

## SPEECH

My Lord, the Chief Justice, my brother and sister colleagues on the Bench, Justice Faheem Anwar, Madhya Pradesh High Court, learned Additional Solicitor General of India Mrs.Maninder Acharya; Mr.Mohit Mathur, Senior Advocate and President; Mr.Jatan Singh, Vice-President, Mr.Abhijat, Secretary, and other office bearers of Delhi High Court Bar Association; Mr.Rahul Mehra, Standing Counsel (Criminal), and Mr.Ramesh Singh, Standing Counsel (Civil); Chairman and Members of the bar Council of Delhi; Office bearers of other Bar Associations; Mr.Fali Nariman, Senior Advocate; Senior Advocates present; members of the Bar; ladies and gentlemen.

I consider it a great privilege to be entrusted with the daunting task of speaking about the immense contribution made by Chief Justice Menon as we bid an affectionate farewell to him, who would be demitting office in a few days. Chief Justice Menon has been with us for just 10 months but in this short span of time, through his simplicity, he has endeared all of us.

Many milestones have been achieved by this court under his leadership – the opening of the Rouse Avenue Court, inauguration of Legal Aid Help Desk, De-stress Room at the Dwarka Court in the year 2018; inauguration of Help Desk at Family Court, Model Judicial Lock-up and Legal Aid Clinic-cum-Briefing Room and Vulnerable Witness Deposition Complex at Patiala House Courts; inauguration of Help Desk for Labour Courts at Rouse Avenue Court Complex.

Chief Justice Menon was born on 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1957 at Jabalpur. He studied in Christ Church Boy's Senior Secondary School, Jabalpur uptill the year 1974, Graduated in Science from Govt. Science College under Rani Durgawati University, Jabalpur in 1977. Later on, he did his LLB from NSE Law College, Jabalpur in the year 1981.

Law was not the first choice of Justice Menon. His first love was Medicine, his second choice was Engineering but fate and destiny had something else in store for Justice Menon. Inspired by one of his uncles, who was primarily a labour lawyer, Justice Menon joined his office and was happy to assist him in preparation of his cases and never felt shy even to carry his files from one court to another. After having an outstanding academic career Justice Menon was enrolled as an Advocate on 27<sup>th</sup> July, 1981. He started his practice in the district court, labour and industrial court, Jabalpur and later on in the High Court of Madhya Pradesh, where he practised for almost 20 years. He worked as a Central Govt. Standing Counsel from 1991 till his elevation to the Bench and during this period, he represented various public and private sector undertakings, South Eastern Coalfields Ltd., Northern and Western Coalfields Ltd., Western Coalfields Ltd., banks, universities and other well-known companies.

He was appointed as a Judge of the Madhya Pradesh High Court on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2002 and was posted at Gwalior Bench of Madhya Pradesh High Court till March, 2008 when he was posted at the Principal Bench at Jabalpur. On 13<sup>th</sup> May,

2016, he was appointed as an Acting Chief Justice of Madhya Pradesh High Court and held the position till his elevation to Patna High Court as Chief Justice on 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2017. During Justice Menon's tenure in the Madhya Pradesh High Court, he was associated with several Administrative Committees including Chairman of Bhopal Gas Victims Compensation Commission from December, 2010 to March, 2015, Chairman of M.P. Legal Services Authority from March, 2015 till March, 2017. He was incharge of Judicial Education and Training and also the Chairman of M.P. State Judicial Academy.

Both as a Judge in the Madhya Pradesh High Court and thereafter as Chief Justice of Patna High Court Justice Menon has made remarkable contribution to the development of law, decided a wide range of ticklish and complicated issues in the realm of civil constitution and labour laws.

The Bench and Members of the Bar were completely bowled over by his simplicity, sweet temper both while holding court and while performing his administrative duties. Although, on the first day while hearing a public interest litigation filed by an NGO with regard to unauthorised construction in South Delhi his lordship firmly asserted that he would not entertain any petition which was not really in public interest but filed to settle personal scores, which sent a proper message and restricted filing of frivolous petitions, which would show that he was polite yet firm. His ability to manage his court coupled with his intellectual calibre has earned him great admiration. Justice Menon has delivered many

landmark judgments to strengthen the rights of a common man. In the case of “*Darshna v. GNCTD*”, his deep sentiments can be seen towards the senior citizens and parents, wherein his Bench noticed “It is high time that senior citizens/parents are allowed to live in peace and tranquillity” and the Bench headed by him had upheld the order passed by the Maintenance Tribunal and a learned Single Judge of this Court.

