



# THE KERALA HIGH COURT ADVOCATES' ASSOCIATION

Reg. No. ER 931/2004

High Court Building, Kochi - 682 031. Ph : 2393244, Fax : 0484 - 2394435, Email : k.hcaa@yahoo.com

KHCAA/HC/185/2025

19 November 2025

To

The Hon'ble Chief Justice,  
High Court of Kerala,  
Ernakulam – 682031.

Sir,

**SUB:** Interference of Judges with the independence of the Bar and  
the broken edifice of the High Court of Kerala

1. I am in a state of shock and have been inundated with calls from not just members of the KHCAA, but members of the Bar across the State asking me so many uncomfortable questions as regards the absence of Judges from Annual Day 2025. The shock and the uncomfortable questions raised is not caused by the absence of Judges, but towards the concerted action of the Judges which is perceived by the majority of the Bar as the 'unionisation' of Judges of the High Court of Kerala that has shaken their confidence on the Judicial Institution itself.
2. I have always maintained that some Judges of the High Court interfered with the affairs of the Association and had several times requested the Judges to not interfere with the politics of the Bar. The collective conduct of Judges on 14.11.2025 demonstrated to the Bar, the truth of what I have always said. I feel vindicated but the cost we have paid for this vindication is disproportionate because the faith of the members of the Bar across the State in the Judicial Institution has shaken. *Independence, impartiality, integrity, propriety, equality, and competence and diligence* – the six core values of Judicial life was sacrificed and the edifice of the Judicial Institution cracked on 14 November 2025.

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3. The members of the Bar are well aware of the 'decision makers' and the method used to execute that decision. What shocked the Bar is the collective failure of all 30 Judges (excepting the three Judges who attended and a few who had genuine reasons to keep away). How can all 30 take the same decision at the same time? The first uncomfortable question asked is whether we can expect Justice from Judges who are not independent of each other? Why was there not a single Judge who was not affected by 'fear' of being isolated by his own peers? Did not even one Judge think about the Judicial Institution? Did not every Judge fail the Judicial Institution?
4. The members of the Bar are well aware that the spouses, children and relatives of Judges are practicing in the Courts. The members of the Bar are asking me the propriety of a Judge continuing to lend his name to a law firm which has a flourishing practice. The members of the Bar now doubt if 'Justice' will be delivered while appearing against such 'related' advocates or Law firms that continue to function under the initials of the sitting Judge? The Bar now see the Judges as a unit acting 'collectively'. I have no answers to give because it is a self-inflicted wound on the Judicial Institution by the collective conduct of Judges.
5. The interference of the Judges into the affairs of the Association is so clear because the message to the Bar was simple. "Change your leadership or else we will boycott the Association". It is for the Bar to decide whether they succumb to the pressure of the Judges or they stand together for the independence of the Bar. Never before in the history of this Judicial Institution has this happened. The perceived 'unionisation' of Judges has deeply affected the perception of the members of the Bar in the ability of





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the Judges to be independent or impartial. Without a fiercely Independent Bar, you cannot have an independent Judiciary. I fail to understand why the Judges didn't understand this simple fact.

6. There is no justification whatsoever to justify the conduct of the Judges on 14 November 2025. The Annual day 2025 was a celebration of the Bar and not a personal function of its President. In any system, there will be difference of opinion, but that ought not to come in the way of maintaining the cordial relation required of the system. The absence of the Judges did not cause a dent to the celebration and the Bar has moved a long way forward from the days where performers refused to perform unless all Judges reached the venue. The new generation don't perform for a specific audience, they showcase their ability to the world and we only set a stage for them. The Bar salutes the Chief Justice for his aloofness from the politics and Justice Anil Narendran for being the 'hope' and assuring the Bar that the entire system has not collapsed. Justice V.G.Arun made a brief appearance before leaving for Thiruvananthapuram and his efforts are acknowledged by the Bar.
7. The relationship between the Bar and the Bench is that of Mutual Respect. It is never a one-way street. I will never be the one to choose cordial Bar and Bench relations by sacrificing the interests of the Bar. I believe I was always respectful to every Judge, not just in the High Court, but in every court. However, being respectful never meant that I would be amenable to all the requests made by the Judges. I was only amenable to those requests which was good for the Judicial Institution or the interests of the Bar.

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8. The Judicial Institution exists for everyone. The Judicial institution cannot be manipulated to cater only to a group of 'people'. We cannot just give lip service to 'gender justice', 'first generation advocates' etc. We must ensure that the Judicial institution gives a level playing field for everyone. I had to take strong stands to weed out 'lobby groups' and 'handpicking' of advocates by Judges for certain committees.
9. Kerala Federation of Women Lawyers (KFWL) is one such lobby group. Their existence divided the Women's Bar. The Full Court took a decision to have every association / entity other than the KHCAA to have their registered address away from the High Court Premises. However, on the basis of a 'representation', the KFWL continues within the High Court premises. This would not happen without the active support of some of the Judges. The inertia of the full court to dispose the 'representation' is keeping an issue alive and causing serious rift in the women's Bar. All women advocates need equal treatment and the KFWL stands as an obstacle to that idea of 'equality'.
10. A committee for the welfare, happiness and grievance of Judicial Officers of the District Judiciary was formed and a helpline number was provided for Judicial Officers to contact. This phone was entrusted to two members of the KFWL. How can such a task be given to an advocate? I am certain not all Judges are even aware of the fact that the Judicial officers were put at the 'mercy' of an advocate controlling that phone number. How fair is it on the judicial officers of the district judiciary to call on a number and know that it is of an advocate?

