

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 1174
TO BE ANSWERED ON FRIDAY, THE 09th FEBRUARY, 2024
e-Courts

1174. SHRI ANTO ANTONY:
SHRI RAVIKUMAR D.:
MS. S. JOTHIMANI:

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

- (a) whether the Government proposes to develop e-courts through Phase III for operation of various courts including High Courts and District Courts across the country, constituency-wise;
- (b) if so, details thereof including the total outlay in Phase III of the e-Courts project including virtual hearings, establishment of virtual benches of the High Courts etc., State-wise;
- (c) whether the Government has conducted an assessment of usefulness of Phase I and Phase II in enabling citizens' access to justice, if so, the details thereof;
- (d) if not, the basis on which the Government decided to substantially increase the allocation for Phase III; and
- (e) whether the Government has formulated any standard operating procedure for the implementation of the Phase III of e-courts project, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

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 (b) :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.

eCourts Mission Mode Project Phase I of the eCourts project was implemented between 2011-2015. It focused on the basics of computerisation like setting up computer hardware, ensuring internet connectivity, and operationalizing the e-Courts platform. Against the financial outlay of Rs.935 crore, total expenditure incurred was Rs.639.41 crore for implementation of this phase.

Phase II of the eCourts Mission Mode Project extended from 2015-2023. It focused on ICT enablement of District & Subordinate Courts and various citizen centric initiatives such as ePayments, eFiling, virtual courts to handle traffic challans, hearings using Video Conferencing. Against the financial outlay of Rs.1670 crore, total expenditure incurred was Rs. 1668.43 crore for implementation of this phase. Under this phase 18735 district and subordinate courts have been computerized, WAN connectivity has been provided and the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) created.

The Union Cabinet in its meeting held on 13.09.2023 approved eCourts Phase-III with a budgetary outlay of Rs.7210 crorespread over 4 years (2023 onwards). Subsequently, in October 2023, Rs. 225 crore has been released for eCourts Phase III by the Ministry of Finance from the Contingency Fund, out of which Rs. 102.50 crore has been allocated to BSNL and NIC and Rs. 110.24 crore has been sub-allocated to various High Courts for scanning and digitization, e-Sewa Kendras, IT Hardware for existing and newly setup courts, solar power backup etc. Rs. 600 crore has recently been received as RE for FY 2023-24. Taking the gains of Phase-I and Phase-II to the next level, e-Courts Phase-III aims to usher in a regime of maximum ease of justice by moving towards digital, online and paperless courts through digitization of the entire court records including legacy records and by bringing in universalization of e-Filing/ e-Payments through saturation of all court

complexes with e-Sewa Kendras. It will put in place intelligent smart systems enabling data-based decision making for judges and registries while scheduling or prioritizing cases. The main objective of the Phase-III is to create a unified technology platform for the judiciary, which may provide a seamless and paperless interface between the courts, the litigants and other stakeholders. The project will help provide a smoother user experience by building a “smart” ecosystem. The eCourts Phase-III may thus prove to be a game changer in ensuring ease of justice by making the Court experience convenient, inexpensive and hassle free to all the citizens of the country. The various components of eCourts Phase III including digitization of 3108 crore pages of legacy records, cloud infrastructure, 4400 fully functional eSewa Kendras in all court complexes, and use of emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning, etc along with its financial details are at Annexure I.

(c): Yes, Sir. Third-Party Evaluation has been conducted by National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) for eCourts Project Phase II and key findings are as follows:

- The eCourts Project has led to an increase in the total number of cases filed in the courts and helped with easier access to information through online portals and mobile applications.
- A high level of satisfaction was expressed with the access and quality of the various ICT facilities provided under the eCourts project.
- The procurement process by the eCommittee, Supreme Court of India is well planned and all payments are received on time.
- Judges are satisfied with the improvement in court time management and transparency of information that has resulted from implementation of eCourts project.
- 90-100% of sample courts have provision of computers hardware and have installed Case Information System (CIS).

- High proportion of judges and court officials had received training in the use of CIS, NJDG and hardware. Almost all respondents were of the opinion that the trainings were very useful.
- Services like Case Information System (CIS), JustIS mobile app and The National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) website are used very often and have an easy user interface.
- Majority of judges and court official feels that eCourts project has reduced pendency of cases because of easy access to cases laws resulting in better research.
- The pendency of cases over 5 years have displayed slow but steady decline over the years.
- Since 2017, a sharp increase in the clearance rate of district courts is also noticed.

(d) : Phase III of eCourts Project is leveraging technology to the next higher level as compared to Phase II by incorporating latest modern state of the art interventions in the form of digitization of court records, cloud storage and use of emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning& Blockchain for putting in place a regime of end to end digital and paperless courts. Accordingly, the Detailed Project Report (DPR) incorporating these interventions has estimated a total project cost of Rs.7210 crore (as illustrated at Annexure I) which is four times the allocation of Phase II.

(e):eCourts project is being implemented in association with eCommittee, Supreme Court of India, headed by Hon'ble Chief Justice of India, and Department of Justice, in a decentralized manner through the respective High Courts. The eCommittee is responsible for the policy planning, strategic direction and guidance for implementation of eCourts project and works in collaborative partnership with Department of Justice which is responsible for providing necessary funding for the

project. A Vision Document was prepared by the eCommittee and placed in the public domain for their comments. After incorporating the suggestions, a Detailed Project Report was prepared by the eCommittee which provides the complete outline of eCourts Phase III. In addition, the eCommittee has issued Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for various activities like Video Conferencing, e-Filing, Digitization, etc and circulated to all the High Courts for their guidance.

Annexure I

Statement referred to in reply of Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1174 for 09/02/2024 regarding e-Courts. The components and financial details of eCourts Phase III are as below:

S.No.	Scheme Component	Cost Estimate (Total (In Rs. Cr.))
1	Scanning, Digitization and Digital Preservation of Case Records	2038.40
2	Cloud Infrastructure	1205.23
3	Additional hardware to existing courts	643.66
4	Infrastructure in newly set up courts	426.25
5	Virtual Courts	413.08
6	eSewa Kendra	394.48
7	Paperless Court	359.20
8	System and Application Software Development	243.52
9	Solar Power Backup	229.50
10	Video Conferencing set-up	228.48
11	e- filing	215.97
12	Connectivity (Primary + Redundancy)	208.72
13	Capacity Building	208.52
14	CLASS (Courtroom Live-Audio Visual Streaming System)	112.26
15	Project Management Unit	56.67
16	Future Technological Advancements	53.57
17	Judicial process re-engineering	33.00
18	Disabled friendly ICT enabled facilities	27.54
19	NSTEP	25.75
20	Online Dispute Resolution (ODR)	23.72
21	Knowledge Management System	23.30
22	e-Office for High Courts & District Courts	21.10
23	Integration with Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS)	11.78
24	S3WAAS platform	6.35
	TOTAL	7210