

Central Administrative Tribunal
All India Conference, New Delhi
20th September 2025
Justice B.R. Gavai, Chief Justice of India

1. My esteemed colleagues, Hon'ble Mr. Justice J. K. Maheshwari, Hon'ble Mr. Justice Satish Chandra Sharma, Hon'ble Mr. Justice Prasanna B. Varale, Justice Vijay Bishnoi, Judges of the Supreme Court of India,

Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Law and Justice,

Dr. Jitendra Singh, Minister of State, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions,

Hon'ble Justice D. K. Upadhyay, Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court, and all the other colleagues from Delhi High Court,

Shri Venkatramani, the learned Attorney General of India and learned Additional Solicitor Generals present in the audience,

Hon'ble Shri Justice Ranjit More, Chairperson, Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), and all the other Chairpersons and members of the State Administrative Tribunals and members of the Bar of the Central Administrative Tribunal, Justice Menon, Chairman of the Armed Forces Tribunal, Justice Mishra Chairman of the GST Tribunal, Justice Sanjay Yadav, Member Lokpal,

Smt. Anju Rathi Rana, Secretary (Law) and other Secretaries present here.

The president and officer bearers of the Central Administrative Tribunal Bar Association,

I see a quiet large number of Senior Advocates from the Supreme Court as well as other lawyers of the Supreme Court, the members of the staff, the Registrars and dear friends, a very good morning to all of you.

I am delighted to address you all today at the inauguration of the Central Administrative Tribunal

Conference, 2025. As a matter of fact, it is a person pleasure for me that the Chairman of CAT Justice More and me started practice together around 41 years back at Bombay, our another friend Atmaram Nadkarni, former Additional Solicitor General and Senior Advocate, is also present among the audience. And our friendship from last for 41 years is as it is till today, and when he was the Chief Justice of Meghalaya High Court, I had also visited the beautiful Chief Justice's house in Meghalaya and I think many of us have pleasure of hospitality.

2. Let me begin by congratulating the Central Administrative Tribunal for envisioning this Conference where chairpersons and members of Central and State Administrative Tribunals can come together to discuss the working of the Tribunal, and challenges they face, and brainstorm solutions to enhance efficiency and accessibility.

3. The spirit of collaboration and problem-solving, which will guide this conference, was also the guiding force for the enactment of the Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985. This Act was intended to establish bodies that would ease the burden of the courts by dealing with service matters. As a result, these Tribunals were designed to improve efficiency and access to justice for government officials.
4. The Central Administrative Tribunal has worked tirelessly to achieve this goal in the four decades since its inception.
5. CAT's disposal rate bears testimony to its sustained efforts in ensuring improved access to justice. For instance, the Law Commission, in its 272nd Report, highlighted that CAT had achieved a disposal rate of 94% compared to the number of cases instituted

annually.¹ CAT also maintained an admirable disposal rate of 91% between 2015 and 2019.²

6. A look at the current disposal and pending case status on CAT's website also reveals that CAT has disposed of nearly 4 lakh of the 6 lakh cases instituted in the Tribunal so far.³

7. These numbers reflect the immense effort, discipline, and dedication that have gone into making the Tribunal a functional and responsive institution.

8. Yet, while it is important to celebrate these achievements, it is equally crucial to acknowledge that statistics cannot be the sole measure of justice. Other factors such as consistency, transparency and public faith, must also be considered.

9. We must, therefore, also reflect on the continuing challenge of pendency.

¹ Law Commission Report No. 272, October 2017, <https://images.assettype.com/barandbench/import/2017/10/Report-272-Tribunalisation-watermark.pdf>

² Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, https://cgat.gov.in/CAT_application/public/research/uploads/642e8ddf2c97d_df44701610841e534f1cb2fe70d78df5.pdf.pdf

³ <https://cgat.gov.in>

10. Despite commendable disposal rates, pendency at Administrative Tribunals remains a significant concern, as it is so even with pendency in the Courts.

