



भारतीय विधिज्ञ परिषद् BAR COUNCIL OF INDIA

(Statutory Body Constituted under the Advocates Act, 1961)

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1. At the outset, it must be emphasized that, according to publicly available records, the so called Society of Indian Law Firms (SILF) represents only about 2% or less of the more than 15,000 law firms currently active across India. Its assertion that it embodies the collective voice of the Indian legal fraternity is therefore both statistically insignificant and factually untenable. In reality, SILF is not the representative voice of the Bar or of Indian law firms. It is a self-appointed body that speaks primarily for its narrow, exclusive circle rather than for the profession at large.
2. This so called Society is a private, voluntary, self-selected group that has historically functioned as a closed, elite club rather than a democratic, representative institution. It does not conduct internal elections, operates under an opaque leadership structure, and cannot claim any statutory or constitutional authority to represent the legal profession at large. Its repeated assertions of collective representation are thus both legally and morally baseless. For this reason, the BCI, being a responsible body committed to protecting the interests of lawyers and law firms, is keen to provide opportunities to a large number of unorganised Indian law firms. The BCI will soon work to associate and unite all law firms to form a strong, democratic association or organisation, so that the views of all law firms can be gathered on any issue, and they can also have their "say" in matters affecting them.
3. The claim of this Society of having maintained a supportive stance toward the "regulated, phased, and sequential" entry of foreign lawyers is contradicted by its consistent record of opposing every concrete move toward liberalization. For over two decades, this pocket Society has actively resisted even moderate initiatives aimed at integrating India's legal profession with global standards and opportunities. It is further to be noted that the BCI has received hundreds of suggestions from various sincere and dedicated law firms. Based on these suggestions, the BCI will soon take important decisions regarding matters such as "Advertisements," "LLPs," and other related issues, with the aim of enabling our law firms to compete effectively with foreign firms. BCI's only motto is to strengthen our lawyers and Law firms and to facilitate the Arbitration work so that India can emerge as an international arbitration hub, ultimately benefiting our lawyers and law firms. There is ample scope and potential for this growth, however, driven by their vested interests, a handful of individuals operating under the name of SILF have actively sought to hinder the progress of thousands of law firms and lakhs of lawyers. This has also resulted in substantial financial losses to the government. Therefore, this is a serious matter, which the BCI views with utmost concern.

4. While multiple discussions took place from 2014 onwards, it is misleading to suggest that the participation of this pocket society equated to veto power over national policy. The Bar Council of India, as a statutory body under the Advocates Act, 1961, is constitutionally and legally mandated to regulate the legal profession in India and is not required to subordinate its vision to the preferences of a self serving private association.
5. The BCI's 2025 amended Rules for Registration and Regulation of Foreign Lawyers and Foreign Law Firms in India have been carefully crafted in line with Supreme Court judgments and after rigorous legal scrutiny. They precisely restrict foreign lawyers to non-litigious advisory work, explicitly prohibiting them from practicing Indian law or appearing before Indian courts and tribunals (Rules 8(2)(b) and 8(2)(c)). The claim of these Regulations being ultra vires is therefore unfounded and without merit.
6. The assertion of this Society that there are no monopolies among Indian law firms is untenable. As highlighted in BCI's statements, a few large firms have systematically monopolized corporate and arbitration work by leveraging informal relationships with foreign clients and networks. This concentration has deprived smaller, mid-sized, and regional firms, as well as young and dynamic advocates, of valuable cross-border legal opportunities.
7. Under the BCI's 2025 amended Rules foreign lawyers and law firms are expressly restricted to advising on foreign and international legal issues and are prohibited from engaging in any form of litigation or practice involving Indian law. This regulated entry does not encroach upon the practice domain of Indian lawyers but merely opens doors for them to advise on their own country's laws and international matters.
8. Globally, this approach is widely accepted. For example, the United Kingdom, Singapore, and Hong Kong permit foreign lawyers to open offices and advise on their home jurisdiction law and international law, without allowing them to appear before domestic courts or practice local law unless expressly permitted. These frameworks strengthen cross-border legal cooperation and do not at all threaten local practitioners.
9. The suggestion of this Society that foreign entry would dismantle the Indian legal arena is exaggerated and deeply detrimental. Controlled foreign participation promotes a more competitive, modern, and globally integrated legal sphere, ultimately empowering clients, providing opportunities for young lawyers, and strengthening India's international standing.
10. The language employed by SILF in its press releases amounts to professional misconduct. This society, dominated and controlled by a handful of elite law firms, has been consistently attempting to undermine the authority of the Bar Council of India, a statutory body. The deliberate dissemination of misleading statements, intended to create a false impression among the legal fraternity and the public at large, is not merely an act of misinformation but also a clear violation of an Advocate's broader duty to maintain the dignity and integrity of the profession at all times. The Preamble to Chapter II (Part VI) of the Bar Council of India Rules expressly requires an Advocate to comport himself in a manner befitting his status as

