

ICT IN THE DISTRICT COURTS OF DELHI
Challenges, Strategies and Solutions

By

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1. Introduction

An independent, effective, just and efficient judicial system that fosters respect for the rule of law is indispensable in a truly democratic system. Modernization, streamlining and improved efficiency of the court systems are paramount in order to ensure a high degree of protection of individual rights and therefore increase citizens' faith and confidence in the State. District Courts of Delhi, functioning in three different Court Complexes, known as Tis Hazari Courts Complex, Karkardooma Courts Complex and Patiala House Courts Complex and having a working strength of about 280 Judges, are striving hard to achieve this objective.

In the year 2002-2003, Ministry of Home Affairs along with Planning Commission and Ministry of Law and Justice decided to release funds to all the four Metropolitan Cities for computerization of District Courts to make them "Model Courts". Delhi was given an initial outlay of about Rs.49.80 Millions for starting the computerization process in District Courts.

The District Courts Computerization Project was formally inaugurated by Hon'ble Chief Justice of India in a glittering function held at District Courts Complex, Tis Hazari on 23.11.2003 and from that day onwards District Courts have not looked back and have achieved one milestone after the other in the field of computerization.

When the initial plan was being implemented, another batch of 76 Judicial Officers consisting of Delhi Higher Judicial Service Members and Delhi Judicial Service Members joined the District Judiciary. So it was necessary to provide additional computers for the Courts of newly appointed Officers. The further allocation of Rs.22.80 Million was made by the Central Government for this purpose as well as to take care of enhanced requirements in other fields also.

Delhi Government has made yearly allocation of Rupees 27.50 Million for the next five years beginning with financial year 2004-2005 for computerization of District Courts. As on date, the finance provided by the Delhi Government is the only source for financing present and future plans of computerization in District Courts as no more funds are being released by the Central Government for this project.

2. Operating System

Operating system is the software that determines how a computer operates, including such things as file structure, input and output devices, printer routines and screen manipulations. When the question regarding selection of the operating system came up, then after due deliberations, it was decided to use LINUX based operating system. The main reason for selecting this operating system is that it is cost effective and is an open platform software. As and when future upgrades are required, the same are available either free of cost on the Internet or at a negligible cost from vendors. The other reason to go for LINUX based system is that it is almost virus free.

3. Hardware

In the first phase, standalone Personal Computer systems [PCs] were provided to the Stenographers and Ahlmads (Record Keepers) attached with every Court and instead of Dumb Terminals [A terminal that doesn't contain an internal micro processor. It responds to simple control codes and usually displays only characters and numericals] or Thin Clients- linked to main server [A computer system or service that provides information or a service to other computers on a network] through the network. The rationale of providing PC system was to be allow system -to perform the required task that is capability of storing sufficient amount of data and retrieval of the same should be quick and instantly available as and when required for efficient functioning of the Court system.

Moreover, the Judges were hesitant to allow transfer of half-baked information

to the servers like judgments or orders, which have not been finalized. Similarly the data for daily use is required to be kept in the computers of the Ahlmads. A backup copy of the data in the Steno's computer system is also kept in the computer system of the Ahlmads, so that in case of any accidental erasing of data of Steno's computer system, its backup copy can be retrieved from the computer system of the Ahlmads of the same Court. Both these computer systems are linked to the servers by LAN [Local Area Network] . In the first phase, only one Dot Matrix Printer was provided on the table of the Stenographers for one Court. The Ahlmad was required to take printout of the reports, cause list and other documents at the Steno's end as both these computers were networked with each other.

The Server Room is the nerve centre of all activity as far as the computerization is concerned. In Tis Hazari Court Complex, six Servers were installed in Server Room on the second floor. Similarly, in Karkardooma Court Complex, four servers have been installed in the designated Server Room. In Patiala House also four servers were installed in the make-shift room, as there is acute shortage of space in the said Court Complex.

Initially, it was decided to go for centralized UPS [Uninterrupted Power Supply] System to power the computer systems in case of electricity failure. One UPS of 10 KVA serves about 30 computer systems. These UPS were installed in secured ventilated rooms with proper power supply and from those UPS rooms,

power supply cables were laid to the user's ends in respective Courtrooms. Later on, it was noticed that if one central UPS trips, it will make about 30 Court computer systems non-functional. So, from the year 2005 onwards, it has been decided to install individual UPS with every system to provide required power back up in case of electricity failure. .

The three Court Complexes were connected to NIC's Headquarters; initially by using ISDN lines, which are now being upgraded to 2 MBPS leased lines of MTNL. This upgradation is the need of the hour keeping in view the manifold increase in traffic between the three Court Complexes and NIC's Headquarter at CGO Complex, Lodhi Road New Delhi. Enhanced speed as well as online connectivity is required for integration of the computerization process of the three District Courts into one centralized system from the users' point of view.

