

FULL COURT REFERENCE HELD IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA ON 26TH MAY 2026, ON THE OCCASION OF THE RETIREMENT OF HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE C. PRATHEEP KUMAR.

Speech by Sri. K. Jaju Babu, Advocate General.

Hon'ble Mr. Justice A K Jayashankaran Nambiar, Judge, High Court of Kerala; Hon'ble Mr. Justice C. Pratheep Kumar, Judge, High Court of Kerala; The Hon'ble Judges of the High Court of Kerala; The Additional Solicitor General of India; Director General of Prosecution Adv. T Asaf Ali, Additional Advocates General - Adv. K C Vincent and Adv. P A Mohammed Shah; 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 - Sri. Peeyus A Kottam; The President, Federation of Women Lawyers, Kerala High Court Unit; Law Officers of the State of Kerala; Deputy Solicitor General, Senior Central Standing Counsel (Taxes) and other Law Officers of the Central Government; Law Officers of the Union Territory of Lakshadweep; The Mediator Co-ordinator, High Court Mediation Centre; Senior Advocates; Esteemed Fellow Members of the Bar; Registrar General, Registrars and Staff of the High Court of Kerala; Family members of Mr Justice C. Pratheep Kumar; Staff of the Advocate General's Office; Advocate Clerks; Ladies and Gentlemen; and all other dignitaries joining online.

The humility of a Judge silently infuses society, for justice commands the deepest respect when tempered with wisdom and restraint, thereby lending dignity to the institution and inspiring enduring public confidence. Today, we have gathered to honour Justice C. Pratheep Kumar — a rare embodiment of humility and erudition — on his retirement, after more than three decades of distinguished and unblemished service to the Judiciary.

Your Lordship was born on 28.05.1964 in the village of Poonkulam in Thiruvananthapuram, as the youngest among the nine children of (late) Chelleppan Nadar, a small-scale farmer cum hotel owner, and (late) Kamalakshy, a devoted homemaker. Your Lordship's visionary mother remained steadfast in ensuring that each of her children received the best education possible. You pursued schooling at Government Lower Primary School, Poonkulam, Boys High School, Venganoor, and St. Xavier's High School, Peyad. Thereafter, you completed the Pre-Degree course and obtained degree, both from Mahatma Gandhi College, Thiruvananthapuram.

Something what Your Lordship fondly describes as a divine intervention, you happened to hear a radio announcement regarding the introduction of the five-year

LL.B. course at Government Law College, Thiruvananthapuram. Inspired by that moment of providence, you joined the Course and successfully completed the same. You, thereafter, pursued postgraduate studies in law and secured an LL.M. degree, also from Government Law College, Thiruvananthapuram.

Your Lordship enrolled as an Advocate in 1989 and commenced practice at the courts at the District Court Centre, Thiruvananthapuram, under the guidance of Advocate P. Rahim. Your senior reposed great confidence in your diligence and ability, and graciously afforded you numerous opportunities to conduct cases before courts on both the civil and criminal sides, opportunities which you utilised with dedication and distinction. After a short break from active practice, during which you served as Lecturer at the Government Law College, Kozhikode (Evening Batch) in 1993–94, you resumed practice at Thiruvananthapuram along with your cousin, (Late) G. Muraleedharan, Advocate.

Your Lordship joined judicial service as Judicial First Class Magistrate at Ernakulam in the year 1997. In the District Judiciary, you later officiated as Munsiff in Kollam and Nedumangad, as Judicial First Class Magistrate at Idukki, Varkala and Kollam, as Additional Sub Judge at Ernakulam, as Secretary, District Legal Services Authority, Thiruvananthapuram, as Judge, Family Court at Alappuzha, as Special Judge (SC/ST) Prevention of Atrocities Act. Kottarakkara, as Judicial Member, Taxes Appellate Tribunal, as Additional District and Sessions Judge. Ernakulam and as Principal District and Sessions Judge at Thalassery and Kozhikode. For years, you weighed the scales with care.

It was with the benefit of such rich judicial experience spanning over twenty-six years across the civil, criminal, matrimonial and taxation jurisdictions, together with considerable administrative experience as Secretary, District Legal Services Authority, and as Principal District Judge in two major districts, that Your Lordship was elevated as an Additional Judge of this Honourable Court on 25.10.2023 and later appointed as Permanent Judge with effect from 09.09.2025. While presiding on the Bench, you were a perfect example of patient hearing and composed demeanour. You always extended unfailing courtesy to members of the Bar and ensured that lawyers were taken along in the process of justice dispensation, fostering an atmosphere of fairness, dignity and mutual respect within the court hall. Your profound judicial acumen, keen legal scholarship, and tireless commitment to the cause of fair and balanced adjudication have significantly enriched the distinguished tradition of erudition and excellence that has long adorned this Honourable Court.