an officer of the court and as a privileged member of the community. It emphasizes that even conduct which may be lawful or moral for others may be improper for an Advocate, highlighting the higher ethical standard expected of members of the Bar both in and outside the courtroom. Advocates are expected to act with self-restraint, avoid intemperate language, and refrain from any conduct that lowers the reputation of the profession. Moreover, the Rules (specifically Rule 36) prohibit an Advocate from engaging in direct or indirect advertising or self-promotion through misleading public statements, personal communications, interviews not warranted by personal relations, or by furnishing or inspiring newspaper comments. Issuing sensational or deceptive press releases in the name of protecting law firms, when in reality aimed at safeguarding private commercial interests, constitutes using the profession for personal or sectional gain, which is strictly prohibited. In light of this, the BCI is seriously considering issuing notice to the individuals responsible for these press releases to explain their conduct. If found guilty, appropriate disciplinary action may be taken, including reprimand, suspension, or even removal from the roll of Advocates. The Bar Council of India is determined to uphold the dignity and integrity of the legal profession and warns that any conduct undermining its statutory mandate will be dealt with firmly and strictly, within the framework of law.

11. The claim that “young and emerging firms are doing big corporate work” does not negate the reality that many are systematically excluded from lucrative cross-border mandates. The opening of controlled, reciprocal opportunities is intended precisely to level the playing field and democratize access to global legal work is the very purpose of the BCI’s reforms.
12. The repeated reference of this so called SILF to various issues cannot justify obstructing a forward-looking regulatory initiative aimed at integrating India’s legal arena with the global economy. These are distinct matters that can and will be addressed concurrently.
13. **The characterization by this pocket society (representing only approximately 2% of Indian Law Firms) of big firms as “architects of modern corporate practice” cannot justify perpetual protectionism. It is a well known fact that almost all the members of SILF have already established foreign offices and informal tie-ups with foreign entities while denying such opportunities to smaller and emerging Indian firms.**
14. **The BCI wishes to convey a clear and unequivocal message to the entire legal fraternity and all law firms across India that it is deeply committed to strengthening Indian law firms, both large and small. To achieve this, it is essential to build unity and promote collaboration among all law firms by forming a resilient, broad-based organization that genuinely represents and safeguards their collective interests. Unlike the so called SILF, which remains a narrow, self-serving group of a few large and selected firms focused solely on preserving their own privileges, the BCI stands for the inclusive growth and empowerment of all firms and practitioners, especially young and emerging talent.**
15. The BCI cannot turn a blind eye to the entrenched, protectionist agenda of SILF. Instead, it must and will prioritize the future of the entire legal profession and the growth of Indian law firms as a whole. SILF is well aware

that there is an overwhelming majority of law firms across the country who have welcomed the BCI's reforms with enthusiasm. In a vibrant democracy, the BCI has a solemn responsibility to protect the interests of the majority of law firms, lawyers, and, ultimately, the nation.