Further in a Judgment in the case of “*Social Jurist, A Civil Rights Group v. Govt. of NCT of Delhi*” while quashing a circular issued by the Government of Delhi denying free treatment to the people who did not have a valid voter card of Delhi, Justice Menon observed that healthcare facility and its access to a citizen is a fundamental right available under the Constitution, and Article 21 of the Constitution imposes a duty on the Government to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that every citizen has free and fair access to health facilities and treatment in a Government hospital.

Last year in December, a Bench headed by Justice Menon while hearing the case titled as “*Dr. Zaheer Ahmed v. Union of India*” ordered ban on the sale of online medicines by e-pharmacists and directed the government to formulate a policy regarding sale of online medicines.

In an another case titled as *Rajeev Singhal v. MCD (East Delhi Municipal Corporation)*, Justice Menon fixed the responsibility of organisations in *inter se* dispute and held that merely because there is an *inter se* dispute between the

organisations as to who is responsible for the accident or the negligence, the writ petition could not be dismissed and awarded compensation to the parent of the deceased.

Martin Luther King Jr. said that “*a genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus, but a molder of consensus.*”

Apart from Chief Justice Menon’s work on the judicial side, we have seen his leadership on the administrative side as well. Justice Menon has always been ready and willing to address every problem placed before him be it of colleagues’ from the Bench, the district judiciary, the Bar or the staff. The excellence in administration stems from his ability to take quick and strong decisions coupled with his patience, independence, humility, lack of ego and his commitment to hard work.

On the administrative side, the steps taken by Justice Menon have been truly remarkable and guided by purity of his thought.

On the home front, I learnt from a very reliable source that the Chief Justice is a complete hands on man, a music lover and has a large collection of audio tapes, music CDs, a movie buff and has a passion for music. He has never waited for the music system to be installed by the company and as soon as the system is delivered without waiting for the company to have it installed and without any help, he loves to set up the system.

A caring husband and a doting father. Such is the level of his simplicity that once his children visited his Court soon after his elevation, they burst into laughter by the fact that every lawyer who entered the Court addressed their father as My Lord, His Lordship. Such formality had not been witnessed by them in their nest, their home.

It is said that a judge must have the grace to hear patiently, to consider diligently, to understand rightly and to decide gently with a sense of humanity. Chief Justice Menon more than meets this test. On a personal note, I have had the benefit of his guidance and have had the opportunity to be closely associated with him in the last few months. I will truly miss his presence and so will the other colleagues. As one American thinker had put it *“Age is only a number, a cipher for the records. A man can’t retire his experience. He must use it. Experience achieves more with less energy and time”*. I am sure Justice Menon would continue to contribute in the growth of the judiciary with his vast experience as having served as a Judge for the past 17 years.

While bidding farewell to you, I on behalf of my sisters and brothers of the Bench extend our gratitude for your leadership and convey our best wishes for your continued good health, a long life and be bestowed with fulfilling assignments in future as well. As your distinguished and satisfied judiciary career devoted to the dispensation of justice comes to an end, you will be remembered

as a dear and sincere friend and a strong leader. You shall occupy a unique place in our minds and hearts.

Chief Justice, we will miss you and we truly mean it. We will miss your infectious smile. We will miss your unhindered laughter, your unbiased and sincere advice, your quality of treating each one equally.

The fact that this court is today bursting with lawyers and your well-wishers bear testimony of your popularity and regard and respect for you. Our best wishes for the future, we hope that you will continue to stay associated with us. Bless us and give us the benefit of your advice and guidance. Treat Delhi High Court as your home, you will always be welcomed here and we will receive you with open arms. Having learnt I am happy to share that it seems that we have also made a place in the heart of the Chief Justice as he has taken a decision to stay back in Delhi. Parting always results in some pain. Today is no exception. We will all miss you.

I end by quoting Richard Bach, an American writer – *“Don't be dismayed at good-byes. A farewell is necessary before you can meet again. And meeting again, after moments or lifetimes, is certain for those who are friends’*.

All the very best Chief Justice and God bless you.