

I.T. APPLICATIONS IN JUDGE MANAGEMENT*

I will open with two anecdotes which would give you an idea of what

some of us feel about Information Technology (IT, for short) and how far-reaching is the impact of IT in our lives today.

Bill Gates, the doyen of computer industry, was visiting India and during the course of his travelling he was often talking about software system, Windows. Reading in the newspapers about Bill Gates frequently talking about Windows, someone observed – when we do not have houses to live in what are we going to do with Gates and Windows!

Look at the other anecdote. The Angel went to God, the Almighty, who creates the universe and conveyed the news, 'Sir, the human-beings, the fellows on the earth have broken the genome code.' The God, the Almighty was disappointed. He commanded, 'change the password, otherwise they would hack into our other systems.' It is amusing to learn that even God is computer-savvy and fully utilises IT in managing the universe. He too is scared of hackers!!

Thus there are those who do not know what IT is, and there are those who know and fully utilise IT to their advantage. However, here we have assembled to exchange our views and share the knowledge of practical utility of applications of IT by judges to their own advantage.

The task of a judge is onerous and poses multifarious demands on his time and energy. By judicious management of his affairs, coupled with utilisation of IT methods a judge can substantially enhance his potentials and also find time to relax.

Information Technology and computing are increasingly being employed by professionals worldwide to ensure their marketability and improve their productivity and decision making process. Although IT and computing was introduced in 'Judiciary' in the US in the early 70s, Canada in the early 80s, UK and Australia in the late 80s, the serious applications commenced only after the commercialisation of the Internet in mid 90s.

Judicial systems in the UK, Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong are now vigorously pursuing IT solutions as an invaluable tool for decision-making by Judges. Slow adoption of IT and computing by Judges is primarily attributed to the failure of the IT vendors and software developers to determine the need of the Judges and make available customised solutions. IT solutions have been developed for the Lawyers but not for the Judges.

It is proposed to demonstrate application of IT and computing in our working environment. These applications will make easy our functioning. It will demonstrate that it is easy to adopt IT, employing extremely user-friendly data input devices. We however need to determine our needs and then get the IT vendor to select suitable software that can be customized to satisfy these needs.

Some of us have already employed IT and computing and may be conversant with what is going to be shown. Inputs and queries are welcome. That would enable determination of

what each one of us needs. Some of the needs will be common. We can get software developed that will meet our common needs and then customize this software as required by each one of us.

I do not propose to enter into the technical side of IT applications. IT and computers have opened innumerable vistas to thrive upon. Within a limited time, available at our disposal during this session it is proposed to give a live demonstration of the just essential and useful IT applications for judges.

1. Case law search

- (i) Key Word Search
- (ii) Free Text Search
- (iii) Search through contents
- (iv) Case Index
- (v) Advances/refined search or search within search
- (vi) Shepherdising - tracing forward and tracing backwards
- (vii) Developing one's own digest or folder
- (viii) Others – Book Mark, underlining, tax annotation (Personal case)

2. (i) Internet Surfing

www.HMSO.GOV.UK.

His Majesty's Stationary Office

Statute Law of England

- (ii) www.findlaw.com.

U.S. based – huge options for search

- (iii) www.Indiancourts.nic.in

Cause list, Court websites, orders of SC/HC, judis, India Code – Statute Law

- (iv) www.indlaw.com.

Legal data base

- (v) www.lawinc.com.

Legal data base

3. Data Base management or Personal Digest of references and articles, case law, cases decided by oneself.

4. Personal organizer/appointments/meetings

- (i) Schedule and reminders, annual, monthly, weekly, daily
- (ii) Pleadings – Electronic notice and reminder – to self and to participants, minutes of meeting
- (iii) Periodic meetings

5. E-mail

6. Voice Chat/E-conferences

7. Data Base of Supreme Court and High Court Judges

- (i) Profile/dynamic upgradation

(ii) How many cases decided/decisions followed, dissented

A computer provides unbound personal service with no limitations to us. The more we play with the computer, the more friendly it becomes to us. It is a do it yourself learning.

This workshop will prove to the truth of this observation.

* Speech delivered at Workshop on “IT Applications in Judge Management” on 15th September, 2002.