



Dr Justice D Y Chandrachud  
Chief Justice of India

19 July 2023

Dear Chief Justice

My attention has been drawn to a communication dated 14 July 2023 addressed by the Registrar in charge of the Protocol Section of one of our High Courts to the General Manager of the regional Railway establishment. The letter adverts to a Judge of the High Court who was travelling on a train with his spouse. The letter proceeds to state thus:

"The train was late by more than three hours. In spite of repeated intimation to the T.T.E, no G.R.P personnel were found in the coach to meet the requirements as desired by His Lordship. Further, no Pantry Car workers attended His Lordship for providing refreshments despite repeated calls. Moreover, when the call was made to the Pantry Car Manager X X X X X X, the call was not picked up.

The aforesaid incident caused great inconvenience and displeasure to His Lordship.

In this regard, the Hon'ble Judge has desired, that explanation may be called from the erring officials of the Railways, the G.R.P Personnel and the Pantry Car Manager pertaining to the inconvenience caused to His Lordship due to their conduct and dereliction of duty.

I, therefore, request you, kindly call the explanation of the concerned officials and send to this Hon'ble Court, so that, the same may be placed before His Lordship for kind perusal."



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In order to prevent further embarrassment to the High Court, I have redacted identities from the extract of the above communication.

A Judge of the High Court does not possess disciplinary jurisdiction over railway personnel. Hence, there was no occasion for an officer of the High Court to call for an explanation from the railway personnel "to be placed before His Lordship for kind perusal". Evidently, the officer of the High Court in the above communication was carrying out a direction of the Judge of the High Court in this instance ("the Hon'ble Judge has desired").

The communication which has been addressed by an officer of the High Court to the General Manager of the Railway establishment has given rise to justifiable disquiet both within and outside the judiciary. Protocol 'facilities' which are made available to Judges should not be utilised to assert a claim to privilege which sets them apart from society or as a manifestation of power or authority. A wise exercise of judicial authority, both on and off the Bench, is what sustains the credibility and legitimacy of the judiciary and the confidence which society has in its Judges.

I am writing this to all the Chief Justices of the High Courts with an earnest request to share my concerns with all colleagues across the High Courts. Self reflection and counselling within the judiciary is necessary. Protocol facilities



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which are made available to Judges should not be used in a manner that is liable to result in inconvenience to others or to bring public criticism of the judiciary.

With regards

Yours sincerely

*Dhananjaya Chandrachud*