013 permitting unlimited corporate contributions to political parties is arbitrary and violative of Article 14. The Court recorded that unlimited contributions by companies to political parties is against free and fair elections because it allows certain persons/companies to use their monetary resources to influence policy making.

Kuldeep Kumar v UT Chandigarh, 2024 INSC 129

Chandigarh mayoral election result overturned

In its judgment dated 20 February 2024, a three-judge bench comprising the Chief Justice of India, **Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice J B Pardiwala** and **Justice Manoj Misra** set aside the result of the Chandigarh Mayoral Election as declared by the Presiding Officer as it found that the eight votes declared invalid by the Presiding Officer were in fact valid. The Supreme Court declared the appellant Mr Kuldeep Kumar, belonging to Aam Aadmi Party-Congress alliance, was the rightful winner by invoking its extraordinary power to do justice under Article 142 of the Constitution. The

Court overturned the earlier result after seeing a video recording of the counting process which showed the Presiding Officer defacing some of the ballot papers. The Court examined the video evidence and noted that in all those ballot papers, the Presiding Officer had drawn a line as a mark and claimed that mark as a ground to declare the ballots invalid. The Court found that this was in violation of the Election Regulations framed by the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation. The Court directed that a show cause notice be issued to the Presiding Officer as to why proceedings under Section 340 of the Criminal Code of Procedure, 1973 ("**CrPC**") should not be instituted against him for making a false statement before the Court.

Mohd Abaad Ali v Directorate of Revenue Prosecution Intelligence, 2024 INSC 125

Condonation of delay in appeal against acquittal

In its judgment dated 20 February 2024, a two-judge bench comprising **Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia** and **Justice Prasanna B Varale** held that delay in filing appeal under Section 378 CrPC against the acquittal of the accused can be condoned under Section 5 (Extension of prescribed period in certain cases) of the Limitation Act, 1963. The Supreme Court observed that although the limitation period in preferring an appeal is mentioned under Section 378 of CrPC, the said provision doesn't contain any exclusionary provision to exclude the application of the Limitation Act. The Court noted that the Limitation Act, 1963 makes Section 5 applicable even in the special laws when a period of limitation is prescribed, unless it is expressly excluded by such special law.

Bharti Cellular Limited v Assistant Commissioner of Income Tax, 2024 INSC 148

TDS deduction on income of franchisees/distributors

In its judgment dated 28 February 2024, a two-judge bench comprising **Justice Sanjiv Khanna** and **Justice S V N Bhatti** held that under Section 194-H of the Income Tax Act, 1961, cellular mobile service providers are not liable to deduct tax at source on income/profit component in payments received by their franchisees/distributors from third parties/customers. Section 194-H provides for TDS (tax deductible at source) deduction on the payment of commission or brokerage. The Supreme Court noted that the obligation to deduct tax at source in terms of Section 194-H of the Act arises when the legal relationship of principal-agent is established. The Court observed that the legal position of a distributor is different from that of an agent, the distributor buys goods on his account and sells them in his territory and is thus an independent contractor. The Court recorded that an independent contractor is free from control on the part of his employer, and is only subject to the terms of his contract, but an agent is not completely free from control, and the relationship to the extent of tasks entrusted by the principal to the agent are fiduciary. The Court recorded that even in franchise agreements, the relationship between a franchisor and a franchisee is that of an independent contractor. The Court noted that the income of the franchisee/distributor is credited to the account of the franchisee/distributor when they sell the

prepaid products to the end-user/customer. The Court also noted that the assessees (cellular companies) do not pay or credit the account of the franchisee/distributor with the income by way of commission or brokerage on which tax at source under Section 194-H of the Act is to be deducted.

High Court Bar Association, Allahabad v State of UP, 2024 INSC 150

No automatic vacation of stay orders

In its judgment dated 29 February 2024, a five-judge Constitution Bench comprising the Chief Justice of India, **Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Abhay S Oka, Justice J B Pardiwala, Justice Manoj Misra** and **Justice Pankaj Mithal** overturned its 2018 judgment in *Asian Resurfacing of Road Agency v Central Bureau of Investigation, 2018 INSC 282* which mandated that the interim orders passed by High Courts staying trials in civil and criminal cases will automatically expire after six months from the date of the order, unless expressly extended by the High Courts. The Court held that the automatic vacation of the order of stay and the disposal of all cases in which a stay has been granted on a day-to-day basis virtually amounts to judicial legislation and the jurisdiction of this Court cannot be exercised to make such a judicial legislation. The Court noted that only the legislature can provide that cases of a particular category should be decided within a specific time. The Court also noted that by a blanket direction in the exercise of power under Article 142 of the Constitution of India, the Court cannot interfere with the jurisdiction conferred on the High Courts for granting interim relief by limiting their jurisdiction to pass interim orders that are only valid for six months at a time.

