

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF LAW & JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 601

ANSWERED ON 07.12.2023

IMPROVING THE LEGAL INFRASTRUCTURE

601. # DR. LAXMIKANT BAJPAYEE:

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

- (a) the steps taken by Government to improve the legal infrastructure, provide timely justice and reduce the pending cases in courts;
- (b) the details of the schemes of Government to make the courts more accessible to the common people;
- (c) whether Government has started any project to digitise the data of the courts; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE; MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE

(SHRI ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL)

(a) to (d): National Mission for Justice Delivery and Legal Reforms was set up in August, 2011 with the twin objectives of increasing access by reducing delays and arrears in the system and enhancing accountability through structural changes and by setting performance standards and capacities. The Mission has been pursuing a co-ordinated approach for phased liquidation of arrears and pendency in judicial administration, which, inter-alia, involves better infrastructure for courts including computerization, increase in strength of subordinate judiciary, policy and

legislative measures in the areas prone to excessive litigation, re-engineering of court procedure for quick disposal of cases and emphasis on human resource development.

The primary responsibility for development of infrastructure facilities for judiciary rests with the State Governments. However, the Government is sensitive to the needs of building better infrastructure for the judicial officers of the lower and subordinate judiciary. To supplement the resources of the State Governments/UTs, the Union Government has been implementing a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) for the Development of Infrastructure Facilities for the Judiciary since 1993-94 by providing financial assistance to them in the prescribed fund-sharing pattern between the Centre and States.

The scheme covers the construction of court buildings and residential accommodations for judicial officers of the district and subordinate judiciary. From the year 2021, besides court halls and residential units, new components of digital computer room, lawyers' halls and toilet complexes have also been added under the ambit of the above CSS. A sum of Rs. 10403 crores has been released under the Scheme so far since its inception, out of which Rs. 6959.16 crores (67%) has been released since 2014-15. The scheme has been extended from 2021-22 to 2025-26 with a budgetary outlay of Rs. 9000 crores including central share of Rs. 5307.00 crore for this scheme.

Government has been regularly filling up the vacancies in higher judiciary. From 01.05.2014 to 13.11.2023, 61 Judges were appointed in Supreme Court. 964

new Judges were appointed and 694 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 1114 currently sanctioned and working strength of judicial officers in district and subordinate courts has increased as follow:

As on	Sanctioned Strength	Working Strength
31.12.2013	19,518	15,115
10.11.2023	25,423	20,026

However, filling up of vacancies in subordinate judiciary falls within the domain of the State Governments and high courts concerned.

Under the aegis of the Fourteenth Finance Commission, the government has established Fast Track Courts for dealing with cases of heinous crimes; cases involving senior citizens, women, children etc. As of 30.09.2023, 848 Fast Track Courts are functional for heinous crimes, crimes against women, and children etc. To fast-track criminal cases involving elected MPs / MLAs, ten (10) Special Courts are functional in nine (9) States/UTs. Further, the central government has approved a scheme for setting up 1023 Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) across the country for the expeditious disposal of pending cases of Rape under IPC and crimes under POCSO Act. As of 30.09.2023, a total of 761 FTSCs including 414 exclusive POCSO (ePOCSO) Courts are functional in 30 States/UTs across the country which have disposed of more than 1,95,000 cases.

Lok Adalats have gained ground across the country as a viable Alternative Disputes Resolution Mechanism available to common people. It is a forum where the disputes/ cases pending in the court of law or at pre-litigation stage are settled/ compromised amicably. Under the Legal Services Authorities (LSA) Act, 1987, an

award made by a LokAdalat is deemed to be a decree of a civil court and is final and binding on all parties and no appeal lies against thereto before any court. LokAdalat is not a permanent establishment. National LokAdalats are organized simultaneously in all Taluks, Districts and High Courts on a pre-fixed date. The details of the case disposed off in National LokAdalats during the last three years are as under:-

Years	Pre-litigation Cases	Pending Cases	Grand Total
2021	72,06,294	55,81,743	1,27,88,037
2022	3,10,15,215	1,09,10,795	4,19,26,010
2023 (upto September)	4,94,88,552	1,06,83,225	6,01,71,777
Total	8,77,10,061	2,71,75,763	11,48,85,824

Besides, the Government launched the Tele-Law programme in 2017, which has emerged as a effective and reliable e-interface platform connecting the needy and disadvantaged sections seeking legal advice and consultation with panel lawyers via video conferencing, telephone and chat facilities available at the Common Service Centres (CSCs) situated in Gram Panchayat and through Tele-Law mobile App.

