

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

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 1257
TO BE ANSWERED ON FRIDAY, THE 9th FEBRUARY, 2024

Infrastructure in District Courts

1257. SHRI MANNE SRINIVAS REDDY:

SHRI KANUMURU RAGHU RAMAKRISHNA RAJU:

Will the MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that legal proceedings in the city's district courts are being hampered by a scarcity of equipment for hybrid hearing and infrastructure, if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor, State/court-wise;
- (b) whether several Advocates/Judges are seeking appropriate infrastructure for smooth functioning of hybrid hearings particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the details of the courts which allowed parties in a litigation to argue via video conferencing, court/State-wise; and
- (d) the corrective steps being taken in this regard till now along with funds sanctioned/spent therefor, court/State-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) to (d): 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 component. 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.

In Phase II of the project, eSewa Kendras have been established in High Courts and District Courts across the country. These centers are located in the court complexes and have been established to bridge the digital divide and extend assistance to lawyers and litigants. These Kendras aim to serve as a one-stop centre offering free of cost information on court cases/orders/judgments, facilitation of court related matters, video conferencing facility and e-filing services, particularly benefiting those who may lack access to technology or reside in remote areas. As on 31.12.2023, a total of 880 e-Sewa Kendras has been established nationwide, underscoring the positive impact of this initiative in providing valuable services to legal practitioners and litigants. Under Phase III of the Project, for bridging the digital divide, provision of saturation of all court complexes comprising 4400 e-Sewa Kendras has been made with a budgetary outlay of Rs. 394.48 crore.

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 (High Courts and district courts wise details on number of cases dealt using video conferencing attached at Annexure III). The Supreme Court held 6,24,427 hearings till 04.01.2024 since the beginning of lockdown period, making it a world leader. In Phase-III of the Project, 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 (Crl.) 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 have been directed to provide necessary funds to the High Courts to put into place the requisite VC facilities.

Annexure-I

Statement referred to in reply of Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1257 for 09/02/2024 regarding infrastructure in district courts. 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.28.886crore

Annexure-II

Statement referred to in reply of Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1257 for 09/02/2024 regarding infrastructure in district courts. 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

Annexure-III

Statement referred to in reply of Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1257 for 09/02/2024 regarding infrastructure in district courts.High Courts and district courts wise details on number of cases dealt using video conferencing across the country as on 31.12.2023 is as under:

Number of cases dealt with (virtual hearings) on video conferencing in High Courts and District Courts as on 31st December 2023				
S. No.	High Court	High Courts	District Courts	Grand Total
1	Allahabad	243581	5381161	5624742
2	Andhra Pradesh	390472	1423856	1814328
3	Bombay	48660	134931	183591
4	Calcutta	146925	87131	234056
5	Chhattisgarh	103554	158365	261919
6	Delhi	319540	5072149	5391689
7	Gauhati – Arunachal Pradesh	2327	8146	10473
8	Gauhati – Assam	266358	406866	673224
9	Gauhati – Mizoram	3965	13268	17233
10	Gauhati - Nagaland	976	737	1713
11	Gujarat	395254	200449	595703
12	Himachal Pradesh	183975	181463	365438
13	Jammu & Kashmir	259521	502761	762282
14	Jharkhand	220725	665438	886163
15	Karnataka	1239626	140745	1380371
16	Kerala	163639	583517	747156
17	Madhya Pradesh	671777	898771	1570548
18	Madras	1450678	387133	1837811
19	Manipur	47972	15399	63371
20	Meghalaya	4552	41936	46488
21	Orissa	316542	277801	594343
22	Patna	277203	2423727	2700930
23	Punjab & Haryana	586805	2320628	2907433
24	Rajasthan	234464	191314	425778
25	Sikkim	529	14371	14900
26	Telangana	588797	191104	779901
27	Tripura	21761	31947	53708
28	Uttarakhand	86417	44862	131279
	TOTAL	8276595	21799976	30076571