Basavaraj v Indira, 2024 INSC 151

Amendment of plaint

In its judgment dated 29 February 2024, a two-judge bench comprising **Justice C T Ravikumar** and **Justice Rajesh Bindal** held that an application seeking amendment of the plaint is impermissible under Order 6 Rule 17 of CPC if the amendment alters the nature of the suit. In the instant case, an amendment of the plaint in a partition suit was sought to include a prayer to declare an earlier compromise decree as void. The Court disallowed the application stating that the amendment had the effect of altering the nature of partition suit to a declaration suit. The Court observed that an application seeking amendment to the suit under Order 6 Rule 17 CPC shall not be allowed after the trial has commenced unless the Court concludes that despite due diligence, the party could not have raised the matter before the commencement of trial. The Court also recorded that amendment to the suit shall not be allowed on the ground that due to oversight and mistake, the party was unable to seek the amendment to the suit. The Court enumerated the factors to be taken into consideration by the court while dealing with an application for amendment: (i) whether the amendment would cause prejudice to the other side or (ii) it fundamentally changes the nature and character of the case or (iii) a fresh suit on the amended claim would be barred on the date of filing the application.

Second Edition of the Supreme Court's Annual Lecture Series

On 10 February 2024, the Supreme Court of India hosted the second edition of its Annual Lecture Series. Ms Hilary Charlesworth, Judge, International Court of Justice, served as the Chief Guest and delivered a lecture titled 'The International Court of Justice: A legal forum in a political environment.' The event began with an opening address by Justice Surya Kant. Dr D Y Chandrachud, the Chief Justice of India, shared his memories of Judge Charlesworth from their time together at Harvard Law School, where they both earned their LLM and doctorate degrees in the 1980s.

Lecture by Judge Hilary Charlesworth

Ms Hilary Charlesworth, a Judge of the International Court of Justice delivered the second edition of the Supreme Court's Annual Lecture Series. During her talk, she examined the history of the International Court of Justice, which replaced the former Permanent Court of International Justice. She also referred to how the Permanent Court of Arbitration was established after successful Hague Peace conferences in 1899 and 1907, which were initiated by Czar Nicholas II of Russia and is still operational today.



Left to right: Judge, International Court of Justice, Ms Hilary Charlesworth, the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud and Justice Surya Kant during second annual lecture series on 10 February 2024



Judge, International Court of Justice, Ms Hilary Charlesworth delivering the Second Edition of the Supreme Court's Annual Lecture Series

Explaining the difference between 'compulsory jurisdiction' and 'voluntary jurisdiction' concerning the International Court of Justice, Judge Charlesworth indicated the limitation with which the International Court of Justice works.

> *".....all 193 members of the United Nations are automatically parties to the Court's statute. But that doesn't necessarily mean that they accept the Court's jurisdiction. There was some discussion whether the Court should have compulsory jurisdiction during the drafting of the United Nation Charter at the San Francisco Conference in 1945. And that position, the Court having compulsory jurisdiction, was certainly championed by smaller states such as Australia and New Zealand. But ultimately the view of the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom prevailed and that was, the jurisdiction should be voluntary and that's the situation today....."*

Recognising the Indian Judges' role at the International Court of Justice, Judge Charlesworth recalled a significant case involving Judge Nagendra Singh, then President of the International Court of Justice. He presided over a case between the United States and Nicaragua, where the U.S. was found guilty of breaking international law by supporting rebels against the Nicaraguan government and mining its harbours. Despite the U.S. arguing that the issue should be resolved politically, the Court made a legal ruling.

Judge Charlesworth also noted that Judge Nagendra Singh had the longest tenure among Indian judges at the International Court of Justice. She also highlighted the roles played by ad-hoc judges like Judge Mohamed Ali Currim Chagla, who served on the International Court during the Right of Passage case between Portugal and India in 1960, and Judge B P Jeevan Reddy, who was part of the Court's bench for the Aerial Incident matter between India and Pakistan in 1999.

Focussing on the operation of International Law, Judge Charlesworth discussed various criticisms that the International Court of Justice faces. She mentions, "International law operates in an intensely political context and its principles are more the product of politics than true law." In this view, International judges are often taken out of the purely legal realm and called on to make political decisions. This criticism isn't peculiar of course to international law, emphasised Judge Charlesworth. "In several domestic jurisdictions including Australia it's sometimes argued that the courts, especially the appellate courts, should keep at arm's-length a category of questions that are incapable of legal decision questions that are deemed non-justiciable."

The key highlight of the Judge Hilary Charlesworth's lecture was her concern over the limited representation of women at the International Court of Justice.

