



2026:AHC:189815-DB

Reserved on 31.08.2026

Delivered on 11.09.2026

A.F.R.

**HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT ALLAHABAD
PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATION (PIL) No. - 1131 of 2026**

Bhavna Pandit

.....Petitioner(s)

Versus

State of U.P. and 16 others

.....Respondent(s)

Counsel for Petitioner(s)	: Ajay Kumar
Counsel for Respondent(s)	: Rajiv Singh (S.C.), Nigamendra Shukla, Ashutosh Kumar Pal

Chief Justice's Court

**HON'BLE ARUN BHANSALI, CHIEF JUSTICE
HON'BLE KSHITIJ SHAILENDRA, J.**

(Per: Kshitij Shailendra, J.)

1. Heard Shri Ajay Kumar, learned counsel for the petitioner, learned Standing Counsel for respondent No.1, Shri Nigamendra Shukla, learned counsel for respondents No. 2, 3 and 6 to 17 and Shri Ashutosh Kumar Pal for respondent No.5.

2. This writ petition, in the nature of Public Interest Litigation, has been filed by an Advocate practising in District Court, Bulandshahr challenging the entire elections of the executive body of Civil Bar

Association, Bulandshahr (in short 'the Bar Association'), for the year 2025-26. Further direction has been sought commanding the Elders' Committee to conduct fresh elections with 30% reservation for women lawyers and also earmark the post of Treasurer for woman.

3. It is stated in the writ petition that in pursuance of a meeting dated 28.03.2026 held by the President of the Bar Association, elections were notified on 04.04.2026 and the same were held on 16.04.2026. By making reference to Elders' Committee comprising of certain members, pleadings are that 387 ordinary members and 108 life members with additional 4 members were indicated in the voter list, that was finalized on 31.03.2026.

4. The challenge is essentially based upon an order dated 13.03.2026 passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in **SLP (Civil) 1404 of 2025 (Deeksha N Amruthesh v. State of Karnataka and others)**, wherein a direction has been issued to all the High Courts to provide for at least 30% representation of women lawyers in elections of governing or executive body of Bar Associations. The pleadings and grounds are to the effect that in the elections of the respondent Bar Association held on 16.04.2026, not even a single woman lawyer has been elected as office bearer though there are 79 women members (65 ordinary members and 14 life members), as voters.

5. When the matter came up before the Court on 01.05.2026, notices were issued to respondents No.2 to 17, i.e. Elders' Committee, Election Officer and elected office bearers in the concerned election, pursuant whereeto, the respondents put in appearance and, on 13.05.2026, submissions were made on their behalf that the elected body had nominated four women Advocates, one as Joint Treasurer and three as Executive Members and that they had taken charge. Counsel for the petitioner was granted time to obtain instructions in that regard.

6. On 15.07.2026, submissions were made on behalf of the petitioner that the purported appointment/nomination of four women Advocates was without jurisdiction as no such post of Joint Treasurer existed and

since all the existing posts of Executive Members had been filled by male Advocates, the same being contrary to the directions issued in the case of **Deeksha (supra)**, were liable to be quashed.

7. After exchange of affidavits *inter se* parties, the matter was finally heard on 31.08.2026 and order was reserved.

8. Learned counsel for the petitioner has made submissions in line with pleadings and grounds contained in the writ petition and prayer has been made to quash the entire election proceedings as well as its result and to issue a further direction to conduct fresh elections as per directions issued in the case of **Deeksha (supra)** .

9. *Per contra*, learned counsel for respondents No.2, 3 and 6 to 17 has made submissions that the order dated 13.03.2026 passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court came to the notice of the respondents only on 08.04.2026 when the Secretary of District Legal Services Authority, Bulandshahr (DLSA) served its copy upon them in furtherance of a communication dated 04.04.2026 issued by the Registrar General of this Court. Submission is that since election programme had already been notified on 04.04.2026, the elections were held on 16.04.2026 as per the notified schedule and, thereafter, on 20.04.2026, before filing of the writ petition itself, four women candidates, namely Km. Nisha Singh, Km. Anjali, Km. Rachna Solanki and Km. Shabana Malik were respectively nominated as Joint Treasurer and members of the executive body and, therefore, the order of the Hon'ble Supreme Court providing 30% representation by women advocates has been complied with.

