

FULL COURT REFERENCE HELD IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA ON 31st MARCH 2026, ON THE OCCASION OF THE RETIREMENT OF HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE N. NAGARESH.

Speech by Sri. K. Gopalakrishna Kurup, Advocate General

Hon'ble the Chief Justice of the High Court of Kerala, Mr. Justice Soumen Sen; The Hon'ble Justice N. Nagaresh; The Hon'ble Judges of the High Court of Kerala; The Hon'ble Former Judges of the High Court of Kerala; The Additional Solicitor General of India; The President of the Kerala High Court Advocates Association; The Chairman of the Bar Council of Kerala; The President, Kerala High Court Senior Advocates Association; The President, Federation of Women Lawyers, Kerala High Court Unit; Law Officers of the State; Deputy Solicitor General, Senior Central Standing Counsel (Taxes) and other Law Officers of the Central Government; Law Officers of the Union Territory of Lakshadweep; Senior Advocates; Esteemed Fellow Members of the Bar; Registrar General, Registrars and Staff of the High Court of Kerala; Family members of Justice N. Nagaresh; Staff of the Advocate General's Office; Advocate Clerks; Ladies and Gentlemen; And all other dignitaries joining online.

Today, we have all assembled to bid farewell to Justice N. Nagaresh on the occasion of Your Lordship demitting office upon attaining the age of superannuation.

Your Lordship has been widely admired as a Judge profoundly learned in law, endowed with a keen and incisive intellect that enabled the swift grasp of even the most complex legal principles with admirable clarity and precision. Equally noteworthy has been your unfailing courtesy on the Bench. The humility you embody, coupled with your warm and affable demeanour, has consistently eased the atmosphere in court, ensuring that proceedings remained not only effective but also humane and respectful.

Your Lordship was born on 1st April 1964 at Vaikom to Advocate S. Narasimha Naik and (Late) Smt. Lalitha Naik. Your father, apart from being a distinguished member of the Bar, was also a towering and widely respected political and public figure of Vaikom, having served as the Municipal Chairman from 1962 to 1979. After completing your schooling at Vaikom, you pursued graduation at Maharaja's College, Ernakulam. Thereafter, you obtained your LL.B. degree from University of Bombay in 1989 and went on to complete your LL.M. from Government Law College, Ernakulam.

Your Lordship was enrolled as an Advocate in December 1989 and commenced practice in the chamber of Senior Advocate O.V. Radhakrishnan, at the instance of late Advocate T. V. Ananthan, who patronised and guided you in every respect. To quote Your Lordship's own words: "*If I have achieved any height in my profession, it is solely the result of the systematic training I received from my Senior, Sri O. V. Radhakrishnan.*" These words truly reflect the essence of a profound guru-shishya relationship. Late T. V. Ananthan and Advocate

Radhamani Amma also played a pivotal role in shaping Your Lordship into a skilful and accomplished legal professional.

Your Lordship commenced independent practice in the year 1995. Thereafter, you shared chambers with Advocate Shaji Thomas for over 23 years. Until your elevation to the Bench—an enduring testament to professional camaraderie and mutual respect. Your practice spanned a wide spectrum of legal disciplines, with particular expertise in labour and service law. You also regularly appeared before the Central Administrative Tribunal in numerous matters, demonstrating both versatility and depth in advocacy.

Your Lordship's legal acumen was duly recognised by the Central Government through your appointment as Central Government Standing Counsel at this Honourable Court from 1998 to 2004. Having amply justified the confidence reposed in you during that tenure, you were later appointed as Assistant Solicitor General of India from 17.07.2014 to 01.11.2018. In that capacity, you appeared in and conducted litigation on behalf of various Central Government Departments and public authorities, and was actively engaged in matters involving constitutional, administrative, and allied branches of law.