> *"The International Court of Justice has a poor record in attention to gender balance. In almost eight decades just six women have been elected to the Court while 109 men have been elected at the same time. Today … Professor Sarah Hull Cleveland has joined us so we are still four women and 11 men."*

Judge Charlesworth said that judicial independence in the international context was aimed at eliminating any non-legal considerations that might affect a judge's reasoning. In this regard, she hailed national jurisdictions like India for being independent and introspective and urged the International Court of Justice to draw inspiration from such national jurisdictions. She concluded her lecture by observing:

> *"Supreme Court's courageous capacity of introspection which, to quote, the Chief Justice's recent talk at the ceremonial sitting and I quote from him 'introspection is the art of bringing the seemingly unattainable within the line of vision' this it seems to me is a vital quality—introspection for true judicial independence."*



Left to right: Judge, International Court of Justice, Ms Hilary Charlesworth, Justice J B Pardiwala, the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, and Justice Manoj Misra in courtroom no 1 on 12 February 2024

Initiatives for the Staff

Staff Library

The Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud inaugurated the Staff Library in the Additional Building Complex of the Supreme Court on 1 February 2024. The Library aims to cultivate and enhance the culture of reading among the staff of the Supreme Court Registry. It is located in Room No. 404, B-Block of the Additional Building Complex. Open to all officials of the Registry, the Staff Library boasts a diverse collection of reading materials. These include legal books, materials for departmental and judicial entrance examinations, and general books in a variety of genres. The Library also provides access to print and e-newspapers, and magazines in both English and Hindi. Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology has streamlined the issue and return of books.



Left to right:
Front row - The Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Sanjiv Khanna
Back row - Justice Aniruddha Bose and Justice P S Narasimha inaugurating the Staff Library in the Additional Building Complex of the Supreme Court



The Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, and Justice Sanjiv Khanna taking a glance of the the newly inaugurated Staff Library



The Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Sanjiv Khanna, with Dr Uma Narayan, Registrar and Ms Poonam Sharma, Director (Incharge), Judges' Library, at the newly inaugurated Staff Library



The Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud inaugurated 'AYUSH Holistic Wellness Centre' in the premises of the Supreme Court of India on 22 February 2024

Inauguration of AYUSH Holistic Wellness Centre

The Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud inaugurated 'AYUSH Holistic Wellness Centre' in the premises of the Supreme Court of India on 22 February 2024

On 22 February 2024, the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud inaugurated the AYUSH Holistic Wellness Centre along with Justice B R Gavai, Justice Surya Kant, and Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah. The event was attended by the Minister of AYUSH, Mr Sarbananda Sonowal, and the Minister of State for AYUSH, Dr Munjpara Mahendrabhai. The Wellness Centre was set up through the collaborative efforts of the Supreme Court Registry and the All India Institute of Ayurveda, and aims to serve the mental and physical well-being of Judges of the Supreme Court and the over 2,000 employees of the Court's Registry.

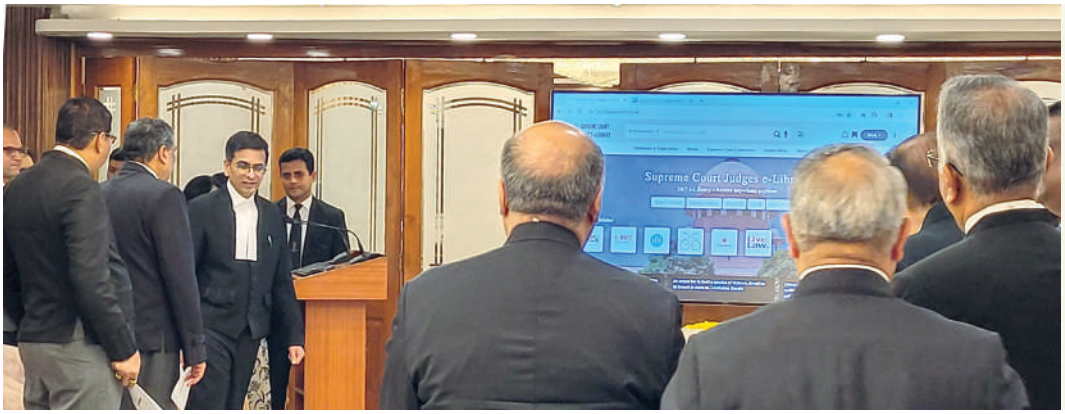


Left to right: Secretary General, Mr Atul M Kurhekar, Justice B R Gavai, Justice Surya Kant, Minister of State for AYUSH, Dr Munjapara Mahendrabhai, Minister of AYUSH, Mr Sarbananda Sonowal, the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud and members of the Supreme Court Registry



Justice P S Narasimha at the finals of the Football match organised by the Supreme Court on 26 February 2024

Release of the Supreme Court Judges e-Library Website and Mobile App for Hon'ble Judges and their residential offices



The Chief Justice of India releasing the Supreme Court Judges e-library Website and Mobile App at the Judges' Assembly Hall on 29 February 2024

The Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud released the Supreme Court Judges e-library website and mobile app on 29 February 2024 in the Judges Assembly Hall. This occasion marked a significant leap forward in the judiciary's embrace of digital technology, emphasising its endeavours to utilise technology to increase efficiency and enhance the administration of justice. The Supreme Court Judges e-library website and mobile app is hosted on the remote access platform of Refread Solutions. This comprehensive platform offers a unified gateway to subscribed legal databases, in-house databases and open-access legal sources, allowing convenient access from any location with a single sign-on. The e-library's seamless integration with e-SCR, Digi-SCR, and the Library Catalogue ensures swift access to indispensable resources such as Nyay Samachar and Monthly Digital Current Content, further enriching the user experience.