16. The BCI's 2025 amended Rules for Registration and Regulation of Foreign Lawyers and Foreign Law Firms categorically protect Indian legal sovereignty. Foreign lawyers are barred from practicing Indian law, appearing before Indian courts or tribunals, or engaging in conveyancing or litigation work (Rules 8(2)(b) and 8(2)(c)). These safeguards render this Society's baseless fears not only exaggerated but wholly unfounded.
17. Public sentiment and media feedback overwhelmingly support the BCI's reforms as necessary to modernize and globalize the Indian legal profession. The continued resistance of this Society, representative of negligible number of law firms is widely seen as an attempt to protect narrow monopolistic interests rather than the welfare of the legal community at large. The BCI will very soon convene a large-scale meeting of all law firms in India, with the aim of strengthening, uniting, and empowering them to better address future challenges and opportunities
18. The BCI's regulations have been meticulously drafted to comply with domestic legal standards and international best practices. They include strict conditions such as government-issued NOCs, regulatory oversight, and compliance checks to ensure that the interests of Indian lawyers and law firms remain fully safeguarded.
19. The BCI's progressive approach has been internationally recognized and appreciated, including at a recent legal conference in the United Kingdom, where India's model was lauded as a balanced blend of openness and sovereignty.
20. The BCI remains open to bona fide suggestions aimed at strengthening the legal profession. However, it will not be deterred by obstructionist rhetoric that seeks to derail forward-looking reforms designed to open new global opportunities for Indian lawyers.
21. The Bar Council of India remains firmly committed to safeguarding the rights and promoting the welfare of all Indian advocates, especially young and regional practitioners, by enabling fair and equitable participation in international legal work. In this spirit, and pursuant to its resolution dated 12.06.2025 and press release dated 18.06.2025, the BCI invited all interested parties, including law firms across the country, to submit their views on this matter within 15 days to the email address bci.foreignlawfirm@gmail.com, with the initial deadline notified on the BCI website as 02.07.2025. As per the resolution, the committee chaired by Mr. Cyril Shroff, along with other prominent senior partners from leading law firms, will continue its work diligently and is expected to submit its report within the stipulated timeframe.

In line with the resolution, wherein the BCI has also indicated that it may invite additional members, special invitees, and representatives from law firms including those engaged in litigation practice to participate in future physical meetings of the committee, and the BCI shall endeavour to do so.

This inclusive approach underscores the BCI's strong commitment to ensuring that all voices, especially those of smaller and emerging law firms, are heard and considered in shaping the future of the Indian legal profession.

Further demonstrating its commitment to constructive engagement with all stakeholders, the BCI has decided to extend the deadline for submission of views by an additional 30 days with effect from today. However, it is clarified that this extension will not affect the ongoing work of the committee, which will continue its deliberations as scheduled and submit its report upon completion of the same.

The BCI shall carefully consider all letters and opinions received from law firms, following which a large meeting will be convened in Mumbai. Representatives of all law firms will be invited to this meeting, and only after hearing their views in this forum will the BCI take any final decision on the matter.

22. Certain individuals or groups, having no meaningful locus, seem intent on perpetuating distractions rather than contributing constructively. We urge the media to exercise caution and responsibility in amplifying such unrepresentative voices and to scrutinize their actual locus and credibility before publishing sweeping claims.
23. While BCI assures all stakeholders that their considered and sincere views will always be welcomed and evaluated by the Committee and the BCI, it must be made unequivocally clear that purely destructive, fear-mongering tactics will not find space in shaping national policy.
24. The focus of BCI remains on enabling fair, inclusive, and globally competitive growth for the Indian legal profession, in line with the constitutional vision of equality, access, and opportunity. The amended 2025 Regulations represent a balanced, progressive step designed to enhance India's legal profession globally while fully safeguarding Indian legal sovereignty.



(Srimanto Sen)
Principal Secretary
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