4. Customized Software

The heart of computerization of District Court of Delhi is the customized software developed by NIC under the guidance and supervision of the Software Development Committee of the District Court Level. The Judges and the Court Staff i.e. Court Clerks, Stenos, Ahlmads, Readers etc. gave their valuable input to software developers to make them aware of the work flow type of registers/forms/data/summons/warrants etc. being maintained and the reports being generated in the Courts. Requirements were analyzed and in accordance with the said requirements specific Softwares were developed.

After a test run and approval of the Software Development Committee, the software modules were integrated in the main Case Information Management System (CIMS). There is no doubt that it was a time consuming process but there were no other shortcuts available.

The District Courts in Delhi are governed under the Delhi High Court Rules, Punjab Court Act and a number of other legislations and rules passed from time to time. Entire working is quite complex to understand by a layman who may be a programmer but without having any legal background. NIC's programmers were taught step by step the complex processes before they could venture into the development of the appropriate customized software modules. These were deliberated in length with the members of Software Development Committee of the District Courts. After the members of the Software Development Committee were satisfied, authorization was given to commence the computerization of those processes. These software modules were then standardized and authorization was given to integrate them in the master software known as CIMS.

5. Management of Computerization in District Courts - As on date, the computerization process is being looked after at the District Courts level by a Central Computer Committee, which assists the learned District & Sessions Judge in computerization of District Courts. The members of the said Central

Computer Committee are the Judges In charge of Computerization in the three Court Complexes alongwith Nodal Officers of Tis Hazari Court Complex and the Administrative Civil Judge. Central Computer Committee lays down the guidelines and oversees the proper implementation of the computerization.

There is also a Central Computer Purchase Committee, which looks after the hardware and software purchases under the guidance of the District & Sessions Judge. The Purchase Committee consists of members of the Central Computer Committee, representative of Delhi Government, and an official from Accounts Department etc. and the purchases are made as per the guidelines laid down by the Government of NCT of Delhi from time to time after observing all the necessary formalities. At the respective District Court Complex level, a Higher Judiciary Judge has been appointed as the Judge In charge, who is assisted by a Nodal Officer and other members of the computer committee for the said Court Complex. Computer Branches in all the three Court Complexes are utilizing the services of the staff withdrawn from other areas as the process of creation of posts for Computer Branch is still pending with the Delhi Government. The Staff so withdrawn and posted in the Computer Branch is computer savvy, they have been given basic training in troubleshooting and maintenance of computer systems and most of them are holding computer qualifications like Certificate/Diploma/Training. It is worthwhile to note here that we even have MCAs and BCAs working in our District Courts and their expertise is being utilized in computerization of District Courts.

The Trouble Shooters take care of the day-to-day maintenance of the computer systems, Printers, UPS Systems, Servers and the LAN connectivity, which is the backbone of the entire system. In case a problem is too complex, the Trouble Shooters immediately inform the Service Engineers and ensure that the work of the Court should not be hampered beyond reasonable minimum period. If a particular item requires removal to the workshop, standby equipment is provided to the said Court/Branch. Complaint Registers are maintained in all the three District Court Complexes in the Computer Rooms and direct telephone connections as well as Inter-com connections have been provided so that complaints can be lodged, which are rectified on top priority.

6. Progress made

The main Court processes, which have been computerized and put into practice, can be categorized as under:

- (i) Creation of database of all the pending cases** - In District Court of Delhi, at 1 January 2005, 471,403 cases were pending [82,265 Civil cases and 389,138 Criminal cases] Every year more than 110,000 cases are filed and about 115,000 cases are disposed of. It was a mammoth task to enter the details of all the pending cases into the computer system and that too, not by employing any external hands for assistance but by the Court staff itself, who

are otherwise looking after the day to day functioning of the Courts and they are too busy in their regular court work. District Court is proud to complete the entire data entry of all the pending cases as on date. It was possible by dividing the data entry into three stages.

At that initial stage, the staff was required to enter only the case name, type of the case and other minor details so that unique ID (Identity Number) of the case is created and a slot is reserved for the case in the CMIS. In the second stage, complete names, addresses and other particulars of the parties to the cases were entered. In the third stage, the list of witnesses and all other remaining fields were entered.

A major problem was faced at Patiala House Court Complex because of pendency of about one hundred thousand complaint cases under Negotiable Instruments Act regarding dishonour of cheques before the Magistrates. In some of the Courts, more than ten thousand cases are pending. There is no space in the Courtrooms of Magistrates to accommodate additional helping hands, as most of the courtrooms are too small. This problem was solved by dedicating the computer training room only for the purpose of data entry for a period of six months and by identifying and allocating 10 computer trained staff members for data entry work.

Initially a proposal was also mooted to outsource the work of

clearing the backlog of data entry but the idea was discarded because of the sensitive nature of data to be fed in. Moreover the case files containing important documents cannot be handed over to outside agencies. Further, the economic parameters were also not found feasible. During summer vacations of 2005, the Judges and staff worked tirelessly to complete the data entry work. District Courts Administration is grateful to the Judges and staff members for their cooperation to complete this Himalayan task, which has not been achieved so far by any other organization in the country on the same scale in such a short time without incurring any cost and without employing an outside agency.