In essence, the Supreme Court Judges e-library represents a triumph of collaboration, innovation, and dedication to the principles of access to justice. It serves as a living proof of the Supreme Court's commitment to progress in the digital age.



Dr Uma Narayan, Registrar (Judges' Library), giving a brief presentation on the newly released e-library Website and Mobile App to the Chief Justice of India and other Judges of the Supreme Court at the Judges' Assembly Hall on 29 February 2024

Training Hub



From 2-9 February 2024 an induction training for newly inducted Junior Court Assistants was conducted. The Secretary General, Mr Atul Madhukar Kurhekar inaugurated the training on 2 February 2024



Dr Sushil Kumar Sharma, Deputy Registrar and Ms Geeta Devi, Assistant Registrar conducted an orientation training programme to 71 newly promoted Court Assistants on 3 and 17 February 2024



Mr Nilesh Kumar Keshri, Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax along with other officials of the Income Tax Department delivered a lecture at the TDS Awareness Programme which was attended by more than 40 Registry officials on 24 February 2024



Training on Compression Only Life Support (COLS) was conducted by Dr Rachna Wadhwa to Registry officers and officials in two sessions at G B Pant Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research, New Delhi on 3 and 24 February 2024



Mr Tapan Kishore Sharma, Assistant Registrar-cum-Drawing and Disbursing Officer and Officials from the Supreme Court Branch of UCO Bank conducted a workshop on pensions and benefits for 38 retiring officials (until June 2024) on 27 February 2024

The Supreme Court Legal Services Committee



"It takes nothing to be polite"
—Mr Yajuvender Singh

The Supreme Court Chronicle met with Mr Yajuvender Singh, Director at National Legal Service Authority (NALSA) with an additional charge of the Secretary of the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee (SCLSC).

Mr Yajuvender Singh began his career in 2003 as a Magistrate from the Himachal Pradesh Judicial Services with over 20 years of invaluable experience. In 2022, Mr Singh became Secretary of the SCLSC. He was appointed Director of NALSA in 2023. Now, in 2024, he has returned as Secretary of SCLSC and Mediation and Conciliation Project Committee (MCPC), focusing on providing access to justice for those struggling to reach the Supreme Court.

"We at SCLSC deal with providing legal aid to all the vulnerable sections of people who are entitled to pursue their matter in the Supreme Court. [...] the parameters are the same as provided in the Legal Services Authorities Act i.e. eligibility as per Section 12 which include people who are economically weak, women, children and people in custody. So they are eligible to approach the Supreme Court," Mr Singh observed.

Mr Singh highlighted the issues concerning litigants, especially the ones from marginalised sections. He believes that the Supreme Court, being the apex institution, is the last resort for people who need legal aid. "From how to approach the Court to getting a lawyer, stakes are very high, so the first thing we did was to simplify the process," says Mr Singh. Therefore, in the year 2022 an SCLSC online portal having access to all was launched.

Through this portal, a number of facilities and legal services are made available to the legal aid beneficiaries. The objective was clear: to make Supreme Court legal aid accessible through online medium without having to physically approach the Apex Court. A litigant can now apply online for legal aid from any part of the country. The majority of litigation in the Supreme Court is in the form of Writ Petitions, Special Leave Petitions and Appeals, mostly falling under the appellate jurisdiction of the Court. To facilitate this process, a feature has been incorporated

in the portal allowing applicants to upload necessary documents supporting their claim.

Explaining the functionality of the portal, Mr Singh highlights that the platform is simple and user-friendly for both staff and especially for the litigants. From tracking the application at various stages to divulging the information about the process, the portal is transparent throughout. A litigant who wishes to approach the Supreme Court can simply go to the website and fill in the necessary details along with the documents required. In the next step, the application is examined and processed by the SCLSC.

