

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE
(DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE)

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No-755
ANSWERED ON- 08/02/2024

FACILITIES FOR E-HEARING

755. SMT. SUMITRA BALMIK:

Will the Minister of *Law and Justice* be pleased to state:

the details of steps which have been taken to increase the IT infrastructure to facilitate e-hearing in various courts?

ANSWER

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)

As part of the National eGovernance Plan, the eCourts Mission Mode Project is under implementation for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) development of the Indian Judiciary based on the “National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology in the Indian Judiciary”. eCourts project is being implemented by Department of Justice in association with eCommittee Supreme Court of India. Phase I of the eCourts project was implemented between 2011-2015. Phase II of the project extended from 2015-2023.

Under eCourts Mission Mode Project, provision of video conferencing facility is one of the major components. During Phase I of the project, video conferencing facility was operationalised between 488 court complexes & 342 corresponding jails while in Phase II of the project, VC facility have been enabled between 3240 court complexes and corresponding 1272 jails. In eCourts Phase II of the project, one video conference equipment each has been provided to all Court Complexes including taluk level courts and funds have been sanctioned for additional VC equipment for 14,443 court rooms (State-Wise details attached at Annexure I). Funds for setting

up 2506 VC Cabins have been made available (State-Wise details attached at Annexure II). Additional 1500 VC Licenses have been acquired to facilitate e-hearing.

Video conferencing emerged as the mainstay of the Courts during the Covid lockdown period as physical hearings and normal court proceedings in the congregational mode were not possible. To bring uniformity and standardization in the conduct of VC, an overarching order was passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India on 6th April 2020 which gave legal sanctity and validity to the court hearings done through VC. Further, VC rules were framed by a 5-Judge Committee which was circulated to all the High Courts for adoption after local contextualization and are available on the website of eCommittee, Supreme Court of India. All the High Courts have implemented Video Conferencing rules. Since Covid lockdown started, the District & Subordinate courts heard 2,17,99,976 cases while the High Courts heard 82,76,595 cases (totalling 3 crore) till 31.12.2023 using video conferencing. The Supreme Court held 6,24,427 hearings till 04.01.2024 since the beginning of lockdown period, making it a world leader.

The Cabinet on 13.09.2023 has approved eCourts Phase-III with a budgetary outlay of Rs.7,210 crore out of which Rs. 228.48 crore has been allocated towards further enhancing and upgrading the available infrastructure of video conferencing in various courts.

Further, in the case of Sarvesh Mathur vs The Registrar General, High Court of Punjab & Haryana (WP (CrI.) No. 351/2023), Hon'ble Supreme Court has passed an order (dated 06.10.2023) that no High Court shall deny access to video conferencing facilities or hearing through the hybrid mode to any member of the Bar or litigant desirous of availing of such a facility. Moreover, all State Governments shall provide necessary funds to the High Courts to put into place the facilities requisite for that purpose within the time frame indicated above.

Annexure-I

Statement referred to in reply of Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 755 for 08/02/2024 regarding facilities for e-hearing. High Court wise details of VC equipment for Court Rooms* across the country is as under:

S.No	High Court	Number of Functioning Court Rooms	Number of VC equipment were already provided	Number of additional equipment to be provided
A	B	C	D	E
1	Allahabad	2438	150	2288
2	Andhra Pradesh	550	212	338
3	Bombay	2178	486	1692
4	Calcutta	840	88	752
5	Chhattisgarh	395	90	305
6	Delhi	479	6	473
7	Gauhati	442	194	248
8	Gujarat	1078	327	751
9	Himachal Pradesh	135	43	92
10	Jammu & Kashmir	218	86	132
11	Jharkhand	417	28	389
12	Karnataka	1029	200	829
13	Kerala	508	159	349
14	Madhya Pradesh	1274	203	1071
15	Madras	1169	267	902
16	Manipur	38	37	1
17	Meghalaya	36	64	0
18	Orissa	688	141	547
19	Patna	1046	76	970
20	Punjab & Haryana	972	118	854
21	Rajasthan	1239	238	1001
22	Sikkim	21	17	4
23	Telangana	440	129	311
24	Tripura	78	66	12
25	Uttarakhand	184	52	132
	Total	17892	3477	14443

*Total estimated cost for VC equipment for 14443 court rooms is Rs.28.886 crore

Annexure-II

Statement referred to in reply of Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 755 for 08/02/2024 regarding facilities for e-hearing. High Courts wise details for VC Cabins and Connectivity in Court Complexes* across the country is as under:

S.No.	High Court	Number of VC Cabins
A	B	C
1	Allahabad	438
2	Andhra Pradesh	57
3	Bombay	271
4	Calcutta	128
5	Chhattisgarh	58
6	Delhi	103
7	Gauhati	77
8	Gujarat	94
9	Himachal Pradesh	18
10	Jammu & Kashmir	34
11	Jharkhand	78
12	Karnataka	128
13	Kerala	52
14	Madhya Pradesh	169
15	Madras	140
16	Manipur	12
17	Meghalaya	11
18	Orissa	84
19	Patna	171
20	Punjab & Haryana	135
21	Rajasthan	143
22	Sikkim	11
23	Telangana	52
24	Tripura	17
25	Uttarakhand	25
Total		2506

*Total estimated cost for equipment for VC cabin is Rs.5.012 crore