

CAMPAIGN FOR JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND REFORMS

6/6 basement, Jangpura B, Delhi – 110014

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22nd August 2026

The Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms (CJAR) demands the immediate resignation of Mr. Manan Kumar Mishra as Chairman of the Bar Council of India (BCI)

CJAR condemns Mr. Mishra's unilateral directive of August 13, 2026, instructing all State Bar Councils not to enrol the 2026 graduating batch of NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad, as advocates. This move, even though withdrawn after public backlash, was utterly illegal and unconstitutional. It was an attempt at collective punishment on an entire class of students over their campaign/letter to the university's administration to reconsider the invitation to the Chief Justice of India, as Chief Guest at the University convocation. Though the directive was withdrawn, Mr Mishra has not expressed any real contrition for his blatantly intimidatory actions.

CJAR affirms and supports the Bombay Bar Association's resolution which has characterised the original letter as "an abuse... of the office of the Chairman," issued without affording the students any opportunity of hearing, and has publicly stated that his belated "apology" cannot substitute for resignation. CJAR reiterates that when an office-bearer who exercises regulatory power, threatens the careers of law graduates for exercising their right to protest and free expression, he has clearly demonstrated unfitness to continue holding that office, irrespective of a subsequent withdrawal of his statement.

CJAR highlights that Mr. Manan Kumar Mishra has been known to issue orders unilaterally misusing the letter head of the BCI without even calling a meeting of the Bar Council as he did in this NALSAR case. The latest letter only confirms that Mr Mishra is unfit to hold this office.

CJAR notes that the BCI exists to safeguard the integrity of the legal profession and legal education — not to serve as a permanent political perch. An independent legal profession, as the Supreme Court has repeatedly highlighted, is one of the best guarantees of constitutional rights. The continuing presence of Mr Mishra as the BCI Chairman has seriously damaged the independence of the Bar. Since 2024, Mr. Mishra is a Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha representing Bihar from the Bharatiya

Janata Party. As BCI Chairman, he has shown more interest in furthering a political agenda rather than protecting the independence of the Bar.

CJAR also wishes to bring to the public's attention that Mr Mishra's continuing as Chairman, BCI is irregular and raises serious questions. The Advocates Act, 1961 provides for a two-year term for the BCI Chairman. A proviso to Section 4(3) permits a sitting member to continue in office "until his successor is elected" — a provision that has, in practice, been used to entrench Mr. Mishra in office indefinitely rather than facilitate periodic rotation, as Parliament intended. This has enabled the concentration of power in a single office-bearer for over a decade and is an indictment of the BCI's failure to reform itself from within.

It is also known that Mr. Mishra has set up a Trust under the BCI (BCI Trust Pearl-First Trust) of which he has made himself a lifetime trustee by name. This Trust took over the funds of an earlier trust set up by the BCI (Bar Council of India Trust). This taking over of the funds as well as their utilization is being enquired into by the CBI.

In light of all the above, CJAR calls upon the legal fraternity, State Bar Councils, and the Supreme Court to ensure that accountability, rotation, and due process are restored to the BCI without further delay by first removing Mr. Mishra from the position of Chairman and ensuring that there is a free and fair selection of the next Chairperson.

CJAR's Demands

1. Immediate resignation of Mr. Manan Kumar Mishra as Chairman, BCI.
2. An inquiry into Mr. Mishra's questionable actions during his tenure including the formation and misuse of the Trust, opaque and non-transparent decision making and orders, etc.
3. Enactment of a binding two-term (or time-bound) limit on the office of BCI Chairman and Vice-Chairman.
4. A transparent, rotational mechanism for BCI leadership across States.
5. Full public disclosure of BCI's finances and disciplinary record during Mr. Mishra's tenure.
6. Institutional safeguards to prevent any future office-bearer from unilaterally penalising students or advocates without due process.