

Standing Committee Report Summary

Infrastructure Development and Strengthening of Subordinate Courts

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice presented its report on Infrastructure Development and Strengthening of Subordinate Courts on February 6, 2014.
- **Land and funding availability:** The Committee noted that states are responsible for identifying and providing suitable land for construction of court buildings etc. Further, they must undertake vertical construction in light of shortage of land. The centre must attempt to increase its contribution to infrastructure, and ensure timely release of funds to states.
- **Implementation of CSS:** The Committee note the complaints received from state governments regarding the centrally sponsored scheme (CSS) on infrastructure development of subordinate judiciary. It recommended that the Department of Justice must conduct an audit of the CSS to ascertain: (i) the uneven utilization of funds by certain states and (ii) development that has taken place in states and if that has helped speed up trial of cases in courts.
- **Computerisation of courts:** The Committee stressed that the central and state governments must also adhere to the timeline set out for computerisation of all the courts, as it is a necessary step towards setting up of e- courts. It also called for a periodic report from the Department of Justice in this regard.
- **E-Court scheme:** The Ministry must ensure that the e-court scheme, which intends to make case filing, case work flow, judgements, cause lists, case status etc. linked to information technology, is implemented across states.
- **Gram Nyayalayas:** The Committee noted that most states have not set up Gram Nyayalayas, especially in the north eastern states. It recommended that the setting up of Gram Nyayalayas would provide access to justice to citizens at their door steps, reach out to marginalised groups and play a role in the overall reduction in the pendency of cases. Further, it recommended that the Ministry consider increasing central assistance to states in this regard.
- **Fast track courts:** In the wake of the gang rape in Delhi and scams related to fraudulent investment schemes, the establishment of Fast Track Courts have become more important. The Committee recommended that Fast track courts be set up at the earliest.
- **Family Courts:** The Committee noted that the shortage of family courts in every state was largely due to the allocation of meagre funds. It recommended that the Ministry revise the financial assistance provided to states in this regard.
- **Shortage of personnel:** The Committee stated that the pendency of cases is directly linked to the large number of vacancies in the subordinate courts. The Committee noted that recruitment and training of judicial personnel and support staff would help in reducing the pendency of cases. Further, the judge-population ratio may be corrected by appointing more judges to the subordinate courts.
- **Court procedures and litigation costs:** The Committee noted that procedures of the courts are ridden with unnecessary complications and consume inordinate time. It recommended that the central and state governments must resolve court procedures at the earliest.
- **All India Judicial Service:** The Committee stressed that the Ministry consider the setting up of the All India Judicial Service, at the earliest. This would benefit the subordinate judiciary by increasing quality of judges. This would also help reduce the pendency of cases in lower courts.

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