

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1524

TO BE ANSWERED ON WEDNESDAY, THE 10th FEBRUARY, 2021

Legal Reforms

1524. SHRI GNANATHIRAVIAM S:

SHRI BHAGWANT MANN:

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

- (a) whether the Government has taken up any measures to address the challenges to improve access to justice for citizens as per the strategy for New India @ 75;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken to address the challenges faced by the judiciary as per Economic Survey and Niti Aayog reports;
- (c) whether the Ministry is aware that the importance of legal reforms is need of the hour to suit contemporary development;
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by the Government in this regards; and
- (e) the other steps taken by the Government to provide “Justice for all” in the society?

ANSWER

**MINISTER OF LAW & JUSTICE, COMMUNICATIONS AND
ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI RAVISHANKAR PRASAD)**

(a) to (e) Yes. The Government has taken concerted steps to address the challenges to improve access to justice for citizens.

The National Mission for Justice Delivery and Legal Reforms was set up in August, 2011 with the twin objectives of increasing access by reducing delays and arrears in the system and enhancing accountability through structural changes and

by setting performance standards and capacities. The Mission has been pursuing a co-ordinated approach for phased liquidation of arrears and pendency in judicial administration, which, *inter-alia*, involves better infrastructure for courts including computerization, increase in strength of subordinate judiciary, policy and legislative measures in the areas prone to excessive litigation, re-engineering of court procedure for quick disposal of cases and emphasis on human resource development.

The major steps taken during the last five years under various initiatives are as follows:

- i. Improving infrastructure for Judicial Officers of District and Subordinate Courts:
The number of court halls has increased from 15,818 as on 30.06.2014 to 20,062 as on 28.01.2021 and number of residential units has increased from 10,211 as on 30.06.2014 to 17,736 as on 28.01.2021 under this scheme. In addition, 2,808 court halls and 1,843 residential units are under construction.
- ii. Leveraging Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for improved justice delivery: Government has been implementing the e-Courts Mission Mode Project throughout the country for Information and Communication Technology enablement of district and subordinate courts. Number of computerized District & Subordinate courts has increased from 13,672 (in 2014) to 18,735 as on 28.01.2021. New and user-friendly version of Case Information Software has been developed and deployed at all the computerized District and Subordinate Courts. All stakeholders including Judicial Officers can access information relating to judicial proceedings/decisions of computerized District & Subordinate Courts and High Courts on the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG). Video Conferencing facility has been enabled between 3240 court complexes and

1272 corresponding jails. With a view to handle the COVID- 19 challenges better and to make the transition to virtual hearings smoother, funds have been provided for setting up 235 e-SewaKendras at court complexes to facilitate lawyers and litigants needing assistance ranging from case status, getting judgements/orders, court/case related information and e-filing facilities.

- iii. Nine Virtual Courts have been set up at Delhi (2 courts), Faridabad (Haryana), Pune & Nagpur (Maharashtra) Kochi (Kerala), Chennai (Tamil Nadu), Guwahati (Assam) and Bengaluru (Karnataka) to try traffic offences. As on 20.01.2021, these courts have handled 41,98,095 cases and realised Rs.139.25cr in fines.
- iv. Filling up of vacant positions in Supreme Court, High Courts and District and Subordinate Courts: From 01.05.2014 to 25.01.2021, 35 Judges were appointed in Supreme Court. 570 new Judges were appointed and 520 Additional Judges were made permanent in the High Courts. Sanctioned strength of Judges of High Courts has been increased from 906 in May, 2014 to 1080 currently. Sanctioned and working strength of Judicial Officers in District and Subordinate Courts has increased as follows:

As on	Sanctioned Strength	Working Strength
31.12.2013	19,518	15,115
28.01.2021	24,247	19,318

Filling up of vacancies in Subordinate judiciary falls within the domain of the State Governments and High Courts concerned.

- v. Reduction in Pendency through / follow up by Arrears Committees: In pursuance of resolution passed in Chief Justices' Conference held in April, 2015, Arrears Committees have been set up in High Courts to clear cases pending for

more than five years. Arrears Committees have been set up under District Judges too. Arrears Committee has been constituted in the Supreme Court to formulate steps to reduce pendency of cases in High Courts and District Courts.

Further, Communications have been addressed by Minister of Law & Justice to Chief Justices of High Courts and to Chief Ministers on 20.06.2014 and 14.08.2018 drawing their attention to cases pending for more than five years and to take up pendency reduction campaign.

- vi. Emphasis on Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR): Commercial Courts Act, 2015 (as amended on 20th August, 2018) stipulates mandatory pre-institution mediation and settlement of commercial disputes. Amendment to the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 has been made by the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Act 2019 for expediting the speedy resolution of disputes by prescribing timelines.
- vii. Initiatives to Fast Track Special Type of Cases: Government has approved a scheme for setting up 1023 Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) across the country for expeditious disposal of pending cases of Rape under IPC and crimes under POCSO Act. As on date, 28 States/UTs have joined the scheme for setting up of 823 FTSCs including 'exclusive POCSO Courts'. Presently 609 FTSCs are functional including 331 exclusive POCSO Courts.
- viii. To reduce pendency and unclogging of the courts the Government has recently amended various laws like the Negotiable Instruments (Amendment) Act, 2018, the Specific Relief (Amendment) Act, 2018, and the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Act, 2018.
- ix. Legal Services Institutions established under Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 are functioning across the country from National level to Taluka level to improve access to justice for citizens. These institutions undertake Legal aid and advice,

Legal services outreach activities, promote and implement ADR mechanisms through Lok Adalats and implement victim compensation schemes. In the scenario of COVID -19 pandemic when protocols of public health and social distancing were being followed, the Legal Services Authorities innovatively leveraged technology and introduced E-Lok Adalats. 8 lakh cases have been taken up till now out of which around 4.07 lakh cases disposed of in E-Lok Adalats held in 24 States/UTs.

- x. In addition to the above, Department of Justice has implemented Tele-Law and Pro Bono Legal Services (Nyaya Bandhu) programme for legal assistance of the poor and marginalized sections of the society.

The Tele-Law Service connects the citizen with the Panel lawyers to seek pre-litigation legal advice through the use of video /Tele conferencing facilities available at the Common Service Centres (CSCs) at the Panchayat level. This service is currently operational in 29,860 CSCs in 285 Districts (including 115 Aspirational districts) across 29 States /UTs. As on 31st January, 2021 advice has been enabled to 5,81,280 beneficiaries. The Pro Bono Legal Services (Nyaya Bandhu) programme aims to provide free legal assistance and counsel to the marginalized sections. Nyaya Bandhu Mobile Application, for android and iOS phones, has been developed to connect the registered Pro Bono Advocates with the registered applicants. As on 31st January, 2021, 2370 Advocates and 1069 beneficiaries have registered under the programme.
