

CAMPAIGN FOR JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND REFORMS

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Statement on the Use of State Resources for Official Visits by the Chief Justice of India and Other Supreme Court Judges

5th March 2026

CJAR notes with serious concern the recent visits of the Chief Justice of India and several sitting judges of the Supreme Court of India, to Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. The manner in which these visits have been arranged and publicized, raise concerns regarding judicial independence, institutional propriety, and compliance with established ethical standards for the conduct of judges in office.

It is a matter of record through publicly available information that:

- A chartered aircraft operated by a private aviation service was used by judges and their staff for travel from Delhi to Ahmedabad.
- The Chief Justice thereafter travelled in the aircraft of the Government of Gujarat from Ahmedabad to Tirupati.
- The Government of Andhra Pradesh arranged two special aircrafts for onward travel of six Supreme Court judges and some family members from Tirupati to Vijayawada and from Vijayawada to Delhi.

We at CJAR raise this concern because both the State of Gujarat and the State of Andhra Pradesh are frequent and active litigants before the Supreme Court of India. In such circumstances, if acceptance of state-sponsored transport and logistical arrangements, beyond lawful entitlements and protocol measures is indeed true, this raises serious concerns regarding judicial propriety and independence. Further, the aspect of judges travelling by a privately chartered aircraft from Delhi to Ahmedabad also gives rise to potential public perception of 'special privilege', and undue influence or compromised judicial independence.

The “Restatement of Values of Judicial Life” adopted by the Supreme Court in 1997 requires judges to maintain high standards of probity and to avoid both impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all activities. It states:

“1. Justice must not only be done but it must also be seen to be done. The behaviour and conduct of members of the higher judiciary must reaffirm the people’s faith in the impartiality of the judiciary. Accordingly, any act of a Judge of the Supreme Court of a High Court,

whether in official or personal capacity, which erodes the credibility of this perception has to be avoided.

6. A judge should practice a degree of aloofness consistent with the dignity of his office.

10. A judge shall not accept gifts or hospitality except from his family, close relations and friends.

16. Every judge must at all times be conscious that he is under the public gaze and there should be no act or omission by him which is unbecoming of the high office he occupies and the public esteem in which that office is held.”

In accordance with this, a judge must avoid situations that might reasonably give rise to the perception that external influences could affect judicial conduct or judgment. Acceptance of extravagant and expensive travel facilities from governments that are litigants before the Court risks undermining public confidence in this principle.

CJAR calls upon the concerned State Governments and the Supreme Court of India to clarify whether the arrangements mentioned above were in the regular course of protocol for the CJI and judges, and if so, who has borne the cost for the same.

CJAR reiterates its position that the judiciary must remain free from any influence, perceived or real, and retain the confidence of the people in its role as an impartial guardian of justice.