The eCourts Mission Mode Project

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In news : Recently, the eCommittee of Supreme Court has prepared the draft vision document for Phase III of the eCourts Project

Phase III of eCourts Project

- Phase III of the eCourts Project in India is rooted in two central facets—access and inclusion.
- It envisions a judicial system that is more easily accessible irrespective of geographical distances, efficient and equitable for every individual who seeks justice, makes more efficient use of human and other resources, and absorbs the latest technology for a positive environmental impact.
- **The key goals and strategy of Phase III** prioritize the creation of a core Digital Infrastructure that can enable the development of services for dispute resolution by the judiciary and services of solutions for dispute containment and resolution by the ecosystem.

Building blocks of Phase-III of the project

This vision for Phase III is sought to be built on the following four building blocks:

- **Core Values:**
    - Phase III must strive for a modern judicial system, governed by core values of trust, empathy, sustainability and transparency which, while simplifying procedures, will maximise the positives of technology and minimise its risks and challenges.
- **Whole-of-system approach:**

- Phase III must aim to make processes more efficient across all three components of dispute management i.e. dispute avoidance, containment and resolution.
- Each of these components will require technological integration with different institutions.
- **Adoption frameworks:**
  - Phase III must focus on building strong adoption frameworks.
  - Such frameworks must include behavioural nudges, adequate training and skill set development, feedback loops, along with the requisite mandate of law.
- **Governance framework:**
  - From a governance perspective, while numerous judicial decisions have validated the use of technology in judicial processes, Phase III must address the accompanying administrative structures.
  - The key goals and strategy of Phase III prioritise the creation of a core digital infrastructure that can enable the development of services for dispute resolution by the judiciary and services of solutions for dispute containment and resolution by the ecosystem.

Timeline of eCourt project

- The E-Courts Project was conceptualized on the basis of "National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary – 2005" submitted by e-Committee of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India
- The e-Courts National portal (ecourts.gov.in) was launched by Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India on 7th August 2013. This provides Case Status, daily Cause-

list, Cases Filed and Cases Registered through the Case information System (CIS) Software.

- The e-Courts National portal also provides training material for judicial officers and staff, links to District Court websites and statistical reports that can be used as a judicial management information system.
- The eCourts Mission Mode Project, is a Pan-India Project, monitored and funded by the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India for the District Courts across the country.

The main objectives of the e-Court Project are as follows:

1. To provide efficient & time-bound citizen-centric service delivery.
2. To develop, install & implement decision support systems in courts.
3. To automate the processes to provide transparency of Information access to its stakeholders.
4. To enhance judicial productivity both qualitatively & quantitatively, to make the justice delivery system affordable, accessible, cost-effective & transparent

Implementation of the project: The eCommittee of the Supreme Court has been overseeing the implementation of the eCourts Project, conceptualized under the National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary-2005.

e-Committee of Supreme Court

- The eCommittee of the Hon'ble Supreme Court was established in 2004 via an order of the Ministry of Law and Justice in pursuance of a proposal received from the then Chief Justice of India.
- The eCommittee is the governing body charged with overseeing the eCourts Project conceptualized under the "National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary-2005".

- The eCourts project is a pan India initiative monitored and funded by the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India.

The objectives of the eCommittee include:

- Interlinking of all courts across the country
- ICT enablement of the Indian judicial system
- Enabling courts to enhance judicial productivity, both qualitatively and quantitatively
- Making the justice delivery system accessible, cost-effective, transparent and accountable; and
- Providing citizen-centric services

Other Phases of e-Court projects

Phase-I

- In Phase-I of the eCourts Project beginning from 2007, a large number of Court Complexes, Computer Server Rooms and Judicial Service Centres were readied for computerization of the District Courts.
- The District and Taluka Court Complexes covered in Phase-I were computerized with installation of hardware, LAN and Case Information Software (CIS), for providing basic case related services to the litigants and the lawyers.
- Under this, a large number of District Courts launched their websites for the convenience of the different stakeholders.
- The Change Management exercise was undertaken to train the Judicial Officers and Court Staff in the use of computers and Case Information System (CIS) was successfully implemented.
- Phase-I concluded with extended timelines upto 30th March 2015.

Phase-II

- The Policy and Action Plan Document Phase-II of the ecourts Project, received approval of Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India on 8th January 2014.
- The government of India sanctioned the project on 4th August 2015.
- In Phase-II, the covered courts are provisioned for additional hardware with (1+3) systems per Court Room, the uncovered Courts of Phase-I and the newly established Courts with (2+6) systems per Court Room and the Court Complexes are provisioned for hardware, LAN etc.
- It provides for High Courts as Implementing Agency, of the project under its jurisdiction
- Provision has been made for computerization of office of District Legal Services Authority; Taluka Legal Services Committee, the National Judicial Academy and the State Judicial Academies for efficient delivery of services and training.
- Phase-II has adopted the Core-Periphery model of Case Information Software, the core being Unified as National Core, while the periphery developed according to requirement of each High Court
- In Phase-II, all the remaining Court Complexes are provisioned to be connected with Jails and Desktop based Video Conferencing to go beyond routine remands and production of under-trial prisoners. It will also be used for recording evidence in sensitive cases and gradually extended to cover as many types of cases as possible
- The Phase-II provides for Judicial Knowledge Management System including Integrated Library Management System and use of Digital Libraries.
- The Phase-II of the project lays great emphasis on service delivery to the litigants, lawyers and other stakeholders.

- The websites will be Accessible Compliant and to the extent possible, the information will be available in the local languages.
- The applications for mobile phones , SMS and emails are extensively used as platforms for dissemination of information