

Fifty Years of Eminence at the Bar

Honouring Shri Bijoy Krushna Mahanti, Senior Advocate

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Today marks a historic milestone in Odisha's legal landscape as Shri Bijoy Krushna Mahanti, Senior Advocate, completes 50 continuous years as a designated Senior Advocate of the Orissa High Court.

Appointed in 1975 and still actively appearing in court at 90, he is believed to be the first in Odisha to achieve this distinction.

A Pillar of Legal Excellence

Shri Mahanti began his legal practice in 1957 in Cuttack. By the 1970s, he had emerged as a leading advocate in taxation, constitutional law, and writ jurisdiction. In 1975, he was designated as Senior Advocate—a title reserved for advocates of exceptional merit. Over five decades, he has maintained a respected presence before the Orissa High Court and occasionally before the Supreme Court, shaping both the legal landscape and institutional ethos of the Bar.

A Landmark in Indian Tax Jurisprudence

A defining moment in his career was his appearance before the Supreme Court in *K.P. Varghese v. ITO* (1981), a case challenging arbitrary taxation under Section 52(2) of the Income Tax Act. He appeared and argued the matter alongside the legendary jurist Shri Nani A. Palkhivala, marking a proud chapter in Odisha's legal history.

Legal Diplomacy and the Chernobyl Trial

In the mid-1980s, Shri Mahanti's expertise was internationally recognized when he was selected by the Government of India as part of a four-member legal delegation led by former

Chief Justice of India, Shri P.N. Bhagwati, to visit the Soviet Union. The team was invited in the aftermath of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, one of the world's gravest environmental tragedies.

Shri Mahanti served as a member of the jury in the Soviet proceedings, representing the Government of India during the Chernobyl Nuclear Trial, and participated in vital legal dialogues as the USSR introduced the concept of Administrative Law into its rigid legal framework.

His contribution in exchanging Indian perspectives on judicial review, legal accountability, and the role of independent courts remains a unique diplomatic achievement — placing him in the rare league of Indian jurists who have contributed to global legal thought at moments of historic transition.

Leadership in the Legal Profession

Shri Mahanti has held several key positions:

- Advocate General of Odisha (2004–2009)
- President and Secretary of the Orissa High Court Bar Association
- Secretary of the Cuttack District Bar Association
- Executive Chairman of the Indian Association of Lawyers

He remains an active member of the Supreme Court Bar Association, Orissa High Court Bar Association, AIFTP, AOTAA, and CTBA. A mentor to many, some of his juniors have gone on to become High Court judges.

Rotary Service and Social Impact

A lifelong Rotarian since 1955, as a member of the Rotary Club of Cuttack, PP Rtn Bijoy Krushna Mahanti has led major healthcare initiatives on behalf of his club:

1. JPM Rotary Eye Hospital & Research Institute

A leading charitable hospital in Eastern India.

2. JPM Rotary Dialysis Centre offering subsidized dialysis to needy patients.

His Rotary leadership reflects his unwavering commitment to public service.

Community Welfare and Education

As Chairman of Gopala Krishna Goushala, he works for animal welfare.

During his tenure as Advocate General of Odisha, he initiated and led the movement to establish the National Law University Odisha (NLUO) and ensured that it was set up and made operational in a remarkably short time. He also played a pivotal role in the modernization of Ravenshaw University, contributing to educational and institutional development in the state.

Even at 90, Shri Mahanti continues to appear in court with grace and conviction. His life reflects a rare blend of brilliance, humility, and service—an inspiration to generations of lawyers and citizens alike.

On this momentous occasion, we honour not just a career but a legacy.

A jurist, reformer, Rotarian, and compassionate leader—Shri Bijoy Krushna Mahanti is truly an institution in himself.