

**Bill No. 59 of 2023**

THE JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY BILL, 2023

By

SHRI SUDHEER GUPTA, M.P.

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**Bill No. 59 of 2023**

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A

BILL

*to lay down judicial standards and provide for accountability of Judges of the Supreme Court or a High Court or a District Court and, establish credible and expedient mechanism for investigating into individual complaints for misbehaviour or incapacity of a Judge of the Supreme Court or of a High Court and to regulate the procedure for such investigation, and for the presentation of an address by Parliament to the President for removal of a Judge and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.*

BE it enacted by Parliament in the Seventy-fourth Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

1. (1) This Act may be called the Judicial Accountability Act, 2023.

Short title and  
commencement.

5 (2) It shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint:

Provided that different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act and any reference in any such provision to the commencement of this Act shall be construed as a reference to the coming into force of that provision.

Definitions.

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

(a) “Assets” includes immovable and movable property; 5

*Explanation.*— For the purposes of this clause,—

(i) “immovable property” includes the land and any building or other structure attached to the land, and tenancies, lease holds or any other interest in immovable property;

(ii) “movable property” includes any other property which is not immovable property as also corporeal and incorporeal property of every description and household goods and personal effects of the value of each item of more than fifty thousand rupees; 10

(b) “Chairman” means the Chairman of the Council of States;

(c) “Competent Authority” means in relation to,— 15

(i) a Metropolitan Magistrate, the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate of that Court;

(ii) a Judges of the District Court, the District Judge of that District Court;

(iii) a District Judge of District Court, the Chief Justice of that High Court;

(iv) a Judge of the High Court, the Chief Justice of that High Court;

(v) the Chief Justice of the High Court, the Chief Justice of India; 20

(vi) a Judge of the Supreme Court, the Chief Justice of India;

(vii) the Chief Justice of India, the President of India;

(d) “Incapacity” means physical or mental incapacity which is, or is likely to be, or a permanent character;

(e) “investigation committee” means the investigation committee constituted under section 22; 25

(f) “inquiry” means an inquiry for proof of misbehaviour or incapacity;

(g) “Judge” means a Judge of the Supreme Court or of a High Court or a judge of the District Court and includes the Chief Justice of India and the Chief Justice of a High Court; 30

(h) “judicial standards” means the values of judicial life specified in section 3, and the Schedule;

(i) “liabilities” includes financial guarantees given and all loans raised from any bank, financial institution or any other source;

(j) “misbehaviour” means,— 35

(i) conduct which brings dishonour or disrepute to the judiciary; or

(ii) wilful or persistent failure to perform the duties of a Judge; or

(iii) wilful abuse of judicial office; or

(iv) corruption or lack of integrity which includes delivering judgments for collateral or extraneous reasons, making demands for consideration in cash or 40

kind for giving judgments or any other action on the part of the Judge which has the effect of subverting the administration of justice; or

(v) committing an offence involving moral turpitude; or

5 (vi) failure to furnish the declaration of assets and liabilities in accordance with the provisions of this Act; or

(vii) wilfully giving false information in the declaration of assets and liabilities under this Act; or

10 (viii) wilful suppression of any material fact, whether such fact relates to a period before assumption of office, which would have bearing on his integrity; or

(ix) wilful breach of judicial standards;

(k) “notification” means a notification published in the Official Gazette;

(l) “Oversight Committee” means the National Judicial Oversight Committee established under section 17;

15 (m) “prescribed” means prescribed by rules made under this Act;

(n) “Scrutiny Panel” means a panel constituted under sub-section (1) or sub-section (2) of section 11 for the scrutiny of complaints;

(o) “Speaker” means the Speaker of the House of the People.

20 3. (1) Every Judge shall continue to practice universally accepted values of judicial life as specified in the Schedule to this Act.

Judicial standards.

(2) In particular, and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing provision, no Judge shall—

25 (a) contest the election to any office of a club, society or other association or hold such elective office except in a society or association connected with the law or any court;

(b) have close association or close social interaction with individual members of the Bar, particularly with those who practice in the same court in which he is a Judge;

30 (c) permit any member of his immediate family (including spouse, son, daughter, son-in-law or daughter-in-law or any other close relative), who is a member of the Bar, to appear before him or associated in any manner with a cause to be dealt with by him;

35 (d) permit any member of his family, who is a member of the Bar, to use the residence in which the Judge actually resides or use other facilities provided to the Judge, for professional work of such member;

(e) hear and decide a matter in which a member of his family, or his close relative or a friend is concerned;

40 (f) enter into public debate or express his views in public on political matters or on matters which are pending or are likely to arise for judicial determination by him:

Provided that nothing contained in this clause shall apply to,—

(i) the views expressed by a Judge in his individual capacity on issues of public interest (other than as a Judge) during discussion in private

forum or academic forum so as not to affect his functioning as a Judge;

(ii) the views expressed by a Judge relating to administration of court or its efficient functioning;

(g) make unwarranted comments against conduct of any Constitutional or statutory authority or statutory bodies or statutory institutions or any chairperson or member or officer thereof, in general, or at the time of hearing matters pending or likely to arise for judicial determinations;

(h) give interview, to the media in relation to any of his judgment delivered, or order made, or direction issued, by him, in any case adjudicated by him;

(i) accept gifts or hospitality except from his relatives;

(j) hear and decide a matter in which a company or society or trust in which he holds or any member of his family holds shares or interest, unless he has disclosed his such holding or interest, and no objection to his hearing and deciding the matter is raised;

(k) speculate in securities or indulge in insider trading in securities;

(l) engage, directly or indirectly, in trade or business, either by himself or in association with any other person:

Provided that the publication of a legal treatise or any activity in the nature of a hobby shall not be construed as trade or business for the purpose of this clause;

(m) seek any financial benefit in the form of a perquisite or privilege attached to his office unless it is clearly available or admissible;

(n) hold membership in any organisation that practices invidious discrimination on the basis of religion or race or caste or sex or place of birth;

(o) have bias in his judicial work or judgments on the basis of religion or race or caste or sex or place of birth.