10. When confronted with the situation that there being only 12 posts of office bearers to be filled up by election, 30% representation should have been provided within and amongst those 12 posts and nomination of four women Advocates over and above 12 posts, making it 16, would be unacceptable, learned counsel for the respondents made submissions that time may be granted to the elected body to amend the bye-laws without disturbing the result of elections as well as nomination of four additional women lawyers. It was further submitted that the order dated 13.03.2026

passed in the case of **Deeksha (supra)** was further modified by the Hon'ble Supreme Court on 16.04.2026 clarifying the provision for nomination and, in light of the directions contained in both the said orders, the decision of the elected body to nominate four women Advocates may not be interfered with.

11. We have considered the submissions made and have perused the material available on record.

12. Since the controversy revolves around the orders dated 13.03.2026 and 16.04.2026 passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of **Deeksha (supra)**, we may first refer to the genesis of the said case. The matter before the Hon'ble Supreme Court arose from an order dated 08.01.2025 passed by the High Court of Karnataka at Bengaluru and various Special Leave Petitions and Interlocutory Applications moved therein came up for consideration for the first time on 24.01.2025. While granting liberty to the Advocates' Association, Bengaluru, a High-Powered Committee as well as Chief Returning Officer appointed for conducting elections of the Association to enter appearance and file counter affidavits, the Hon'ble Supreme Court observed that there was no provision for reservation for women for any post under the Regulations meant for conduct of elections and the Regulations being completely silent to that effect, powers under Article 142 of the Constitution of India were invoked and following directions were issued on 24.01.2025:-

“5. Consequently, we deem it appropriate to invoke our powers under Article 142 of the Constitution of India and direct as follows:

- (i) The post of Treasurer of Advocates Association, Bengaluru shall be exclusively earmarked for women candidates.
- (ii) For this purpose the High-Powered Committee and the Chief Returning Officer shall extend the date for inviting nominations and if so required, the date of election can also be deferred for a few days. However, such a decision shall be to the entire discretion of the High-Powered Committee and the Chief Returning Officer.
- (iii) The High-Powered Committee and Chief Returning Officer will also consider the desirability of ensuring that

- at least 30% elected members of Governing Council of Advocates Association, Bengaluru are women advocates.
6. In this regard the directions issued by this Court in the matter of High Court and District Court Bar Associations in NCT of Delhi shall apply mutatis mutandis in the case of Advocates Association, Bengaluru also.
 7. Post the matter on 03.03.2025.
SLP(C) No.1404/2025 & SLP(C) No.1808/2025
 8. Issue notice, returnable on 03.03.2025.
 9. Liberty to serve the standing counsel.
 10. Dasti, in addition, is permitted.”

13. When the matter next came up before the Hon’ble Supreme Court on 28.01.2025, considering the fact that the order dated 24.01.2025 came to be passed only a few days before the scheduled date of elections and that the general body of the Advocates’ Association, Bengaluru did not have sufficient time to meet and create additional posts, following directions were issued:-

“6. Having regard to the fact that the order dated 24.01.2025 came to be passed only a few days before the scheduled date of election and, meanwhile, the General Body of the Advocates’ Association, Bengaluru don’t have sufficient time to meet and create additional posts, we deem it appropriate to invoke our powers under Article 142 of the Constitution and issue the following additional directions in continuation of the order dated 24.01.2025:

