

augmenting the Judge-strength in Supreme Court of India appropriately so that it can function more efficiently and effectively and retain the goal of rendering timely justice to litigant public and other for increasing the retirement age of High Court Judges for ensuring continued availability of more experienced judges for a longer tenure and for improving the vacancy position and reducing the pendency of cases.

Legislation for prescribing time-limit for disposal of cases

2144. DR. K. V. P. RAMACHANDRA RAO: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is bringing any legislation to prescribe maximum time-limit for disposal of cases in various courts;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) if not, whether pendency of cases for years together is affecting the judicial process and right to justice of the people?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD):

(a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Timely disposal of cases in courts depends on several factors which, *inter-alia*, include availability of adequate number of judges and judicial officers, supporting court staff and physical infrastructure, complexity of facts involved, nature of evidence, co-operation of stake holders viz. bar, investigation agencies, witnesses and litigants and proper application of rules and procedures. However, the Government is fully committed to speedy disposal of cases and reducing pendency and has, in conjunction with the judiciary, taken many corrective steps.

Pursuant to the Joint Conference of the Chief Ministers of the States and Chief Justices of the High Courts held in 2015, where it was resolved that all High Courts would constitute Arrears Committee, the *then* Minister of Law and Justice had written to the Chief Justices of the High Courts requesting them to appraise the Government of the steps being taken by them to address the issue of pendency especially regarding cases pending for more than 5 years. As per the available information, all High Courts have established Arrears Committees. Progress made by the High Courts in reducing pendency was taken up for consideration again in the Conference of Chief Justices of

High Courts held in April 2016. Based on the reports submitted by the Arrears Committee of various High Courts, it was, *inter alia*, resolved that (i) all the High Courts shall assign top most priority for disposal of cases which are pending for more than five years; (ii) High Courts where cases are pending for more than five years shall facilitate their disposal in mission mode; (iii) High Court shall progressively thereafter set a target of disposing of cases for more than four years; (iv) While prioritizing the disposal of cases pending in the district courts for more than five years, additional incentives for the Judges of the district judiciary could be considered where feasible; and (v) Efforts shall be made for strengthening case-flow management rules. It was further resolved that the Chief Justices of the High Courts will set up a Cell/Committee for monitoring the implementation of the resolutions passed in the Chief Justices Conferences and each High Court shall create a mechanism for submitting progress report to the Supreme Court. Accordingly, Arrears Committees have been functioning in all High Courts and in District Courts.

Further, the Government has taken several initiatives to provide an ecosystem for faster disposal of cases by the judiciary. The National Mission for Justice Delivery and Legal Reforms established by the Government has adopted a coordinated approach for phased liquidation of arrears and pendency in judicial administration through various strategic initiatives, *including* improving infrastructure for courts, leveraging Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for better justice delivery, and filling up of vacant positions of Judges in High Courts and Supreme Court. The major achievements during the last five years under various initiatives to make the functioning of judiciary more efficient are as follows:

- (i) **Improving infrastructure for Judicial Officers of District and Subordinate Courts:** As on date, ₹ 6,986.50 crores have been released since the inception of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) for Development of Infrastructure Facilities for Judiciary in 1993-94. Out of this, 3,542.20 crores (which are 50.70% of the total amount released till date) have been released to the States and UTs since April, 2014. The number of court halls has increased from 15,818 as on 30.06.2014 to 19,101 as on date and number of residential units has increased from 10,211 as on 30.06.2014 to 16,790 as on date under this scheme. In addition, 2,883 court halls and 1,896 residential units are under construction. The Central Government has approved continuation of the Scheme beyond the 12th Five Year Plan period *i.e.* from 01.04.2017 to 31.03.2020 with an estimated additional outlay of ₹ 3,320 crore.

- (ii) **Leveraging Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for improved justice delivery:** Government has been implementing the e-Courts Mission Mode Project throughout the country for Information and Communication Technology enablement of district and subordinate courts. Number of computerised District and Subordinate courts has increased from 13,672 to 16,845 registering an increase of 3,173 during 2014 till date. New and user-friendly version of Case Information Software developed and deployed at all the computerized District and Subordinate Courts. QR Code facility made operational in the software, which enables to check current status of the case. National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) provides citizens with online information about case filings, case status and electronic copies of orders and judgments from district and subordinate courts that have already been computerized. Information regarding 11.73 crore cases is available on this portal. eCourts services such as details of case registration, cause list, case status, daily orders and final judgments are available to litigants and advocates through eCourts web portal, Judicial Service Centres (JSC) in all computerised courts, eCourts Mobile App, email service, SMS push and pull services. Information Kiosks have been setup at all computerized court complexes for disseminating judicial information related to cause lists and other case related information to the lawyers and litigants. eCourts Project has been consistently amongst the top 5 Mission Mode Projects of country.
- (iii) **Filling up of vacant positions in Supreme Court, High Courts and District and Subordinate Courts:** From 01.05.2014 to 30.06.2019, 31 Judges were appointed in Supreme Court. 454 new Judges were appointed and 366 Additional Judges were made permanent in the High Courts. Sanctioned strength of Judges of High Courts has been increased from 906 in May, 2014 to 1079 currently. Sanctioned and working strength of Judicial Officers in District and Subordinate Courts has been increased as follows:

As on	Sanctioned Strength	Working Strength
31.12.2013	19,518	15,115
04.07.2019	23,235	17,785

- (iv) **Reduction in Pendency through/follow up by Arrears Committees:** Further, in pursuance of resolution passed in Chief Justices' Conference held in April, 2015, Arrears Committees have been set up in High Courts to clear

cases pending for more than five years. Arrears Committees have been set up under District Judges too. Arrears Committee has been constituted in the Supreme Court to formulate steps to reduce pendency of cases in High Courts and District Courts.

- (v) **Emphasis on Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR):** Commercial Courts Act, 2015 (as amended on 20th August, 2018) stipulates mandatory pre-Institution mediation and settlement of commercial disputes. Amendment to the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 has been made by the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Act 2015 for expediting the speedy resolution of disputes by prescribing timelines.
- (vi) **Initiatives to Fast Track Special Type of Cases:** The Fourteenth Finance Commission endorsed the proposal of the Government to strengthen the judicial system in States which included, *inter alia*, establishing Fast Track Courts for cases of heinous crimes; cases involving senior citizens, women, children etc., and urged the State Governments to use the additional fiscal space provided in the form of enhanced tax devolution from 32% to 42% to meet such requirements. At present, 581 such Fast Track Courts are functioning across the country. To fast track criminal cases involving elected MPs/MLAs, twelve (12) Special Courts were set up in eleven (11) States (Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and NCT of Delhi) and proportionate funds have been released to these States by the Government. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018 has been enacted on 11.08.2018 to amend the Indian Penal Code, Indian Evidence Act, 1872, the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012.

Constitution of National Court Management System Committee

2145. SHRIMATI VANDANA CHAVAN: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the National Court Management System Committee under the National Court Management Systems (NCMS) has been constituted;
- (b) if so, the number of meetings and recommendations given by the committee during the last three years and if not, the reasons therefor; and