

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

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 1417
TO BE ANSWERED ON FRIDAY, THE 28th JULY, 2023

Court Hearings during COVID-19 Lockdown

1417. SHRI MOHANBHAI KALYANJI KUNDARIYA:
SHRI DIPSINH SHANKARSINH RATHOD:

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

- (a) whether the country has been appreciated globally for conducting the hearings of courts during the COVID-19 lockdown and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the details of hearings conducted by the courts during the said lockdown, court-wise;
- (c) the methods or mediums that were utilized for conducting these hearings; and
- (d) the details of expenditure incurred by courts in conducting the said hearings, court-wise?

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)**

(a) & (b) : 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. During the covid period, the case clearance rate in 2020 for District & Subordinate Courts was 61.47% and it rose to 80.22% in 2021 due to robust ICT infrastructure, thus making India a global leader in conducting court hearing through Video Conferencing. Since Covid lockdown started, the District & Subordinate courts heard 1,98,67,081 cases while the High Courts heard 78,69,708 cases (totalling 2.77 crore) till

30.06.2023 using video conferencing. The Supreme Court held 4,82,941 hearings till 15.05.2023 since the beginning of lockdown period. The court-wise details of virtual hearings conducted since Covid-19 has been attached at Annexure-I. To bring about 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. One video conference equipment each has been provided to all Court Complexes including taluk level courts and additionally funds have been sanctioned for additional VC equipment for 14,443 court rooms. Funds for setting up 2506 VC Cabins have been made available. Additional 1500 VC Licenses have been acquired. VC facilities are already enabled between 3240 court complexes and corresponding 1272 jails.

(c) : Holding of court proceedings is an administrative matter and falls strictly under the domain of judiciary. It is for courts to decide whether court proceedings are to be held physically or online. The Courts across the country are presently using various video conferencing platforms such as Vidyo, Jitsi Meet, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Cisco WebEx etc. to conduct virtual hearings through video conferencing.

(d): In the Phase-II of the eCourts Project, out of total outlay of Rs. 1670 crore, the Government has released a sum of Rs. 1668.43 crore as on 31.03.2022 to various organizations involved in the implementation of the project. This includes a sum of Rs. 111.29 crores released for installation of video conferencing infrastructure such as video conferencing equipment for court rooms, VC Cabins, VC Licenses and Document Visualizers, etc in Courts and Jails.

Annexure-I

Statement referred to in reply of Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. for 28/07/2023 regarding Court Hearings during Covid-19 lockdown. The court-wise details of virtual hearings conducted since Covid-19 are as under:

Number of cases dealt with virtual hearings in High Courts and District Courts as on 30 June 2023				
S. No.	High Court	High Courts	District Courts	Grand Total
1	Allahabad	241609	4715226	4956835
2	Andhra Pradesh	380257	1416538	1796795
3	Bombay	41058	103510	144568
4	Calcutta	142353	84539	226892
5	Chhattisgarh	103323	51560	154883
6	Delhi	318964	4725322	5044286
7	Gauhati – Arunachal Pradesh	2295	8128	10423
8	Gauhati – Assam	266221	366667	632888
9	Gauhati – Mizoram	3963	13268	17231
10	Gauhati - Nagaland	945	678	1623
11	Gujarat	388945	194963	583908
12	Himachal Pradesh	183911	124491	308402
13	Jammu & Kashmir	258457	477088	735545
14	Jharkhand	219493	652867	872360
15	Karnataka	1229767	130114	1359881
16	Kerala	161911	560308	722219
17	Madhya Pradesh	671241	826174	1497415
18	Madras	1432188	376473	1808661
19	Manipur	38695	15288	53983
20	Meghalaya	3735	34301	38036
21	Orissa	301492	260759	562251
22	Patna	277203	2245253	2522456
23	Punjab & Haryana	581047	2041363	2622410
24	Rajasthan	231257	181705	412962
25	Sikkim	487	13510	13997
26	Telangana	299031	190327	489358
27	Tripura	10606	14254	24860
28	Uttarakhand	79254	42407	121661
	TOTAL	7869708	19867081	27736789