

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

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 2195
TO BE ANSWERED ON FRIDAY, THE 10th DECEMBER, 2021

Video Conferencing in Criminal Cases

2195. SHRI KHAGEN MURMU:

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

- (a) whether the Government has conducted any study to understand why video conferencing in criminal cases has neither shortened trials nor reduced the number of people awaiting trial and need to address uneven digital access for the purpose;
- (b) if so, the details of the remedial steps taken by the Government keeping in view the fact that while mobile phones are widely owned and used, access to the internet remains limited to urban users and lawyers in semi urban and rural districts find online hearings challenging, mostly due to connectivity issues and an unfamiliarity with this way of working; and
- (c) if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER
MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE
(SHRI KIREN RIJJU)

(a) : No Sir.

(b) & (c): During the Covid lockdown period physical hearings and normal court proceedings in the congregational mode were not possible. The initial technical glitches were gradually tackled and video conferencing emerged as the mainstay of the courts. A variety of platforms are being used to conduct hearings through video conferencing such as Vidyo Connect, Jitsi Meet, Zoom, Cisco WebEx, Google Meet, WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams etc. Since Covid lockdown started, the District courts heard 1,01,77,289 cases while the High Court heard 55,24,021 cases (totalling to 1.57 core) till 31.10.2021 using video conferencing only. The Supreme Court of India held 1,50,692 hearings during this period upto 29.10.2021, making it the world leader.

To further improve the video-conferencing facilities, 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. Funds for setting up 2506 VC Cabins have been made available to High Courts. Additional 1500 VC Licenses have been acquired. VC facilities are already enabled between 3240 court complexes and corresponding 1272 jails. Funds have been released to High Courts for procurement of 1732 Document Visualizers.

To bridge the ICT access divide amongst stake-holders in the court eco-system, funds have been released for setting up 235 eSewa Kendras at all High Courts and one District Court in every state. A Nyay Kaushal Centre has been started in Nagpur to provide all e-facilities along with VC facilities. Mobile e-Courts vehicles for video conferencing for speedy disposal of cases equipped with Wi-Fi and computers were started in Telangana and Uttarakhand. The Wide Area Network (WAN) Project under

eCourts project aimed at connecting all District and Subordinate court complexes was geared up across the country by using available alternative technologies like OFC, RF, VSAT. So far, 2956 sites have been commissioned out of 2992 sites with 10 Mbps to 100 Mbps bandwidth speed (completing 98.7% sites). This forms the backbone for the eCourts project for ensuring data connectivity in courts across the length and breadth of the country.