(ii) Automatic generation of Cause Lists - Before the computerization process was started, every Ahlmad (Record Keeper) used to spend about 45 minutes everyday for preparation of the Cause List of the cases to be listed before the Court on the next day. This was quite time consuming task and there were chances of mistakes, like non-listing of the cases fixed for the day or listing of the cases which are not fixed for the said date. It used to cause great inconvenience to the lawyers, litigants and the Judges. After computerization, this problem has been solved successfully as the database is upgraded on daily basis by the Ahlmads so, as and when required, Cause List for any working day can be generated at the press of the button. It saves time, efforts and energy on the part of the Ahlmads who have become more efficient after introduction of the automatic generation of Cause List. The

said Cause Lists are also available on the Internet in advance, so that lawyers and litigants can plan and schedule their visits to the Courts accordingly.

(iii) Automatic generation of Monthly Statements - Every Court is required to submit to the Hon'ble High Court monthly statements showing institutions of fresh cases, disposal of the cases during the month and pendency at the end of the month. Earlier, the Ahlmads used to take about 2/3 days to manually prepare the said Monthly Statements. As mentioned earlier, since the entire database is available on computers, the Monthly Statement is generated only on the press of a button, resulting in saving of time and energy. The response time has reduced to the bare minimum. Now the said statements can be generated for a week, fortnight or on monthly basis, which helps in planning by the Judges to maximize the disposal.

(iv) Generation of reports in response to Parliament questions - Sometimes Parliament questions are received regarding number of cases of a particular type pending in the Courts, the age of the cases or the Courts in which the said cases are pending. All these details can be sorted out on the basis of the inquiry and reports can be generated and dispatched in the least possible time only because of availability of the entire data on the Servers.

(v) Centralized Filing - Prior to computerization, the filing was scattered in different Courts causing great inconvenience to the Lawyers and the public

at large. Nobody was sure about the place where he had to do the filing. Now special Counters known as “**Facilitation Centers**” have come up in all the three Court Complexes where the entire filing for the Courts can be done. In Tis Hazari Court Complex, filing counters have been opened at two places, keeping in view that there are about 160 Courts functioning in the said Complex and it is the largest Court Complex in Asia. At the counters near the Post Office facing the Civil Side Chamber Complex, cases of the Court of Senior Civil Judge and District Judge including matrimonial and rent matters can be filed. The filing counters have been opened at the said place with a purpose because most of the Civil Lawyers have their chambers in the Eastern Wing and it is very convenient for them to approach the filing Counters on the Eastern side.

The Criminal Lawyers have their chambers mainly in the Western Wing and they also operate from Central Hall. Hence a filing counter has been opened in the Central Hall itself where criminal complaints to be listed before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate and the bail matters to be listed before the Additional Sessions Judges, can be filed.

As soon as a matter is filed, it is given a unique number; the first digit denotes the Court Complex like "1" stands for Tis Hazari, "2" stands for Karkardooma and "3" stands for Patiala House. The next six digits denote the number of case and last four digits after "/" denote the year of filing. The

type of case is mentioned in the beginning and a normal case number generated by the computer looks like "Civil Suit No. 1756/2005". In this number, the type of suit is "Civil Suit", "1" stands for Tis Hazari and '756' stands for the particular case number and 2005 is the year of filing. **The numbering digits can go upto six digits, so that the future needs of filing have been also taken care of.**

The case number will remain permanent for the life of the case irrespective of the fact that the case is transferred from one Court to the other. Even after final disposal, the case file can be easily traced from the Record Room on the basis of this number. The permanent numbers have solved the problem of identification and tracing of cases because at the time when computerization was not in place, every Court was assigning its own case numbers as and when the matters were allocated or transferred to the said Court and this practice used to result in great confusion in the minds of the litigants.

Now with the introduction of permanent case numbers, one can easily trace his case by making query on the internet or by visiting the Information Counters where Public Relation Officers have been appointed to assist the general public and the Lawyers for answering their specific queries regarding the allocation, transfer and pendency of cases and their present status.

(vi) Automatic allocation of cases - At the time of filing a case at the Central Registry, the party's name, jurisdiction, type of case and the statute under which the case has been filed, are entered into the system. Immediately the computer assigns unique IDs to the cases and sorts them on the basis of set norms like jurisdiction of a particular Police Station, pendency status in the respective Courts, specific allocation of cases to designated Courts and other pre-determined parameters and the cases are automatically allocated to the Courts. The lawyers/litigants are informed in the least possible time about the allocation of the cases filed by them. This system operates without any intervention by the officials manning the Filing Counters, so the chances of manipulating the allocation of cases is ruled out. However, the District Judge/Judge In charge has the right to over-ride the allocation done by the Computer and for this purpose, he may identify a particular case online and decide that the said case is to be allocated not to a Court chosen by the system but to some other Court. This overriding option is excised in exceptional cases, as and when the need arises.

