

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION No- 2040

ANSWERED ON- 12/12/2024

eCOURTS PROJECT PHASE III IMPLEMENTATION

2040. DR. SYED NASEER HUSSAIN :

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

- (a) the current status of the eCourts Phase III Project implementation, including specific milestones achieved to date;
- (b) whether any region-specific challenges have been encountered, particularly in rural or under-resourced areas; and
- (c) the measures being taken to address them?

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) to (c): The eCourts Mission Mode Project is under implementation for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) development of the Indian Judiciary. The Department of Justice, Government of India, is implementing eCourts Project in close coordination with the eCommittee of Supreme Court of India, in a decentralized manner, through the respective High Courts. The eCourts Phase III (2023-2027) has been approved by the Union Cabinet in Sep'2023 at an outlay of ₹7,210 crore, which is over four times the funding for Phase II. The project envisages various new digital initiatives, such as establishment of Digital and Paperless Courts that aim to bring court proceedings under a digital format, digitization of court records (both legacy records and pending cases), expansion of video conferencing facilities to courts, jails and hospitals, scope of online courts beyond adjudication of traffic violations, saturation of all court complexes with eSewa kendras, state of the art and latest Cloud based data repository for easy retrieval and supporting the digitized court records, software applications, live streaming, and electronic evidence etc., use of emerging

technologies like Artificial Intelligence and its subsets like Optical Character Recognition (OCR) etc. for analysis of case pendency, forecasting future litigation, etc. Thus, the efforts of the Government of integrating technology with the governance may prove to be a game changer in eCourts Phase III, ensuring ease of justice by making the Court experience convenient, inexpensive and hassle free to all the citizens of the country. Under eCourts Phase III, an amount of Rs. 825 crores was allotted in FY 23-24 and expenditure of Rs 768.25 Cr (93.11%) was made. During FY 24-25, an allocation of Rs 1500 Cr. in the BE has been received, of which Rs. 1232.17Cr. has already been released to the various High Courts.

The eCourts Mission Mode Project, a Central Sector Scheme fully funded by the Government of India, aims to universalize various e-initiatives with a view to make justice accessible for all. Some of these initiatives are delineated below:-

i. Under the Wide Area Network (WAN) Project, connectivity has been provided to 99.5% of total Court Complexes across India with 10 Mbps to 100 Mbps bandwidth speed.

ii. National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) is a database of orders, judgments, and cases, created as an online platform under the eCourts Project. It provides information relating to judicial proceedings/decisions of all computerized district and subordinate courts of the country. Litigants can access case information and more than 27.64 crore orders / judgments (as on date).

iii. Case Information Software (CIS) based on customized Free and Open- Source Software (FOSS) has been developed. Currently CIS National Core Version 3.2 is being implemented in District Courts and the CIS National Core Version 1.0 is being implemented for the High Courts.

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 (Over 4 lakhs SMS sent daily), Email (Over 6 lakhs sent daily), multilingual 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 2.69 crore downloads till 31.10.2024) and JustIS app for judges (20,719 downloads till 31.10.2024).

v. India has emerged as a global leader in conducting court hearing through Video Conferencing. The District & Subordinate courts heard 2,48,21,789 cases while the

High Courts heard 90,21,629 cases (totalling 3.38 crore) till 31.10.2024 using video conferencing system. The Supreme Court of India held 7,54,443 hearings from 23.03.2020 to 04.06.2024 through video conferencing. VC facilities have also been enabled between 3240 court complexes and corresponding 1272 jails.

vi. Live Streaming of court proceedings has been started in the High Courts of Gujarat, Gauhati, Orissa, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Patna, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Calcutta & the Supreme Court of India, thus allowing media and other interested persons to join the proceedings.

vii. Virtual Courts in 21 States/UTs have been operationalized to handle traffic challan cases. Over 6 crore cases (6,00,29,546) have been handled by these virtual courts and in more than 62 lakhs (62,97,544) cases, online fine of more than Rs. 649.81 crores have been realized till 31.10.2024.

viii. e-filing system (version 3.0) has been rolled out with upgraded features for lawyers to access and upload documents related to the cases from any location 24X7.

ix. e-Filing of cases requires the option for electronic payment of fees which includes court fees, fines and penalties which are directly payable to the Consolidated Fund. Therefore e-Payment system was launched for hassle free transfer of fee etc.

x. Digitization is critical to the eCourts project to provide various citizen centric services to litigants and lawyers. It covers digitization of the entire court record - both legacy records and fresh filing of cases. It is at the core of the ICT enablement initiatives in the judicial domain and for effective hearing of court proceedings in virtual or paperless courts, availability of court records in digitised form is imperative. Over more than 406.48 crore pages (4,06,48,37,964) of court records has been digitized in the High Courts and District Courts as on 31.10.2024.

xi. To bridge the digital divide, 1394 eSewa Kendras (Facilitation Centres) in District Courts and 36 eSewa Kendras (Facilitation Centres) in High Courts have been rolled out to provide citizen centric services to lawyers and litigants. It also assists the litigants in accessing online e-Courts services and acts as a saviour for those who cannot afford the technology or are located in far-flung areas. It also aids to addresses the challenges caused by illiteracy among citizens at large. These also provide benefits in saving time, avoidance of exertion, travelling long distances, and saving cost by offering facilities of

e- filing of cases across the country, to conduct the hearing virtually, scanning, accessing e-Courts services etc.

xii. National Service and Tracking of Electronic Processes (NSTEP) has been launched for technology enabled process serving and issuing of summons. It has currently been implemented in 28 States/ UTs.

xiii. 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.

xiv. As a part of the project, 605 trainings and awareness programmes on the ICT services provided under the eCourts project has been conducted from May 2020 to October 2024 covering nearly 6,64,144 stakeholders, including High Court Judges, Judges of the District Judiciary, Court Staff, Master Trainers among Judges/DSA, Technical Staff of High Courts, and Advocates.

As such, no region specific challenges have been encountered particularly in rural or under resource areas in terms of implementation of eCourt project. It is, however, envisaged that the eCourt project will go a long way in bridging the digital divide and resolve the problem of digital exclusion by multiple initiatives, which are to be implemented across all States uniformly.