Your Lordship's popularity and esteem among the brethren in black robes found expression in your election to the Bar Council of Kerala in 2011. Prior to that, from 2008 to 2011, you served as a member of the Disciplinary Committee of the Bar Council of Kerala, contributing meaningfully to the maintenance of professional standards and ethics within the legal fraternity.

Your Lordship's academic pursuits were not confined to the courtroom alone. You served as Reporter of the Indian Law Reports from 1993 to 1999, contributing significantly to the development and dissemination of legal jurisprudence. You were also nominated to the General Council of the National University of Advanced Legal Studies in 2012, reflecting your continued engagement with legal education and scholarship.

Your Lordship was actively associated with labour and trade union activities in the State during your years at the Bar. You led several trade unions and served as the Ernakulam District President, as well as the Kerala State Vice President, of one of the largest confederations of trade unions in the country. You also represented workers in labour disputes and was deeply engaged in trade union-related legal advocacy, reflecting a steadfast commitment to the cause of labour and social justice.

Your Lordship was elevated as an Additional Judge of this Honourable Court on 5th November 2018 and was appointed as a Permanent Judge with effect from 14th September 2020. You, upon elevation, set aside all your previous affiliations with remarkable ease and unwavering conviction, and proceeded to render justice with complete impartiality, in faithful adherence to the solemn constitutional oath undertaken. In that sense, I can say, without an iota of doubt, that you join the illustrious league of great jurists. At the same time, the practical wisdom and grounded pragmatism that naturally flow from grassroots public life - qualities you possessed in abundant measure - stood you in excellent stead on the Bench, enabling you to devise

balanced and workable solutions to the multifarious disputes that came up for consideration.

With an unparalleled sense of ease and grace, you presided over the Court in a manner that left all present with the distinct impression that the dispensation of justice was both seamless and humane. You had the rare ability to identify and distil the core issues in every case, often with a touch of gentle humour that lightened even the most complex proceedings. Your rich and varied experience - as a labour leader, a member of a regulatory body like the Bar Council of Kerala, and as the Assistant Solicitor General of India - helped you during your tenure on the Bench. It endowed you with a deep and empathetic understanding of the concerns of all sections of society. Your Court often transformed into a haven of compassion, where litigants could seek relief without the burden of intimidation or distress. Guided by the firm belief that those who approached the Court in pursuit of justice should not return disappointed, you ensured that every matter received patient and thoughtful consideration. Your Lordship was also known for your amiable interaction with members of the Bar, and never once did impatience find place, even in the course of prolonged and detailed arguments.

Your Lordship is married to Smt. V.R. Asha. Your daughter Nayana N. is a Post Graduate student in Homoeopathy medicine.

On behalf of the legal fraternity of the State of Kerala, I extend to My Lord and Your Lordship's family my earnest wishes for good health, happiness, and continued intellectual fulfilment in the years to come. May

the next phase of Your Lordship's journey prove to be as distinguished and fulfilling as the one that draws to a close today.

Thank you

Jai Hind.

Speech by Sri. Peeyus A. Kottam, President, Kerala High Court Advocates' Association.

Farewell to Justice N. Nagaresh

Hon'ble Mr. Justice Soumen Sen, Chief Justice of the High Court of Kerala; Hon'ble Mr. Justice Anil K. Narendran, Hon'ble Judges and Former Judges of the High Court of Kerala; Learned Advocate General, Sri. Gopalakrishna Kurup; Adv. Sreekumar P., Additional Solicitor General, Adv. Asok M. Cherian Addl. Advocate General Director General of Prosecution, Sri. T.A. Shaji; Additional Director General of Prosecution, Sri. Gracious Kuriakose; State Attorney, Sri. N. Manoj Kumar; President, Senior Advocates' Association ; Chairman, Bar Council of Kerala, Smt. Nima Jacob; Secretary, Kerala High Court Advocates' Association, Executive Committee members of Kerala High Court Advocates' Association; President, Kerala Federation of Women Lawyers, Sri. R.V. Sreejith; Legal Retainer and Senior Central Government Counsel for Lakshadweep Administration, Respected Senior Members of the Bar; Registrar General and Registrars of this Hon'ble Court; Court Officers, Advocate Clerks; Esteemed family members of Hon'ble Mr. Justice Nagaresh; My esteemed

colleagues at the Bar; My dear brothers and sisters and all other dignitaries joining us online.

