

**Welcome Address by Justice Pankaj Mithal, Chief Justice,  
High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh,  
on the Occasion of Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony of the  
New High Court Complex, Srinagar on May 14, 2022**

1. Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India Shri Justice N.V. Ramana, Shri Kiren Rijiju ji, Hon'ble Union Minister for Law and Justice, Hon'ble Shri Justice U.U. Lalit and Shri Justice S.K. Kaul, Senior Judges of the Supreme Court of India, Hon'ble Shri Manoj Sinha, Lieutenant Governor of UT of J&K, Hon'ble Shri R.K. Mathur, Lieutenant Governor UT of Ladakh, Advisors to Hon'ble Lieutenant Governors of the two UTs, my brother and sister judges of this High Court, Hon'ble the Chief Justice Allahabad High Court, Shri Justice Rajesh Bindal, learned Advocate General Shri D.C. Raina, Dr. Arun Mehta, Chief Secretary, UT of J&K, Director General of Police, Senior Advocates, Office bearers of the J&K High Court Bar Association both at Jammu and Srinagar, senior officers of the administration of both the UTs, other dignitaries including judicial officers present, ladies and gentlemen.

"मेरे आँगन में भीड़ लगी,  
में किस को कितना प्यार करूँ।"

I love and respect everyone

2. Today is a red letter day in the annals of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. Head of the Indian Judiciary, the Chief Justice of India Hon'ble Shri Justice N.V. Ramana is gracing a function at Srinagar and is blessing one and all of the judiciary of the two union territories.

3. I am informed it has been six years since any Chief Justice has attended any official function of this High Court. The last visit of the Chief Justice of India was in the year 2016 in a function at Ukhral, a far flung area in Jammu province. Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India is accompanied by his wife Smt. N. Sivamala.

4. The Union Law Minister, Hon'ble Shri Kiren Rijiju ji has been very kind to spare his valuable time again for us in a short span of a month. He had previously visited Srinagar on 14.04.2022 to inaugurate the Mega Legal Awareness programme and the new premises of the Jammu & Kashmir International Arbitration Centre. I admire his respect to the Indian Judiciary.

5. I heartily welcome the senior most Judge of the Supreme Court Justice Lalit at this solemn function. Justice Koul is the son of the soil and needs no introduction on his home turf. Nonetheless, I welcome him and his better half. We are blessed to have them with us.

6. The judiciary of twin Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh is grateful for the presence of the Hon'ble Shri Manoj Sinha, Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir and Hon'ble Shri R.K. Mathur, Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh both of whom have always been very kind to provide full administrative support to the judiciary.

7. We are missing Ms. Justice Gita Mittal, former Chief Justice of this High Court who had conceived of the project and through her untiring efforts got the land allotted and design and concept finalised for the new building of the High Court. I am delighted by the presence of Shri Justice Rajesh Bindal, Hon'ble the Chief Justice, Allahabad High Court who has

been instrumental in getting the things through while being a senior judge of this High Court and heading the Infrastructure Committee.

8. Srinagar occupies a unique position in the country. It is the hollow around “Bharat Mata” and a paradise on earth to live. It is an ancient city of saints, sufis and sages where even Adi Shankaracharya meditated.

9. This is the land regarding which Sufi Poet Amir Khusro had said ***“Ghar firdous bar-rue zamin ast, hamin asto hamin asto hamin ast”***, if there is heaven on earth, it is here - it is here - it is here. And Pran Kishore a famous writer has vividly described Kashmir as a land of “Gul Gulshan Gulfam”. This heaven on earth may have witnessed a period of turmoil for almost three decades putting “Paradise at War” in the eyes of famous historian Radha Kumar but that has in no way faded its glory and the natural beauty. It still glows and is ready to blossom as usual.

10. It is her everlasting natural beauty and serenity that has attracted our dignitaries and they are all here with us. It is my proud privilege to welcome you all here in this land of saints and sufis. There could be no better congregation of dignitaries than having the Chief Justice of India along with two senior judges of the Supreme Court, Hon’ble Union Minister for Law and Justice, Lieutenant Governors of two Union Territories present at the same time to begin a new chapter in the history of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. We all working in this beautiful institution of judiciary are overwhelmed by your gracious presence and feel strengthened in our resolve to create a vibrant pillar of democracy.

11. Today, we have witnessed the foundation stone laying of the mega new High Court Complex at Srinagar by Hon'ble Shri Justice N.V. Ramana, Chief Justice of India in the august presence of all the dignitaries, administrative officers, members of the Bar and the judicial officers.

