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भारतीय विधिज्ञ परिषद् BAR COUNCIL OF INDIA

(Statutory Body Constituted under the Advocates Act, 1961)

21, Rouse Avenue Institutional Area, New Delhi - 110 002

Press Release Dated 07.10.2025

Bar Council of India condemns killing of Odisha Bar Council Member Pitabas Panda, demands immediate SIT probe, comprehensive witness protection, and time bound prosecution

The Bar Council of India expresses its strongest condemnation and profound anguish at the cold-blooded shooting and murder of Shri Pitabas Panda, a duly elected Member of the Odisha State Bar Council and reportedly the topper in the recent Bar Council election. This barbaric act is not merely a crime against an individual, it is a direct assault on the independence of the legal profession and the rule of law in the State of Odisha and in the Republic at large.

From communications received from Members across India and from the Odisha Bar, it is evident that Shri Panda was targeted by armed miscreants. The legal fraternity across the country is shocked and in mourning. The Bar Council of India stands in unwavering solidarity with the bereaved family and with the Odisha State Bar Council.

The safety and dignity of advocates are non-negotiable. BCI demands decisive, time-bound action from the State Government to bring every perpetrator and conspirator to justice, to protect witnesses and the victim's family, and to reassure the Bar that the State will uphold the rule of law.

The Bar Council of India calls upon the Government of Odisha to constitute forthwith a Special Investigation Team headed by a senior IPS officer unconnected with the local police station, with a written mandate to complete investigation in a time-bound manner. All perpetrators, conspirators, and facilitators must be apprehended without delay, custodial interrogation ensured where warranted, and recovery of weapons and digital evidence secured. Any lapses in beat intelligence, preventive action, or local station response must be examined immediately, with errant officials placed under suspension pending inquiry.

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Prosecution must proceed with equal urgency. A Special Public Prosecutor of acknowledged repute should be appointed, the charge-sheet filed within the statutory timeline, and an application moved for an expedited, framed-timeline trial before a designated Court. Strict victim and witness protection in terms of the Witness Protection Scheme, 2018 must be ensured, including secure transport, relocation where necessary, confidentiality of identities, and comprehensive CCTV coverage of court premises.

Protection of the Bar is imperative. Within 48 hours, a Statewide security advisory and a dedicated helpline or control-room protocol for advocate-related threats should be issued, a rapid risk audit for Bar leaders who may face intimidation should be undertaken, and all Superintendents of Police should hold immediate liaison meetings with local Bar Associations. In coordination with the High Court administration, CCTV in court complexes and Bar premises should be installed or repaired forthwith.

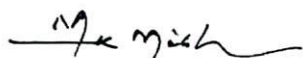
Relief to the bereaved family must be meaningful and immediate. The State should announce adequate ex gratia to the next of kin at the highest level applicable for victims of targeted killings, consider compassionate appointment in eligible cases, and sanction as well as disburse immediate interim relief to meet funeral and urgent family expenses.

Accountability and transparency are essential to public confidence. A written status report should be furnished to the Bar Council of India and to the Odisha State Bar Council within 72 hours, with weekly updates thereafter until filing of the final report. To the extent permissible by law, essential steps such as arrests, recovery of weapons, and forensic milestones should be shared with the family and with the Bar.

The Bar Council of India has written to the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Odisha, the Chief Secretary, and the Director General of Police seeking immediate constitution of an SIT, comprehensive witness protection, swift arrests, ex gratia to the family, and an expedited trial, and has sought a written status report within 72 hours and weekly updates thereafter.

If meaningful progress is not communicated within the timelines indicated, the Bar Council of India will be constrained to approach constitutional courts and to coordinate nation-wide peaceful protests in defence of the safety and dignity of the legal profession. The independence of the Bar is a pillar of justice, an attack on one of us is an attack on all.

With deepest condolences to the bereaved family, the Bar Council of India stands firm in its resolve to ensure justice is done.



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