Your Lordship is married to Smt. Shirley, a retired teacher, and has been blessed with two sons, Shri Abhijith and Shri Abhinav, both of whom have followed their father's footsteps into the noble profession of law.

The heavy robes are laid to rest from today. But the seeds of justice that you sowed during the past three years will echo through these halls. On behalf of the entire legal fraternity of the State of Kerala, I extend to Your Lordship and the members of Your Lordship's family my earnest wishes for good health, happiness, peace, and contentment in the next season of life. May the next season of Your Lordship's life be as meaningful, distinguished, and rewarding as the illustrious judicial journey that culminates today. Your noble work is proudly done. Now step into brighter sun.

Jai Hind.

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

Hon'ble Dr. Justice A. K Jayasankaran Nambiar Judge of the High Court of Kerala; Hon'ble Judges and Former Judges of the High Court of Kerala; Learned Advocate General, Sri. K. Jaiju Babu, Adv Sreekumar P, Additional Solicitor General, Adv. Mohammed Shah, Addl Advocate General, Adv. K.C. Vincent, Addl Advocate General, Director General of Prosecution, Sri. Asaf Ali, State Attorney, Sri. N. Manoj Kumar; President, Senior Advocates' Association, Sri. Nandakumar Menon; 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, Co-ordinator, High Court mediation Centre. 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 Pratheepkumar, My esteemed colleagues at the Bar; My dear brothers and sisters; 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 Pretheep Kumar, as His Lordship completes a truly distinguished journey on the Bench.

Mr. Justice Pretheep Kumar has always stood apart as an extraordinary personality.

I am deeply honoured to address this gathering because, from the very initial stage of Justice Pradeep Kumar's career as a judicial officer, I had the privilege of being a part of that journey. During his remarkable judicial service journey from

Munsiff to High Court Judge, I was blessed with the opportunity to contest cases before him.

Mr. Justice Pradeep Kumar captured the confidence, love, and affection of the Bar within a very short span of time. Though he got the opportunity to serve as a High Court Judge only for about two and a half to three years, within that brief period he truly conquered the hearts of the Bar.

The members of the Bar genuinely appreciated his manner of handling cases, maintaining the courtroom in a calm and composed atmosphere, and treating every lawyer — whether senior or junior — with equal courtesy and consideration. Mr. Justice Pradeep Kumar accommodated everyone in a pleasant manner and discharged his judicial duties with courage, disposing of cases fearlessly and without favour.

Dear Mr. Justice Pradeep Kumar, the members of the Association will always remember your tenure as a golden era. If at any point of time, due to momentary temperament, anything unpleasant happened between the Bar and the Bench, it was purely accidental and never intentional. We sincerely request Your Lordship not to bear any such instance in mind.

Your Lordship's judicial mind was always inclined to help the aggrieved and to redress their grievances. Such judicial sensitivity found expression in the celebrated judgment of Your Lordship in *Shiny v. District Legal Services Authority*. In that case, Your Lordship's judicial conscience rose to the occasion to redress the grievance of an acid attack victim who had lost her eyesight.

Your Lordship boldly held that the compensation of 3 lakhs fixed by the Supreme Court in *Laxmi v. Union of India* was not the upper limit. Invoking the provisions of the Victim Compensation Scheme, 2017, Your Lordship directed KELSA to immediately disburse an additional sum of 5 lakhs to the victim for her urgent medical treatment, over and above the amount already granted.

This approach in that case clearly demonstrates that Your Lordship's judicial mind has always stood with the needy, the vulnerable, and the deserving sections of society.

We all love you, admire you, and deeply respect the manner in which you discharged your duties as a judicial officer. We will proudly remember your service, your temperament, your compassion, and your passionate commitment to justice. Your life itself stands as a lesson and an inspiration to the coming generation — a person who, through struggle, perseverance, and dedication, rose to occupy the highest position in the State judiciary.

Though Your Lordship is now retiring from service, your legacy will continue to remain in the hearts of the members of the Bar and the judicial fraternity. We wish you a very happy, healthy, peaceful, and fulfilling future ahead.