11. The Law Commission reported that, as of July 2017, more than 44,000 cases were pending before CAT. This number has grown significantly over time, with over one lakh cases currently pending at the CAT⁴ and numerous others pending at State Administrative Tribunals as well.

Another persistent problem in this regard is the multiplicity of appeals which arise from the Tribunals' decisions. Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, Hon'ble Law Minister refer to it and we come across various matters even after the concurrent finding in the Central Administrative Tribunal and the High Courts still appeals are filed before the Supreme Court. Some of the Ld. Additional Solicitor Generals present in the

⁴ <https://cgat.gov.in>

Court and they know what my approach in every matters. And therefore, as suggested by Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, Hon'ble Law Minister as well as Dr. Jitendra Singh, Minister of State, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, because always the bureaucrats afraid of taking any risk and they pass on the work to the Courts. But if we can have a Central agency to filter as to really whether the matter deserve to be appeal or not, that will greatly reduce the pendency of the matters before the Court. As all of us know central government is the biggest litigant before the Supreme Court as well as the High Courts and if a nodal agency I had practiced with my colleague Justice Sambre, also present here, when I was in Nagpur, we issue direction that in every department and every collector office there should be a nodal officer who should scrutinize as to whether the matter deserves to be an appeal or not. If I think

such filter is used it will greatly help in reducing the pendency of matters.

12. Although citizens' right to appeal is the cornerstone of justice, this process often results in lengthy litigations, spanning years, thereby undermining the purpose of establishing Tribunals.

13. Delay in adjudication process before Administrative Tribunals have consequences that extend far beyond mere statistics. In numerous instances, Government officers and officials reached the age of retirement before their cases are finally resolved. No doubt that it is true that even after retirement the post retiral benefits that is monetary benefits can still be granted but the prolonged uncertainty and delay create significant professional and personal challenges. This is a problem that demand urgent attention and systematic effort.

14. In order to address this issue, there is a need for greater consistency in the Tribunals' rulings and increased transparency in their functioning.
15. A citizen who approaches a Tribunal must feel that the decision rendered is well-reasoned. This consistency is as much a product of institutional culture as it is of structural reforms. As it is rightly said that the reasons are live link between consideration and the result.
16. The Administrative Tribunals are unlike courts in that they occupy a unique space between the executive and judiciary. Many of their members come from administrative services, while others come from the judiciary. Although this diversity presents a strength since it brings together judicial acumen and administrative experience, it also makes it imperative that members are consistently trained and held to uniform standards of eligibility and conduct.

17. Judicial members would benefit from exposure to the nuances of public administration, while administrative members would require training in legal reasoning. I may not be taken because nowadays you don't know what you say and what comes in the social media but as a Judge, I have personally noticed that some of the Judges coming from administration they do not forget that they are from administration and they avoid from passing any order which would be against the Government and I think it is reflected on that.

18. The Regular workshops, conferences, and training programs conducted by judicial academies can prove invaluable in this regard and greatly enhance the effectiveness of Tribunal members.

19. Furthermore, if a uniform appointment process is enacted with clear eligibility criteria, this would abate all questions of arbitrariness and reinforce the trust of the citizens in the Tribunals.

20. Additionally, as I had previously mentioned, such a system would also ensure greater uniformity in judgments, thereby strengthening the credibility of the Tribunals.

While I am on this issue, both Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, Hon'ble Law Minister and Dr. Jitendra Singh, Minister of State, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, present in Court, one of the issue the Government needs to address urgently is the service conditions of the members of the tribunal. If the government desires that the retire Judges of the High Court and good judicial officers should adorn the office of the tribunals, a quick look or quick relook of the service conditions of the chairperson and members of the tribunals, I think is the need of the day.

21. The second area I wish to highlight is the need for a centralised data platform. National platforms such as the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) or the

National Justice Clock provide comprehensive data on the functioning of courts at the District, High Court and Supreme Court levels. These details include case filings, disposals, and pendency data.

