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In a short span of a decade or so, there is quantum jump as far as technology in context of Indian judiciary is concerned. Transition is not slow or gradual. If we go in retrospection, we will rather find that just 10-15 years back, judicial system was virtually in a *Stone Age* in terms of technological tools. From just one typewriter per court, today the court room is equipped with three computers, TFT screen, laser printer, photocopier, pen drive, data uploading facility, library software, etc.

Delhi District Courts computerization had started in the year 2003 when Hon'ble Chief Justice of India flagged off the first phase of computerization. Thereafter, Delhi District Courts have shown great concern and extra zeal in this regard and various plans have been chalked out, under continuous guidance of Hon'ble High Court, to make fullest use of technology. Computers were provided to Judges at their residences for the first time way back in the year 2001 though first batch of computers to be installed in Court complex came as late as in Oct. 2003. Thereafter, there was no looking back and as on date there are around 1500 computers and 600 printers installed in various courts and branches. Presently, all the judges have been provided with latest Desktop computers for their residences. Laptops and printers have also been provided for residences by E-Committee. Latest Law-software has also been provided.

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Facility of Broadband has already been provided at the residences of Judges. Some more novel plans have already started taking shape and short depiction of such plans is as under:-

1. Digitization of Files

Record Room in each court complex occupies a huge area. Files, which have been otherwise disposed of, are kept in such *record room* and it requires a lot of manpower and space to keep the record properly. To access such record is again a cumbersome job despite the fact that good numbers of files are being destroyed periodically. It has been decided to preserve the record in *digitized form* instead of keeping the physical files. Contract has been already awarded for digitization of 150 Lakh pages of records in the first phase.

For preserving physical files, besides space crunch, we are also required to take care to thwart any possible damage which might occur from dust, termite, or rats, etc. Once the entire record is digitized, we would be saving space, money, time and manpower also.

2. Digital Signatures

Introduction of digital signatures would indeed go a long way. All the Courts have already been provided with computers and printers and once judgment is announced and signed, such judgment or order is immediately uploaded so that same is available to the litigants, advocates and general public. In order to ensure the genuineness of the text of the judgment, digital signatures would be provided to judges and officials and once the order or judgment is pronounced, same would be digitally signed and transmitted accordingly. Any receiver or recipient of such order or judgment can always very well know whether the transmitted order or judgment is in original format or not. In case, there is even slightest alteration, digital signatures would promptly declare that the document was not in the original format. Some of the judges have been already provided with the digital signatures and the experiment has proved to be successful and very soon all the judges will be provided with digital signatures.

3. Upgradation of Website

Website of Delhi District Courts, which is the most beneficial technological tool for all stake-holders, is being further updated so that every litigant or lawyer is in a position to access date-wise continuous progress in the matter.

4. Installation of CCTV

Installation of CCTV Cameras in Tis Hazari Courts has already begun. 125 cameras would be installed in Tis Hazari Court complex with a state of art *control room* which would be manned by court staff as well as by the local police so as to monitor all the activities. The configuration would be of such nature that audio and video recording is preserved for at least seven days. This would enhance the security in the court complex as any suspicious movement in the court complex would be caught immediately.

5. Surety Management System

This is altogether a new concept which would be introduced in India for the first time. We all know the menace of bogus sureties. We do not have any record of sureties and it is very easy for anyone to stand surety time and again without being caught.

In connection with criminal matters, numerous sureties come to court complexes daily and submit bail bonds. It is desirable to have a complete data base with respect to the persons submitting surety bonds. It is essential to have complete details with respect to background of such surety in order to control the menace of bogus sureties and in order to see that there is no fraudulent duplication of sureties. Objective is to have the complete data base of the surety along with his fingerprints and facial recognition system. Requisite data is to be stored in the system through machine readable text tools and photos would be taken with the help of digital cameras. Surety would be directed to the verification/identification wing in the Court Complex. There would be 3 separate rooms, in each court complex, meant for verification/identification. Each room would be equipped with necessary hardware and software and each

surety would give 10 fingerprints and a match of these would be done in the existing database. The Surety would be photographed and his photo image would also be verified in existing database. The result of automatic Fingerprint & Automatic Facial verification would get displayed on the PC. In case of a match, the data of the person will be available for further scrutiny. In case no match is found using both biometric systems, the surety details, photo and his fingerprints templates will be added to the database. Technical bids have already been invited and project would be commissioned very soon.