*Explanation.*—For the purposes of this sub-section, “relative” means—

(i) spouse of the Judge;

(ii) brother or sister of the Judge;

(iii) brother or sister of the spouse of the Judge;

(iv) brother or sister of either of the parents of the Judge;

(v) any lineal ascendant or descendant of the Judge;

(vi) any lineal ascendant or descendant of the spouse of the Judge;

spouse of the person referred to in clauses (ii) to (vi).

Declaration of assets and liabilities.

4. (1) Every Judge shall make a declaration of his assets and liabilities in the manner as provided by or under this Act.

(2) A Judge shall, within thirty days from the date on which he makes and subscribes an oath or affirmation to enter upon his office, furnish to the competent authority the information relating to –

(a) the assets of which he, his spouse, his blood relatives and dependent children are, jointly or severally, owners or beneficiaries;

(b) his liabilities and that of his spouse, his blood relatives and dependent children.

(3) A Judge holding his office as such, at the time of the commencement of this Act, shall furnish information relating to such assets and liabilities, as referred to in sub-section (2) to the competent authority within thirty days of the coming into force of this Act.

(4) Every Judge shall file with the competent authority, on or before the 31st July of every year, an annual return of his assets and liabilities, as on the 31st March of that year as referred to in sub-section (2).

(5) The information under sub-section (2) or sub-section (3) and annual return under sub-section (4) shall be furnished in such form and in such manner, as may be prescribed.

*Explanation.*— For the purposes of this section,

(a) “dependent children” means sons and daughters who have no separate means of earning and are wholly dependent on the Judge for their livelihood.

(b) “blood relation” means all relatives which are related by *full blood or half blood* irrespective of the fact whether he or she have separate means of earning and are wholly independent on the Judge for their livelihood.

5. The competent authority shall exhibit the document or information in relation to a declaration of assets and liabilities of Judges,—

Making available document or information in relation to a declaration of assets and liabilities of Judges on website.

(a) in the case of Metropolitan Magistrates and Judges of the District Courts, on the website of the District Court in which such Metropolitan Magistrates and Judges are serving;

(b) in the case of Judges and Chief Justices of the High Courts, on the website of the High Court in which such Judges and Chief Justices are serving;

(c) in the case of Judges of the Supreme Court and Chief Justice of India, on the website of the Supreme Court.

6. The competent authority shall keep the documents or information forms containing the details of the assets and liabilities and other particulars in relation thereto filed by the Judges in its safe custody for such period as may be decided by the Oversight Committee.

Maintenance of records.

7. Any person making an allegation of misbehaviour or incapacity in respect of a Judge may file a complaint in this regard to the Oversight Committee.

Complaints.

8. The complaint under section 7 shall—

(a) be in such form and filed in such manner as may be prescribed;

Manner of making of complaint.

(b) set forth particulars of the misbehaviour or incapacity which is the subject matter of allegation;

(c) be verified at the foot of the complaint by the complainant and shall specify, by reference to the numbered paragraphs of the complaint, what he verifies of his own knowledge and what he verifies upon information and shall refer to the source of the information.

9. Save as otherwise provided under this Act, the Oversight Committee shall refer all such complaints to the appropriate Scrutiny Panel constituted under relevant sections of this act for scrutiny.

Reference to Scrutiny Panel.

