

**Legal age of marriage for women**

583. SHRI DEREK O'BRIEN: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has set up a taskforce to reconsider legal age of marriage for women; and

(b) if so, the rationale behind this move?

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

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) On the basis of the announcement made by the Hon'ble Finance Minister of India, during her Budget Speech for 2020-21 in Parliament, the Government of India, *vide* notification number S.O. 1736(E), dated the 4 June, 2020 had set up a Task Force to examine the matters pertaining to the age of motherhood, imperatives of lowering Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR), improvement of nutritional levels and related issues.

**Virtual courts in rural areas**

584. SHRI DEREK O'BRIEN: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether courts in rural areas have adequate infrastructure to move to virtual hearing;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Ministry has allocated funds to make the transition to virtual courts in rural areas smoother, if so, the details thereof; and

(d) what other steps, if any, the Ministry has taken to strengthen the IT infrastructure of courts in rural areas?

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

(a) and (b) One video conference equipment each has been provided to all Court Complexes including Taluk Level Court Complexes in rural areas under the Phase II of the e-Courts Project for virtual hearings. To further augment the Video Conferencing infrastructure, the eCommittee of the Supreme Court has approved Video Conferencing

equipment to be provided to 14443 court rooms in these court complexes. The details are given in the Statement (*See* below).

As per information available the number of hearings done by video conferencing from 24.3.2020 till 15.7.2020 by the district and subordinate courts across the country were 1193046.

(c) The Government is implementing the e-Courts Mission Mode Project for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enablement for District and Subordinate Courts across the country in association with the eCommittee, Supreme Court of India. The eCourts Mission Mode Project Phase-II commenced its implementation in 2015. The target set out for computerization of 16845 District and Subordinate Courts has been completed. Against the financial outlay of ₹ 1670 crores for this Phase, the Government has released a sum of ₹ 1424 crores so far to various organizations involved in the implementation of the project.

With a view to handle the COVID-19 challenges better and to make the transition to Virtual Court hearings in rural areas smoother, funds have been allocated by the Department of Justice recently under eCourts Project Phase-II for creating additional infrastructure in the court complexes. ₹ 12.54 crore has been allocated for 235 e-SewaKendras at court complexes to facilitate lawyers and litigants needing assistance ranging from case status, getting judgements/orders, court/case related information and e-filing facilities. ₹5.01 crores has been allocated for providing equipment in Video Conferencing cabins in various court complexes to facilitate virtual hearings. ₹12.12 crores has been allocated for 1732 Help desk counters for e-filing in various court complexes.

(d) Various steps have been taken under e-Courts Mission Mode Project Phase-II. New and user-friendly version of Case Information Software has been developed and deployed at all the computerized District and Subordinate Courts. All stakeholders including judicial officers can access information relating to judicial procedures / decisions of computerized District and Subordinate Courts and High Courts on the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG). Currently case status information in respect of 13.72 crore pending and disposed cases and more than 12.67 crore orders /judgements pertaining to these computerized courts is available on NJDG. The eCourt Services provides citizen-centric services through 7 platforms viz. eCourts Web Portal, eCourts Mobile

App, e-Mail Service, SMS Push and Pull Services, Judicial Service Centres (JSC) and Touch Screen Information Kiosks. The eCourts Services provides details of case registration, cause list, case status, daily orders and final judgement etc. A Sub-Committee consisting of five Judges of the High Courts was constituted by the Chairperson, e-Committee for drafting model rules of Video Conferencing for courts and has been circulated to all the High Courts for their adoption. Similarly, a Sub-Committee consisting of five Judges of the High Courts was constituted to draft model E-Filing Rules during May 2020 which has been circulated to all High Courts for their adoption. A new Software Patch and Court User Manual has been recently developed for COVID-19 Management. This tool has been developed to help in smart scheduling all cases to effectively manage overcrowding in courts. Towards creating awareness and familiarization of advocates on e-filing, eCourt Services and ICT awareness, training programmes have been organized in all Districts in regional languages. Help tutorials, Manuals and Brochures on e-filing have been created in regional languages and made available on the e-filing portal for use of advocates and litigants.

***Statement***

*Fund proposal for VC equipment for Court Rooms*

Sl. No.	High Court	Number of Functioning Court Rooms	Number of VC equipment were already provided	Number of additional equipment to be provided	Total Estimated Cost (In Lac)
A	B	C	D	E	F=Ex20000
1.	Allahabad	2438	150	2288	457.6
2.	Andhra Pradesh	550	212	338	67.6
3.	Bombay	2178	486	1692	338.4
4.	Calcutta	840	88	752	150.4
5.	Chhattisgarh	395	90	305	61
6.	Delhi	479	6	473	94.6
7.	Gauhati	442	194	248	49.6
8.	Gujarat	1078	327	751	150.2

A	B	C	D	E	F=Ex20000
9.	Himachal Pradesh	135	43	92	18.4
10.	Jammu and Kashmir	218	86	132	26.4
11.	Jharkhand	417	28	389	77.8
12.	Karnataka	1029	200	829	165.8
13.	Kerala	508	159	349	69.8
14.	Madhya Pradesh	1274	203	1071	214.2
15.	Madras	1169	267	902	180.4
16.	Manipur	38	37	1	0.2
17.	Meghalaya	36	64	0	0
18.	Odisha	688	141	547	109.4
19.	Patna	1046	76	970	194
20.	Punjab and Haryana	972	118	854	170.8
21.	Rajasthan	1239	238	1001	200.2
22.	Sikkim	21	17	4	0.8
23.	Telangana	440	129	311	62.2
24.	Tripura	78	66	12	2.4
25.	Uttarakhand	184	52	132	26.4
TOTAL		17892	3477	14443	2888.6

Note: Every Court to be equipped with—

- (i) LED display unit (50" or more as per the room requirements) to connect laptop output (Optional).
- (ii) USB PTZ Camera.
- (iii) External USB Speaker cum mike Estimated Cost per Court ₹20,000/-.

#### Appointment of panel lawyers

585. SHRI DEREK O'BRIEN: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

- (a) the system adopted by Government in appointing its panel lawyers; and