

eCommittee Newsletter

(For Internal Circulation Only)

March 2016



eCommittee, Supreme Court of India

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A Regional Discussion of the Computer Committee of the High Courts of Madras, Bombay (Maharashtra & Goa), Orissa, Gujarat and Karnataka was held at Bangalore on 19-20 March, 2016. The discussion was attended by the Hon'ble Judges of these High Courts, the Secretary and Joint Secretary of the Department of Justice of the Government of India, the concerned officers from the Registry of these High Courts, all the Central Project Coordinators, senior officers of the State Governments and officers of the National Informatics Centre (NIC).

Session I

The statistical information available on the **National Judicial Data Grid** (NJDG) was presented and discussed. The strengths of each participating High Court were highlighted and a request made to better the results in the coming months.

The **benefits and advantages** of frequent visits to the NJDG were emphasized and the participants were briefed on how the NJDG could be an extraordinary useful tool in **caseload management**. Through the NJDG, the progress of all cases available on the grid, particularly 10 year old cases can be easily monitored on a regular basis. A random search of such cases was made and it was found that the disposal of quite a few cases in the district courts is delayed due to an interim stay granted by the High Court. Such cases can be easily identified through the NJDG and steps taken to dispose of the pending cases in the High Court or at least vacate the interim stay.

A demonstration of **CIS 2.0 for the District Courts** was also given and it was explained that this version is far more user-friendly than CIS 1.0. Apart from that, a lot of information can be collated from CIS 2.0 which too can be of immense benefit in **case management**. The Karnataka High Court had recently migrated data from CIS 1.0 to CIS 2.0 in the district of **Ramanagar**. A live demonstration of this was given to the participants to show that a speedy switchover to CIS 2.0 would be greatly beneficial to the district judiciary, lawyers and litigants. The live demonstration was greatly appreciated by all participants.

A presentation of the features of **High Court software version 1.0** under preparation was given to the participants. The High Court software would provide flexibility to enable the High Court to build their periphery modules around the software. In due course of time, it would also enable the High Court to switch-over to **e-filing**, the module of which is under preparation by the e-Committee.

The participants were of the view that **adequate publicity** needs to be given to the developments that have taken place in the e-Courts project, particularly relating to the progress made in the district courts.

Session II

Bombay High Court made a presentation with regard to the progress made, the challenges faced in the implementation of Phase I and Phase II of the eCourts Project as well as steps taken to overcome these challenges.

The Bombay High Court has clearly identified the **responsibilities of DSAs**. This is extremely helpful and, therefore, the responsibilities as identified are given below:

1. Hardware Maintenance & Installation
2. Network management, maintenance and installation
3. Database administration and management: MySQL and PostgreSQL.
4. System software installation, upgrades and maintenance; trouble-shooting: Ubuntu, Libre Office, OS, shell scripts, drivers, maintenance and upgrades.
5. CIS NC2.0 application software
6. Technical Support at District & Taluka levels.

The judicial officers as well as officers in the Registry of the various District Courts discuss the issues being faced and proposed solutions through “**telegram**”. Images exchanged through “**telegram**” were shown and they show that this is a very innovative manner of resolving issues concerning the implementation of the eCourts Project. This is a recommended **good practice**.

Issues of **connectivity** have been resolved (to some extent) through dialogue between the Hon’ble Judges of the Computer Committee as well as senior officers of the Department of Information Technology and NIC.

The Bombay High Court also has a very interesting system of **analytics** through the use of Google sheets, the

query builder provided in CIS 2.0 and through the use of NJDG. This is a recommended **good practice**.

The **scanning and digitization of records** in the High Court is going on satisfactorily but due to the large number of records, it may take some time for that project to be over. The Supreme Court has been scanning and digitizing its record for quite some time and the participants were informed that the software has already been shared with the High Courts. Instead of preparing fresh software by each High Court, the software already made available by the Supreme Court can easily be utilized with appropriate modifications.

