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Bar Council of Punjab & Haryana

LAW BHAWAN

Dakshin Marg, Sector 37-A, Chandigarh - 160036, website. www.bcph.co.in

Ref. No. 483/2021

Dated. 2-5-2021

PRESS NOTE 2ND May 2021

The Bar Council of Punjab and Haryana in its emergent meeting held on 30.4.2021 has taken some very important steps with regard to the functioning of the Courts and safety of Advocates in Punjab, Haryana & Chandigarh due to the surge in Covid-19 cases. Kindly find enclosed the resolution passed which is reproduced below:-

RESOLUTION (For Press only)

Today an emergent meeting of Bar Council was held through virtual mode (Zoom) to discuss the serious situation which has arisen due to the alarming surge in Covid -19 pandemic cases, which was attended by the members mentioned above.

Resolution No.1 - The Item No.1 of the agenda to discuss the functioning of Courts in the State of Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh due to spread of Covid-19 was taken up and the House discussed the prevailing precarious situation in which there is an acute shortage of steroids, oxygen requirements, ventilation care etc and even hospitals are flooded to full occupancy contributing to the heart-wrenching death toll. The latest strain of Covid (B.1.617 variant of SARS-CoV-2) currently identified as the '*Indian strain or double-mutant strain*' having many mutations is believed by experts to be the reason behind this huge surge. Even the respective governments have imposed stricter curbs essentially to break the chain. Latest, assembly of more than 20 persons is banned. The issue was discussed at length with views expressed on all sides and it

was resolved to apprise Hon'ble The Chief Justice about the trauma being faced by advocates and their families especially those who have contracted this strain (or, other) and in some cases unfortunately lost their lives. A view expressed, also endorsed by all was the serious loss of livelihood and the difficulty faced due to semi-functional Courts by advocates finding it difficult to support their families. The House was ad idem in the thought, that after much conjoined efforts, Courts have become functional and if any suspension/lockdown is imposed on Court working again, it will be extremely difficult to re-gain the lost ground and restart functionality. It was apprised to the House by Mr.Minderjeet Yadav, Chairman that more than 100 advocates (daily growing) have unfortunately died due to Covid-19 infection and countless frantically seeking hospital admissions and help in Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh emphasizing that urgent steps need to be taken to ensure their safety, healthcare and security. The House was also apprised of the media report stating that more than 100 Judicial Officers and 400+ employees/court staff have been tested positive of this lethal strain. The existing medical apparatus is already overburdened; the Council cannot be oblivious of the current situation.

The Council thus resolved to immediately write to the Hon'ble Chief Justice apprising him of the current situation as seen through our lens, and request him to take appropriate steps as per his wisdom and available expertise to safeguard the health and safety of all advocates and their families. The Council has further resolved not to insist for physical hearing of the cases and only most urgent cases be heard during this unprecedented situation at least for 15 days because this is the only way to break the transmission of Covid-19 to safeguard Hon'ble Judges, Officers, lawyers, para-legal staff, Court employees and litigants.

Resolution No.2 - The Item No.2 of the Agenda was pertaining to the feasibility of conducting election in view of the order of Election Tribunal, Haryana in the matter of DBA, Faridabad was taken up w.r.t the binding

order of the Tribunal in Bar Association Faridabad, it was resolved to request the Election Tribunal to consider the prevailing circumstances of pandemic and keep their order in abeyance of holding elections in the Bar, till the time the situation improves.

Resolution No.3 - The Item No.3 of the Agenda to impress upon the respective governments of Punjab, Haryana and U.T. Chandigarh to allocate Rs. 100 Crores to Bar Council of Punjab and Haryana, to provide financial help to the needy Advocates was taken up and it was resolved to write to respective State Governments for release of 50 crores each to Bar Council of Punjab & Haryana, Chandigarh as has been done in the State of Delhi and Karnataka, so that the young and stricken Advocates who are suffering due to Covid-19, also due to limited functioning of Courts can be immediately compensated from this Fund. Sh Atul Nanda Ld.Advocate General, Punjab was requested to immediately release one crore from Trustee Committee (Punjab) as Covid Fund as given by Haryana and he graciously accepted to take up the matter with Government of Punjab, on priority. The Council further authorized the worthy Chairman to meet, apprise and represent to H.E. The Governor of Punjab (also the Administrator of U.T Chandigarh) and both the Hon'ble Chief Ministers in this regard.

Also, during the course of meeting, it was discussed and resolved that for the sake of immediate relief of advocates suffering from Covid-19, compensation as given earlier be disbursed on priority.

Furthermore it was resolved that the Council will start a 24*7 helpline to provide ready coordination and logistics support to all advocates and their families who require any assistance due to Covid-19. The Council will also contemplate on the possibility of converting the Law Bhawan Office at Chandigarh as a tertiary medical care center with primary medical centres connected to each district and sub-divisions (with ambulance facilities) exclusively for advocates and their families.

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The Council also resolved to start an awareness campaign/movement amongst advocates and their families under the tagline '*Advocates - Break the Chain*' focused on minimizing laxity and Covid-19 inappropriate behavior.

Finally the House decided to adjourn the meeting to re-convene again on 15.05.2021 to take stock of the changed circumstances and the progress made.

The meeting ended with a silent prayer and vote of thanks to the worthy Chair.

(For Press only)


(Addl. Secretary)