

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2048
ANSWERED ON 08/08/2024

Accessibility of justice to socially and economically backward classes

2048. Shri Ryaga Krishnaiah:

Shri Golla Baburao:

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

- (a) whether any efforts are being made by Government to ensure easy, accessible and affordable judicial system for the people belonging to socially and economically backward classes;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (c) whether the court premises and proceedings have become more accessible for Persons with Benchmark Disabilities, if so, the details thereof and if not, the manner in which Government proposes to do the same?

ANSWER

**MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE; AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS
(SHRI ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL)**

(a) & (b): The efforts made by the Government to ensure an easy, accessible, and affordable judicial system for people belonging to socially and economically backward classes are as follows:

- i. The Legal Services Authorities (LSA) Act, 1987 has been enacted to provide free and competent legal services to socially and economically backward classes, including beneficiaries covered under Section 12 of the Act which includes - (a) a member of a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe; (b) a victim of trafficking in human beings or begar as referred to in article 23 of the Constitution; (c) a woman or a child; (d) a person with disability (e) a person under circumstances of underserved want such as being a victim of a mass disaster, ethnic, violence, caste atrocity, flood, drought, earthquake or industrial disaster; or (f) an industrial workman; or (g) in custody, (h) in receipt of annual income less than rupees nine thousand or such other higher amount

as may be prescribed by the State Government to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities.

- ii. Under the aegis of the Legal Services Authorities Act, Lok Adalats are organized to promote justice on the basis of equal opportunities. Lok Adalats provide an affordable, accessible, and speedy justice delivery system. Legal services institutions have been set up from the Taluk Court level to the Supreme Court for this purpose.
- iii. 18.86 lakh persons have been provided with free legal services, and 12.08 crore cases (pending in courts and disputes at the pre-litigation stage) have been settled through Lok Adalats during the period from April 2023 to June 2024.
- iv. In addition, the Government has been implementing the Nyaya Bandhu (Pro Bono Legal Services) program to link persons eligible for free legal aid under Section 12 of the LSA Act, 1987, with pro-bono lawyers. 11,227 pro bono advocates have been registered under the program, and 3,474 cases have been registered by the beneficiaries.
- v. The Tele-law program, run by the Government, provides legal advice to the public, including persons entitled to free legal aid under Section 12 of the LSA Act, 1987, at the pre-litigation stage by Panel Lawyers through the Common Service Centers (CSCs) at the Panchayats. Tele-law has served more than 93.19 lakh beneficiaries till date.

(c): The responsibility for developing infrastructure facilities, including ensuring accessibility for persons with benchmark disabilities, primarily rests with the respective State Governments. The Central Government supplements the resources of the States through the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) for Judicial Infrastructure in District and Subordinate Courts. Under the CSS for the development of infrastructure facilities for the Judiciary, funds are provided for constructing court buildings, residential units, lawyers' halls, toilet complexes, and digital computer rooms for the convenience of lawyers and litigants. However, funds are released to the States/UTs only when their project proposals comply with accessibility norms for persons with disabilities, as laid down by CPWD/Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. A certificate to this effect is also required from the States as part of the CSS guidelines. Under the Scheme, the States have the liberty to provide additional facilities, including those that facilitate easy accessibility for persons with benchmark disabilities to the court premises.

The eCourts Integrated Mission Mode Project is a national eGovernance initiative aimed at facilitating faster case disposal and enhancing accessibility to the judicial proceedings. The eCourt project addresses accessibility issues with various digital interventions involving process reforms, advanced technology features, and support systems. These features remove structural and systemic barriers, facilitating easy access to services, particularly for persons with disabilities. The eCourts Services Portal and Mobile App offer 24/7 access to case status, orders, and judgments, which helps individuals avoid physical visits to courts. ePayments enable electronic payment of court fees and fines, reducing the need for in-person transactions. Virtual Courts handle traffic violation cases online, operational in 28 courts across 21 States/UTs, eliminating the need for physical presence. Video conferencing allows online trial attendance, reducing travel costs and time. Live streaming provides remote access to court proceedings for those unable to attend in person. eFiling eliminates the need for physical document submission, besides reducing the errors. eSewa Kendras, with 1072 centers operational, offer judicial services, especially benefiting those need help in accessing the services and those without technology access. The NJDG platform increases transparency by making case information publicly accessible, and NSTEP offers real-time status updates for process serving, enhancing accessibility for all, including those with disabilities. These initiatives remove structural barriers, making court procedures more accessible, reducing associated costs and time, and creating systematic changes to benefit persons with disabilities.