With the permission of the Full Court, I take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt congratulations to our newly appointed Advocate General, Additional Advocate Generals, and the Director General of prosecution

We extend our heartfelt wishes for your success in office. May you serve with integrity, dedication, and distinction, upholding the justice delivery system and serving society with excellence.

Thank you all, Jai Hind.

Thank you.

Speech by Honourable Dr. Justice A.K. Jayasankaran Nambiar:

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice C. Pratheep Kumar, Brother and Sister Judges of this Court, the learned Advocate General Sri. Jaju Babu, Sri. Peeyus A Kottam, President of the Kerala High Court Advocates' Association, Former Judges of this Court present here, Mrs. Shirly Pratheep Kumar and family members of Justice Pratheep Kumar, Registrars and staff of this Court, the Law Officers of the Union and State Government, Advocate Clerks, esteemed members of the bar, Ladies and Gentlemen.

We have assembled here today not merely to mark the retirement of a Judge, but to celebrate the remarkable judicial journey of our dear friend and esteemed brother Judge, Justice C. Pratheep Kumar, who demits his judicial office on the 28th of this month. A judicial career is not measured merely by years of service, but by the character, integrity, learning, and humanity that one brings to the administration of justice. Justice Pratheep Kumar's journey on the Bench over the last three decades has been a shining example of these virtues. His retirement today from the High Court of Kerala marks the conclusion of that distinguished judicial career characterized by integrity, humility, and a steadfast commitment to justice. Widely admired for his balanced and empathetic approach on the Bench, Justice Pratheep Kumar consistently upheld the highest constitutional values while remaining deeply sensitive to the cause of social justice and fairness. Through his erudition, patience, and dedication to the rule of law, he earned the deep respect of the Bar and the admiration and affection of his colleagues on the Bench.

Justice Pratheep Kumar's judgments reflect a fine balance between legal principle and social sensitivity. In matters concerning labour welfare, personal liberty,

and educational discipline alike, Justice Pratheep Kumar consistently demonstrated an unwavering commitment to fairness, compassion and constitutional values. His decisions reveal a humane and balanced judicial approach, marked by concern for vulnerable sections of society, respect for individual rights, and a deep understanding of the social realities underlying legal disputes. I have also had the benefit of observing his commitment to the cause of justice during programmes organised by the KeLSA. Justice Pratheep was the Chairman of the Sub-committee constituted to oversee Tribal Welfare and his enthusiasm and Zest has left all of us in awe of his sincerity. Even yesterday he called upon the DLSA authorities to look into the case of a tribal person who had succumbed to injuries sustained from a wild elephant attack, through a post on the official WhatsApp group. Such actions give meaning to the oft-quoted remark that a Judge in our legal system works 24 x 7, 365 days in a year !

Dear brother, Retirement from judicial office is not a withdrawal from public life; rather, it is the beginning of a new chapter — one that hopefully offers more time for family, personal pursuits, good health and continued service to society in different forms. After years of serving society and the justice delivery system, we do believe that you richly deserve this privilege of a relaxed second innings in life.

We are honoured by the presence of Justice Pratheep Kumar's family today—his wife, Shirley, and his dear sons, Abhijith and Abhinav. To them, I express sincere appreciation for the constant encouragement, understanding, and support they extended to our beloved brother throughout his years on the Bench. Their quiet strength undoubtedly contributed to the distinguished journey he has had in this noble institution. On behalf of everyone gathered here, I extend my heartfelt wishes to my dear brother and his family for a peaceful, fulfilling, and joyous life in the years ahead.

Thank you. .

Jai Hind.

Reply speech by Honourable Mr. Justice C. Pratheep Kumar.

The Hon'ble Dr. Justice A.K.Jayasankaran Nambiar, my esteemed Sister and Brother Judges, former Judges, learned Advocate General Sri.K. Jajubabu, President of the Kerala High Court Advocates Association Sri.Peeyus A. Kottam, Sri.P.Sreekumar, Additional Solicitor General of India, Chairman of the Bar Council of Kerala Sri.Ajith T.S., Additional Advocate General Sri.Mohammed Shah P.A, Director General of Prosecution Sri. T. Asaf Ali, Deputy Solicitor General Smt. Shalina, Other Law Officers of the Centre and

the State, President of the Senior Advocates Association Sri.Nandakumara Menon, President of Kerala Federation of Women Lawyers Smt.Karthika Sukumaran, respected Senior Advocates, other members of the Bar, Sri.G.Gopakumar, Registrar General, Sri.Nixon M. Joseph, Smt.Mini.S.Das, Sri. Prabhathu Kumar, Sri.K.S.Rajeev and Sri.Joseph Rajesh, Registrars of the High Court, Smt.Jubiya, Director, KSMCC, other Judicial Officers, Sri.Mathew Kuriakose, Mediator Co-ordinator, Staff of the High Court including my personal staff, Advocate-Clerks, My family members, friends, all those watching the program online, Ladies and Gentlemen, a warm good afternoon to all.