The Bombay High Court has produced two-page **poster/pamphlet** that was circulated to all participants. This gives the progress made in the eCourts Project at a glance.

The Bombay High Court also explained that it was having a fresh look at the **Process Re-engineering exercise** and the Civil Court Rules as well as the Criminal Court Rules.

The presentation and the following discussion highlighted that if there is a **constant exchange of views** between the High Court, the Department of Information Technology as well as the concerned officers of the NIC, many of the problems relating to **connectivity** could be resolved and other outstanding issues could also be resolved. During the course of discussions it was also suggested that **wide publicity to the eCourts Project** should be given to the members of the District Courts Bar

Associations and the general public. This may be through pamphlets, posters, local awareness programmes conducted by the State Legal Services Authority, spots on FM channels, scrolls on local TV channels, advertisements in newspapers etc.

One of the suggestions that came up in the discussion was that perhaps some extra payment may be made by way of **incentive to the DSAs and the TSAs**. The High Court will take up this issue with the State Government and see what can be done in this regard.

During the course of discussions, it was also suggested that a report may be prepared on the **utilization of video conferencing units** given to the Courts and Jails. Some sort of evaluation may be made about the utility of Video Conferencing in each State.

Session III

The Karnataka High Court presentation showed that the **SMS facility** of forwarding information to lawyers and litigants is being extensively used. In fact out of 199 court locations the SMS facility is used in 177 court locations to great advantage.

The SMS facility is also used for the benefit of judicial officers through an application called **HC2LC**. This is a very interesting method of **information exchange** between the High Court and the District Court. Whenever an appeal or revision is filed against an interim order passed by a Judicial Officer, the High Court sends

an SMS to him/her so that he/she is aware of that fact and also whether any stay of proceedings is granted or any interim order passed. This also enables the Judicial Officer to prepare the LCR for onward transmission to the concerned Court without delay, thereby saving considerable time. Similarly, if the appeal or revision is disposed of, an SMS is sent to the Judicial Officer.

Another advantage of this application is that if there is an **undated case**, an SMS is immediately sent to the Judicial Officer so that the NJDG can be updated at the earliest. As a result of this, the number of undated cases in the district Courts in Karnataka has drastically come down and is now in the region of 0.13 %. Information with regard to this application can be obtained from the CPC of the Karnataka High Court.

Another interesting piece of information provided by the Karnataka High Court is that the use of video conferencing has resulted in a **huge financial saving**. According to the High Court, for the production of every prisoner, the State has to incur expenditure of Rs.700/- per day. Through video conferencing, the expenditure has been brought down to Rs.7/- per person per day. Undoubtedly, this is an enormous saving.

The Karnataka High Court is also experimenting with inviting **online applications for recruitment** so that the time of the staff is not spent in processing the applications. This is a progressive step and hopefully the application will be ready in a few months time.

The Karnataka High Court has also made a considerable progress in **periphery development**, particularly in the High Court. Some of the periphery applications developed by the High Court are as follows:

1. CIS Extension Reports:
 - a. Filing
 - b. Accounts
 - c. Copying
 - d. Pendency
 - e. Court Hall
2. Court Summon & Notice Management System
3. Online Filing of meta data of Negotiable Instruments Act and Motor Vehicle Cases
4. Integration for Police IT Data with CIS at local server at High Court

There is also full utilization of the human resource provided by the **district level computer committees**. They are in constant touch with each other and the High Court Computer Committee. Through this process, the eCourts project has been taken forward to a considerable extent by the Karnataka High Court.

One interesting fact that came up during the course of discussions is that the Karnataka High Court **generates a large amount of electricity through the use of solar panels**. The participants had a look at the solar panels and the manner in which electricity is generated. The information given by the High Court suggests that they have made a saving

of more than Rs. 40 lakhs in the last one and a half years and hope to recover the entire cost of the solar energy generating system for electricity within about 10 years.

