

## GOOD MORNING

सहिदों की चिताओं पर लगेगे हर बरष मेले  
वतन पर मिटने वालो का यही बाकि निशाँ होगा।

To organize a function on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 26<sup>th</sup> January or any other such occasion and saying few words of praise in favour of those who lost their lives, stand up in honour of the National Flag and National Anthem. Is this the only way to remember our freedom fighters or something more is required to be done?

This needs our attention.

My esteemed colleagues, past and present, leaders of the Bar and its members, Additional Solicitor General of India, Advocate General and his team, Judicial Officers, employees of the High Court, friends from the media, Ladies and Gentlemen, who are present physically and who have joined virtually.

On this occasion, I extend my greetings to all of you.

As I present myself before you today, my mind is a mixed bag of glee and also sadness. My feeling of happiness stems from the fact that we are celebrating 75<sup>th</sup> year of our independence from the yoke of British slavery; while my mind feels for those who unreservedly laid down their lives for securing independence for their motherland. I must pause here for a moment, to add that this feeling of sadness again is also reflective of the gratitude we owe, as a nation, to the freedom fighters who unmindful of any sense of personal deprivation, sacrificed all that they had in order to ensure that their country-men could breathe free air, free from slavery. While in Bengal, names of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Masterda Surya Sen, Khudiram Bose and Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, whose birthday falls today immediately come to our mind. Naming few does not mean that the others who sacrificed their lives for the nation should not be remembered. There is a long list. One strong message they have given for the future generations is that never think what the country has done for you but what you can do for the country. My special word of gratitude to all brave personnel of armed forces or

para-military forces who laid their lives for the country. It is service before self. It is because they are awake and alert that we can enjoy our lives. This year's theme for Independence Day is 'Nation First Always First'.

Friends, major part of the audience here would be post-partition born. Obviously, they cannot claim to have witnessed the vicissitudes of freedom struggle. Theirs can at best be derivative information which they had from their ancestors, books or media. One thing is common between Bengal and Punjab. These both have suffered the pain of partition.

We all know that the world is suffering from COVID-19 pandemic since February/March, 2020. Our country and the state have not been left out. The life initially came to a complete stand-still. Working of courts was also affected. Though there were less casualties during the first phase of pandemic but the second phase has been more fatal. As access to justice cannot be denied even in difficult times, our staff, judicial officers and my colleagues in High Court have worked tirelessly. There

was exceptional load on our healthcare system and law enforcement agencies. During this period, we lost two judicial officers and four staff members in this court and the District Courts. With heavy heart, I am sharing with you that in January, 2021, we lost one of our colleague. Besides this, large number of my colleagues, judicial officers, employees working in the judicial system in the state and their family members were affected. Even this had not dampened our spirit to keep the wheels of justice moving. Besides this, number of frontline workers and their families have suffered during this pandemic. My heartfelt condolences to the families of all those who have lost their lives in this pandemic. I am sure together we will come out of this pandemic also. But we all have to join hands to fight this, may not be physically.

Despite COVID-19 pandemic, we have tried to keep the doors of justice open for all. At times, virtual mode was the only window open with whatever infrastructure available, which has been improved with the time. To support young or the lawyers who do not

have IT facilities to conduct their cases online, the e-committee in Supreme Court of India has provided some funds to our Court for creating VC facilities for the lawyers. We are in process of establishing the same. This will give a boon to the young and the deserving lawyers to conduct their cases online.

As against filing of 47,188 cases in this court in last one year, we have disposed of 34,813 cases. In the District Courts as against filing of 5,31,143 cases during the aforesaid period, 3,69,895 cases have been disposed of. In the High Court during 2021 about 25,000 cases were filed and we have been able to dispose of close to that despite working with 40% of the sanctioned strength. For this, the credit goes to my colleagues and the members of the Bar, as well, as without their able assistance, this was not possible.

As large number of old cases are pending in various District Courts in the State, an Annual Action Plan has been prepared and circulated to all the officers

giving targets to take up and dispose of the old cases as well on priority.

If we go to the State Legal Services Authority's contribution, the entire staff and even the para-legal volunteer, working at the grass-root level, have contributed in providing legal aid even during this difficult times. High Court Legal Services Committee had organized four Lok Adalats. 327 cases were settled and an amount of Rs.16.02 crores was paid to the claimants. If we go to the District Courts, more than 26 lakhs traffic challans pending in various districts were taken up and disposed of during the last one month only. In addition to that, the State Legal Services Authority, in various Lok Adalats held, had disposed of 78,505 cases. Rs.316.76 crores were paid as compensation to the litigants in different categories of cases and

Rs.6.87 crores were recovered as loan of various financial institutions, fines, electricity dues, etc. A sum of Rs.2.20 crores were paid to the victims of crime under

Victim Compensation Scheme. The Legal Services Authority has provided legal aid to more than 17,000 victims.

If we talk about the mediation activities, though COVID-19 pandemic did impact the same but still in High Court, we have been able to dispose of 38 cases and in the District Courts, 781 cases have been disposed of.

Training is an integral part of any service. Judicial system also cannot be left out. With a view to keep our officers updated with latest developments in law, the West Bengal Judicial Academy had been proactive even during this pandemic period. In the last one year, 75 training programmes were held either physically or online in which more than 2700 Judicial Officers from the State participated. Beside this, the Academy had also conducted programmes for other stakeholders in the judicial system, namely, the government officials, and the lawyers.

The fact also remains that livelihood of number of persons who are associated with the justice delivery system including the young lawyers, law clerks has been

affected because of the pandemic. It is the duty of all of us to make effort to support them in this difficult times.

Besides celebration, it is also the time for introspection. The Judiciary has been entrusted with the task of ensuring actualization of the rights granted to the citizens in this country. It has to ensure that every citizen have an effective efficacious remedy against any violation of his rights. The Indian Judiciary has established itself as one of the prime pillars in our democratic set up.

We have many achievements to our credit but still there are several tasks to be completed and several challenges to be addressed. There are number of social evils which are still prevalent in the society. Crime against women and use of drugs are the major challenges. It is the time for all of us to take a pledge that we will make a joint effort to root out social evils from the society. That would be a real and true tribute to those who laid down their lives for the freedom of the country.

Let us join hands to build strong, united and progressive India of the dreams of the Father of the Nation



and our freedom fighters and work hard with dedication  
to achieve the same.

JAI HIND

Rajesh Bindal  
Chief Justice (Acting)  
15<sup>th</sup> August, 2021