6. E Kiosks

E kiosks have been installed in Tis Hazari Court-Complex on experimental basis where any litigant or lawyer can gather information about his/her case. These Touch-screen systems are user-friendly and they have considerably reduced the work load of Facilitation Center.

7. Biometric Attendance System

Hon'ble Supreme Court and High Court of Delhi have already installed biometric attendance system for their staff and project was approved for implementation of the same in the District Courts. Formal contract has been signed and the Vendor has started the preliminary work. It has been proposed that fingerprint impression of each staff member would be taken and preserved in data base as well as in a smart card and such smart card would be thereafter given to concerned staff member and while recording the attendance, every staff member would be required to place his/her finger on a particular terminal and to flash the smart card from a short distance and once the fingerprint impression matches with the image stored in the smart card, the attendance, along-with time, would be marked electronically. We would be in a better position to keep entire record with respect to attendance and since there won't be any possibility of tampering with such electronic record, staff would naturally become more disciplined and punctual.

8. E Filing

E-filing would be a quantum leap in use of technology. Recent amendments incorporate provisions of service through electronic means, i.e., through e-mail and fax and it would be feasible only when e-filing starts taking place and the soft copies of the pleadings are also made available to the courts. E-filing would take place once all the stake holders actively participate and give their valuable input and co-operation. Preliminary study in this regard is being undertaken.

9. Inter-active Voice Response System (IVRS)

Though the computerization has become order of the day yet it is not possible for each and every litigant or lawyer to have a computer and Internet facility and to provide them with instant information, the District Court has definite plans to introduce Inter-active Voice Response System. Dedicated telephone numbers for specific enquiry would be installed and voice would guide the litigants to select requisite choice and then the status of the case would be made available to such litigants.

10. SMS Enquiry Facility for Lawyers and Litigants

It is being studied whether facility of automatic SMS can be started whereby public can be intimated regarding status of the case, next date of hearing and purpose of hearing. Litigants and lawyers would be required to send their enquiries to a specific mobile number and they would be provided with status of the case immediately through SMS. This would save their time and in such a situation they would not be required to visit the court complex.

11. Creation of E-Court

India's first District level E-Court has been inaugurated on 08.02.2010 at District East, Karkardooma Courts by Hon'ble Chief Justice of High Court of Delhi in the presence of Hon'ble Judges of High Court as well as other dignitaries. It is a pilot project executed under the guidance of Computer Committee of High Court of Delhi. Funds for this project were sanctioned by TIFAC, an autonomous body under Ministry of Science and Technology and

the project has been executed by C-DAC, Noida. This E-Court is a pilot project and after testing the technology in this Court, this experience will be utilized for making more Courts paperless. There is a provision of a document visualizer and any document can be projected on the LCD Screens installed in the E-Court, so that the same are visible to the accused, witnesses or the prosecutor in the same Court, as well as when they are connected through Video-Conferencing. At any given point of time, E-Court can be connected to four distant locations, which may be the Jail where the accused is lodged, Forensic Lab from where Forensic Expert is to be examined, Hospital where Doctor is to be examined or any other remote location where either the ISDN based Video-Conferencing facility or at least a laptop with a Webcam connected to internet through broadband is available. This will not only revolutionize recording of evidence but it will also enable the E-Court to record evidence of the witnesses who are incapable of coming to the Court due to health reasons, old age or when they are abroad. This E-Court is already connected to all the Jails, other Court Complexes in Delhi as well as to the office of DCP (East). Efforts are underway to provide videoconferencing facilities at Forensic Lab, Rohini, Delhi, all Police Stations and Hospitals.

In near future, we will gradually shift to new era of court management, where the paper records will be replaced by digital records in all aspects of functioning of courts. We have to brace ourselves to face these challenges by updating our knowledge regarding advancements in information and communication technology for courts.