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11. KELSA is operated by judicial officers and certain advocates handpicked by Judges. Why can't there be fair competition? Why not the KHCAA advertise these vacancies and all interested advocates compete for the position? The Victims Rights Centre and other schemes are all operated by handpicked advocates. The handpicked advocates get access to take depositions of child victims. There is no statutory backing for the process or the procedure exposing these children to 'manipulation'. How can judicial officers of the District Judiciary be allowed to continue for years without any 'judicial work' and return to the court one fine day and create havoc by sheer lack of judicial experience?

12. I do not know of any other High Court of India which publishes a 'journal'. The entire IT set up of the High Court is used for this purpose. Advocates are handpicked. The phone number of advocates available with the IT department are used to create whatzapp groups. The 'Publisher' is the High Court of Kerala. What is the need for the Judges to run a journal in the name of the High Court of Kerala?

13. The IT department of the High Court operates as an entity in itself. Its recruitment policy will not stand scrutiny? The procurement of IT equipment, though through the State Government can raise serious doubts on the manner and method of procurement. E-filing has not made a shade of difference to the advocates who continue to take additional burden of both e-filing and physical filing. The IT systems are 'manipulated' and I have myself pointed out atleast 5 instances. Recently the most shocking one, the replacement of final judgments after the same is pronounced, uploaded and the certified copy issued. Inquiry established that some of the Judgments have been changed to upto 5 times. If lobby system exists and





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the IT systems are manipulated, it is a deadly cocktail that could torpedo the Judicial Institution itself.

14. The non-completion of the 'Dandapani lane' which protect the advocates and litigants accessing the Court is a living testimony to the Bar – Bench Relations. Every Judge knows how important the project is for lawyers and litigants to access the court premises. One of the senior Judges had the audacity of stating that the lane would take away the 'aesthetic beauty of the High Court building'. I was aghast on hearing this because I could only remember the 'British' who built big buildings deliberately as a psychological tool to make people feel small. The senior Judge forgot that the beauty of the High Court comes not from its buildings but its ability to deliver justice to the helpless people who have knocked on the doors of justice. The same theory applies to all Judges batting for a new High Court premises. No High Court in India has been rebuilt inside a span of 20 years and I can assure that this High Court is not going to move anywhere without a full-fledged legal battle with the Bar. The Bar has been deliberately kept away from any discussions pertaining to 'shifting' of the High Court in spite of several letters written by the Association.

15. When SCBA refused to give farewell to a recently retired Judge, many including the Chief Justice criticised it. This Bar has a different legacy. When a Judge accepted a hushed-up reference in the banquet hall, it is the KHCAA that offered a farewell Party. During the retirement speech of Justice A.J.Desai, I had stated in clear words that the personal issues will never come in the way of the President making his official reference speech and this Bar will continue with that legacy. However, as a President, I never cut short on criticising when there was a need for it in the interests of the



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Institution. The then acting CJ along with other members of the administrative committee even told me that if I continue like that, the reference will not include the address by the President of the Bar. I had clearly told the administrative committee that it was their prerogative to decide on the formalities of the reference, but what to speak is the prerogative of the President.

16. All these issues pointed out always existed and I have been silently working on each one of it. I could have made this public, but I chose to work silently because the bread and butter of the advocates rested on the faith of the people in the system. None of my actions should dent that faith. However, when the faith of the advocates itself remains shaken, it is an opportunity to address each of the issue and repair the system together.

17. I had great hopes from some of the members of the Bar who recently moved from the Bar to the Bench, but their meek surrender to the senior Judges have put great doubts in my mind on their ability to withstand pressure.

18. The Bar is the mother of the Judiciary. The respect a Judge gets from the people is fully dependant on the respect the Bar gives to a Judge. A judge who loses the trust and respect of the Bar will soon lose the trust and respect of the People. It is the Bar that has always come to the rescue of the Bench whenever the independence of Judiciary was threatened. When Mr. Sanjeev Sanyal, member of the PM's Economic Advisory Council criticized the Judiciary for its 'My Lord' culture, it was the members of the Bar that responded. However, I believe that in the Republic of India, we should





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refrain addressing the Judges as 'My Lords' and henceforth, I would put earnest efforts to address the Judges only as Sir / Madam.

19. I am no one to advice any Judges, but as the President of the Bar I am responsible to convey the sentiments of the Bar. I do not know if the Judges have realised the consequences of their collective action, but I have no doubt in my mind that the collective action of Judges has permanently damaged the edifice of the High Court of Kerala. It is time for every Judge to introspect on their conduct and ask themselves if they were right. The Judges have to start afresh at the start line and each one will have to work hard to earn the trust and respect of the members of the Bar. The reverence that the Judges see now is the one caused by fear of the enormous power they wield. Trust and respect earned lasts forever, the reverence earned by power, ends with retirement.

Sincerely,

Adv. Yeshwanth Shenoy  
President