Namaste and a very warm good evening to one and all.

It is both a privilege and a proud moment for me to stand before this august gathering to express our deep respect, admiration, and affection for Hon'ble Mr. Justice N Nagaresh, as His Lordship completes a truly distinguished journey on the Bench.

Mr. Justice Nagarsh has always stood apart as an extraordinary personality. During his time at the Bar, he combined professional excellence with warmth, approachability, and a gentle chumminess that made him truly beloved among his peers. When he rose to the office of Solicitor General, that humility did not diminish—it only deepened. He became a vital bridge between the Bar and the Government, earning admiration and trust from all quarters.

But when His Lordship was elevated to the Bench, we witnessed not a change in character, but a transformation in responsibility. Mr. Justice Nagaresh became a rock—firm in principle, unwavering in conviction, and steadfast in the pursuit of justice.

Your tenure as judge, will forever remain a golden era. His court was truly a haven for the Bar. The grace with which His Lordship handled matters, the clarity in his approach, his impeccable temperament, and his remarkable patience—especially towards young lawyers—made his courtroom not just a place of adjudication, but a space of learning and growth.

Justice Nagaresh, was Bar-friendly without compromising on discipline, fearless without being harsh, impartial without

being distant, and authoritative without losing his inherent kindness.

I fondly recollect an incident that, to my mind, truly reflects the very essence of Your Lordship's character.

On a day in June 2022, while on his way to the High Court, His Lordship witnessed a distressing incident in which a young, struggling lawyer being attacked on the road young lawyer was being brutally attacked. Without a moment's hesitation, and setting aside the stature of his high office, His Lordship courageously intervened and physically stepped in to protect the lawyer from a road rage assault on Foreshore Road, Kochi.

Even while holding the high office of a Judge, Your Lordship never ceased to remain a lawyer at heart. When a member of your own fraternity was under attack, it was not your position that defined your response, but your conscience. You stepped forward, putting aside the formality of office, to stand for justice and to protect your fellow advocate.

That spirit—that courage, that sense of duty, that unwavering integrity—is what we salute today.

Your Lordship judgments will be remembered forever—not for their verbosity, but for their clarity, erudition, and an abiding sense of fairness.

Today, as we bid farewell, we are not merely parting with a Judge—we are parting with an institution, a guiding force, and a reassuring presence on the Bench.

With these words, we place on record our deepest respect and heartfelt gratitude. Your legacy will continue to

inspire generations of lawyers, and your absence will be deeply felt, both inside and beyond the courtroom.

Thank you, My Lord.

Speech by the Honourable Chief Justice Mr. Soumen Sen.

Brother Justice N. Nagaresh, My Esteemed Sister and Brother Judges, Former Judges of this Court, Learned Advocate General, Learned Additional Solicitor General of India, Learned Deputy Solicitor General of India, Law Officers of the State, Union of India and Union Territory, Chairman, Bar Council of Kerala, President, Kerala High Court Advocates' Association, President, Senior Advocates' Association, President, Kerala Federation of Women Lawyers, Senior and Junior Members of the Bar, Registrar General and Members of the Registry, Smt. V. R. Asha, wife of Brother Justice Nagaresh and his family members, Members of the Advocates' Clerks' Association, Staff of the High Court, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon to all.

We assemble here today with a sense of respect and warm regard to bid an affectionate farewell to Brother Justice N. Nagaresh, who demits the office as a Judge of the High Court of Kerala on attaining superannuation, after an illustrious service of more than seven years in this Court.