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| Constitution of Scrutiny panel.                                | <b>10.</b> There shall be constituted a panel to be called “Complaints Scrutiny Panel” in the Supreme Court and in every High Court to scrutinise the complaints received against a Judge under this Act.  |    |
| Composition of Scrutiny panel.                                 | <b>11. (1)</b> The Scrutiny Panel in the Supreme Court shall consist of a former Chief Justice of India and two Judges of the Supreme Court to be nominated by the Chief Justice of India.   | 5  |
|  | (2) The Scrutiny Panel in every High Court shall consist of a former Chief Justice of that High Court and two Judges of that High Court to be nominated by the Chief Justice of that High Court.   |    |
| Functions of Scrutiny panel.                                   | <b>12. (1)</b> If the Scrutiny Panel, after scrutiny of the complaint referred to it for scrutiny under section 9, and after making scrutiny of the complaint, as it deems appropriate, is satisfied that—   | 10 |
|  | (a) there are sufficient grounds for proceeding against the Judge, it shall, after recording reasons therefore, submit a report on its findings to the Oversight Committee for making inquiry against the Judge in accordance with the provisions of this Act;   | 15 |
|  | (b) the complaint is frivolous or vexatious, or, is not made in good faith, or there are not sufficient grounds for inquiring into the complaint, or the complaint relates only to the merits of the judgment or a procedural order, and, then, it shall after recording reasons therefore submit a report on its findings to the Oversight Committee for not proceeding with the complaint and treating the matter as closed. | 20 |
|  | (2) The scrutiny of complaints under this section by the Scrutiny Panel shall be held in camera.   |    |
|  | (3) The Scrutiny Panel shall submit its report under clause (a) or clause (b) of sub-section (1), to the Oversight Committee in this behalf within a maximum period of three months from the date of receipt of the complaint from the Oversight Committee.  | 25 |
| Procedure of Scrutiny panel.                                   | <b>13.</b> Save as otherwise provided in this Act, the Scrutiny Panel shall have power to regulate its own procedure in scrutinising the complaints referred to it for scrutiny under section 9.   |    |
| Power relating to scrutiny of complaints.                      | <b>14.</b> The Scrutiny Panel shall, while scrutinising the complaints forwarded to it for scrutiny under section 9, have all the powers of a civil court trying a suit under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 and in particular, in respect of the following matters, namely:—   | 30 |
|  | (a) summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person from any part of India and examining him on oath;   |    |
|  | (b) requiring the discovery and production of any document;  | 35 |
|  | (c) receiving evidence on affidavits;  |    |
|  | (d) requisitioning any public record or copy thereof from any court or office;   |    |
|  | (e) issuing commissions for the examination of witnesses or other documents; and   |    |
|  | (f) any other matter which may be prescribed.  | 40 |
| Provision for officers and other employees for Scrutiny panel. | <b>15. (1)</b> The Chief Justice of India shall, determine the nature and categories of the officers and other employees required to assist the Scrutiny Panel referred to in sub-section (1) of section 11 in the discharge of its functions and provide the Scrutiny Panel with such officers and other employees as he may think fit.   |    |



(2) The Chief Justice of the High Court shall, determine the nature and categories of the officers and other employees required to assist the Scrutiny Panel referred to in sub-section (2) of section 11 in the discharge of its functions and provide the Scrutiny Panel with such officers and other employees as he may think fit.

5       **16.** If the Scrutiny Panel is of the opinion that a complaint was filed frivolously or vexatiously or only with a view to scandalise or intimidate a Judge, it may refer the case to the Oversight Committee for further action.

Provision regarding frivolous and vexatious complaints.

**17. With effect from such date as the Central Government may, by notification, appoint, there shall be established a National Judicial Oversight Committee.**

Establishment of Oversight Committee.

10       **18. (1)** The National Judicial Oversight Committee shall consist of the following, namely:—

Composition of Oversight Committee.

(a) a retired Chief Justice of India appointed by the President after ascertaining the views of the Chief Justice of India—Chairperson

15       (b) a Judge of the Supreme Court nominated by the Chief Justice of India—Member;

(c) the Chief Justice of a High Court nominated by the Chief Justice of India—Member;

(d) the Attorney-General for India — *ex officio* Member;

(e) an eminent jurist nominated by the President—Member.

20       Provided that—

(i) where the allegations are against a Judge of the Supreme Court, who is a member of the Oversight Committee, then, the Chief Justice of India shall nominate another Judge of the Supreme Court in his place as a member of that committee; or

25       (ii) where the allegations are against the Chief Justice of a High Court, who is a member of the Oversight Committee, then, the Chief Justice of India shall nominate a Chief Justice of another High Court in his place as a member of that committee.

30       (2) After the commencement of the proceedings relating to a complaint against a Judge,—

(a) if any change in the composition of the Oversight Committee arises due to elevation of a member of the Oversight Committee, as the Chief Justice of India or a Judge of the Supreme Court, as the case may be; or

35       (b) if any change arises in the composition of the Oversight Committee due to refusal or retirement or resignation or any other reason, the proceedings of the Oversight Committee shall continue from the stage from which it was pending before such change and the Chairperson of the Oversight Committee shall make such incidental changes, as he deems necessary, to continue the proceedings.

40       **19.** The Oversight Committee shall, within three months of the receipt of a complaint relating to misbehaviour of—

Forwarding of complaint relating to misbehaviour to Scrutiny Panel.

(a) an individual Judge of the Supreme Court or Chief Justice of a High Court, refer the complaint, to the Scrutiny Panel of the Supreme Court to scrutinise and report thereon;

(b) an individual Judge of a High Court, refer the complaint, to the Scrutiny Panel of the High Court in which such Judge is acting as such, to scrutinise and report thereon.

Records of complaints forwarded to Scrutiny Panel.

**20.** The Oversight Committee shall maintain a record of the complaints referred to the Scrutiny Panel.

Certain complaints not to be forwarded to Scrutiny Panel.

**21.** A complaint against the Chief Justice of India shall not be referred to the Scrutiny Panel for scrutiny but shall be scrutinised by the Oversight Committee. 5

Investigation by investigation committee.

**22.** (1) The Oversight Committee, shall for the purpose of inquiry for misbehaviour by a Judge, constitute an investigation committee (by whatever name called) to investigate into the complaint in respect of which the Scrutiny Panel has recommended in its report under clause (a) of sub-section (1) of section 12 for making inquiry against the Judge in accordance with the provisions of this Act. 10

(2) The composition and tenure of the investigation committee shall be such as may be decided by the Oversight Committee:

Provided that the number of the investigation committees, in no case, at a time, shall exceed three: 15

Provided further that the Oversight Committee may, having regard to the nature of misbehaviour of a Judge, may constitute different investigation committees for inquiry into different complaints.