The SCLSC has a Screening Committee made up of senior advocates tasked with assessing civil and petty cases for their maintainability. They use the online portal with separate dashboards, which can also be accessed by the Secretary, Mr Singh, to keep a tab on timely feedback. However, serious cases with sentences of ten years or more, death sentences, or life imprisonment are not reviewed by this committee. Instead, these cases are expedited, typically taking 2-3 days, and are directly assigned to an Advocate-on-Record (AOR) from a pool of 175 AORs. Each AOR gets a dashboard on the same portal to receive and process digital documents, eliminating the need for physical paperwork. The Secretary monitors progress through these dashboards, ensuring efficiency. Transparency is maintained by publishing monthly lists of assigned advocates. Mr Singh emphasises the fair allocation process by displaying these lists in his office every month.

Earlier, there was no effective way to track file progress, but now, it's possible as all the steps can be monitored. This portal offers information like application closure dates and remarks, promoting transparency. Additionally, SCLSC has a Permanent Legal Service Counsel-cum-Consultant within the office of the SCLSC. This provides immediate help for urgent cases. In addition, says Mr Singh, we keep revising the list of empanelled advocates based on their performance reports. If there are any complaints made by the litigants we take the necessary steps, including re-allocation of advocates. The portal also facilitates the allocation of mediators for cases referred to mediation centres. Mediator assignments are made based on court orders, with the process integrated into the same portal.

Mr Singh emphasises the importance of digitisation but highlights territorial challenges, especially in distant places like District Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh with poor roads and harsh winters. Based on personal experience as a Chief Judicial Magistrate there, he underscores the need for basic infrastructure like proper connectivity and electricity backup before embracing digitalisation in remote courts. He recalls an instance of running court proceedings by candlelight as there was no electricity and power back up due to persistent snowfall, emphasising the practical hurdles of transitioning to digital processes in such areas.

Mr Yajuvender Singh concludes by expressing gratitude for being part of a system striving for change, citing inspiration from the workload of Supreme Court Judges. He feels rejuvenated thinking about their dedication, admitting his own efforts seem small in comparison. Quoting Robert Frost's famous lines, "the woods are lovely, dark and deep, But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep," he reflects on his commitment to his duties despite challenges, emphasising his determination to persevere.

SCBA Scoop



The Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud inaugurating the Supreme Court Bar Association's (SCBA) new Consultation Room near the Bar Lounge, ground floor on 5 February 2024



Justice P S Narasimha, Justice Dipankar Datta, and Justice K V Viswanathan at the SCBA's Annual Cricket Tournament'24 at Modern School, Barakhamba Road on 10 February 2024



The Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud at SCBA's felicitation function organised in honour of Justice Satish Chandra Sharma, Justice Augustine George Masih, Justice Sandeep Mehta, and Justice Prasanna Bhalachandra Varale on 28 February 2024

Public, Press, and Profession: The 3 Ps that define the Public Relations Office

The Public Relations Office of the Supreme Court of India was set up in 2008. It serves as a communications bridge between the Court and the various public stakeholders such as lawyers and citizens . It operates 363 days a year from 7 am to 8 pm, even on Sundays and holidays. Mr Rakesh Sharma, appointed the Court's first Public Relations Officer (PRO) in 2008, oversees a team of 20 officers.

Mr Sharma reflects on his time at the Court, "A major change I have seen during my years of work here is the use of Information Technology. I think 90% of our workload has been tackled by the use of technology. We have come a long way from issuing manual passes to people to getting them online on our SuSwagatam portal."

Initially, entry to the Supreme Court was effected through the issuance of manual entry passes: white slips for courtrooms, yellow slips for office blocks, and red slips for the Advocates' enclosure. With the launch of Su-Swagatam in 2023, applying for passes online became the norm. The portal streamlined the process of entry to the Court, allowing individuals to submit their requests and identification documents online and receive an e-pass.



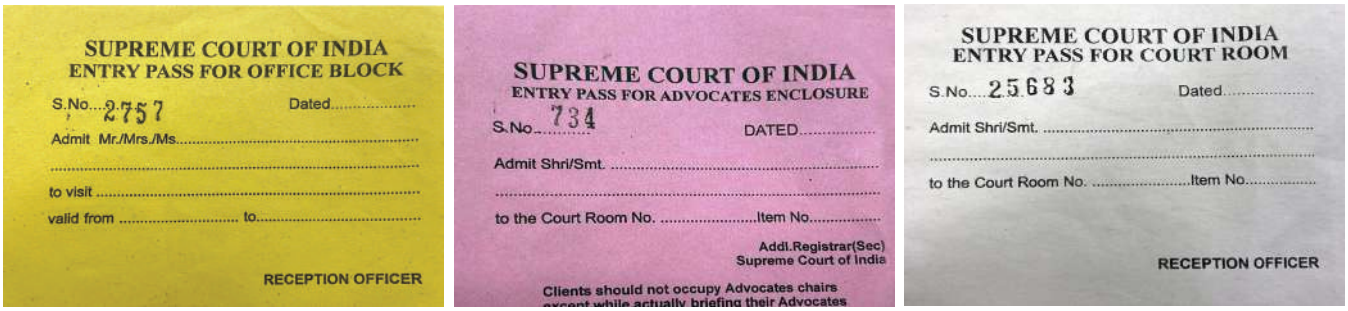
Mr Rakesh Sharma, Public Relations Officer (PRO) with his team at the Front Desk

Mr Sharma shares that "Su-Swagatam is exclusively dealt with by the PR Office. We stay open from 7 am to 8 pm to assist litigants who often arrive in Delhi by train, some even late at night. Our goal is to help them with obtaining passes and finding accommodations, if needed, when they reach us."