(vii) Transfer of the physical case file and the data to the Allocatee Court - After allocation, the sanction of the District Judge/Judge In charge is obtained and the hard copy of the case file is sent to the said allocatee Court. The data captured in the Central Registry is also transferred to the said Court through Central Server. Once the case reaches the concerned court, the

Ahlmad makes the second and third stage entries, i.e., he completes names and addresses of the parties and witnesses in the computer system alongwith the next date of hearing as fixed by the learned Judge. So by the end of the day, the entire details of the cases filed during the course of the day reach the Central Server and the said data can be used for any pre-defined purpose. This information is automatically sent to the Court Web-Site.

(viii) Grouping of cases - Sometimes, it is decided to transfer cases of a particular type to one court. Earlier the process of identifying the said cases used to take a long time as manual lists were prepared but now as and when a decision is taken, it can be implemented within few minutes because the entire data regarding the nature of cases, their respective age, special characteristics, nature of offences, age of the accused, place of residence of the parties and other unique identities are available in the data bank.

(ix) Allocation of Court Numbers to different Courts - Prior to computerization, all the Courts were known by the names of the Presiding Officers of the said Courts like the "Court of Mr. ABC". The frequent transfers, abolition of certain courts due to exigencies and creation of new Courts because some Officers had come back from deputation or they had been transferred to a particular Court Complex used to result in great confusion in the minds of the Lawyers and litigants. Another reason for the said confusion was that a number of Judges share the same name. Allocating

specific Court Numbers to all the Courts, which are situated in three District Court Complexes, has solved this problem.

To overcome the problem of abolition of a particular Court when a Judge is transferred out/he proceeds on deputation, it has been decided not to allocate the same Court Number to any other Judge for a period of one year. The said Number can only be re-used after one year so that in the intervening period, the pending cases of the earlier Court stand transferred to other Courts and by that time, the litigants and the lawyers may also notice that a particular Court stands abolished. To take care of appointment of new Judges and creation of new Courts when the Judges are transferred to a particular Court Complex or they come back from deputation, sizable numbers of vacant Courts numbers have been provided in every Court Complex, where the said Officers can be accommodated.

It is pertinent to mention here that a particular Court Number is not associated with the Room Number or seniority of the Judge. The Court Numbers continue from year to year and it becomes easy to identify a particular Court by its Number rather than by the name of the Presiding Officer. Even for the purpose of report generation, the process has become quite simple now because Computer can easily track the Court Numbers. Associating the Courts with the names of the Judges was quite a cumbersome process which was very difficult to be handled by modern technology of

computerization, where certain specific parameters and fundamentals have to be followed while performing a particular task.

(x) Automation of the Process Serving Agency - The automation of the Process Serving Agency was a daunting task as it was following the practices adopted about one century ago of creation of Beats for distribution of summons, marking of reports on the said summons and their ultimate return to the concerned Courts. This process has been given special attention.

The summons is entered in the Computerized Registers on receipt from respective Courts. The said Programme automatically allocates the summons to the next Process Server in line and the summons are accordingly distributed area-wise to the Process Servers by the computer. After such distribution, the progress regarding service of summons is noted on day-to-day basis in the form of Daily Reports to be submitted by the said Process Servers.

The Process Servers are made accountable. Every day, they have to submit a report stating the number of summons already pending with them, new summons allocated on the said day, number of summons served by them during the day and number of summons returned by them unserved with specific reasons as to why the said summons were not served. The data collected from Process Servers is fed into the Computer System, which generates a Daily, Weekly and Monthly Report on the basis of number of

processes served during the said period and the percentage of success. The performance of the Process Serving Agency has significantly improved after computerization.

The Ahlmads of the Courts have the facility to check at the end of the day as to how many summons issued by their respective Courts have been served and how many of them are still pending. The matter can be brought to the knowledge of the concerned Judge regarding the service of the summons because the performance of the Process Serving Agency is available on the intra-net to all other terminals in different Courts and Branches.

(xi) Implementation of the Financial Accounting Package - The Accounts and Cash Branch are fully automated. Payment of Salaries to the Judges and the Staff, numbering about five thousand has being taken care of by the System. The fines collected in the Courts, fees collected in the Copying Agency and other Branches are being monitored by the Accounts and Cash Branch on real time basis and remedial actions are taken as and when required. It has minimized the risk of financial irregularities because the details are available online and any deliberate deviations can be pinpointed well within time.

(xii) Automated Attendance Marking System - The District Courts of Delhi are first in India to opt for the most modern Automated Attendance

Marking System, which is based upon Advanced Smart Card Technology. A Micro Chip of 1 KB capacity is embedded in every Smart Card, which contains all the details regarding a particular employee alongwith his photograph and designation etc. The attendance can be marked on the Automatic Contactless Terminals provided at different entry points in all the three District Court Complexes. To mark the attendance, only the Card is to be waved before the Machine and it takes not more than one second for one person to do so. The problem regarding late coming and leaving the Court early stands resolved by installing this system.

