

# Standing Committee report on virtual courts

November 2, 2020

In news

Recently, the Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice headed by Mr. Bhupender Yadav submitted its report on the functioning of virtual courts

## Key recommendations of the committee

- **Digital divide:** The Committee noted that a large number of advocates and litigants lack access to basic infrastructure and high-speed internet needed for virtual hearings. To address this, it recommended exploring the feasibility of involving private agencies to take videoconferencing equipment to the doorsteps of people who are not tech-savvy, to help them connect with virtual courts.
- **Timely implementation of National Broadband Mission:** In order to address the connectivity divide, the Committee recommended that the government ramp up efforts to ensure timely implementation of the National Broadband Mission.
- **Training and awareness programs to address Skill divide:**
  - To address the skill divide, the Committee recommended that training and awareness programs be conducted on all court complexes across the country to help advocates acquire skills required for handling digital platforms.
  - Committee also recommended that the Bar Council of India introduce computer courses as one of the subjects in law courses.
- **Lack of basic infrastructure in Subordinate courts:** The

Committee noted that lower courts lack basic infrastructure and have experienced difficulties in adapting to virtual courts. Since transition to virtual Courts requires high initial investment, **the Committee recommended exploring the feasibility of new financing approaches** such as a public private participation model.

- **Continuation of virtual courts:** The Committee recommended continuing the current system of virtual hearings on an experimental basis with the consent of **all parties** for certain categories of cases of appeals and final hearings (where physical presence is not required).

#### Way forward:

- **The Committee recommended implementing a full-fledged virtual Court system on a pilot basis**, in consultation with members of bar associations and bar councils.
- The Committee recommended transferring to virtual courts all matters in which personal presence may be dispensed with.
- In cases involving interpretation of law, facts, and examination of a large number of witnesses, hybrid model can be adopted to digitise manual processes (such as filing of plaint and issuance of summons) and the hearings can be held in physical courtrooms.