

USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN INDIAN COURT ADMINISTRATION

Prof. Prakash N. Chaudhary

Vice Principal, Associate Professor & Head, Dept. of Business Laws,
Ness Wadia College of Commerce, Pune – 411 001.

Email: pncwadia@gmail.com

Abstract

Judiciary plays vital role in justice delivery system in any country. In India, due to huge population, high number of cases are pending in the Indian Courts right from lower judiciary to the apex court. In this background, to overcome the challenge of adjudicating the cases effectively and without delay, it is imperative for the court administration to use the tool of information technology effectively for resolving disputes and minimizing the pendency. This paper depicts the efforts of Indian government to tackle the issue of pendency through IT enabled solutions and discusses its utility in enhancing the efficacy of the court administration.

Key Words: Judiciary, Court Administration, Computerization, Cause lists, CONFONET, Consumerism

In 1990, the National Informatics Centre of the Ministry of Information Technology started the process of computerization in the Supreme Court as a result many applications have been computerized which made positive impact on the litigants. The similar computerization is in place at 18 High Courts and thereby helped the court administration positively. .

I. Supreme Court of India

List of Business Information System (LOBIS): This system is about scheduling of cases to be heard by the courts on the following day. This process has enabled the court administration to eliminate the manual process of Cause List generation. These databases contain details of fresh cases, disposed and pending cases. This has proved to be a backbone application of every Court in these days. Due to this system Cause Lists are generated automatically by the computer without any manual interference resulting in generation of Cause List in time without any delay. Cases are listed strictly in chronological order of date of filing; eliminated irregularities

All the cases having the same law point(s) to be decided by the courts can be grouped and posted before one bench. This has helped the courts in faster disposal of cases. It has become easier to recall dismissed cases when review petitions are filed. The system has been effective in generating instantaneous statistical reports. It has helped Registry of Supreme Court in streamlining its day to day activities to achieve one of the main objectives of COURTIS Project

Computerization at Filing Counter: In the Supreme Court of India and all High Courts fresh cases are filed only before the computerized Filing Counters. As the advocates stand in queue for Filing cases before the counters, the data entry Operator enters preliminary details required for Registration such as Party names, advocate

details, etc. The computer terminal at the query counter is used to attend to the queries of the litigants on the spot. The defects, if any, are listed out and handed over to the litigants/advocates for rectification. Time limitation is also checked by the system automatically. The impact of this computerization is that the filing process is now hassle free. The advocates/litigants can save their time and they need not wait for a long time in the queue. The amount collected towards Court fee in a day is automatically calculated thus saving the time of court official's time. Query counter avoids the litigants go around the sections to find out the Filing status

COURTNIC:

This is about providing Supreme Courts' pending case status information to litigants/advocates on any node of NICNET. COURTNIC answers about two hundred queries of litigants/advocates per day all over the country on the status of their pending cases. It is available on nominal charges. Primarily COURTNIC information is available in all NIC-High Court Computer Cells and in some District Court. This system is in use since 1993. The response to the COURTNIC from the public is very positive because the litigants need not visit the court to come all over to Delhi from their place to get the information of their case. T

JUDIS:

NIC has brought out Judgment Information System (JUDIS) consisting of complete text of all reported judgment of Supreme Court of India from 1950 to till Date. (<http://judis.nic.in>)

Supreme Court's pending Cases on IVR: Interested litigants and advocates can find out the status of their cases pending in Supreme Court on telephone by making use of Interactive Voice. Response System (IVR) free of charge.

Cause Lists on Internet (<http://clists.nic.in>): The Cause lists of Supreme Court and many other High Courts are available on NIC Web Servers. As the Supreme Court of India and all the 18 High Courts and their 10 Benches are fully computerized, all these courts generate Daily and Weekly Cause lists from the computer servers installed by NIC. The Cause list application is the backbone application of all courts as no court can function without that day's Cause list. Hence this has been proved to be very useful for the litigants. By making the Cause lists available on Internet, no High Court is incurring any expenditure as they are using the already available infrastructure and the Software of NIC. This has saved lot of public money. The major feature of this list is that it can be accessed at URL i.e. (<http://10.249.17.134>) through internet.

- Advocates can also generate their own Cause list consisting of his/her own cases. This is possible through the name of either petitioner or respondent
- Court wise list, Judge wise list can be prepared
- Entire Cause list can be printed, if required. Even Case no. wise access is possible
- This has helped the lawyers to receive the Cause lists almost immediately after courts hours.
- Advocate can generate their own casuists which will contain only their cases, thus avoiding them to go through hundreds of pages to locate their cases
- As the application is available on Internet, the litigant public can easily find out whether their cases are coming for hearing or not, without bothering the advocates.