The Attendance software is duly integrated with the Salary Preparation System and it takes care of leaves and other facilities availed by the said employees. Different reports based upon the information captured through the system can be generated. The entire information collected from all the three Court Complexes regarding attendance is combined in one database, which can be accessed even from the web browser.

In future the finger print identification system is also to be introduced with a view to restrict entry of undesirable elements in security zones like Server Rooms, Record Rooms and Stores etc.

(xiii) Digitization of Disposed Records - The disposed files take a lot of space to store, so it has been decided to digitize the old records and keep

them safe in the digitized form instead of maintaining the physical files for decades together. Proper care has been taken while weeding out the record by following the rules framed in this regard. A lot of space is being made available for other important purposes after digitization of the records and there is no danger of any fire, termites or other natural calamities, which may destroy the record. Proper backups are being kept at different places so that the data is not lost in case of any eventuality.

(xiv) Computerization of Judges' Libraries - The Judges' Libraries in all the three Court Complexes have hundreds of thousands of books, which have been affixed with Bar Code Tags. As and when a book is to be searched, it is easy to trace the same and entries regarding their issuance and return are made automatically with the help of the Bar Code Readers. On the intra-net, the judgments of the Hon'ble Supreme Court and Hon'ble High Courts have been provided so that Judges may access them from their computers installed in the chambers. The said judgements can also be accessed from terminals installed in Courts so that the Judges have the ease of looking for a particular law point and use the same as and when required.

(xv) Provision of TFT LCD Screens on the Dias - In the second phase of computerization, TFT/LCD 15" Screens have been provided on the Dias which are connected to the computers of the Stenos. The Judges are able to keep a watch on the evidence being recorded by Stenos under their dictation

and they are further able to go through the transcripts of the judgments typed out by the Stenos. Necessary corrections can be made there and then so that the judgments are announced on time, without any delay and mistakes.

(xvi) Provision of Computers in the Chambers of the Judges – Similarly, in the second phase of computerization, Judges have been provided with computer systems in their respective chambers so that they are able to use them as and when they are free. These systems can be also used by the Stenos to type out the judgments when the learned Judge is holding his Court. Thereafter, the learned Judge can check the said judgments and in spare time, he/she can also access the judgments of Hon'ble Supreme Court and High Courts. He/She can transfer the files from his Court Room to his residential Computer Systems by using the secured E-mail facility. The judges have been provided with digital signatures and they can always sign their judgements digitally, so that no one is able to tamper the data when the same is transmitted. Judges may make necessary corrections in the judgments in the comfort of their homes and thereafter the said judgments can be transmitted to Courts by using the secured E-mail.

(xvii) Computerization of Copying Agency - Since all the orders and judgments are available on the intra-net, now there is no need for typing or photocopying the orders in the Copying Agency. The required orders are downloaded and printed in the Copying Agency, properly authenticated and

delivered to the applicants in the minimum possible time. Uncertified copies of the orders are available on payment of nominal fees on the very next day of moving the application, as the Copying Agency only has to print the orders already available on the intra-net.

(xviii) E-Mail Facility - E-Mail facility has been provided to all the Judges and Courts with the commissioning of dedicated E-Mail Server for district judiciary in Delhi. The Judges are able to transfer the drafts of the judgements/orders from Courts to their residences by using the secured e-mail facility and vice-versa. All the circulars are also e-mailed to the Judges. It has resulted in availability of cost effective instant communication facility. District Courts have been able to cut cost of paper printing and labour by use of e-mail facility.

(xix) Automatic Staff Posting System - Prior to computerization, it was very difficult to keep track of the postings of the staff members numbering about five thousand. Now a Personnel Information System (PIS) is in place. All the details and particulars of the employees alongwith their postings have been entered into the system and the said software generates the reports on the set parameters and indicates the names of the Court Officials who are mature for their transfers after serving for a particular number of years in their present postings. The said PIS System also takes care of the Annual Confidential Reports, Provident Fund Entries and Service Book Entries. It

signals well in time the steps to be taken in respect of the Court Officials who are going to retire in a few months time. It helps in proper management of the staff, which is a valuable asset for the District Courts of Delhi.

(xx) Stores Management - Every year, the District Courts purchase huge quantity of consumables valued at millions of rupees. A proper Stores Management System has been put in place with computerization of the District Courts. It indicates well in time the store items, which need replenishment, monthly/weekly consumption pattern of different types of stores and the budgeted and actual expense on a particular store item. It helps in planning the future budget for purchase of the store items and proper inventories are maintained.

(xxi) Laser Printers for District Courts - Dot Matrix Printers installed in the first phase of computerization on the stenos' tables have been found to be very noisy and slow in their operation. After much deliberation and working out the feasibility of going for different options, it was decided to purchase Laser Printers for the Stenos. The Laser Printers perform the printing function without any noise and disturbance. The speed is fantastic and overall efficiency of the Stenographers has improved. They do not interfere with the normal functioning of the Courts. The Dot Matrix Printers removed from the Stenos' seats have been provided to the Ahlmads, who need to generate different types of reports and summons etc.

