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New Year Message

My esteemed colleagues; former judges; Members of the Bar; Judicial Officers; officials of this court as well as of the subordinate courts of the States of Punjab; Haryana and Chandigarh; litigants and members of the general public.

The year 2007 is virtually over and soon we would enter 2008. Apart from exchanging greetings, this is the time to do some introspection. As in business, at the end of the year, we do stock taking; draw the balance-sheet and make proposals for the next year, it is the time to make assessment of the work done in the year gone by and to fix targets for the next year.

As I look back, I recall with a deep sense of satisfaction that the year 2007 has been quite an eventful for us. I have always held the belief that any amount of modernization and computerisation of our courts has no meaning, until we are able to reach out to the poorest of the poor and redress his

grievances. I am glad that we could make a headway in this direction last year. Fourth of August, 2007 would always be remembered in the history of Indian judiciary as a historic day, as on this day, under the dynamic leadership and able guidance of our worthy Chief Justice, Hon'ble Mr Justice K G Balakrishnan, we launched the first mobile court of India at Mewat in Haryana. I express my heartfelt gratitude to Hon'ble Chief Justice of India, for having inaugurated the project. We got overwhelming response from the State Government; lawyers and litigants for this project and I thank them for that. Taking a leaf from its sister state, the State of Punjab soon followed suit and with its help, we launched the first mobile court of Punjab also at Talwara in District Hoshiarpur on the birthday of the Father of the Nation, Mahatama Gandhi and Sh. Lal Bahadur Shastri on October 2, 2007.

It goes without saying that our Courts are clogging with mounting arrears. The solution to the problem lies in disposing of old cases and by increasing the strength of judicial officers. I am glad that as per the directions of the Apex Court, we could address this problem to a great extent last year by recruiting a good number of judicial officers. We successfully conducted the examinations of the subordinate judicial services during the last year in the States of Punjab and Haryana in the shortest possible time. In fact, the results of these examinations were declared in record time and the result of preliminary examinations on the very next day of the examination. I thank my colleagues who have been associated in making these selections. Sooner our young colleagues would join us for training in the month of January/ February, 2008. I welcome them to our fraternity. We

recruited 93 officers as judicial magistrates and promoted 12 officers as Additional District Judges. Not only we made recruitments in the lower judiciary, but the strength in the high court was also increased. As many as eleven judges were elevated to the Bench during the last year, including a lady advocate from the High Court Bar (which happened this time only, which is also a record in the history of the High Court), taking the over all strength of the High Court to 42, a figure which is an all time high. I am grateful to Union of India for favourably considering my request for raising the sanctioned strength of the High Court from 53 to 68 judges. My agenda for the New Year is to make more appointments to the cadre of judicial magistrates and additional district judges and make efforts for more elevations to the high court.

In the changed social scenario, Judicial Officers are not only supposed to decide cases in the courts but they are also supposed to educate the masses about their legal rights. The Legal Services Authority Act, 1986 enjoins upon the Lok Adalats and its functionaries to create awareness among the masses about their legal rights. Accordingly, to create awareness among the masses, we organized many seminars last year on Female Foeticide and Drug Addiction. I am glad that I got very encouraging support from the Hon'ble Judges of the Supreme Court; my esteemed colleagues of this court as also from the lawyers and general public. In the New Year, we will continue our crusade against these social evils.

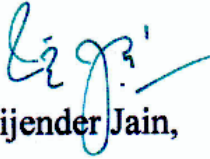
In order to make the lives of our former colleagues more comfortable, we also framed a scheme to provide Home Peons at the residences of former Judges.

To have understanding with other stake-holders engaged in the criminal justice delivery system, we organized a colloquium at Chandigarh on February 9, 2007 which was attended by all the District and Sessions Judges, Chief Judicial Magistrates, SSPs of all districts, District Attorneys and representatives of Forensic Science Laboratories of Haryana wherein we discussed the bottlenecks which come in the way of efficient criminal justice delivery system. We got encouraging results. There were 1503 criminal cases pending for more than 10 years as on 1.2.2007. The figure came down to 734 as on 1.11.2007. There were 55469 criminal cases which were pending for more than 5 years. We brought that down to 44319 as on 1.11.2007. We have decided to have a similar colloquium for Punjab in the month of January.

It would not be an exaggeration in case I say that the year 2007 was a “Year of Computerization for the Judiciary”. We installed computers in all the subordinate Courts in the State of Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh. That apart, we provided laptops to all the Judicial Officers with broadband connectivity at their residences. We also successfully implemented software in the High Court to take care of the filing of cases. Now we can make queries in respect of our cases by the use of internet. We will continue with our efforts in the New Year. We have plans to introduce touch-screen computers in the High Court so that the lay litigants may know the status of the cases themselves. To beef up security in the High Court, we have also plans to install CCTVs and cameras in the High Court and also digital display boards in the next year. The project of Video Conferencing between the Courts and the jails in Haryana is

also in the pipeline and I hope that it will unfold in the New Year. Time forbids me from making mention of the petty milestones which we crossed last year. People's faith in the justice delivery system is the bedrock of confidence which stimulates the courts to share greater responsibilities. In the New Year, we would make all possible endeavour to see that justice delivery system does not suffer from delay. I wish all a very happy and prosperous New Year and call upon all to join us in our efforts to make all-round progress in all the fields.

Jai Hind. Thank You.



Vijender Jain,

Chief Justice.
