

**FULL COURT REFERENCE HELD ON 12<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 2022 AT 2:45 P.M.  
ON THE SAD DEMISE OF JUSTICE RAMESH CHANDRA LAHOTI  
{FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA, AND FORMER JUDGE, HIGH  
COURT OF DELHI}**

My Esteemed Sister and Brother Judges;

Mr. Chetan Sharma, Additional Solicitor General of India;

Mr. Murari Tiwari, Chairman, Bar Council of Delhi;

Mr. Mohit Mathur, President, Delhi High Court Bar Association;

Mr. Jatan Singh, Vice President, Delhi High Court Bar Association;

Mr. Abhijat, Secretary, Delhi High Court Bar Association;

Mr. Santosh Kumar Tripathi, Standing Counsel (Civil), Govt. of NCT of Delhi;

Standing Counsels of the Central and State Government;

Executive Members of the Delhi High Court Bar Association;

Office Bearers of Bar Council of Delhi and other District Bar Associations;

Senior Advocates;

Members of the Bar;

Family members of Late Justice R. C. Lahoti;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

*It is with immense sense of sadness that we have assembled today to condole the demise of Mr. Justice Ramesh Chandra Lahoti, former Chief Justice of India and former Judge, High Court of Delhi.*

Justice R. C. Lahoti was born on 01<sup>st</sup> November 1940 in District Guna, Madhya Pradesh. He did his B.Com (Hons.) from R. A. Poddar College at Bombay, and was awarded the LL.B. degree from Holkar College, Indore. For standing first class, first, he was awarded the Gold medal by the then Vice President of India, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. He joined the Bar in his home district in 1960, and was enrolled as an Advocate in 1962.

In April 1977, Justice Lahoti was recruited directly from the bar to the State Higher Judicial Service, and was appointed as a District & Sessions Judge. After serving as a District & Sessions Judge for a year, in May 1978, he tendered his resignation and reverted to the Bar to pursue his practice, primarily in the High Court.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 1988, Justice Lahoti was appointed as an Additional Judge of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, and was made permanent on 04.08.1989. Thereafter, he was transferred to this Court on 07.02.1994.

During his tenure as a judge of this Court, Justice Lahoti, by dint of his legal acumen and work ethics, earned great respect and regard, not only from his colleagues on the Bench, but also from the Bar. He conducted the proceedings in his Court while keeping the atmosphere light, and his wit and humour diffused the stresses and tensions in the Court room. I had occasion to appear before him several times and always found him in complete grip of the matter. He was very balanced and was equity minded in his approach.

Justice Lahoti was appointed as a Judge of Supreme Court of India on 09.12.1998. On 01.06.2004, Justice Lahoti was appointed as the 35<sup>th</sup> Chief Justice of India. His Lordship demitted the office of the Chief Justice of India on 31.10.2005.

During his tenure in the Supreme Court, Justice Lahoti authored about 342 Judgments. Justice Lahoti led the seven-judge bench that overturned a 1959 Supreme Court ruling, which laid down that the ban on slaughter of the cow's progeny - old bulls and bullocks - was unconstitutional. By virtue of his knowledge, wisdom and ability, Justice Lahoti reached the highest position in the Indian judiciary, despite coming from a very humble and remote background.

He also presided as an independent Director of the Board of Directors of the Press Trust of India. On account of his competence and reputation, Justice Lahoti was appointed as an arbitrator by the Government of India in the Rs 20,000 crore high-profile tax dispute case with the telecom major Vodafone.

Justice Lahoti has been a part of several international conferences and seminars related to law and justice. To enlist a few of them, he attended the Law-Asia Conference held in Tokyo, Japan (August–September 2003) – which I too attended, SAARCLAW Conference held in Karachi, Pakistan (February, 2004), Biennial Conference of International Law Association held in Berlin, Germany (August, 2004) and Yale Law School Seminars on Global Constitutionalism in

(2000, 2003 and 2005). He was also a member of Fourth Indo-US Legal Forum Meet held in Washington and San Francisco in October, 2002. He had participated in several other conferences around the globe.

For his contribution towards the administration of justice and the legal education, Justice Lahoti was widely acknowledged and conferred various honorariums. He was conferred the degree of Doctor of Laws (Honoris Causa) in the august presence of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, the then President of India, by the Rani Durgawati Vishwavidhyalaya, Jabalpur on 12.10.2006. He was also presented with the National Law Day Award, 2006 for his unique contribution in the field of administration of justice, for making it more friendly to the people at large, by the then Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh, on 26.11.2006. On 22.08.2007, Lok Jagran, Tulsi Shodh Sansthan, Allahabad decorated His Lordship with 'Goswami Tulsidas Samarohan Samman'. On 02.03.2008 Vikram Vishwavidyalaya, Ujjain conferred the degree of Doctor of Laws (Honoris Causa) in the august presence of Dr. Balram Jakhad, Governor of Madhya Pradesh and Sh. Naval Kishore Sharma, Governor of Gujrat. On 18.07.2008 (Guru Purnima Divas) - he was decorated with 'Shri Ramkinkar Samman, by Shri Ramayanam Trust , Shree Dham Ayodhya . He was also decorated with 'Swami Shree Akhandanand Saraswati Alankaran, 2009' by Shree Rajeev-Lochanam Trust, Jabalpur for achieving ideals worth being emulated in the field of Samskaar-Srijan, Sanskriti-Poshan, Sewa-Samarpan. He was decorated with the National honour – 'Shree Bhav bhaveshwar

Rashtranidhi Ratna' by Shree Sadguru Swami Akhandanand Memorial Charitable Trust, Varumaal (Gujrat) for exceptional contribution made in the field of judicial reforms and upholding constitutional rights of citizens of India.

Justice Lahoti was also an active Rotarian for about 21 years (1973-1994), and was also a Founder Member of Rotary Club of Guna. He was also appointed as the Chairman, Advisory Board of Sri Aurobindo Foundation for Integral Management (SAFIM) Pondicherry, on 19.10.2011.

Justice Lahoti was passionate about Legal Aid Services and Alternate Dispute Resolution. Justice Lahoti will always be remembered for upholding the Rule of Law as a fearless and independent Judge. His lordships' outstanding contributions to the judiciary of the country, and emphasis on speedy justice to the underprivileged will always be admired.

Justice Lahoti used to address me by my surname whenever we met, he would say "*Aur Kaise ho Sanghi*". His words of appreciation and encouragement meant a lot to me, enthused me, and served as a re-assurance for the work I did.

Justice Lahoti left for his heavenly abode on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2022. He is survived by his wife Ms. Kaushalya – a Social Worker; three daughters Ms. Pankaj Soni, Dr. Archana Mantra and Dr. Vandana Marda; one Son Mr. Ujjwal Lahoti; brother Justice K. K. Lahoti; sister-in-law Ms. Asha Lahoti; brother Mr. O. P. Lahoti; sister-in-law Ms. Shyama Lahoti; Nephew Dr. Amit Lahoti; grandsons Advocate Divyakant Lahoti and Advocate Kartik Lahoti.

I, on behalf of my sister and brother Judges, and on my own behalf convey our heartfelt condolences to the members of the bereaved family and pray to the Almighty to give them strength to bear this irreparable loss. May almighty bestow peace to the departed soul.

**(AFTER REFERENCE BY LAWYERS IS OVER)**

As a mark of respect to the departed soul, we shall now observe silence for two minutes. (The Hon'ble Judges will take their respective seats for a moment after the silence, and it will be announced by Hon'ble the Acting Chief Justice as under).

“As a mark of respect to the departed soul, the working in the Court is adjourned for the rest of the day.