2. Justice Nagaresh was born on 1 April 1964 at Vaikom, to Adv. Shri S. Narasimha Naik, who served as the Municipal Chairman of Vaikom for nearly two decades and late Smt. Lalitha Naik. Justice Nagaresh received his early education at the Government Boys High School, Vaikom. He pursued his pre-degree at St. Albert's College, Ernakulam, and graduated with a B.Sc. in Physics from Maharaja's College, Ernakulam. Thereafter, he obtained his LL.B. from the Bombay University in 1989, followed by a postgraduate degree in law from the Government Law College, Ernakulam.

3. He enrolled as an Advocate on 17 December 1989 and started his practice under the able guidance of Senior Advocate Shri O. V. Radhakrishnan. By 1995, he had established an independent practice, marked by diligence and professional integrity. Over the years, he held several important positions – serving as Central Government Counsel before this Court, as Reporter for the Indian Law Reports, and as a Member of the Disciplinary Committee of the Bar Council of Kerala. His election to the Bar Council of Kerala and nomination to the General Council of the National University of Advanced Legal Studies are a testament to the esteem in which he was held by the legal fraternity.

4. His tenure as the Assistant Solicitor General of India from July 2014 to November 2018 stands out as a significant chapter in his professional life. During this period, he appeared in several important matters on behalf of the Union of India, including cases of national importance, such as those relating to demonetisation, freedom of the media, and the aftermath of the Kerala floods of 2018, apart from cases entrusted by the Central

Bureau of Investigation. His services were also sought by various public sector undertakings and institutions of repute.

5. In recognition of his legal acumen, ability and merit, on 5 November 2018, he was sworn in as an Additional Judge of this Court and on 14 September 2020, became a permanent Judge. From the very inception of his judicial career, he demonstrated a profound commitment to the rule of law and to the ideals of justice.

6. During his tenure on the Bench, Justice Nagaresh has dealt with matters covering diverse branches of law, leaving a meaningful and enduring imprint on its development. He has, with remarkable diligence and judicial acumen, disposed of more than **24,000** cases while sitting in Single Bench, Division Bench, and Full Bench. His judgments reflect clarity of thought, depth of analysis and a careful balancing of competing interests. They are marked by precision, fairness and a strong grounding in constitutional principles. His work has undoubtedly enriched the jurisprudence of this Court.

7. On the administrative side as well, Justice Nagaresh has rendered valuable service by serving as Chairman of various Committees. To cite a few, Committee for Framing High Court Rules and High Court Service Rules, Special Committee to make recommendations for promotion to Selection Categories in the High Court Service, Committee for performance evaluation and mentoring of the Judicial Officers in the District Judiciary – Central Zone, Special Committee for the preparation of draft seniority list of District Judges, etc.

8. Retirement, as we often say, is a moment of gentle transition – a pause that marks the conclusion of one chapter and the beginning of another. For Justice Nagaresh, it brings to a close a judicial career defined by integrity, industry and quiet excellence. As a colleague, he has been known for his unfailing courtesy, patience and balanced approach. His interactions with members of the Bar have been marked by respect and openness, fostering an atmosphere of mutual trust and dignity. These qualities are invaluable to the life of any judicial institution.

9. The High Court of Kerala has, over the years, earned a reputation for its rich traditions and intellectual vitality. Justice Nagaresh has contributed significantly to sustaining and strengthening this legacy. Whether dealing with complex constitutional questions, intricate statutory interpretations, or matters affecting the lives of ordinary citizens, he has consistently displayed a deep sense of justice and humane concern.

10. While he now lays down the robes of judicial office, the wealth of experience, wisdom and insight that he carries will undoubtedly continue to serve society in many meaningful ways. The end of his formal judicial duties does not mark the end of his engagement with law, learning and public life. This I consider to be the beginning of new life with full freedom.

11. On behalf of my esteemed sister and brother Judges, I place on record our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for the invaluable services rendered by Justice Nagaresh, both on the judicial and administrative sides of this Court. His contributions will remain indelibly inscribed in the annals of this Court.