At the very outset I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Hon'ble Dr. Justice A.K.Jayasankaran Nambiar, learned Advocate General and the President of the Kerala High Court Advocates Association for the kind words spoken about me. I am aware that on the date a judge assumes charge and on the date of his retirement, it is customary to make only positive comments about him. Even then, those words gave me some relief, especially during this moment, filled with mixed emotions.

On 25-10-2023, when I took charge as a Judge of this Court I said that my elevation was only because of the Grace of God and not because of my merit. I knew that He had added the prefix 'Justice' to my name to serve the society with humility and not to show the power or authority of that Post. Therefore, I believed that, I have an added duty to the society, as well as to my own conscience to do my level best to justify my elevation.

After assuming charge as a Judge of this court, from day 1 onwards, my humble attempt was to discharge that onerous responsibility, to the best of my ability. At the same time I was aware of my own limitations. I knew that I will have only a short span of 2 years and 7 months to my credit, in this esteemed institution. Such a short span is not enough to prove anything in a High Court, especially in the Kerala High Court where there is a well educated and equipped Bar and the Best District Judiciary in the country. In my attempt to cover up my short stint, I have divided my 2 and odd years allotted to me into 31 months, which looked like a longer period. Then my attempt was in disposing of more and more cases, initially on a monthly basis and later on, on daily basis. As per the data available in my dashboard, till today, I have disposed of 6341 cases in this court. It includes more than 3100 CrI.MC, 1173 MACA, 274 RFA, 66 RSA, 182 Writ Appeals, 147 Mat Appeals, 82 (DB) CRL.A. and 124 CrI.Rev.Petitions. I know that it is nowhere near to the disposal of my Senior Brothers and Sisters. But as per the data furnished by the IT cell of this court, among the Judges of this court with less than 3 year service, these

figures are one of the best.

During my initial 5 months before this court, I had the privilege to share the DB with Sister Justice Anu Sivaraman. From the very beginning she had treated me like an equal partner and given me the opportunity to write judgments regularly. Within the aforesaid period I was also given the opportunity to author the judgment of the FB, which included Brother Justice C Jayachandran, in **Sruthi v. The District Collector, Thrissur, 2024 KLT Online 1212** (FB), relating to the power of the District Collector under S.54 of the Kerala Revenue Recovery Act, 1968. I have no words to express my sincere thanks to Sister Justice Anu Sivaraman and Brother Justice C Jayachandran, in reposing confidence in me while entrusting such a challenging task, during my initial months itself. The confidence it gave to me for the rest of my service was priceless.

I had only a short span of 1 week to share DB with Brother Justice Devan Ramachandran, whom I know from the late 1990s. As always, he was very much affectionate to me and it was a wonderful experience working with him.

Thereafter, for about 4½ months I could share a criminal DB with Brother Justice P.B.Suresh Kumar. During the said period, because of his able guidance I could transform myself from a trial court judge to an appellate court judge, with ease. Brother Justice P.B.Suresh Kumar also treated me like an equal partner and gave me the opportunity to write an equal number of judgments like him, so that, during the said short span, I alone could author judgments in 40 DB criminal appeals.

I also had the privilege to share the DB with the then Chief Justice Desai, Justice Muhammed Musthaq, Justice Anil K.Narendran, Justice Arun and Justice Nagaresh. I also had the privilege to share a FB with Brother Justice Raja Vijayaraghavan and Brother Justice C.Jayachandran and another FB with Brother Justice Sathish Ninan and Brother Justice T.R.Ravi. Today I also had a Ceremonial Bench with Hon'ble Dr.Justice A.K.Jayasankaran Nambiar.