Powers of Oversight Committee and investigation committee.

**23.** The Oversight Committee, shall, for the purpose of proceedings under this Act and the investigation committee, while conducting any investigation under this Chapter, have all the powers of a civil court while trying a suit under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 and in particular, in respect of the following matters, namely:— 20

(a) summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person from any part of India and examining him on oath;

(b) requiring the discovery and production of any document; 25

(c) receiving evidence on affidavits;

(d) requisitioning any public record or copy thereof from any court or office;

(e) issuing commissions for the examination of witnesses or other documents; and

(f) any other matter which may be prescribed.

Search and seizure by investigation committee.

**24.** (1) If the investigation committee has reason to believe that any documents which, in its opinion, will be useful for, or relevant to, any preliminary investigation or inquiry, are secreted in any place, it may request the oversight committee to authorise any officer subordinate to it, or any officer of an agency referred as provided in section 25, to search for and to seize such documents. 30

(2) If the investigation committee is satisfied that any document seized under sub-section (1) would be evidence for the purpose of any investigation and that it would be necessary to retain the original document in its custody, it may so retain the said document till the completion of such investigation or retain a copy of such document, as it may deem fit. 35

The provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, relating to searches shall, so far as may be, apply to searches under this section subject to the modification that sub-section (5) of section 165 of the said Code shall have effect as if, for the word “Magistrate”, wherever it occurs, the words “investigation”. 40 2 of 1974.

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|    | <b>25.</b> The investigation committee shall be entitled to make a request to the Oversight Committee for assistance to it and the Oversight Committee may invoke its powers in this behalf under section 38 of this Act.  | Assistance to investigation committee by Government agencies.                |
| 5  | <b>26.</b> If a Judge, to whom notice is issued by the investigation committee, referred to in section 22, refuses to appear before it or does not co-operate with it in conducting investigation, then, the investigation committee may proceed <i>ex parte</i> .   | <i>Ex parte</i> Investigation in certain cases.                              |
| 10 | <b>27.</b> The investigation committee may cause investigation into any act or conduct of any person, other than the Judge concerned, in so far as it considers necessary so to do for the purpose of its investigation into any allegations made against a Judge and shall give such person a reasonable opportunity of being heard and to produce evidence in his defence. | Investigation into act or conduct of certain other persons in certain cases. |
|    | <b>28.</b> The investigation committee, after completion of the inquiry in respect of a complaint, shall submit its findings to the Oversight Committee.   | Submission of report by investigation committee.                             |
| 15 | <b>29. (1)</b> The investigation committee shall frame definite charges against the Judge on the basis of which the inquiry is proposed to be held.  | Procedure in inquiries by investigation committee.                           |
|    | (2) Every such inquiry shall be conducted in camera by the investigation committee.  |  |
| 20 | (3) Charges framed under sub-section (1) together with the statement of grounds on which each such charge is based shall be communicated to the Judge and he shall be given a reasonable opportunity of presenting a written statement of defence within such time as may be specified by the investigation committee.   |  |
|    | (4) The investigation committee shall hold every such inquiry as expeditiously as possible and in any case complete the inquiry within a period of six months from the date of receipt of the complaint:   |  |
| 25 | Provided that the Oversight Committee, for reasons to be recorded in writing, may extend the period for completion of the inquiry by a further period of six months.   |  |
| 30 | <b>30.</b> Save as otherwise provided, the investigation committee shall have power to regulate its own procedure in making the inquiry and shall give reasonable opportunity to the Judge of cross examining witnesses, adducing evidence and of being heard in his defence.  | Investigation committee to have power to regulate its own procedure.         |
|    | <b>31.</b> The Central Government may, if requested by the investigation committee, appoint an advocate to conduct the cases against the Judge.  | Central Government to appoint an advocate to conduct cases against Judge.    |
| 35 | <b>32. (1)</b> The Oversight Committee shall, for the purpose of performing its functions under this Act, appoint a Secretary and such other officers and employees possessing such qualifications, as the President may determine, from time to time, in consultation with the Oversight Committee.   | Staff of Oversight Committee.  |
|    | (2) The terms and conditions of service of the Secretary, officers and employees referred to in sub-section (1) shall be such as the President may determine, from time to time, in consultation with the Oversight Committee.   |  |
| 40 | (3) In the discharge of their functions under this Act, the Secretary, the officers and employees referred to in sub-section (1) shall be subject to the administrative control and direction of the Oversight Committee.  |  |

(4) The Oversight Committee shall provide such number of its officers and other employees to assist the investigation committee as the Oversight Committee considers appropriate having regard to the nature of investigation in a case.

Stoppage of assigning judicial work in certain cases.

**33.** During the pendency of the inquiry by the investigation committee, the Oversight Committee may recommend stoppage of assigning judicial work including cases assigned to the Judge concerned if it appears to the Oversight Committee that it is necessary in the interest of fair and impartial scrutiny of complaints or investigation or inquiry.

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Procedure on receipt of report of investigation committee.