12. We also extend our good wishes to Smt. V. R. Asha, his gracious spouse, to his daughter, Ms. Nayana N., a Homeo Doctor, and to all members of his family. May they enjoy continued good health, peace and happiness in the years to come.

13. Justice Nagaresh, as you step into a new phase of life, we wish you peace, contentment and continued purpose. May the years ahead be as meaningful and fulfilling as those you have devoted to the service of justice.

Thank you.

Reply speech by the Honourable Mr. Justice N. Nagaresh

Hon'ble The Chief Justice Mr. Justice Soumen Sen, my esteemed brother and sister judges, the Advocate General - Sri. Gopalakrishna Kurup, the Additional Solicitor General of India - Sri. P. Sreekumar, President of the High Court Advocates' Association - Sri. Peeyus A. Kottam, the Chairman, Bar Council of Kerala - Sri. T.S. Ajith, the Deputy Solicitor General of India - Smt. Shalina, the Director General of Prosecutions - Sri. T.A. Shaji, the Additional Director General of Prosecutions - Sri. Gracious Kuriakose, the State Attorney - Sri. N. Manoj Kumar, Law Officers of the Union and the State, President of the Senior Advocates Association - Sri. N. Nandakumara Menon, President of the Kerala Women Lawyers Federation - Smt. Karthika S, President of the Kerala High Court Advocates' Clerks Association - Sri. Prathapan, senior and junior members of the Bar, Advocate Clerks, members of the High Court Registry, my dear friends, ladies and

gentlemen.

A very pleasant evening to all of you.

I am overwhelmed by the kind words spoken about me by the Hon'ble Chief Justice, the Additional Solicitor General of India, the Advocate General and the President of the Advocates' Association. While I thankfully acknowledge their expression of affection towards me wholeheartedly, I take the words of praise and laudatory remarks showered on me by Sri. P. Sreekumar, Sri. Gopalakrishna Kurup and Sri. Peeyus Kottam, with a little reservation as I am certain that those epithets seldom suit me fully. I console myself with the thought that it is customary to say a few words of praise on occasions like this about every one who lays down his office after a not so short tenure. I thank them for their affection shown towards me.

I have never thought before how I would feel on the day of my cessation as a judge. To be honest with you, I am now taken over by an emotional pain - not at the thought that from tomorrow onwards, my name will be prefixed or suffixed with the letters R-E-T-D in parentheses, but at the pensive thought that I will have to stop coming to this great institution, which for the last over 36 years has been my world of existence.

I became an Advocate by choice, but I became a judge by chance. I have thoroughly enjoyed both the roles, doing justice to both, to the best of my ability. I think there is no meaning in pondering how the posterity will rate me as a judge or whether anyone would even remember my existence here, after a long time. I would be happy and feel gratified if during the last over seven years, you have found me to be a not-so-bad judge. I can say with certainty that I have treated all the

lawyers who had appeared before me with courtesy and respect, whether I had agreed or disagreed with their contentions or granted them the reliefs asked for or not.

I still remember the day when I first entered this prestigious institution with my robes on, with a heart, full of dreams, and a mind, full of confidence, sparingly laced with trepidation and inhibitions. Before long, I realised that unless you work your way up, under the tutelage of a good Guru, you cannot aspire to become a good professional. I was fortunate to be admitted into the office of one of the doyens of the Bar, Sri. O.V. Radhakrishnan Sir, who was then and is still, an authority on Constitutional law. Radhakrishnan Sir was then known to be a tough Senior, brooking no nonsense, breaking no rules. But soon I found that I had landed on the best training ground. It was from the office of Radhakrishnan Sir and late Smt. Radhamani Amma that I started learning law, slowly and steadily honing up my forensic skills under his able guidance, ultimately to be confident enough to spread my wings to start independent practice after about 5 years. Thank you Radhakrishnan Sir for all the efforts spared by you in grooming me up to be a good lawyer.