- (i) One more post of ‘Vice-President’ shall be deemed to have been created in the Advocates’ Association, Bengaluru to be filled through the ensuing elections.
- (ii) The male candidates, who have filed nominations for the post of ‘Treasurer’, namely, the post which is now exclusively earmarked for the women candidates, shall be granted one opportunity either to switch over their nominations from the post of ‘Treasurer’ to the newly created post of ‘Vice-President’ and/or any other than the post of ‘Treasurer’. It goes without saying that those who do not want to contest will be at liberty to withdraw their nominations.
- (iii) Similarly, in the light of 30% post of Councilors having been exclusively earmarked for the women candidate, the strength of Councillors is ordered to be increased as follows:

- (a) City Civil Court: $12+3 = 15$
- (b) Mayo Hall: $5+2 = 7$
- (c) Magistrates’ Court: $5+2 = 7$
- (d) High Court: $7+2 = 9$

7. The High-Powered Committee and the Chief Returning Officer shall conduct the elections accordingly, keeping in view the increased strength of office bearers and Councillors of the Governing Council.

8. It will be appreciated if the election process can be concluded within three weeks.

9. The nominations for the newly created post of 'VicePresident' of the Advocates' Association, for the post of 'Treasurer' of the Advocates' Association and for the newly added posts of 'Councillors' of the Governing Council, be invited within one week.

10. Wherever the Regulations governing the elections to different posts of Advocates' Association, Bengaluru provide minimum eight years' or any other experience at Bar as an eligibility condition for contesting election, such eligibility condition shall be adhered to.

11. The order dated 24.01.2025 stands clarified/modified to the extent indicated above.

12. The applications stand disposed of in the above terms.

13. Tag with SLP (C) No.1910/2025."

14. The matter was, thereafter, considered on 24.03.2025, on which date, when factum of holding of elections of few Bar Associations in terms of directions issued on 28.01.2025 was placed before the Hon'ble Supreme Court with additional information that elections of District Bar Association in different districts of Karnataka were yet to take place, Hon'ble Supreme Court directed that the directions contained in the order dated 28.01.2025 in respect of Advocates' Associations, Bangalore, would apply *mutatis mutandis* in the matter of elections of District Bar Associations for the entire State of Karnataka. It would be appropriate to quote paragraphs 3 and 4 of the order dated 24.03.2025, which read as under:-

"3. We, accordingly, direct that the directions contained in our order dated 28.01.2025 in respect of Advocates Association, Bangalore, shall apply *mutatis mutandis* in the matter of the elections of District Bar Associations in the entire State of Karnataka. All the District Bar Associations are, accordingly, directed to earmark the post of Treasurer exclusively for women candidates and are further directed to reserve 30% of the posts of Councillors/Members of the Executive Committee for women candidates. Each Bar Association, after holding the election, shall submit a compliance report to their respective District and Sessions Judges who shall forward the same to the Registrar General of the High Court. The Registrar General of the High Court shall then collate all those reports and submit a comprehensive compliance report to this Court.

4. Post the matters on 21.07.2025."

15. Then comes the order dated 13.03.2026 which is germane to the controversy in hand and the same reads as under:-

“1. The issue that arises for consideration in this batch of matters pertains to ensuring 30% representation for women lawyers as Office Bearers or Executive Members in every Bar Association, including at Taluka or District levels and specialised bodies like Tax and RERA, as well as High Court Bar Associations. It may be noted that such representation has already been achieved with the active support of Bar members in the Supreme Court Bar Association. **In some High Courts**, such as the Delhi High Court, Bar members have been very supportive and have graciously ensured representation, resulting in many such Bar Associations implementing our order dated 24.03.2025.

2. However, it was brought to our notice that in some States, the benefit of representation for women members was not percolating at different types of Bar Associations such as Tax, RERA, NGT, DRT, as well as at the sub-divisional level. Therefore, this Court *vide* order dated 16.01.2026, sought a report from the **Registrar Generals of all the High Courts** with a commitment to ensure adequate representation from all the Bar Associations. A separate direction was issued to the Registrar General of the High Court of Karnataka, along with other Registrar Generals, to submit a status report on the representation of women advocates in the governing/executive bodies of the various Bar Associations.