- The courts have saved good amount of money on annual basis on printing and circulating such cause list.

NIC has made the Cause lists of almost all High Courts on its Web servers apart from the Supreme Court of India:

Ever since NIC has made the Cause lists of the Supreme Court of India and High Courts available on Internet, this application has received huge response from the advocates and litigant public. To understand the enormous response the application has received. On an average it is receiving 10,000 hits per day. By any standard, it is a significant number for one application.

II. High Courts:

NIC took up computerization of all 18 High Courts and 9 Benches on the lines of Apex Court's Computerization. NIC implemented the List of Business Information (LOBIS) in all High Court Courts. Some of the High Courts' Cause List are also available on Internet. Many possible applications in all High Courts have been computerized. Most of the High Courts have opened query counters along with Filing Counters for providing pending cases information to the litigants and advocates. All HCs are connected on NICNET/Internet. Day to day Judgments and Orders are now stored on computers

III. District Courts

In 1997, NIC took up the computerization of all 430 District Courts in the country on the lines of High Courts Computerization Project. The basic objectives of the project are:

1. to provide transparency of information to the litigants and advocates
2. to help the judicial administration in streamlining its activities
3. to provide judicial and legal databases to the District Judges

Training to the Staff: NIC provided three level training programs to the District Court officials. The three levels are:

- **Computer Awareness Programs** for the District Judges.
- **Supervisory level training** at NIC State Centres. These supervisory level officials were identified and sent to NIC State Centres by the District Courts for training on day to day maintenance of the computers and its peripherals.
- **In-house hands on training** to the District Court officials working on the computer terminals. The District Informatics Officers of NIC posted at the District Magistrates' Office imparted this training.

All officials have been trained on 'District Court Information System' (DCIS) SW. The DCIS Software is a huge general purpose Software package developed for the computerization of District Courts. This software takes care of all aspects of District Court needs. The project is yet to pick up momentum in most of the District Courts for want of interest from the District Court officials. NIC has proposed to conduct another round of Training to the users

Use of IT in Consumer Disputes Redressal Machinery in India:

'CONFONET' Scheme: A project for Computerization and Computer Networking of Consumer Fora in the Country (CONFONET) was launched during the 10th Plan

period in March 2005 at a cost of Rs.48.64 crore. The project is being implemented by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) on a turnkey basis.

The CONFONET project has been extended to 11th Plan with a total outlay of Rs.25.00 crore. In the extended period of project, stress is being laid upon continued HR support by means of Technical Support Personnel (TSP) and training for eventual adoption of the system by the Consumer for themselves. Hundred percent expenditure of Rs.6.60 crores has been incurred during 2012-13 under the CONFONET project. As on December 2012, out of 640 locations being covered, the CONFONET is operational in 340 Consumer Fora. 288 Consumer Fora are uploading cause lists while 191 Consumer Fora are uploading judgments.

Strengthening the infrastructure of Consumer Fora:-The Central Government has been extending financial assistance to States/UTs for strengthening the infrastructure of consumer fora so that minimum levels of facilities are made available at each consumer forum, which are required for their effective functioning.

Infrastructural Facilities being provided under the scheme include construction of new building of the Consumer Fora, carrying out addition/ alteration/renovation of existing buildings and grant for acquiring non-building assets such as furniture, office equipment etc. During 2012-13, under the Scheme for “Strengthening of Consumer Fora (SCF)” an amount Rs.384.28 lakhs has been released so far to 4 States, namely, Mizoram (Rs.15.75 lac) Punjab (Rs.4.33 lac), Tamil Nadu (Rs.197.41 lac) & West Bengal (Rs.166.79 lac).

Conclusion:

The Government of India has taken initiative to computerize the court administration in India almost two decades back. The system has been proved to be very effective cost and time wise. The Common man can also have access for this information and thereby posed the confidence in them about the Indian court administration. However people from rural area still have problem due poor internet connectivity, their ignorance to handle the electronic gadgets to seek the information of their cases. More accessibility to internet and computers or mobiles and their awareness would be of great help to the masses.

The consumerism has been established all over the world and in the last century it has got moment of in India also. The govt. of India has taken proactive steps through CONFONET to strengthen the consumerism by various ways. The Consumer Forums all over the country have played vital role in consumer protection. The IT enabled services have created hope of getting speedy justice from the Indian courts and other quasi-judicial bodies.

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