There are **some important points** to be noted with regard to the utilization of solar energy for generating electricity. These are:

- (i) The **annual maintenance cost** for the system is quite high and should be taken into consideration.
- (ii) Facility of **storage of electricity** has its own advantage but it increases the cost of the project. The Karnataka High Court does not store electricity but transfers it to the State grid.
- (iii) The **choice of panels** is important and it appears that “amorphous” panels are preferable to “crystalline” panels. “Amorphous” panels are said to be far more efficient.

Session IV

Gujarat High Court emphasized once again the advantages of the **extensive use of video conferencing** facilities. Video conferencing is used in Gujarat not only for production of undertrial prisoners but also during the course of trial. There is a huge financial saving and very often witnesses and investigating officers who are out of station are also examined through video conferencing.

CIS 2.0 has been implemented in all the districts of Gujarat except in

two courts and steps are being taken to ensure that CIS 2.0 is implemented in these two courts also.

Training of judicial officers and staff is being taken very seriously by the Gujarat High Court and this has had a very beneficial impact insofar as the implementation of the eCourts project is concerned.

The Gujarat High Court has also made considerable progress in **periphery development** and some of the areas in which periphery software has been developed are as follows:

1. Judicial Side (High Court)

- (a) Filing/Registration of Cases
- (b) Caveat Matching
- (c) Inspection register
- (d) Daily Court Proceedings
- (e) Court-wise and Advocate-wise Cause lists
- (f) Order/Judgment Template Generation
- (g) Writ/Notices/Summons generation with dispatch register
- (h) Judgment Authentication Register
- (i) Account Section with automated Estimate Cost calculation
- (j) Certified Copy generation
- (k) Records and Proceedings Register
- (l) Decree Record Room Register
- (m) Reportable Judgment and Publication Details Register
- (n) Free-text Search within the Order(s)/Judgment(s)
- (o) Party In Person

- (p) Business Intelligence Tool
- (q) Case Tracking System
- (r) Online Sick/Leave Note Management
- (s) Android Applications
- (t) Case Tracking System
- (u) Online Bail Application System

2. Judicial Side (District Judiciary)

- (a) Advocate-wise Cause-list Performance Assessment of Judicial Officers
- (b) Various Monthly and Quarterly Report Generation
- (c) Certified Copy Module
- (d) Police Station wise Cause-list
- (e) Cause-list with name of all Parties
- (f) Cause-list with Act, and Section details etc.

The PPT presented by the Gujarat High Court gave a list of good practices being followed. These are as follows:

1. Administrative Side Applications Developed at High Court:

- (a) Annual General Transfer
- (b) Personal Information System (PIS) for Judicial Officers
- (c) Building Construction Proposals Management System
- (d) Judges' Community
- (e) Visitor Management System
- (f) File Tracking System
- (g) Central Tapal Registry
- (h) Stock Management System
- (i) Leave Management System
- (j) Payroll Management System
- (k) Vehicle Allotment System

- (l) Online Technical Complaint Management System
- (m) Agenda and Minutes Search Application
- 2. Data Transfer Issue Resolution for Taluka Court data transfer to NJDG
 - (a) Since the data uploading of Taluka Courts from GSWAN connectivity to NJDG server is not permissible, a stop-gap solution for data uploading is as below:
 - (b) Taluka Courts upload csv data files and order/judgement(s) tar ball files to the staging web application server located at High Court by using GSWAN connectivity.
 - (c) Uploaded csv data files and order/judgment(s) files are pushed to another server located at High Court which has GSWAN and NICNET connectivity.
 - (d) Data and order or judgement(s) are being pushed from intermediate server to NJDG server using NICNET Connectivity through 'slony' and 'rsync' respectively.

One of the significant developments that the Gujarat High Court is working is **online bail application for prisoners**. This is still at a development stage and it is expected that it will be ready sometime in July. Thereafter, the application software can be shared with all the

High Courts. The benefit of this online bail application is that a prisoner can directly move the bail application through jail with the assistance of the legal aid lawyer or some other prisoner. Through this process, the proceedings of the bail application can also be communicated to the prisoner. This is an interesting development and hopefully we all should be able to share it within a few months' time.

