

HIGH COURT OF DELHI: NEW DELHI

Due to ongoing global pandemic of COVID 19, the entire nation was under lockdown. It severely affected and disrupted the public life and the functioning of almost all the offices, departments, institutions, schools, college etc. The routine business also came to standstill. The Court Complexes, which are routinely thronged by Members of the Bar, litigants and witnesses, were no exception. Therefore, to contain the spread of virus, physical functioning of the Courts was suspended in the entire Country including the National Capital Territory of Delhi. However, all the judicial institutions rose to the occasion and came up with innovative ideas to ensure that all urgent matters are duly attended to provide access to justice to the citizens with the use of Information Technology tools.

Delhi High Court and Subordinate Courts carried on their judicial and administrative functions albeit in restricted manner through Video Conferencing facility by using state of the art CISCO WebEx Platform. Endeavour of the judicial administration, during the 4 four months period of April, May, June and July, has been to ensure that important matters related to life and liberty, matters of public importance and public interest litigation and like are filed, heard and disposed.

Hon'ble Mr. Justice D.N. Patel, Chief Justice, Delhi High Court constituted a Committee of Senior Judges dedicated to the cause of graded physical resumption of Courts. Delhi High Court took several pioneering administrative steps viz. cancellation of Summer Holidays to cope up with time lost during Lockdown, made all the High Court Benches functional through Video Conferencing, took steps for decongestion of prisons, held e-LokAdalat and like. Video Conferencing Rules were also notified during this period.

Though initially, only extremely urgent cases were being taken up by the High Court and the Subordinate Courts, gradually, the sphere has been extended and expanded considerably. Several circulars have been issued for guiding the functioning of Courts during this period. Delhi District Courts have established Courts in Prisons for continuous physical hearing in respect of fresh arrestees with the active assistance of Prison Authorities, Directorate of Prosecution, DLSAs, Police and Members of the Bar.

Hon'ble Mr. Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, Judge, Supreme Court of India inaugurated two additional Virtual Court dedicated for traffic challans in Delhi Subordinate Court on 13th May, 2020 for facilitating online disposal of MV Act challans. Delhi High Court and Subordinate Courts have also provided much needed facility for e-filing to the litigants. Online e-filing system of Delhi High Court had been inaugurated by **Hon'ble Mr. Justice D.N. Patel, Chief Justice** Delhi High Court on 13.06.2020. Around **12,000 advocates/litigants-in-persons** have got themselves registered for e-filing. Online display board system has also been developed to enable advocates and litigants to find out the status of matter being taken up through videoconferencing. A provision has also been made for

public-viewing of such hearings. Physical filing has also been started in Subordinate Courts as well as in Delhi High Court for non-urgent matters.

During the period starting from 1st April to 31st July, Delhi High Court listed around **13,000 matters** before the Benches through video conferencing. Upon hearing the parties, around **2800 Main Cases** and around **11,000 miscellaneous applications** have been disposed of. During this period, the Registry carried out registration of around **21,000** new main cases/miscellaneous applications. Around **196 PIL cases** were instituted and **155 PIL cases** were disposed during this period.

For assisting the general public in accessing justice through use of Information Technology, e-Seva Kendra has been made functional in all the District Court Complexes.

On the administrative side, different Committees of the High Court, conducted around **300 meetings** through video conferencing on various administrative and court-functioning related issues. High Court Registry also organized virtual farewell for Hon'ble Mr. Justice I.S. Mehta and Hon'ble Ms. Justice Sangita Dhingra Sehgal.

District Courts in Delhi, on its part, listed around **67,000 matters** which were taken up through video conferencing during this period. Besides pronouncement of judgments in around **3700 cases**, more than **21,000 miscellaneous applications** have been disposed of by District Courts.

Delhi Judicial Academy conducted **30 training programs** and **40 special training sessions** during this pandemic period and successfully imparted training to **760** Judicial Officers, Prosecutors and other stakeholders.

Delhi State Legal Service Authority organized first ever e-LokAdalat in all the District Courts of Delhi on 8th August, 2020 in which **77 Virtual Benches** were constituted wherein total **5838 cases** were disposed with settlement amount of approx. **Rs. 46.28 crores**. The accomplishment ceremony was presided over by **Hon'ble Mr. Justice N.V Ramana, Judge Supreme Court of India** and the Executive Chairman, NALSA. VidhikSewa Mobile App was launched for helping the needy. Around **322 Learning Series** through Webinar for panel lawyers were organized. Around **4230 Women** benefited by counseling and legal advice in DV Act cases. Around **3,22,125 persons** benefited from ration distribution organized by DSLSA. Around **5000 calls** were received on helpline no. 1516.

The Members of the Bar have actively and whole-heartedly participated in the virtual hearings during this pandemic time. Office bearers of Bar Council of Delhi, Delhi High Court Bar Association and District Court Bar Associations extended fullest cooperation and support to the Judicial Administration in taking up and hearing of fresh as well as pending cases. Presently, the Delhi High Court is in the process of preparing a graded plan for physical resumption of Courts.