***Percentage Wise break-up of Tele – Law Data**

30 th November, 2023	Cases Registered	% Break Up	Advice Enabled	%Break Up
Gender Wise				
Female	21,78,743	35.72	21,49,485	35.69
Male	39,20,326	64.28	38,73,737	64.31

Total	60,99,069	-	60,23,222	-
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A path breaking initiative of the Department of Justice has been the eCourts Mission Mode Project which is a Central Sector Scheme being implementing in close association e-Committee, Supreme Court of India. It is under implementation for Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) development of the District & Subordinate courts.

Phase I (2011-15) was aimed at basic computerization of courts and providing local network connectivity. It was concluded in 2015 in which 14,249 Court sites were computerized. Phase II of the project started in 2015 in which 18,735 District & Subordinate courts have been computerized. Some of the digital initiatives taken by Government under the eCourts Project to make justice accessible and available are as follows:

- i. Under the Wide Area Network (WAN) Project, connectivity has been provided to 99.4% (2977 out of earmarked 2992) of total Court Complexes across India.
- ii. National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) is a database of orders, judgments, and cases, created as an online platform under the eCourts Project. Litigants can access case status information in respect of over 24.35 crore cases and more than 23.80 crore orders / judgments (as on 01.11.2023).
- iii. Case Information Software (CIS) based on customized Free and Open-Source Software (FOSS) has been developed.

- iv. As part of eCourts project, 7 platforms have been created to provide real time information on case status, cause lists, judgements etc. to lawyers/Litigants through SMS Push and Pull (2,00,000 SMS sent daily), Email (2,50,000 sent daily), multilingual and tactile eCourts services Portal (35 lakh hits daily), JSC (Judicial Service centres) and Info Kiosks. In addition, Electronic Case Management Tools (ECMT) have been created with Mobile App for lawyers (total 2.03 crore downloads till 30.09.2023) and JustIS app for judges (19,405 downloads till 31.10.2023).
- v. Video Conferencing has emerged as the viable medium for better and economical delivery of justice, apart from ensuring greater transparency. The High Courts heard 79,92,249 cases (totaling 2.88 crore) till 30.09.2023 using video conferencing system. The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India held 4,82,941 hearings through video conferencing till 15.05.2023.
- vi. Live Streaming of court proceedings has been started in High Courts of Gujarat, Gauhati, Orissa, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Patna, Madhya Pradesh & Constitutional Bench of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India thus allowing media and other interested persons to join the proceedings.
- vii. 25 Virtual Courts in 20 States/UTs have been operationalized to handle traffic challan cases.
- viii. New e-filing system (version 3.0) has been rolled out for the electronic filing of legal papers with upgraded features.

- ix. To bridge the digital divide, 869 eSewa Kendras have been rolled out with the intention of facilitating the lawyer or litigant who needs any kind of assistance ranging from information to facilitation and eFiling.
- x. A new “Judgment Search” portal has been started with features such as search by Bench, Case Type, Case Number, Year, Petitioner/ Respondent Name, Judge Name, Act, Section, Decision: From Date, To Date and Full Text Search. This facility is being provided free of cost to all.
- xi. LED Display Message Sign Board System have been installed. A total of 39 Justice Clocks in 25 High Courts has already been installed. Virtual Justice Clock is also hosted on the portal.

Recently, in September 2023, the Union Cabinet approved eCourts Phase-III with a budgetary outlay of Rs.7,210 crore, in which one of the important component is digitisation of entire court record - both legacy court records and pending cases at an estimated outlay of Rs. 2038.40 crore, that would pave the way for end-to-end digital and paperless courts facilitated through saturation of all court complexes with e-Sewa Kendras for universalizing e-filing of court cases. The eCommittee, Supreme Court of India had constituted a sub-committee for preparing a Digital Preservation Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for scanning, storage, retrieval, digitization of court records and preservation of legacy data of the Judiciary. The said SOP have been framed and circulated by eCommittee, Supreme Court of India to all High Courts for better implementation of digitization of court records and are available on the website of eCommittee, Supreme Court of India.