In our student days it was not difficult to get admission to a law college, as law was not a much sought after course. But now things are different. Getting into a good law college is as tough as getting into any other good professional college. Every year the youngsters joining the profession swell in thousands. I have found many of the young lawyers practising here highly promising and I am confident that they would be tomorrow's leaders of the Bar. The significance of getting trained under a good senior in the formative years as a lawyer cannot be over emphasized. My advice to my young friends

who come into the profession is to get themselves trained not only in law but also on professional ethics and principles, under a good Senior.

This year's International Women's Day has passed by just a few weeks back. This High Court, which has given to the Nation the first woman high court judge, the first woman high court chief justice, the first woman supreme court judge and the first visually challenged woman judge, can also boast of a formidable force of women lawyers, who can be safely rated to be one of the best in the country in their work culture, etiquette, efficiency and legal skills. It is indeed good to see their numbers swell, year after year. I wish to give our lady lawyers a special commendation. Go to any other High Court or even the Supreme Court, you will never see women lawyers so immaculately dressed in their robes as our lady lawyers.

The judge's job is a balancing act. Like charity, peace also starts from home. Without the dedicated support and sacrifice of the family, I believe, no judge can discharge his duties satisfactorily and efficiently. Though thanking the members of my family for having voluntarily given up several small and big pleasures of life to ensure that my work as a judge is not meddled with, may sound a little too formal, I thank my wife Asha and our dear daughter Nayana from my heart for the care and support they have extended to me throughout my professional career. My beloved parents have always been my guiding spirit since I was born. While my father Sri. Narasimha Naik is with me, enjoying the evening of his life, I lost my mother Smt. Lalita Naik two years back, but she is not too far away not to hear my prayers every day. I am also thankful to my elder brother Sri. Sudhakar Naik and my sister-in-law Smt. Sreekala for the affection and

support extended to me throughout my life.

Retirement from an office is also an occasion for thanksgiving. Though naming every one who has been part of your professional life is a bit too difficult, I would be failing myself if I do not reminisce my association with my friends and colleagues, Sri. Mohan Pulickkal and Sri. Shaji Thomas and the days we had celebrated the carefree joys and pains of our junior days. I also acknowledge the valuable assistance given to me by Sri. Binu Paul, Sri. T.V. Vinu, Smt.S. Krishna and my all other junior colleagues during my practice.

I would not have been able to effectively discharge my duties as a Judge all these years without the dedicated support and co-operation extended to me by the members of my personal staff. Smt. Sunitha A.K., Private Secretary throughout my tenure, gave me exceptional support which made discharge of my duties easier. But, for the efforts and pains taken by Smt. Sunitha, my orders and judgments, would not have reached you in time flawless. My Court Officers Suvarna and Tess; Personal Assistants Sheejarani, Hazina, Shabna and Aswathy; Chauffeur Anilkumar; Office Attendants Gokul and Sunitha; PSOs Geethesh and Hareesh were of commendable help. My home staff Vijayan, Margaret and Ramani were also of good help. My Sevak Sri. Jerry George took care of my aged father and domestic front.

Every man learns some lesson from another whom he interacts with. When you are in the company of men of erudition and wisdom, you are bound to expand your horizon of knowledge. I am lucky to be a part of this Bench for over years and I have learnt a lot from my brothers and sisters on the Bench. I thank them from my heart for all the support and co-operation extended to me all these years. And last but the

least, I thank all my esteemed lawyer friends, senior and junior, old and young, for all the support they have given me all these years.

It is only 4.30 in the evening and there is a long way to go before the sun sets. Symbolically speaking, I wish to walk many more miles before the sun sets, enjoying the fragrance of life after retirement, indulging in my favourite pastimes.

I am happy to have been associated with this august institution and will always cherish the memories of the days I have spent here as a lawyer and as a Judge. I wish this institution ever-enhancing glory and unfading fame.

Thank you all.

Jai Hind.