During the commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee Year of the Supreme Court, the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud announced that more than 125,000 passes had been issued over the past 6 months on Su-Swagatam.

Besides helping people in person, the Public Relations Office also addresses Court-related inquiries over the phone. They have four phone lines - 23116400, 23116401, 23116402, and 23116403 that anyone in India can call for help. Additionally, a new counter for accessibility and inclusion, which operates from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm, addresses the needs of persons with disabilities (PwD).

The Public Relations Office is notable for employing the highest number of PwD employees in the Court. Mr Sharma takes pride in highlighting the excellent work of three staff members: Ms Suman Chaudhary, Mr Harjinder Singh, and



Manual Entry Passes: White slips for entry to Courtrooms, Yellow slips for entry to Office Blocks, and Red slips for entry to the Advocates Enclosure

Mr Diwakar Pandey, who are all persons with disabilities. While the primary role of all staff at the Office is issuing ID passes, Ms Chaudhary has a special gift for assisting women, senior citizens, and PwDs. In fact, Mr Sharma calls Ms Suman the right hand of the Office. Mr Sharma praises Mr Singh's exceptional punctuality of reaching the office at 7:00 am everyday, even during harsh winters or the challenging period of pandemic, and Mr Diwakar's efficient management of the facilitation centre.

In addition to its regular tasks, the Office also organises study tours and guided tours of the Supreme Court for the public. Study tours are held every weekday, while guided tours are organised every Saturday, except on holidays. Mr Sharma shares that in the last year, the Office conducted a total of 201 tours, including 74 guided tours. 8,000 students joined the study tours.

The Public Relations Office also maintains records of 'rain baseras' or night shelters in Delhi. It does this to help litigants who cannot afford accommodation, especially if their case gets delayed. Spending a night in Delhi can cost upwards of Rs 2000, including food. Although not officially required, the Office takes the lead in providing information on night shelters to those in need, including options like Bangla Sahib and other religious institutions. This service is unique to the Office and not a part of its official duties.

Mr Sharma suggests having a single window system at the front desk of the Supreme Court instead of separate counters for judicial filing, clerical filing, etc. This would make things easier for litigants, especially for PwD as they would not have to go to multiple counters for various tasks. During a tour of the front desk, Mr Sharma introduces the Branch Officer, Ms Sonika Khurana and other staff members who were celebrating the birthday of a newly transferred colleague, Ms Komal. Despite their busy workload, they took a moment to enjoy some laughter just like a family. Summing up the office's work, Mr Sharma emphasises that it deals with three 'Ps': Public, Press, and Profession.

Mr Rakesh Sharma concludes by saying, "Our motto is: We are here to serve you with a smile." As a crucial part of the Supreme Court, the Public Relations Office offers important services to the public while ensuring the Court is an approachable institution.



Public Relations Office issuing entry passes

Event Roundup



Left to right: Solicitor General, Mr Tushar Mehta, Minister of Law and Justice (I/C), Mr Arjun Meghwal, the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, Justice Surya Kant, and Attorney General, Mr R Venkataramani, at the inauguration of the CLEA–CASGC on 3 February 2024

Commonwealth Legal Education Association (CLEA) – Commonwealth Attorneys and Solicitors General Conference (CASGC'24)

On 3 and 4 February 2024, the Commonwealth Legal Education Association (CLEA) – Commonwealth Attorneys and Solicitors General Conference (CASGC'24) on the theme 'Cross-Border Challenges in Justice Delivery' was held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. The Conference was organised by the Department of Legal Affairs, Government of India, the Office of the Attorney and Solicitor General of India, and the CLEA. Attorney Generals and Solicitors from Commonwealth nations participated in the Conference.

> *The Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, while addressing the Conference, said "I am compelled to underscore the significance of global collaboration and trust-building in addressing the diverse cross-border challenges to justice delivery [...] by fostering partnerships and sharing best practices, we can amplify our impact and pave the way for a more sustainable future."*

On 3 February 2024, Justice B R Gavai along with Justice Dipankar Datta co-chaired the technical Session-II on the topic 'Judiciary and Justice in a Changing World' with sub-topics 'Judiciary in Transition: Navigating the evolving role of the judiciary in a changing world' and 'Access to justice: Bridging the Divide: Addressing disparities in access to justice.'