(xxii) Automatic Generation of Summons and Warrants etc. -

Considerable time was being spent every day by the Ahlmads for preparation of the summons, warrants and other types of notices to be sent to the witnesses, parties and other officials requiring their attendance in Court. After the introduction of computerization and completion of third phase of data entry (primarily concerning with entering the names of the witnesses in the Computer Data Bank) now the summons to the witnesses and Notices to the parties, Production Warrants, Bailable and Non Bailable Warrants, Release Warrants and custody warrants etc. are being generated by using the Computer System. The Ahlmad only requires to select the serial number of witness to be summoned and thereafter, the summons is automatically generated showing the next date of hearing, time of appearance and the purpose for which the summons/warrant has been issued. It saves a lot of time for the Ahlmads and the summonses are generated in a legible format, which can be duly acted upon by the concerned authorities. In the past, number of reports were received regarding non-mentioning of complete names and illegible handwriting in which the summon formats were filled in and sent for service resulting in delays. With the introduction of computerization of summons, this problem has been taken care of.

(xxiii) Training to the Staff - The District Courts had engaged the services of NIIT in the initial stage to train the staff and judges, which ran a capsule

course of 15 days for all the court officials. Moreover, intensive training was provided by NIC to the staff regarding the customized software developed for District Courts. Refresher courses are being run from time to time as and when the need arises. New staff appointed in the District court is given training to use the computer system in the most effective manner soon after their appointment. Gradually we have developed our own faculty to take care of the staff training and dependency on outside training agency is not required.

(xxiv) Introduction of Digital Signatures - Since the volume of data being sent and received by use of electronic means is increasing, a concern was shown regarding security of the said valuable data. Need was felt to introduce digital signatures for Judges. Digital signatures have been provided to the Judges and the Court officials. After pronouncing the judgments, the same are digitally signed and transmitted in a secured environment to the intended recipients. The benefit of digitally signing a document is that a third party will not be able to make alteration in the contents of the document and the intended receiver on receipt can verify whether the transmitted document has been in its original format or not. Successful experiments have been made to transmit the bail orders to the jail complexes from District Courts by using the digital signatures and very soon it will be implemented on a large scale.

(xxv) Provision of Photocopiers - The plans are afoot to provide one photocopier to each Court so that the copies of the evidence recorded during the trial and the orders/judgments pronounced by the learned Judge are made available to the litigants there and then. It will save their frequent visits to the Court Complexes and will result in lessening the burden of the Copying Agency. It is worthwhile to mention here that as per Law, the Courts are bound to supply free copies to all the under-trials lodged in Jails and to the parties in Motor Accident matters. In other cases, copies have to be provided as and when proper application is moved with requisite Court fees. Hence, one photocopier in each Court is the minimum that is required to take care of granting copies to the said applicants/parties.

(xxvi) Computers for Readers/Court Masters - Computers are also being provided to the Readers/Court Masters as the said officials are also required to maintain and update a number of registers like Peshi Register, Disposal Register and they have to collect fine and prepare Fine Statement etc. In the spare time, the said computers can be utilized by the additional Steno for typing the judgments or orders. It is a step, which is necessary to be taken for full computerization of District Courts. This proposal is being forwarded to Delhi Government for approval.

(xxvii) District Courts Website - The District Court Website is a unique in-house venture of District Courts of Delhi. It is the first Web-Site of District

Judiciary in India, which is, updated daily. The entire Website was developed by the Author and the same is being hosted successfully for the last about two years. The website is available at www.delhicourts.nic.in. It provides the Judges, Lawyers, litigants and the general public host of facilities. Some of the highlights of the Web-site are :-

(a) History of the District Courts - The history of Delhi Courts has been traced back to the year 1911 when the Commissionerate of Delhi was carved out by a Proclamation Notification and from that date onwards all the historical developments in the field of judicial history of Delhi have been enumerated.

(b) Introduction - The brief background of all the three Court complexes has been given. Specific Courts housed in the said Court complexes have been detailed and direct links have been provided to the said Courts. Introduction of the present District & Sessions Judge and a list of his learned predecessors has been provided along with brief introductions of the Judges In charge of Karkardooma Courts and Patiala House Courts.

(c) Jurisdiction - The jurisdiction of different types of Courts situated in District Courts has been given. The Court numbers, names of the Judges, their respective jurisdictions, specific room numbers and their place of sitting have been listed. A special feature is the chart showing Police Station wise

list of the Magistrates in which all the Police Stations of Delhi have been alphabetically arranged. If a person knows the Police Station where crime has taken place, he can track the concerned Court, where the case is pending alongwith other details. It works as a guide to litigants. A list of all the Special Courts in Delhi has been also provided, which deal with specific type of offences under different law enactments.

(d) General Information - General information regarding types of cases, place of filing, requisite documents to be filed alongwith specific types of petitions, necessary Court Fees to be affixed etc. is provided in the General Information Section.