Session V

Madras High Court informed that **Process Re-engineering** is being taken very seriously and the Civil Court Manual and the Criminal Court Manual pertaining to the districts is being completely overhauled with the assistance of a retired High Court Judge.

The Madras High Court has also prepared **Recruitment Rules** for the technical staff and this will be useful for all the High Court. If required, a copy of the Recruitment Rules can be obtained from the CPC in the Madras High Court.

A list of **interesting developments** was communicated in the PPT prepared by the Madras High Court. These interesting developments are as follows:

1. Judicial Officers Management System
2. Tapal Document Management System
3. Visitor Management System (High Court Security)
4. Training to the Staff of the High Court

5. Hon'ble Judges' P.As Management System
6. Staff Management System
7. Inventory Management System
8. Advocate Chamber Allotment Management System
9. Interconnecting Criminal Courts and Prisons
10. WACOM Boards in Court Halls

The Madras High Court is also seriously looking at **locally developing periphery modules** both for the districts courts as well as for the High Court. This will be in accordance with the practices followed in the District Courts. Some of the periphery modules may certainly be useful for other High Court and can always be shared.

Session VI

The last presentation was made by the Orissa High Court, which is looking at giving a considerable amount of information on its website. This includes a **list of new cases filed** so that the lawyers and litigants are aware of this fact. The lawyers are also informed whether the cases filed by them are lying under defects or not.

The High Court is also looking at an **online payment system** which it hopes to develop with the technical manpower for which posts have been created. It may take some time for the recruitment process but that should not stop the online payment system. In fact, the eCommittee shared the progress made in this regard and also demonstrated how online payment can be made which has been implemented

as part of the eFiling application being developed. The application software of the eCommittee is at an advanced stage and subject to security audit, it should be ready in a couple of months.

The Orissa High Court has also prepared a list of best practices which it shared with all the participants. These best practices are as follows:

1. The NJDG and eCourts activities are regularly monitored under the supervision of the Portfolio Judges.
2. Daily observance of NJDG improvement and proper appraisal made to the District Judges.
3. Monitoring of daily uploading of Judgments and final orders on NJDG.
4. Adoption of Centralised filing without laxity.
5. Formation of District Computer Committee for monitoring and progress of eCourt Project.
6. Email ID of the Judicial Officers are maintained.
7. New Laptops and Printers are provided to the newly recruited Judicial Officers on the date of their joining.

As far as the district courts are concerned, the Orissa High Court is taking up the **digitization of the records** very seriously. The software in this regard has already been shared by the eCommittee and the Orissa High Court will be making some modifications in the software to suit its own purpose.

Conclusions

At the end of all the sessions, certain important points that had come out during the discussions and presentations are listed below:

- (1) The number of **undated cases** is fairly high as far as Orissa is concerned. Ideally the number of undated cases should be less than 1%. It may be good idea to follow the practices adopted by the Karnataka High Court to achieve this.
- (2) **Citizen Centric Services** need to be increased considerably. Out of a total of 28 Citizen Centric Services, Karnataka High Court has made available 20 such services. Madras and Orissa High Courts need to make greater efforts in this regard.
- (3) **Stock entry** has progressed considerably but Bombay and Orissa High Court are lagging behind in this to some extent. Gujarat High Court has got some excess stock and perhaps it will need to reconcile the figures.
- (4) The **implementation of CIS 2.0 needs to be expedited** particularly in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Orissa. Maharashtra, Daman & Diu, Goa and Gujarat have more or less completed the migration.
- (5) **SMS services** have been found to be very beneficial. Greater usage need to be made of this service. The application software used by the Karnataka High Court and the Gujarat High Court are very user friendly and beneficially.
- (6) The **summary report** presented by the eCommittee from the NJDG was briefly discussed. It was pointed out that the summary report can be generated by the CPCs and by the Nodal Officer of the district court and will be of great benefit for case management.
- (7) All the participants were of the view that the use of **video conferencing should be encouraged**. It has certainly a great benefit not only in terms of being cost effective but also frees police personnel for other tasks including law and order. Video conferencing has also saved a lot of time of the judicial officers.
- (8) **Greater publicity** needs to be given to the eCourts Project. Pamphlets can be prepared and distributed in awareness programme conducted by the State Legal Services Authority, radio spots, T.V. channels, newspaper advertisements etc. can be used to give information about the eCourts Project.
- (9) All of us need to take **greater advantage of the National Judicial Data Grid** particularly for court and case management.
- (10) The **e-filing module** prepared by the eCommittee is under testing. A demonstration of this module was given to the participants. Hopefully, it should be ready sometime in July or August depending on the security audit.