Justice Aniruddha Bose delivered a speech in Session-III Global Legal Challenges and

Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice P S Narasimha co-chaired Session 1: Legal Frameworks and Advocacy in Justice Delivery, CLEA– CASGC, on 3 February 2024

Institutional Resilience on 'Technological Advancements for Legal Dynamics: Exploring the intersection of technology, law and justice' and 'Cross Border Challenges in Justice: Tackling transnational crimes and strengthening institutional capacities.' Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah co-chaired the technical Session-III.



Justice Surya Kant chaired and delivered the inaugural and valedictory address as Chief Patron, CLEA– CASGC, on 3 and 4 February respectively

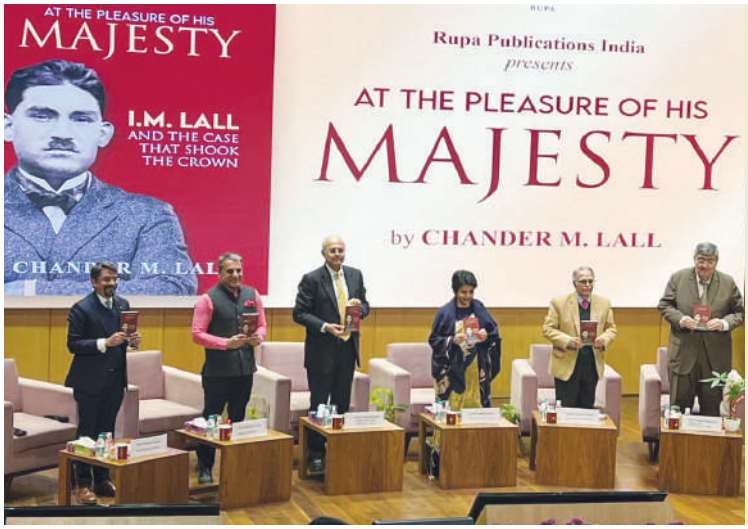
Beyond the Court



Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah chaired a 'Human Trafficking Workshop-2' conducted by Federal Judicial Centre (FJC), Washington and CEELI Institute, Prague in collaboration with the National Judicial Academy at West Bengal Judicial cademy, Kolkata, 3 and 4 February 2024

Justice Rajesh Bindal lighting the lamp at the ICFAI University, Dehradun during the 'The Ink of Impartiality: The National Judgment Writing Competition' held on 4 February 2024





Justice Hima Kohli along with Justice Sanjay Karol, Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul (Retired) and Acting Chief Justice of Delhi High Court, Justice Manmohan at book launch of 'AT THE PLEASURE OF HIS MAJESTY" held in Delhi High Court Auditorium on 6 February 2024



Justice B R Gavai and Justice Vikram Nath at the second convocation of Maharashtra National Law University, Nagpur on 10 February 2024



Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah addressing the gathering along with Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra and Justice S V N Bhatti during the interaction session at the 'Workshop for Young Advocates- Shaping Futuristic India,' organised by the Bar Council of India in collaboration with the Bar Council of Andhra Pradesh and the Anantapur Bar Association on 10 February 2024

Justice Rajesh Bindal along with Justice Hemant Gupta (Retired) and the Delhi High Court Judge, Justice M L Mehta presenting a trophy to the winners of the inaugural JGLS-Khaitan & Co Negotiation Competition on 11 February 2024





Justice B R Gavai attended the inauguration of the Regional Conference on Mediation, Nagpur on 11 February 2024

Justice C T Ravikumar delivered AVNI Trust Speech in the National Symposium at the Indian Society of International Law on 12 February 2024





Justice Surya Kant delivered a valedictory address as Chief Guest at the 'Completion of One Year Induction Training Programme' of Judicial Officers from the State of Haryana, at the Chandigarh Judicial Academy on 17 February 2024

Justice Sanjay Karol inaugurated the AIL Sarin National Rounds of the 15th Sarin International Air Law Moot Court Competition at the Army Institute of Law on 17 February 2024





The Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, inaugurated Dr Rajendra Prasad National Law University in the auditorium of Allahabad Medical Association (AMA) Hall on 16 February 2024



Left to right: The Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Pankaj Mithal, and Justice Rajesh Bindal at the inauguration of the 'Arbitration Centre' in the Allahabad High Court on 17 February 2024

Left to right: Justice Rajesh Bindal, Justice Pankaj Mithal, the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, and Justice Manoj Misra at the book launch of 'Courts of Uttar Pradesh' at the Convention Centre of the Allahabad High Court on 17 February 2024





Left to right: Ms Fatima Balfaqeeh Managing Partner, Balfaqeeh Advocates, Jehad Kazim, Executive Director, DIAC, Justice Hima Kohli, Mr Tariq Khan, Registrar, IAMC, Ms Linda Fitz-Alan, Registrar, ADGM, Dr Mahmood Hussain, Founding Partner, M&Co Legal at 'The India-MENA Arbitration Summit,' at Hyatt Hyderabad, Gachibowli, 17 and 18 February 2024