(e) Important Links - Links have been provided to all the important legal Websites available on the inter-net like Supreme Court of India, Delhi High Court, National Crime Records Bureau, Delhi Police, Tihar Jail, different Libraries and other Departments concerned with the District Courts.

(f) Other Legal Forums - All the other legal forums in Delhi have been listed like FERA/FEMA Board, MRTP, NCDRC and State Consumer Commission etc. and links have been provided to the Websites of the said Forums is available.

(g) Tender/Bids - All the tenders and bids issued by the office of the District

& Sessions Judge are being uploaded on the inter-net so that interested vendors may submit their competitive quotations and the purchases can be made in an open and fair manner.

(h) Daily Cause List - Cause Lists of all the Courts in the three District Court Complexes are uploaded a day in advance on the inter-net and the same are available after 6:00 PM. Lawyers and litigants can plan their visit to the respective Court Rooms on the basis of the information provided in the Cause Lists and it helps in reducing the rush in the Court Complexes in the morning hours.

(i) Bail Cause List - Seven Sessions Courts in Delhi hear bail matters for specific districts. The Cause Lists of these Bail Courts are also uploaded a day in advance so that the Lawyers can plan their visit to appear in the said Courts, where their bail matters are listed.

(j) Bare Acts - Bare Acts, which are necessary for running the Courts on day to day basis have been provided with direct links so that as and when required, a particular bare Act may be accessed and relevant section may be extracted, copied, saved or printed.

(k) Pleading Forms - Most of the pleading forms used for filing in the District Courts have been listed and their specimen formats have been

provided on the Website so that Lawyers and litigants are able to use the said forms for drafting pleadings.

(l) Daily Orders All the important interim orders passed by the District Courts in Delhi are uploaded in secured PDF format on the same day so that lawyers/litigants are able to access them by the evening. The orders can be searched by name of the Judge and specific date of the said order. Daily Orders are available on the Internet for a period of one month from the date when they are pronounced.

(m) Availability of District Courts Judgments - Judgments pronounced by District Courts are uploaded on the Internet by 6.00 p.m. in secured PDF format so that the lawyers and litigants are able to access the said judgments and there is no need to come to Court for their uncertified copy as prints can be directly taken from the Website. It reduces the work load of the Copying Agency and the visits of the public and the lawyers to the Court complexes. Care is taken not to upload the judgments in matrimonial cases, rape matters, Official Secret Act cases and other matters of sensitive nature.

(n) Judgments of Hon'ble High Court - Every month's judgments of the Hon'ble High Court are uploaded on the District Courts Website after sorting them subject-wise, party name-wise and Judge-wise. It helps the District Court Judges to access the latest judgments of the Hon'ble High Court on the

specific topics pending before the District Court Judges. The High Court Judgments work as a guiding force for them and they are kept informed of the latest developments in the field of law. Even lawyers and litigants have found this feature quite useful in sharpening their legal skill and knowledge.

(o) Case Status - Any litigant can check the case status on the Internet where he is a party by entering the name of any of the party/case number/Court Number/Name of Judge. Free text search is also available. One can check the case status even by entering the type of case if he is not sure of any of the above parameters. It reduces the crowds in Court Rooms where litigants/lawyers and their clerks visit only for enquiring the purpose for which the case is fixed on the next date of hearing.

(p) Certified Copy Status - The certified copy status of the applications filed in the three Court Complexes is available on the inter-net. If the copy is ready, the party can visit the Copying Agency and collect the same. If the copy is not ready then the probable date when the copy will be ready is automatically displayed and there is no need to visit Copying Agency only for the purpose of noting down the next date when the copy will be ready.

(q) On Line Enquiry Facility - To reduce the rush in the Courts, an on-line enquiry facility has been provided on the Website. Litigants/lawyers can submit their queries, which are answered on-line in least possible time. The

enquiries can be related to any matter concerning their cases pending in District Courts.

(r) Members' Area - The Web-site also provides an exclusive members' area for the District Court Judges. The telephone directories of the District Courts and other important institutions are available. The list of judges with their date of appointment and place of posting has been provided. In the E-Journal Section, Judges are encouraged to publish their articles. All the forms useful for the Judges, like Leave Applications, Medical Claim Form and LTC form etc. with extracts of the relevant rules have been provided. It saves the numerous rounds to the different branches to collect the forms and to know the relevant rules. The Judges can also access their own personal information like salary and leave details etc. on-line.

A discussion forum has been started where unique questions of law are put to the participants who are encouraged to provide their view points/solutions. The Judges may also file their computer related complaints on-line, which are attended on priority. The members' area is quite popular with the members of District Judiciary.

(s) Service Rules – The service rules of Delhi High Judicial Service (DHJS) and Delhi Judicial Service (DJS) have been published on the Website, so that interested persons can view them. For the lawyers who wish to join judiciary,

these rules are quite useful.

(t) Statistics– The periodical pendency statements in respect of all types of cases are also published on the Website, which are quite helpful to understand the trend of disposal of cases.