**34.** (1) If the Oversight Committee on receipt of the report from the investigation committee is satisfied that—

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(a) no charges have been proved, it shall dismiss the complaint and matter be closed and no further action shall be taken against the Judge and the complainant shall be informed accordingly;

(b) all or any of the charges have been proved but the Oversight Committee is of the opinion that the charges proved do not warrant removal of the Judge, it may, by order, issue advisories or warnings.

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(2) Without prejudice to the provisions contained in sub-section (1), if the Oversight Committee, on receipt of the report from the investigation committee is satisfied that there has been a prima facie commission of any offence under any law for the time being in force by a Judge, it may recommend to the Central Government for prosecution of the Judge in accordance with the law for the time being in force.

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(3) In a case where an inquiry or investigation against the Judge has been initiated and such Judge has demitted office during such inquiry or investigation, such inquiry or investigation may be continued if the Oversight Committee is of the opinion that the misbehaviour is serious in nature and requires to be inquired into or investigated and the Oversight Committee may after conclusion of inquiry forward its findings to the Central Government to take further action in the matter under relevant law for the time being in force.

25

Advice to President for removal of Judge.

**35.** If the Oversight Committee is satisfied that all or any of the charges of misbehaviour or incapacity of a Judge have been proved and that they are of serious nature warranting his removal, it shall request the judge to voluntarily resign.

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Filing of complaint against complainant in certain cases.

**36.** If the Scrutiny Panel refers a case to the Oversight Committee under section 16, the Oversight Committee shall consider the matter further and if it concurs with the conclusion of the Scrutiny Panel, it may authorise the filing of a criminal complaint against the original complainant before a competent court.

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Proceedings before Oversight Committee to be judicial proceedings.

**37.** All proceedings under this Act shall be deemed to be judicial proceedings within the meaning of sections 193 and 228 of the Indian Penal Code, and the Oversight Committee shall be deemed to be a civil court for the purposes of section 195 and Chapter XXVI of the Code of Criminal Procedure Act, 1973.

2 of 1974.

Power to call for assistance.

**38.** The Oversight Committee shall be entitled to take assistance of such officers of the Central Government or State Government or any agency thereof or authority as it deems fit.

40

Confidentiality in complaint procedure.

**39.** Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, the complainant and every person who participates in the scrutiny or investigation or inquiry as a witness or as a legal practitioner or in any other capacity, whether or not he seeks confidentiality about his name, shall undertake to the Oversight Committee or Scrutiny Panel or investigation committee that he shall not reveal his own name, the name of the Judge complained against, the contents of the complaint

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or any of the documents or proceedings to anybody else including the media without the prior written approval of the Oversight Committee:

5        Provided that the Oversight Committee may, if it considers appropriate, authorise any person to apprise the media or press in respect of matters relating to complaint, scrutiny or investigation or inquiry, as the case may be.

**40.** The Oversight Committee or the Scrutiny Panel or investigation committee may, at the request of a complainant, direct that the complainant be accorded such protection, as it deems appropriate, including keeping his identity confidential, from every body and also the Judge against whom the complaint is made.

Keeping identity of complainant confidential.

10        **41.** After the commencement of scrutiny of complaints under this Act, no action for contempt of court shall lie or shall be proceeded with in respect of the allegations, which are the subject matter of the investigation or inquiry.

No action for contempt to lie in certain cases.

15        **42.** Any scrutiny, investigation or inquiry pending before the Scrutiny Panel or investigation committee or Oversight Committee shall not affect the criminal liability in respect of such allegations which are the subject matter of the investigation or inquiry.

Investigation and Inquiry by Oversight Committee not to affect criminal liability.

22 of 2005.        **43.** Notwithstanding anything contained in the Right to Information Act, 2005 or any other law for the time being in force, all papers, documents and records of proceedings related to a complaint, preliminary investigation and inquiry shall be  
20        confidential and shall not be disclosed by any person in any proceeding except as directed by the Oversight Committee:

All records, documents, etc., related to complaint, scrutiny, investigation and inquiry to be confidential.

      Provided that the findings of the investigation committee and the orders passed by the Oversight Committee under clause (b) of sub-section (1) of section 34 shall be made public.

25        **44.** No suit, prosecution or other legal proceeding shall lie against the Chairperson or any member of the Oversight Committee, Scrutiny Panel, investigation committee or against any officer or employee, agency or person engaged by such committees or panel for the purpose of conducting scrutiny or investigation or inquiry in respect of anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done under this Act or the rules  
30        made thereunder.

Protection of action taken in good faith.

**45.** The President, on receipt of advice under section 35, shall cause the findings of the Oversight Committee along with the accompanying materials to be laid before both Houses of Parliament.

Laying of advice of Oversight Committee before Parliament.

35        **46.** On laying of the advice of the Oversight Committee along with the accompanying material, the Central Government may move a motion in either House of Parliament for taking up the said advice for consideration by the House.

Motion for removal of a Judge.

**47. (1)** Notwithstanding anything contained in section 45 or section 46, if notice is given of a motion for presenting an address to the President praying for the removal of a Judge signed,—

Investigation into misbehaviour or incapacity of Judge by investigation committee for removal of Judges.

40        (a) in the case of a notice given in the House of the People, by not less than one hundred members of that House;

      (b) in the case of a notice given in the Council of States, by not less than fifty members of that Council, then, the Speaker or, as the case may be, the Chairman may, after consulting such persons, if any, as he thinks fit and after considering  
45        such materials, if any, as may be available to him, either admit the motion or refuse to admit the same.