3. In deference thereto, the **Registrar Generals of 13 High Courts** have submitted their compliance reports. They have addressed issues such as: (i) whether the Bar Associations in their jurisdictions have adequate representation of women in the executive body, (ii) whether the Bar Associations have included a requirement of 30% representation for women, and (iii) what remedial measures have been implemented where the directions issued by this Court could not be complied with.

4. Be that as it may, **12 High Courts** are yet to send their responses/compliance reports.

5. We, accordingly, direct the remaining 12 High Courts to firstly ensure that, within all Bar Associations in their respective jurisdictions, at least 30% of the members of the Bar involved in the election of the governing or executive body of such Bar Associations are women. However, where the number of women lawyers enrolled with such Bar Associations falls significantly short of 30%, those available may serve on their governing body.

6. Where there are enough women members and, for some reason, they could not contest the election, the District Judges are hereby authorised to nominate women members to the executive committee of the respective Bar Associations within their jurisdiction and submit a compliance report to the Registrar General of the High Court. The Registrar General will then collate these reports and forward them to this Court.

7. We emphasise that these directions must be followed, especially since our experience shows that most of the Bar Associations across the country have wholeheartedly accepted the policy decision made by this Court on the judicial side. In any case, if there are any reservations at the level of a particular subdivision or district, those details must be forwarded to this Court for appropriate directions based on the peculiar facts and circumstances of the case. The Registrar Generals of the 12 High Courts, who have not yet submitted a compliance report, are instructed to do so within two weeks.

8. Post this matter for further consideration on 17.04.2026.”

(emphasis by us)

16. It would be seen that prior to 13.03.2026, the directions were meant only for State of Karnataka and, for the first time, directions to all other High courts were issued only on 13.03.2026. The paragraphs relevant are 5 and 6 of the order, wherein the High Courts have been directed to ensure that at least 30% of the members of the Bar involved in the election of the governing or executive body of Bar Association are women. It has further been provided that where there are enough women members and, for some reason, they could not contest the election, the District Judges would be authorised to nominate women members to the executive committee of the respective Bar Associations within their jurisdiction and submit a compliance report to the Registrar General of the High Court and the Registrar General would collate the reports and forward the same to the Supreme Court.

17. In the present case, the election programme of the respondent Bar Association was notified on 04.04.2026, by which time, the directions of Hon'ble Supreme Court had already become operative and, therefore, the submission to the effect that as the order dated 13.03.2026 was served upon/communicated to the respondents by the Secretary of DLSA on 08.04.2026 in furtherance of communication dated 04.04.2026 issued by the Registrar General of this Court and, hence, the respondents were not aware of the order prior to 08.04.2026 when the election process had already been set into motion, cannot be accepted by this Court. The reason is that the respondents, being an association of lawyers, are

supposed to be aware of the orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, particularly in light of nature of controversy involved in the present case where the very election of Bar Association was to be conducted as per the directions issued. Further, the order of Hon'ble Supreme Court being in public domain, its ignorance cannot be accepted.

18. Above being the position *qua* the order dated 13.03.2026 and its effect, we find that not making provision for 30% representation of women Advocates amongst 12 office bearers in the concerned elections, at the first instance, was not as per the directions contained in the order, however, the very fact that the directions contained in paragraph 6 of the order dated 13.03.2026 were subsequently modified by the Hon'ble Supreme Court by its order dated 16.04.2026 and, in a meeting of elected office bearers of the Bar Association held on 20.04.2026, four women advocates were nominated (one as Joint Treasurer and three as Executive Members), we deem it appropriate to quote the entire order dated 16.04.2026 passed in the case of **Deeksha (supra)**. The same reads as under:-

“1. At the outset, Ms. Jayna Kothari, learned Senior Counsel, representing one set of the petitioners, submits that some time may be granted to collate the information received from the different High Courts with respect to ensuring 30% representation of women members of the Bar in District Bar Associations. Such collation is stated to be necessary in view of the fact that certain Bar Associations have not complied with the directions contained in our order dated 13.03.2026.