This can be customized by each High Court as per its needs.

- (11) Similarly, the **High Court software** should be ready sometime in August or so depending upon the security audit. A discussion about the High Court software is being held with all the CPCs on 28-29 March, 2016 for their suggestions and comments.
- (12) NIC has been requested to study all the **websites** of the district courts and make them compliant with Government guidelines including guidelines relating to handicapped persons.
- (13) **Server management** has been taken over by the High Courts of Bombay, Gujarat and Karnataka. These High Courts are now directly uploading the information on the NJDG. Orissa and Tamil Nadu also need to take over server management as also other High Courts.
- (14) The **responsibilities of DSAs** deserve to be considered by the High Courts.
- (15) The **best practices** prepared by the Gujarat High Court need to be considered by all the High Courts.
- (16) Greater use should be made of **social media such as “telegram”** by the DSAs and the judicial officers to resolve issues pertaining to the implementation of the eCourts project. Chat groups can also be formed for this purpose.
- (17) **Connectivity** issues need to be discussed by the High Court Computer Committee with the Department of Information Technology of the State Government and also with NIC. Issues can be resolved through the process of dialogue.
- (18) The application software prepared by the Karnataka High Court that is **HC2LC** is a very interesting programme and can be utilized by all the High Courts.
- (19) The High Courts need to take active interest in **periphery development particularly at the district court level**. It was observed that while periphery development is going on for the High Court, very little is being done for the periphery development for the district courts.
- (20) The issue of **payment gateway** can be discussed with the eCommittee by the High Courts. The eCommittee is willing to share its expertise in this regard.
- (21) **Online bail application system** being developed by the Gujarat High Court is very interesting and hopefully should be available sometime in July or August.
- (22) There is some **discrepancy in the figures of pending cases** shown on NJDG and the figures provided by the High Courts on physical verifications of the files. The principal reason for this is that pending cases in the Family Courts are not shown on the NJDG; some courts have no

connectivity being dilapidated courts; some courts have no connectivity being tenanted; some courts do not have connectivity at all. It is proposed to add a disclaimer in the NJDG in this regard.

(23) **New courts** that are established by the State Government should be with full facilities for computers and also staff. If the new courts are sanctioned without facilities and staff, it becomes difficult to persuade the State Government to provide the necessary facilities and staff at a later stage.

(24) **Interesting developments** made by the Madras High Court need to be considered by all of us.

(25) We need to concentrate on **innovations for the district courts** also and not only innovations and application software for the High Court.

(26) The **CPCs should coordinate with the Registrar General** of the High Court so that there is no

discrepancy in number of courts and the number of pending cases reflected both on the NJDG as well as through physical verification. The Department of Justice explained that sometimes it becomes difficult to reconcile the figures and to provide the correct answer to Parliament.

(27) The **best practices** of Orissa High Court need to be considered by all of us.

(28) It was proposed that an **e-mail ID** should be given to each court establishment so that communication between the High Court and the court establishment can be done through email.

(29) The experience of the Madras High Court is that the information contained in all existing registers is already available in CIS. All the Registers can therefore be dispensed with in physical form in the process reengineering exercise after confirmation.
