



RAM BALAK MAHTO FOUNDATION

2ND RAM BALAK MAHTO MEMORIAL ESSAY COMPETITION

EMERGING PERSPECTIVES IN CONSTITUTIONAL
INTERPRETATION

ABOUT LATE MR. RAM BALAK MAHTO

Mr. Ram Balak Mahto was the longest-serving Advocate General of the state of Bihar, having served for over 16 years, and the chief legal advisor to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. Since 1937, only 20 Advocate Generals have been appointed, with him being appointed six times. Mr Mahto primarily practised before the High Court of Judicature in Patna and had the rare privilege of working as the Advocate General with six Chief Ministers of Bihar: Bhagwat Jha Azad, Bindeshwari Dubey, Satyendra Narayan Sinha (all from the Congress Party), Lalu Prasad Yadav (Janta Dal), Nitish Kumar, and Jitan Ram Manjhi (Janta Dal-United).

He was born on January 27, 1926, into an agricultural family in the small village of "Aunta" (nearly 100 KM away from the capital city of Patna). He finished his schooling at Mokama's James Walker High School. During his school days, he actively participated in the Freedom Movement and, when in class 10th, severely disrupted British trade at the Mokama Ghat, forcing him to flee his family to avoid arrest. He had a strong interest in sports and used to play hockey in college.

Mr. Mahto joined the Bihar State Bar Council in 1955 after graduating from the Bihar National College and then the Patna Law College. In September 1955, he joined the profession of law as an Advocate at the Patna High Court and, during his first days, worked alongside the famed Advocate of his day, Sri Lal Narayan Sinha, who went on to become the Advocate General of Bihar and later the Attorney General of India.

In 1975, he was appointed as an Advocate for the State Government (Government Pleader), followed by his appointment as Government Advocate and subsequently as the Additional Advocate General. Finally, on April 5, 1980, he was appointed as the Advocate General of Bihar. During his last days, he served as the chief legal advisor to the Chief Minister of Bihar. As an Advocate, he commanded respect, both from the Bench and the Bar.

Aside from his legal career, he was actively involved in a variety of social concerns. He was involved with the Mahavir Cancer Hospital, International Yoga Satsanga, International Buddhist Society, Ramakrishna Mission, and many more organisations.



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ABOUT THE COMPETITION

The *Ram Balak Mahto Memorial Essay Competition* is held in memory of Mr. Ram Balak Mahto (1926-2020), an eminent and distinguished lawyer. Late Mr. Mahto was a famous legal luminary in the disciplines of constitutional law and other areas of law. This Essay Competition is organised to commemorate his accomplishments in the field of law and continue it in his remembrance. The Competition aims to increase academic scholarship in critical areas of constitutional law by stimulating interest and fostering growth amongst students in exploring and engaging with contemporary and seminal issues in the field of constitutional law. The Competition is organised by the Ram Balak Foundation with unwavering support and guidance from members from both the Bar and the Bench.

THEME

After the resounding success of the first edition of the competition, which saw the participation of students from universities and institutions across India, the Ram Balak Mahto Foundation is pleased to organise the 2nd edition of the *Ram Balak Mahto Memorial Essay Competition*. This year, the theme of the Competition is **"Emerging Perspectives in Constitutional Interpretation."**

As India celebrates 75 years of independence, it is an appropriate time for us to step back from the political debates over the Constitution and examine how the text has been interpreted by the courts over the last seven and a half decades. The Supreme Court adopted a textualist approach in the early years after Independence, focusing on the plain meaning of the words used in the Constitution. Later, this strict literal interpretation was progressively supplanted by a more liberal type of interpretation, in which the Supreme Court began to appeal to the overall structure and coherence of the Constitution. The Supreme Court's broad interpretative powers laid the groundwork for it to assume an unprecedented role in national governance. We are currently transitioning to a more purposeful interpretation of the Constitution in accordance with its revolutionary and transformative potential.

Participants are free to write on, and choose, any suitable topic for their essay as long as it is within the ambit of the aforementioned theme.

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GENERAL RULES

- The Competition is open to all undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in any recognised university/college in India.
- There is no registration fee for participating in the Competition, however, interested participants are required to click [here](#) to register.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- The essay must be written in English and submitted in Microsoft Word document format (.doc/.docx).
- Co-authorship up to a maximum of **two authors** is permitted.
- Only one submission is allowed per author/team. Submissions, both as co-author and single, will be treated as multiple submissions and will be disqualified as an entry to the competition.
- The following formatting specifications need to be strictly adhered to: **Main Body:** Font – Times New Roman, Font Size – 12, and Line Spacing – 1.5; **Footnotes:** Font – Times New Roman, Font Size – 10, and Line Spacing – 1.0; **Margins** should be 1 inch or 2.54 cm on all sides.
- The word limit is 2500-3000 words excluding footnotes. Footnotes must follow the Bluebook system of citation (Harvard, 20th edition).
- The essay must contain an abstract, not exceeding 250 words (which would not be counted in the word limit for the essay). It must indicate the theme/topic.

- All submissions should be made in an electronic form at rambalakmahtofoundation@gmail.com under the subject heading "**Submission: 2nd Ram Balak Mahto Memorial Essay Competition**" by **19 March 2023, 23:59 hours** (Indian Standard Time, GMT +5:30).
- The essay must be accompanied by a separate document containing the following information about the participant: (i) full name of the participant; (ii) theme/topic chosen; (iii) participant's current year of study and name of the degree pursued; (iv) name and full address of the participant's university; (v) name and full postal address of the participant; (vi) phone number of the participant; and (vii) email ID of the participant.
- The essay must be original and bonafide work of the participant. Incomplete or plagiarised submissions shall be summarily rejected. The plagiarism limit is 15% (excluding footnotes).
- No part of the essay should contain any form of identification of the participant such as the name of the author, University/College name, etc. on the essay. Any form of identification will lead to disqualification.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

- The essays will be evaluated in a two-stage process on the basis of original thinking, grasp of the subject, writing skills and choice of topic.
- All submissions received will be evaluated by a screening committee comprising practising Advocates, legal academicians and other legal professionals.
- The top 5 essays shall be sent to the judging panel comprising **Hon'ble (Retd.) High Court Judges and Senior Advocates at the Supreme Court of India**.

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PRIZES

- **Winner: The Lal Narayan Sinha Gold Medal for Best Essay, ₹ 10,000** and an **internship opportunity with a Senior Advocate at the Supreme Court of India/ Sitting Judge of a High Court.**
- **Runner-up: ₹ 5,000** and an **internship opportunity with a Senior Advocate at the Supreme Court of India/ Sitting Judge of a High Court.**
- The top five essays will be awarded a **Certificate of Merit**. A Certificate of Participation will be awarded to all the participants.
- Any copyright infringement/plagiarism shall result in automatic disqualification. The organisers reserve the right to recall any prize if it is discovered later that the article suffered from any copyright infringement/plagiarism.
- If there arises any situation that is not contemplated in the rules, the organisers' decision on the same shall be final and binding. The administration of the Competition, including determining the eligibility of any participant or essay, evaluation of essays, and awarding of the prizes, is within the sole and absolute discretion of the organisers.

MISCELLANEOUS

- The organisers shall endeavour to declare the results of the competition by **9 April 2023**.
- By entering the Competition, the participants agree to indemnify the organisers from and against all claims, suits and damages based on any claim of copyright infringement or plagiarism or unauthorised use.

CONTACT INFORMATION

- For inquiries, please email us at rambalakmahtofoundation@gmail.com or contact Viraj Aditya at +91 8210697371 / +91 8447488295.

IMPORTANT DEADLINES