22. However, no such database exists for Tribunals.
23. Although CAT provides a brief overview of pending, disposed and filed matters on its home page, a comprehensive resource where such data can be found for the Central and State Administrative Tribunals would provide more uniformity in accessing data. Additionally, it would also empower litigants to track their cases with greater ease.
24. Such uniformity in data will also foster a culture of comparability among the Tribunals, allowing policymakers, researchers and the Court to identify best practices as well as areas which may require urgent attention.
25. Such a database, where Tribunals regularly update the status of each case reviewed by them,

would also greatly improve the Tribunal's sense of accountability and transparency.

26. Dr Jitendra Singh, Minister of State, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, have already talked about the issue of technology and AI. In Supreme Court we are using AI for categorisation of the cases as well for translating the judgments in around 70 languages, so that the litigants know about their case.

27. One crucial aspect that I would also like to discuss about the conduct of the Judges / Judicial Officers and also the Quasi-Judicial Officers, as many of you must be knowing that in the All India Judges case, we now reintroduce the requirement of practice of three years for the law graduate to be eligible for the examination of JMFC. We have done so, after we collected the data from all the states as well as all the High Courts and it was noticed that the fresh graduates, who did not have any experience or

exposure of the court, the chair would go in their hands on the very first day and they would prohibit or illtreat the lawyers who have standing for 40 years or 50 years and therefore we thought that it was necessary that the candidates appearing before the examination must be exposed to the Court's practice and procedure.

28. Recently we also notice that due to the conduct of some of the Judges there is discontent in the bar. I had read a newspaper item or on google wherein, because of one Judge in one High Court, I won't name the Judge nor the High Court, a young lawyer was so brow beaten that he became unconscious in the Court. As Judges you must also accept the position that both Judges as well as lawyers are like two wheels of the golden chariot of justice, non-superior non-inferior. Unless both the judges and lawyers work together the institution of administration of

justice which exists for the large citizen of the Country cannot function properly.

29. As Judicial officers, as the Judges, as the Members of the Tribunal we wield immense power. And you must carry this power with the utmost humility and responsibility.

30. All litigants who appear before us do so with the faith that they will receive justice before you and your judgment will not be coloured. I urge you to honour this responsibility, not just within official spaces, but outside as well.

31. In many ways, our roles are those of a leader; you will shape the lives of several thousand citizens through the outcomes that we determine, thereby also affecting the faith of the citizens in the country's judiciary.

32. Thus, in our capacity of judicial and quasi-judicial officers, you must remember Martin Luther King's words, "*We need leaders not in love with money*

but in love with justice. Not in love with publicity but in love with humanity. Leaders who can subject their particular egos to the pressing urgencies of the great cause of freedom.⁵”

33. As we reflect on these themes, I encourage you not to see them as criticisms but as opportunities which can inspire change.

34. They are points for collective reflection, so that we may come up with innovative solutions to strengthen the Tribunal system.

35. The Central Administrative Tribunal and its counterparts in the States have already played a transformative role in reducing the burden of courts and in improving access to justice for countless citizens. We must now build on that legacy and further strengthen it.

⁵ Martin Luther King, The Birth of a New Age, January 1, 1956, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/birth-new-age-address-delivered-11-august-1956-fiftieth-anniversary-alpha-phi>

36. I am confident that the deliberations at this conference will produce valuable insights.
37. It is my hope that today's conference will help us improve the legitimacy of Tribunals in the eyes of the people.
38. I hope the discussions in this conference prove enriching and that each of you returns with renewed energy to carry forward this work of strengthening our institutions.
39. I would again like to thank my dear friend Shri Ranjit More for inviting me to inaugurate this conference. As a matter of fact, we are scheduled to go to Bikaner, but then we changed our program and we abided by command of Justice More and from here Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, Hon'ble Law Minister, Justice Vijay Bishnoi and I, from Bharat Mandapam we will be going to sand dunes of Bikaner. Thank you very much.