(2) If the motion referred to in sub-section (1) is admitted, the Speaker or, as the case may be, the Chairman shall keep the motion pending and the matter shall be referred to the Oversight Committee for constitution of an investigation committee under section 22.

(3) The Oversight Committee, after receipt of reference under sub-section (2), constitute an investigation committee under section 22 and the investigation committee shall conduct an inquiry in accordance with the provisions contained under Chapter VI and submit its report to the Oversight Committee for being submitted to the Speaker or Chairman, as the case may be, for consideration. 5

(4) Where it is alleged that a Judge is unable to discharge the duties of his office efficiently due to any physical or mental incapacity and the allegation is denied, the investigation committee may arrange for the medical examination of the Judge by such Medical Board as may be appointed for the purpose by the Speaker or, as the case may be, the Chairman. 10

(5) The Medical Board shall undertake such medical examination of the Judge as may be considered necessary and submit a report to the investigation committee stating therein whether the incapacity is such as to render the Judge unfit to continue in office. 15

(6) If the Judge refuses to undergo medical examination considered necessary by the Medical Board, the Board shall submit a report to the investigation committee stating therein the examination which the Judge has refused to undergo, and the investigation committee may, on receipt of such report, presume that the Judge suffers from such physical or mental incapacity as is alleged in the motion referred to in sub-section (1). 20

Consideration of report and procedure for presentation of an address for removal of Judge.

**48.** (1) If the report of the investigation committee contains a finding that the Judge is not guilty of any misbehaviour or does not suffer from any incapacity, then, no further steps shall be taken in either House of Parliament in relation to the report and the motion pending in the House or the Houses of Parliament shall not be proceeded with. 25

(2) If the report of the investigation committee contains a finding that the Judge is guilty of any misbehaviour or suffers from any incapacity, then, the motion referred to in section 46 shall together with the report of the investigation committee, be taken up for consideration by the House or the Houses of Parliament in which it is pending. 30

Motion of removal of a Judge.

**49.** If the motion is adopted by each House of Parliament in accordance with the provisions of clause (4) of article 124 or, as the case may be, in accordance with that clause read with article 218 of the Constitution, then, the misbehaviour or incapacity of the Judge shall be deemed to have been proved and an address praying for the removal of the Judge shall be presented in the prescribed manner to the President by each House of Parliament in the same session in which the motion has been adopted. 35 40

Power of Joint Committee to make rules.

**50.** (1) There shall be constituted a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament in accordance with the provisions hereinafter contained for the purpose of making rules to carry out the purposes of this Act.

(2) The Joint Committee shall consist of fifteen members of whom ten shall be nominated by the Speaker and five shall be nominated by the Chairman. 45

(3) The Joint Committee shall elect its own Chairman and shall have power to regulate its own procedure.



(4) Without prejudice to the generality of the provisions of sub-section (1), the Joint Committee may make rules to provide for the following, among other matters, namely:—

5                   (a) the manner of presentation of an address to the President for the removal of a Judge;

                  (b) the manner of transmission of a motion adopted in one House to the other House of Parliament;

10                   (c) the travelling and other allowances payable to the members of the Joint Committee and the witnesses who may be required to attend such Committee;

                  (d) the facilities which may be accorded to the Judge for defending himself;

15                   (e) any other matter which has to be, or may be, provided for by rules or in respect of which provision is, in the opinion of the Joint Committee, necessary.

Any rules made under this section shall not take effect until they are approved by each House of Parliament and are published in the Official Gazette, and such publication of the rules shall be conclusive proof that they have been duly made.

20                   **51.** (1) Whoever intentionally insults, or causes any interruption, to the Scrutiny Panel or investigation committee or Oversight Committee while the Oversight Committee or Scrutiny Panel or investigation committee or any of their members is doing scrutiny or conducting any investigation or inquiry under this Act, shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine, or with both.

Intentional insult or interruption to Oversight Committee.

25                   (2) The provisions of sub-section (2) of section 199 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 shall apply in relation to an offence referred to in sub-section (1) as they apply in relation to an offence referred to in sub-section (2) of the said section 199, subject to the modification that no complaint in respect of such offence shall be made by the Public Prosecutor except with the previous sanction of the Oversight Committee.

30                   **52.** If any complainant or other person, who participates in the scrutiny or investigation or inquiry as a witness or as a lawyer or in any other capacity, contravenes the provisions of section 39 or section 40 or section 43, shall be liable for punishment with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one month, or with fine which may extend to five hundred rupees, or with both.

Penalty for violation of confidentiality in complaint procedure.

35                   **53.** When any such offence as is described in sub-section (1) of section 51 is committed, in the view, or, in the presence, of the Oversight Committee, then the said Oversight Committee, may cause the offender to be detained in custody and may at any time on the same day take cognizance of the offence and after giving the offender a reasonable opportunity of showing cause as to why he should not be punished under this section, try such offender summarily so far as may be in accordance with the procedure specified for summary trials under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, and sentence him to simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one month, or with fine which may extend to five hundred rupees, or with both.

Power of Oversight Committee to try certain cases.