2. We also deem it necessary to issue a word of caution and a stern warning that wherever the Bar Associations have failed to comply with, or shall be found to have defied, the directions issued hereinabove, such Bar Associations shall be liable to be suspended through a judicial order and fresh elections shall be directed to be conducted.

3. The Registrar Generals of all the High Courts are hereby directed to communicate this order and submit a report along with the details of the Bar Associations that have failed to comply with the order or are reluctant to comply with these directions.

4. While acceding to the request of Ms. Kothari, we make it clear, in no uncertain terms, that the purpose and object of order dated 13.03.2026 is to ensure that 30% of the posts of the governing or executive members in every Bar Association, on a

pan-India basis, shall be for the purpose of ensuring adequate representation of women advocates. In cases where women advocate members are not present and/or do not contest the elections, the shortfall in representation shall be ensured through nominations.

5. In this regard, we modify paragraph 6 of the order dated 13.03.2026 and direct that such nomination shall be made by the Administrative Judge/Portfolio Judge of the jurisdictional High Court, in consultation with the concerned District and Sessions Judge, the elected office bearers, and the senior-most women members of the respective District Bar Association. The tenure of the nominated member shall be co-terminus with that of the elected members.

6. The application (I.A. No.109832/2026) moved by the Bar Council of India, accordingly, stands disposed of. ”

(emphasis by us)

19. A bare perusal of paragraph 5 of the order dated 16.04.2026 indicates that nomination of women Advocates has to be made by the Administrative Judge/Portfolio Judge of the jurisdictional High Court in consultation with the concerned District and Sessions Judge, the elected office bearers and the senior most women members of the respective District Bar Associations; however, in the present case, such nomination was made only by the elected office bearers of the Bar Association in its meeting held on 20.04.2026 but immediately after passing of the order dated 16.04.2026 by the Hon’ble Supreme Court.

20. At this stage, we may refer to many other orders passed in the case of **Deeksha (supra)** on interlocutory applications; the same are reproduced hereinunder:-

I.A. Nos.114304/2026 & 114308/2026 .

7. Issue notice.

8. The Registrar General of the **Madhya Pradesh High Court** is directed to submit a Fact-Finding Report with respect to the allegations made in these applications.

IA Nos.114357/2026 & 114359/2026

9. Issue notice.

10. The Registrar General of the **Andhra Pradesh High Court** is directed to submit a Fact-Finding Report.

IA No.114059/2026

11. Issue notice.

12. The Registrar General of the **Punjab and Haryana High Court** is directed to submit a Fact-Finding Report.

IA Nos.54036/2026, 55629/2026

13. Issue notice,

14. The Registrar General of the **Bombay High Court** is directed to submit a Fact-Finding Report.

MAIN MATTER

15. Post the matter on 12.05.2026."

IA No. 114059/2026; order dated 15.05.2026:

"1. The instant application has been filed on behalf of some advocates practising in **Chandigarh**, seeking directions to ensure 30% representation for women advocates by reserving two office-bearer posts in the Punjab and Haryana High Court Bar Association elections for the year 2026-27.

2. Without going into the correctness of the averments therein, we are not inclined to entertain this Interlocutory application at this stage. The same stands dismissed.

3. However, it is clarified that if adequate representation is not provided to women advocates in terms of the order passed by this Court previously, the applicant(s) shall be at liberty to approach the appropriate Court."

21. It has come on record and also admitted by counsel for the parties that when the nomination papers were being filled up in relation to the elections of the respondent-Bar Association, not even a single woman lawyer came forward and, therefore, in our opinion, the clause "In case where women advocate members are not present and/or do not contest the elections, the shortfall in representation shall be ensured through nominations", as contained in fourth paragraph of the order dated 16.04.2026 passed in the case of **Deeksha (supra)** stands attracted and, hence, the nomination cannot be said to be *per se* illegal.

