

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE
(DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE)
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- 1244
ANSWERED ON 01/08/2024

eCOURTS PROJECT PHASE III

1244. SHRI KAPIL SIBAL :

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

- (a) whether Government has proposed to develop Phase III of the eCourt Project for operation in various courts, including High Courts and District Courts across the country;
- (b) if so, the State-wise details of progress made there under, including establishment of virtual benches of the High Courts;
- (c) whether Government has conducted an assessment of usefulness of Phase I and Phase II in enabling citizens' access to justice, if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) whether Government has formulated any SOPs for Phase III, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

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): On 13.09.2023, the Union Cabinet has approved Phase-III of the eCourts Project for the ICT development of the Indian Judiciary, at an outlay of Rs.7,210 crore for a period of 4 years starting from 2023. Taking the gains of Phase-I and Phase-II to the next level, e-Courts Phase-III aims to usher in a regime of maximum ease of justice by moving towards digital, online and paperless courts through digitization of the entire court records including legacy records and by bringing in universalization of e-Filing/ e-Payments through saturation of all court complexes with e-Sewa Kendras. The eCourts Project Phase-III intends to put in place intelligent smart systems enabling data-based decision making for judges and registries while scheduling or prioritizing cases. The main objective of the Phase-III is to create a unified technology platform for the judiciary, thus providing a seamless and paperless interface

between the courts, the litigants and other stakeholders. The project envisages a smoother user experience by building a “smart” ecosystem. The eCourts Phase-III may thus prove to be a game changer in ensuring ease of justice by making the Court experience convenient, inexpensive and hassle free to all the citizens of the country. The various components of eCourts Phase-III includes digitization of 3108 crore pages of legacy records, cloud infrastructure, 4400 fully functional eSewa Kendras in all court complexes, and use of emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning, etc.

(b): Under the eCourts Project, funds are released by Department of Justice on the recommendation of eCommittee, Supreme Court of India to the High Courts and not to specific States, as High Courts are the implementing agency. The details of funds allocated under eCourts Phase III along with the expenditure incurred in FY 2023-24 and FY 2024-25 is as under:

| (Amount in Rs. Cr) | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|--------|-------|------------|-------|---------------|
| Financial year | Funds allocated | Expenditure incurred | | | | | Total |
| | | High Courts* | NICSI | BSNL | eCommittee | Misc. | |
| 2023-24 | 825.00 | 611.88 | 101.26 | 54.79 | 0.24 | 0.07 | 768.25 |
| 2024-25 | 1500.00 | 464.98 | - | - | 0.75 | - | 465.74 |

* The High Court wise release of funds for FY 2023-24 and FY 2024-25 is at Annexure I.

Further, the establishment of Virtual Bench is an administrative matter which falls strictly within the purview and domain of the respective State Governments and the concerned High Court. The Central Government as such has no direct role to play in the matter.

(c): Third-Party Evaluation has been conducted by National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) for eCourts Project Phase II and the key findings are as follows:

- The eCourts Project has led to an increase in the total number of cases filed in the courts and helped with easier access to information through online portals and mobile applications.
- A high level of satisfaction was expressed with the access and quality of various ICT facilities provided under the eCourts project.
- The procurement process by the eCommittee, Supreme Court of India is well planned and all payments are received on time.

- Judges are satisfied with the improvement in court time management and transparency of information that has resulted from implementation of eCourts project.
- 90-100% of sample courts have provision of computers hardware and have installed Case Information System (CIS).
- High proportion of judges and court officials had received training in the use of CIS, NJDG and hardware. Almost all respondents were of the opinion that the trainings were very useful.
- Services like Case Information System (CIS), JustIS mobile app and The National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) website are used very often and have an easy user interface.
- Majority of judges and court official feel that eCourts project has reduced pendency of cases because of easy access to case laws resulting in better research.
- The pendency of cases over 5 years have displayed slow but steady decline over the years.
- Since 2017, a sharp increase in the clearance rate of district courts is also noticed.

(d): eCourts project is being implemented in association with eCommittee, Supreme Court of India, presently headed by Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India, and Department of Justice, in a decentralized manner through the respective High Courts. The eCommittee is responsible for the policy planning, strategic direction and guidance for implementation of eCourts project and works in collaborative partnership with Department of Justice, which is responsible for providing necessary funding for the project.

The Detailed Project Report of the e-Courts Project Phase-III was approved by the eCommittee on 21st October 2022 which formed the basis for approval of Phase-III by the Union Cabinet on September 13th, 2023. In addition, the eCommittee has issued various Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for various activities like Video Conferencing, e-Filing, Digitization, etc. and circulated to all the High Courts for their guidance.

Annexure I

Statement referred to in reply of Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1244 for 01/08/2024 regarding eCourts Project Phase III. The details of High Court wise release of funds in FY 2023-24 and FY 2024-25 is as under:

| | | Phase III | |
|--------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| S. No. | High Courts | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
| | | Fund Released (In Rs. Cr.) | Fund Released (In Rs. Cr.) |
| 1 | Allahabad | 95.87 | 34.94 |
| 2 | Andhra Pradesh | 25.44 | 17.82 |
| 3 | Bombay | 69.54 | 48.36 |
| 4 | Calcutta | 16.73 | 31.54 |
| 5 | Chhattisgarh | 16.27 | 18.28 |
| 6 | Delhi | 17.89 | 15.09 |
| 7 | Gauhati (Arunachal Pradesh) | 2.03 | 2.59 |
| 8 | Gauhati (Assam) | 24.97 | 9.05 |
| 9 | Gauhati (Mizoram) | 3.12 | 1.88 |
| 10 | Gauhati (Nagaland) | 1.79 | 1.29 |
| 11 | Gujarat | 27.72 | 39.98 |
| 12 | Himachal Pradesh | 6.06 | 4.36 |
| 13 | Jammu & Kashmir | 6.52 | 5.29 |
| 14 | Jharkhand | 10.59 | 8.92 |
| 15 | Karnataka | 32.37 | 22.87 |
| 16 | Kerala | 15.40 | 10.00 |
| 17 | Madhya Pradesh | 22.90 | 28.99 |
| 18 | Madras | 90.69 | 41.29 |
| 19 | Manipur | 11.12 | 2.72 |
| 20 | Meghalaya | 3.33 | 2.17 |
| 21 | Orissa | 6.77 | 17.25 |
| 22 | Patna | 32.43 | 37.44 |
| 23 | Punjab & Haryana | 14.58 | 4.71 |
| 24 | Rajasthan | 19.80 | 30.81 |
| 25 | Sikkim | 1.71 | 1.25 |
| 26 | Telangana | 22.03 | 16.39 |
| 27 | Tripura | 0.53 | 2.17 |
| 28 | Uttarakhand | 13.68 | 7.42 |
| Total | | 611.88 | 464.98 |