I am deeply indebted to Hon'ble Justice Muhammed Mushtaq for appointing me as the Chairman of the Steering Committee of 'Gothravardhan', a scheme of KeLSA meant for the upliftment, empowerment and enrichment of the tribal people in Keralam. As per the above scheme, Tribal Task Forces were constituted in all the 14 districts and Tribal Cadet Corps were constituted in more than 5000 tribal unnathies. Under the banner of 'Gothravardhan' scheme, with the co-operation of the Members of the Steering Committee, and active support of the Chairmen and Secretaries of DLSAs, more than 1200 interventions were made during the period from October 2024 till April 2026, which include providing them roads, houses,

wells, electricity, BPL cards, Aadhar cards etc. We have also organised several medical camps, distributed spectacles and medicines, provided treatments and also arranged awareness classes on child marriage, PoCSO Act, Drug abuse etc. to them, across the State. While demitting the office, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Executive Chairman, KeLSA, Members of the Steering Committee, Chairmen, Secretaries and members of DLSAs, Tribal Task Forces and Tribal Cadet Corps for their commitment, support and co-operation in effectively implementing the 'Gothravardhan' scheme.

Being one of the Judges in charge of the Kozhikode judicial district, I had worked along with Brother Justice K. Natarajan. We have worked together for the betterment of Kozhikode judicial district and I express my sincere gratitude to Brother Justice K. Natarajan, in that respect.

Enrolled as an advocate on 17.12.1989, I have started practice at Thiruvananthapuram, under advocate Sri.P.Rahim, an advocate then practicing at the district court Thiruvananthapuram. Later on he became the Govt.Pleader at the Kerala Administrative Tribunal as well as at this Court. He was very loving and affectionate to me. He had given enough opportunities to me to conduct cases in different courts in Thiruvananthapuram district. Thereafter I worked along with Advocate G.Muraleedharan, one of my cousins, who is now no more. He had given me full freedom to conduct all the cases in his office.

My parents are no more. It is only because of their sacrifice, good deeds, blessings, and prayers I could reach up to this level.

I have been receiving immense support from my wife, Smt.Shirly S.P. in all my endeavors. While working as teacher in an aided school in Thiruvananthapuram, she ably managed the affairs of the family and brought up my two sons, Abhijith P.S. and Abhinav P.S., well. I am very happy that both of them are pursuing the legal profession.

My relatives and friends have always given me full support and co-operation and never interfered with my official duty, for which I am very much indebted to them. I am very happy that the members of my family and some of my relatives and friends are present here to witness this momentous occasion. I express my gratitude to all of them.

As told you on the date of my swearing, if I had acquired any knowledge in law, it is only because of the erudite Bar. At that time I had given an assurance to all of you that I will perform my duties as a Judge of this court faithfully, to the best of my ability, without fear or favour, affection or ill-will. I had also requested your co-operation, guidance and support to lead me along the right path. At this moment I

am very happy to tell you that I have received overwhelming co-operation, support, guidance, love and affection from across the Bar in discharging my official duties. And my humble belief is that I have discharged my duties as a Judge of this court faithfully, to the best of my abilities, without fear or favour, affection or ill-will, as promised. Therefore, personally speaking, I am satisfied and content with my achievements and performance as a Judge of this court. I know that my belief has nothing to do with reality and ultimately it is for the Bar to evaluate a Judge. Therefore, it is for the members of this erudite Bar to assess and evaluate my performance as a judge of this court and to decide whether I have justified my elevation. In the long run, especially after demitting the office, your estimation and assessment alone will stand the test of time.

As you are aware, both the Bench and the Bar are like two wings of a bird. Unless both wings work in tandem, the bird will not be able to fly high. An independent, fearless and impartial judiciary is inevitable for a healthy democracy like India. Therefore, the members of the Bar have an added duty to protect the judiciary, from being attacked unnecessarily, from inside or outside, so that it could discharge the Constitutional obligations freely and fairly. When a member of the Bar raises false allegations against a Judge, the Bar should be able to properly deal with him and correct him. If so, initiation of contempt proceedings in such situations could be avoided or minimized. It will further strengthen the bond between the Bench and the Bar. It was with that object, recently I have referred a matter to the Bar Association and to the Bar Council. I earnestly believe that they will seriously address the above issue, without further delay.

From the bottom of my heart, I express my gratitude to the members of this Bar, for your wholehearted co-operation, support and guidance throughout my tenure so that I could discharge my duties without any difficulty. I also express my sincere thanks to each one of you, for your gracious presence on this occasion.

Jai Hind.