(u) Annual Report – We are the only District Court in India that publishes every year Annual Report of the District Judiciary on its Website. The Annual Report gives details of history of Courts organization, branches, disposal trends and future vision etc. One of the resolutions in the Conference of the Chief Ministers of the States and Chief Justices of the High Courts held on September 18, 2004 in New Delhi is that one of the confidence building measures among all the stakeholders in the justice delivery system is for the Court system is to publish Annual Reports of achievements and use of resources. In Delhi we have already achieved this target.

7. Future Plans: –

(i) Video Conferencing - A need was felt to establish Video conferencing Studios in all the existing Court Complexes. As far as future Court Complexes are concerned, plans have been made to introduce E-Courts in the said Court Complexes, which will be fully equipped with Video Conferencing facilities as well as other E-Governance paraphernalia. In the present Court Complexes, efforts are being made to establish at least two

Studios in each Court Complex to enable Video Conferencing between Courts and Jails as well as between Courts and Witnesses, who are living at far flung places and are unable to come to Court to attend the hearings. There is a legal requirement to have Video Conferencing facilities in the Courts in view of the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the matter of Sakshi vs. State as well as the judgment passed by our own Hon'ble High Court in a child rape case where it was observed that the child is not to be exposed again to the said alleged rapist during the trial and electronic means are to be used to record his testimony.

(ii) Direct Connectivity with Delhi Police, Hospitals and Jails - In the near future, we wish to go for direct connectivity with different Police Stations in Delhi so that copies of FIR can be sent using E-mail and other electronic facilities to the concerned Magistrates. The summons of police witnesses can be also issued using electronic communication. Another area where we want to concentrate is to have a direct link to the posting list of Delhi Police. By the time a case reaches the evidence stage, the concerned Police Officials, who are witnesses in a case stand transferred once or twice and their present postings are not noted anywhere. It results in delay in tracing the said witnesses. If the present posting status of over fifty-four thousand strong Delhi Police is available on intra-net, our system can track a particular police official using his PIS number and the summons can be directly sent to his present place of posting. This way, the wastage of

Court time in tracing the police officials can be minimized and disposal rate will certainly increase.

Similarly, we require direct access to the data banks of different hospitals as the Medico Legal Cases requiring opinion in respect of nature of injuries, the availability of the doctors to depose in Courts and opinion of the experts take a long time to reach the Court.

District Courts also we want to establish a direct access to the Computer Systems of the Jail Authorities as on number of occasions, the under trials are not produced due to one reason or the other. In some cases, they are lodged in Jails under different names because at the time of arrest, they did not disclose their real name by which they were earlier booked. The identity can be ascertained on the basis of finger prints, Retina Identification and other approved electronic identification kits so that the anomaly of identifying a person only by his name is taken care of and accused are produced in Courts on time. The bail orders can also be transmitted electronically to Jail by e-mail in secured environment using digital signatures.

(iii) Interactive Voice Response System – In India, the penetration of computers is very low. Although most of the lawyers now have computers and Internet facility but most of the litigants do not have these facilities

available to them. To provide instant information to them, the District Court has plans to introduce Interactive Voice Response System by providing dedicated telephone numbers for enquiry. The litigants can dial these numbers and a voice will guide them to make appropriate choices regarding Court Complexes, type and number of Court, details of the case and then the present status of the case will be intimated to him. The details provided are the next date of hearing and the purpose for which the case is listed.

(iv) SMS Enquiry Facility for Lawyers/Litigants – The lawyers, who will register for e-filing, they will be provided facility of automatic SMS intimating them the next date of hearing and purpose for which their cases have been adjourned. The litigants and other lawyers can send in their queries at a given number by SMS and the latest details of their cases will be sent back to them by SMS. It will save frequent visits to Courts by the lawyers, their staff and litigants to know the present status of their cases.

(v) Minute to minute progress of Cause List on Internet - It has been also proposed to provide minute to minute progress of the Cause Lists of the Courts, so that the lawyers and litigants can come to know whether their cases have been adjourned or their matters are still pending, so that they can attend the same.

(vi) E-filing - The next big step is to go for E-filing. We are in the process

of establishing infrastructure to allow the Lawyers to file civil cases in electronic form. It is need of the hour as legislature has already allowed electronic service of summons by use of e-mail and fax but it can become a reality only when e-filing of cases is allowed. The availability of the electronic copies of arguments and pleading in the system will improve the efficiency of the Case Information Management System (CIMS), as there will not be any need to type in the details mentioned in the said cases and the summonses can be generated and dispatched to the parties by E-mail and fax by enclosing the copy of the petition and documents available in electronic form. The concerns and advice of different interested groups like Lawyers, Litigants, Judges and the Staff as well as the Higher Authorities will be taken into consideration before initiating E-filing in consonance with the laws of the land.

In the end, it is reiterated that we have a vision to become the first District Court in India to be fully computerized before the end of 2005 and to achieve this target we are working tirelessly.

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