45                   **54.** (1) Any person who makes a complaint which is found, after following the procedure under this Act to be frivolous or vexatious or made with an intent to scandalise or intimidate the Judge against whom such complaint is filed, shall be punishable with simple imprisonment which may extend to one year and also with fine which may extend to fifty thousand rupees.

Punishment for frivolous and vexatious complaints.

(2) The provisions of this section shall have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

(a) No suit, prosecution or other legal proceeding shall lie against the complainant under this section in respect of anything which is done in good faith or intended to be done under this Act.

Offences by  
companies.

55. (1) Where an offence under this Act has been committed by a company, every person who at the time the offence was committed was in charge of, and was responsible to, the company for the conduct of the business of the company, as well as the company, shall be deemed to be guilty of the offence and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly:

Provided that where a company has different establishments or branches or different units in any establishment or branch, the concerned Head or the person in-charge of such establishment, branch or unit nominated by the company as responsible shall be liable for contravention in respect of such establishment, branch or unit:

Provided further that nothing contained in this sub-section shall render any such person liable to any punishment provided in this Act, if he proves that the offence was committed without his knowledge or that he exercised all due diligence to prevent the commission of such offence.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1), where an offence under this Act has been committed by a company and it is proved that the offence has been committed with the consent or connivance of or is attributable to any neglect on the part of, any director, manager, secretary or other officer of the company, such director, manager, secretary or other officer shall also be deemed to be guilty of that offence and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

*Explanation.*— For the purpose of this section,—

(a) “company” means any body corporate and includes a firm or other association of individuals; and

(b) “director”, in relation to a firm, means a partner in the firm.

Offences by  
societies or  
trusts.

56. (1) Where an offence under this Act has been committed by a society or trust, every person who at the time the offence was committed was in charge of, and was responsible to, the society or trust for the conduct of the business of the society or the trust, as well as the society or trust, shall be deemed to be guilty of the offence and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly:

Provided that nothing contained in this sub-section shall render any such person liable to any punishment provided in this Act, if he proves that the offence was committed without his knowledge or that he exercised all due diligence to prevent the commission of such offence.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1), where any offence under this Act has been committed by a society or trust and it is proved that the offence has been committed with the consent or connivance of, or is attributable to, any neglect on the part of any director, manager, secretary, trustee or other officer of the society or trust, such director, manager, secretary, trustee or other officer shall also be deemed to be guilty of that offence and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

*Explanation.*— For the purpose of this section,—

(a) “society” means any body corporate registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 and, “trust” means any body registered under the Indian Trusts Act, 1882;



(b) “director”, in relation to a society or trust, means a member of its governing board other than an *ex officio* member representing the interests of the Central or State Government or the appropriate statutory authority.

57. Any person convicted on a trial held under sub-section (1) of section 54 may, notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, appeal, within sixty days of order of such conviction, to the Supreme Court.

Appeal to  
Supreme Court.

58. The Central Government may make rules, in consultation with the Chief Justice of India, to carry out the provisions of this Act.

Power of  
Central  
Government to  
make rules.

(2) In particular, and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, rules made under this section may provide for all or any of the following matters, namely:—

(a) the form and manner in which, information is to be furnished or, annual return to be filed, under section 4;

(b) the form and manner in which complaint shall be filed under section 8;

(c) other matters in respect of which the Scrutiny Panel shall, for the purpose of scrutiny of complaint, have powers of a civil court under section 14;

(d) other matters in respect of which the Oversight Committee shall, for the purpose of inquiry or investigation of complaint have powers of a civil court under clause (f) of section 23;

(e) any other matter which is required to be, or may be, specified by rules or in respect of which provision is to be made by rules.

(3) Every rule made under this Act shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made, before each House of Parliament while it is in session, for a total period of thirty days which may be comprised in one session or in two or more successive sessions, and if, before the expiry of the session immediately following the session or the successive sessions aforesaid, both Houses agree in making any modification in the rule or both Houses agree that the rule should not be made, the rule shall thereafter have effect only in such modified form or be of no effect, as the case may be; so, however, that any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under that rule.

59. (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the Central Government may, after consultation with the Chief Justice of India, by an order published in the Official Gazette, make such provisions, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act as appear to it to be necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty:

Power to  
remove  
difficulties.

Provided that no such order shall be made after the expiry of a period of three years from the date of commencement of this Act.

(2) Every order made under this section shall, as soon as may be after it is made, be laid before each House of Parliament.

60. (1) The Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968 is hereby repealed.

Repeal and  
saving.

(2) Notwithstanding the repeal of the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968 (hereinafter referred to as the repealed Act) the rules made by the Joint Committee under section 7 of the repealed Act shall continue to be in force until rules are framed under section 49 of this Act.

(3) Notwithstanding such repeal, anything done or any action taken or purported to have been done or taken including any order or notice made or issued or any inquiry initiated under the repealed Act shall, in so far as it is not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, be deemed to have been done or taken or initiated under the corresponding provisions of this Act.

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(4) The mention of particular matters in sub-sections (2) and (3) shall not be held to prejudice or affect the general application of section 6 of the General Clauses Act, 1897 with regard to the effect of repeal.