12. The Supreme Court of India under the dynamic leadership of the Chief Justice of India is giving top priority to augment the basic judicial infrastructure in the entire country so much so it has even mooted a robust proposal to establish a National Judicial Infrastructure Authority as a special purpose vehicle to oversee the development of the infrastructure needed by the judiciary. The new High Court Complex at Srinagar is a step forward in this direction which will go a long way in "capacity building" of our judicial officers.

13. Spread over an area of more than 500 kanals i.e 2,54,650 sq m excluding the land under the Nallah and situate on NH-44, Srinagar Bypass, the new complex is a vision plan with futuristic approach. It is going to be people friendly, litigant friendly, judiciary friendly, administration friendly and above all eco-friendly and congenial to lawyers, with a good and comfortable place for the judges to work and administer justice. It covers issues of safety and security of all. This State of the Art facility shall ameliorate all our difficulties related to infrastructure for the High Court and would help us to work with a renewed vigour.

14. It has been designed in a scientific manner contextually with Sun, wind and the local climate keeping in mind the functional efficiency. At the entrance of the main complex it will have a 'visitors centre' with a

Convention Centre and a Judicial Academy with a huge parking area. The main court complex will consist of seven floors and two sub-ground level structures, consisting of 25 court rooms and 29 judges' chambers with a public garden.

15. It will have a Western Annexe and the western wing as also the Eastern Annexe and the eastern wing. The Eastern Annexe would consist of space for Administrative Branches whereas the Western Annexe would have Judicial Branches. The Eastern Wing would contain Arbitration Centre, Mediation Centre, 300 Lawyers Chambers, food court, Library etc. The Western Wing will have 420 Lawyers Chambers, Bar Rooms, food court etc. It will also have a Hospital/Maternity Hospital.

16. In the second phase Convention Centre, Judicial Academy, residential blocks and other utilities associated with the Courts' ecosystem would be constructed.

17. I am elated to inform you that the Government has already allotted 813.13 kanals of land for the New High Court Complex at Jammu also. Its possession has also been delivered to the High Court. We are in the process of getting the design and layout for the new High Court building and other facilities prepared. After completion of certain formalities we can even proceed with the construction activity of it in due course. Projects worth Rs.285 Crores, excluding the cost of Rs.908 Crores for this project are in pipeline in Jammu and Kashmir in connection with the infrastructure of judiciary. Likewise, projects worth Rs.175 Crores are in pipeline in the UT of Ladakh.

18. I can proudly say that in the last one year with the cooperation and full support of the Ladakh administration, we have been able to lay the foundation of the District Court Complexes in both the districts of Ladakh i.e Leh and Kargil, and the work is in full swing. Foundation stone has also been laid for a court building at Drass in District Kargil. It is a pride moment for our judiciary that we are able to reach even those living in the remotest area of the country. "न्याय चला निर्धन से मिलने" a dream coming true.

19. I take this opportunity to call upon my judicial fraternity to take advantage of this infrastructure development and to work even harder to meet the expectations of the public of speedy justice. I hope and trust that all of us will rise to the occasion and march along with the administration to prove that such infrastructure development will not go waste or be unutilised.

20. I wholeheartedly welcome the Chief Justice of India, the Union Law Minister, Senior Judges of the Supreme Court Justice Lalit and Justice Kaul and express my sincere thanks to all of them for sparing their valuable time to come over all the way to Srinagar to grace the function. I also thank Shri Manoj Sinha, Lieutenant Governor, Jammu & Kashmir and Shri R.K. Mathur, Lieutenant Governor, Ladakh, who always have helped me in all my endeavours and have ardently supported the cause of judiciary. There is no proposal mooted by the High Court to which we may have received a 'no' from either of the administrations of the two UTs. It is quite gratifying for me that in a period of less than one and a half year as Chief Justice of this High Court that I am witnessing a purposeful cordiality between two

important organs of the State which augurs well for the health of the democracy.

21. I am grateful to the members of the Bar both of Jammu and Srinagar wings of the High Court and that of Ladakh who have always rendered full cooperation to me and to my companion judges in ensuring smooth dispensation of justice. I am conscious of their problems and difficulties and am trying my utmost to resolve them.

22. I am proud of the Subordinate Judiciary and the court staff who are always ready and willing to walk an extra mile in a quest to provide timely and quality justice.

23. I admire the sincerity with which the Architects 'Design Forum International' led by Shri Goonmeet Singh Chouhan and the executing agency PWD(R&B) have worked to design this building and are enthusiastically working to see it through in the shortest possible time.

24. I end up expecting and hoping for full cooperation from all the stakeholders so that our judiciary may continue to march forward.

Thanks to all.

Jai Hind