22. At the same time, it is apparent that the nomination has not been made in the manner indicated in paragraph 5 of the order dated 16.04.2026. What would, then, be its effect, for this we have to look at paragraphs 2 and 3 of the order dated 16.04.2026 wherein a caution/warning has been issued that wherever the Bar Associations have

failed to comply with the directions issued on 13.03.2026, such Bar Associations would be liable to be suspended through a judicial order and fresh elections will be conducted. Further, a mechanism has also been provided to hold any Bar Association as having defied the directions, wherein Registrar General of the concerned High Court is required to undertake an exercise and submit his report along with details of the Bar Association.

23. In the present case, though we find that the respondents did not make provision for 30% representation of women lawyers, the elections were held on 16.04.2026, on which date itself the earlier order dated 13.03.2026 was clarified/modified by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, soon whereafter on 20.04.2026, nomination of four women Advocates was made by the elected body. Therefore, despite the fact that the said nominations were made over and above the strength of the elected body, it cannot be said that presently, there is less than 30% representation of women lawyers in the body elected on 16.04.2026 and the requirement of 30% representation was promptly fulfilled within next 4 days. As a matter of fact, 30% of 16 (12+4) comes to 4.8 and, therefore, inclusion of four women Advocates in the elected body, by way of prompt nomination, fulfils the purpose.

24. In our considered view, it would serve no meaningful purpose to set in motion a further fact finding or procedural exercise when the outcome is unlikely to lead to any conclusion different from the one which we have arrived at this stage looking to the peculiar facts of the case. To direct an inquiry in this matter, in our opinion, would invite wastage of scarce administrative resources of the justice delivery system without any corresponding advancement of the cause of justice.

25. At the same time, since the manner of making nomination has been clarified in the Supreme Court's order dated 16.04.2026, nomination made in the present case, in our opinion, may not result in quashing the entire elections of the Bar Association and we are inclined to grant breathing time to the respondent-Bar Association to amend the bye-laws

so as to make provision for 30% representation of women Advocates in all the future elections of general body/executive body in consonance with the directions issued in the case of **Deeksha (supra)**.

26. In view of the above discussion, the writ petition is **disposed of** with the following directions:-

(i). The elected body of respondent-Bar Association pursuant to the elections finalized on 16.04.2026 shall amend its Bye-laws/Memorandum of Association **positively within a period of one month** from the date of this order making a provision for 30% representation of women lawyers in all future elections of the governing or executive body of the Bar Association. The amendment may indicate its **special retrospective effect** qua the recent elections and nomination, describing the circumstances, as indicated hereinbefore;

(ii). **Within the same period of one month**, due intimation of nomination of four women Advocates along with entire proceedings of elections shall be sent by the respondent-Bar Association to the Administrative Judge of District Bulandshahr in consultation with the District and Sessions Judge, Bulandshahr, elected office bearers and the senior most woman member of the Bar Association in view of directions contained in para 5 of the order dated 16.04.2026 passed in the case of **Deeksha (supra)** ;

(iii). Unless otherwise ordered by the Administrative Judge of District Bulandshahr based upon the intimation, as directed above, the elections finalized on 16.04.2026 as well as nomination of four women lawyers made on 20.04.2026 would remain intact and the elected body along with nominated members would continue to function;

(iv). No further exercise is required to be conducted at the level of Registrar General of this Court **at this stage** so as to examine as to

whether directions issued in the case of **Deeksha (supra)** have been flouted by the respondent-Bar Association; however, in case of breach of the said directions complained of at any future date, appropriate exercise may be undertaken by the Registrar General.

27. Office is directed to place a copy of this order before Registrar General of this Court for information and compliance.

(Kshitij Shailendra, J) (Arun Bhansali, CJ)

September 11, 2026
Jyotsana