## THE SCHEDULE

[See section 3(1)]

### JUDICIAL STANDARDS

1. Norms, including punctuality and commitment to work, guidelines and conventions essential for the conduct and behaviour of Judges, being pre-requisite for an independent, strong and respected judiciary, having integrity and detachment and impartial administration of justice as reflected in the Restatement of Values already adopted by the Conference of Chief Justices held in 1999 shall be practised by every Judge.
2. All times be conscious that he is under the public gaze and not do any act or omission which is unbecoming of the high office he occupies and the public esteem in which that office is held.
3. A degree of aloofness consistent with the dignity of his office shall be practised by every Judge.
4. Judgments should speak for themselves.
5. A judge shall refer to all the points raised by counsel in the arguments.
6. The judge shall correctly record on the docket what transpires in a proceeding on any given day.
7. If anyone attempts to communicate with a judge regarding the merits of any matter that is pending before him when the court is not in session, the judge shall report it to the Competent Authority.

## STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

The judicial system in any country is an independent and impartial set up in any nation to remedy injustice. Justice is declared to be blind and therefore, it is on the judges to decide how to provide justice, keeping in mind that justice should be rendered to each and every citizen of the nation. Therefore, there comes the need to hold these judges to be accountable for their verdicts as it is the decision taken by the judges that decide the fate of the parties involved in a case being heard by the court.

The Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968 was enacted with a view to lay down a procedure for removal, for proved misbehaviour or incapacity, of Judges of the High Courts and the Supreme Court by way of address of the Houses of Parliament to the President. There is, however, no legal provision at present for dealing with complaints filed by the public against Judges of the High Courts and the Supreme Court. The need for a statutory mechanism to address complaints of the public in this regard has been felt to bring greater transparency in the judiciary.

The Full Court meeting of Supreme Court of India on 7 May, 1997 had adopted “the Restatement of Values of Judicial Life”. The above Restatement lays down certain judicial standards which are to be followed by the Judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts. However, this Restatement of Values of Judicial Life does not have any legal authority and cannot be enforced. There is also no legal provision at present that requires Judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts to declare their assets and liabilities.

In the year 2012, a Government Bill, namely, “The Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill, 2010” as passed by Lok Sabha, sought to lay judicial standards and provide for accountability of judges, and establish credible and expedient mechanism for investigating into individual complaints for misbehaviour or incapacity of a Judge of the Supreme Court or of a High Court. However, the Bill could not be taken up for discussion in the Rajya Sabha and the bill was lapsed.

Accountability is declared to be the *sine qua non* of any democratic nation as it secures the rights provided to the citizens and delivers justice that is meant to be equal for all. It is true that the judiciary is an independent body and it does have the authority to decide on its own way over a case. But the decisions that are made subsequently affect the public at large and therefore the judges should be held accountable for the decisions they make. Therefore, in order to regulate its function and promote impartiality among the judges while making a decision, the judiciary must strike a balance.

It is, therefore, necessary that the Central Government should enact the Judicial Accountability Bill and the proposed Bill would strengthen the institution of judiciary in India by making it more accountable thereby increasing the confidence of the public in the institution.

Hence this Bill.

NEW DELHI;  
23 December, 2023.

SUDHEER GUPTA

## FINANCIAL MEMORANDUM

Clause 17 of the Bill provides for establishment of National Judicial Oversight Committee comprising of a retired Chief Justice of India as the Chairperson, a Judge of the Supreme Court and the Chief Justice of a High Court to be nominated by the Chief Justice of India and the Attorney-General of India and an eminent person to be nominated by the President as members.

Clause 31 of the Bill empowers the Central Government, if requested by the investigation committee, to appoint an advocate to conduct the cases against the Judge.

Clause 32 of the Bill provides for appointment of a Secretary and such other officers and employees as the President may determine, from time to time, in consultation with the Oversight Committee.

The expenditure on account of the aforesaid provisions would be negligible. At this stage, it is not practicable to make an estimate of expenditure likely to be involved in the upcoming financial years, both recurring and non-recurring. However, the expenditure would be met from the Consolidated Fund of India.

## MEMORANDUM REGARDING DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Sub-clause (1) of clause 58 of the Bill empowers the Central Government to make rules, in consultation with the Chief Justice of India, to carry out the provisions of the proposed legislation.

Sub-clause (2) of clause 58 specifies the matters in respect of which such rules may be made. These matters, *inter alia*, include:

- (i) the form in which the information relating to assets and liabilities is to be furnished by Judges and the form for filing annual return by Judges regarding their assets and liabilities;
- (ii) the form and manner in which a complaint is to be filed;
- (iii) other matters in respect of which the Scrutiny Panel and the Oversight Committee shall have powers of a civil court; and
- (iv) any other matter which is required to be or may be prescribed for the purposes of the proposed legislation.

The rules made by the Central Government are to be laid before each House of Parliament.

The matters in respect of which rules may be made in accordance with the aforesaid provisions of the Bill are matters of procedure and detail and it is not practicable to provide for them in the Bill itself. The delegation of legislative power is, therefore, of a normal character.

## LOK SABHA

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A

## BILL

to lay down judicial standards and provide for accountability of Judges of the Supreme Court or a High Court or a District Court and, establish credible and expedient mechanism for investigating into individual complaints for misbehaviour or incapacity of a Judge of the Supreme Court or of a High Court and to regulate the procedure for such investigation, and for the presentation of an address by Parliament to the President for removal of a Judge and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

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*(Shri Sudheer Gupta, M.P.)*