Justice Hima Kohli addressing the gathering during 'The India-MENA Arbitration Summit,' at Hyatt Hyderabad, Gachibowli on 17 February 2024

Justice Hima Kohli was the Chief Guest at 'The India-MENA Arbitration Summit.' The event was a gathering of notable arbitration experts from India and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), organised by the International Arbitration and Mediation Centre (IAMC), Hyderabad on 17 and 18 February 2024, at the Hyatt Hyderabad, Gachibowli. Justice Kohli observed that the collaborative efforts between India and the MENA region could boost arbitration on a global level. She noted that the 21st century will witness the ascent of India as a global arbitration leader.



Justice B R Gavai at the Diamond Jubilee felicitation of Justice Vijay Daga, at Vasantrao Naik Memorial Hall, Vanamati, Nagpur on 18 February 2024



Justice Rajesh Bindal presided as Guest of Honour at the National Conference on 'Artificial Intelligence: Legal Implications and Challenges' organised by Dr B R Ambedkar National Law University, Sonepat in collaboration with the Law Commission of India at Bhim Auditorium, Dr Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi on 24 February 2024



Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah presided as the Chief Guest at the inaugural session of the first GNLU-GAIL Arbitration Conference on Oil and Gas Disputes at Gujarat National Law University on 24 February 2024

Conference on 'South Asian Constitutional Courts in the Twenty-First Century : Lessons from Bangladesh and India'



The Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina along with the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Aniruddha Bose, Justice Dipankar Datta and other dignitaries at the International Conference on 'South Asian constitutional courts in the twenty-first century: lessons from Bangladesh and India' on 24 February 2024



The Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina felicitated the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud and Justice Dipankar Datta on 24 February 2024

On 23 and 24 February 2024, the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud attended the Conference on 'South Asian Constitutional Courts in the Twenty-First Century: Lessons from Bangladesh and India,' in Dhaka, Bangladesh, along with Justice Dipankar Dutta and Justice Aniruddha Bose. The Chief Justice of India delivered a lecture on the topic, 'Judiciary and its Role in Upholding Constitutionalism.' Justice Aniruddha Bose delivered a speech as a panel speaker in Session-I on 'Constitution Making in South Asia' on 23 February 2024.



Justice Pankaj Mithal delivered the keynote address at the inaugural session of the West Zone-II: Regional Conference on 'Contemporary Judicial Developments and Strengthening Justice through Law & Technology' and presided over Session-II on 'Elements of Judicial Behaviour' at Jodhpur on 24 February 2024



Justice P S Narasimha gave a keynote address in the seminar organised by Federation of Women Lawyers, Visakhapatnam on 24 February 2024



Justice P S Narasimha laid the foundation stone of the Four Court Building at the District Court Building Complex at Bobbili, Vizianagaram District, Andhra Pradesh on 24 February 2024



Justice P S Narasimha laid the foundation stone for construction of District Court Building Complex, Vizianagaram on 25 February 2024

Obituary



Eminent jurist Fali S Nariman passed away on 28 February 2024. He was ninety-five years old.

A graduate of Government Law College, Mumbai, Mr Nariman began his practice before the Bombay High Court in 1950. He was designated a Senior Advocate in the Supreme Court of India in 1971. He was appointed Additional Solicitor General of India in 1972, but resigned in protest during the imposition of the Emergency in 1975.

Over a remarkable career spanning seven and a half decades, Mr Nariman argued cases that shaped the constitutional and civic life of the nation. Among these are: *IC Golaknath v State of Punjab* (1967), concerning the protection of fundamental rights against dilution by constitutional amendment, and *Supreme Court Advocates-On-Record v Union of India* (2015), where the process of making judicial appointments was in dispute.

Mr Nariman's achievements extended beyond the courtroom. He was a nominated member of the Rajya Sabha between 1999 and 2005. He served as the President of the International Council for Commercial Arbitration, the President of the Bar Association of India, the Vice-Chairman of the International Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce, and the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the International Commission of Jurists. He also authored several books, including *Before Memory Fades* (2010) and *You Must Know Your Constitution* (2023).

Mr Nariman received the Padma Bhushan in 1991 and the Padma Vibhushan in 2007 for his excellent contributions to the field of law.

A fearless champion of civil liberties, human rights, and constitutional values, Mr Nariman leaves behind an indelible impact. On his passing, the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud remarked, "Generations of lawyers of judges have been mentored by him, and I belong to that category as well. But above all, despite his own scholarship, his learning, and his own quest for excellence in his professional life, Mr Nariman never lost his sense of humanity, his sense of humour, and that really took place in everything that he did."

Glimpses of the Second Edition of the Supreme Court Annual Lecture Series



























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