

**UNVEILING THE SEVENTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA**

**[FOUNDATION DAY ADDRESS]**

**DR DHANANJAYA Y CHANDRACHUD , CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA**

**28 JANUARY 2024**

Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi,

My colleague Judges of the Supreme Court of India,

Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan, Chief Justice of Bangladesh,

Justice Kinley Dorji, Judge, Supreme Court of Bhutan,

Chief Justice Bibi Rehana Mungly-Gulbul, Chief Justice of Mauritius,

Chief Justice Bishowambhar Prasad Shrestha, Chief Justice of Nepal,

Chief Justice Jayantha C Jayasuriya, Chief Justice of Sri Lanka,

Chief Justices and Judges of the High Courts,

Former Chief Justices and judges of the Supreme Court of India,

Mr R. Venkataramani, Attorney General for India,

Mr. Tushar Mehta, Solicitor General of India,

Mr. Manan Kumar Mishra, Chairman of the Bar Council of India,

Dr. Adish C Aggarwala, President and the Executive Committee of the Supreme Court Bar Association,

President and Members of Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association,

Vice Chancellors of National Law and other Universities,

Members of the Bar, students, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

1. Today is a momentous occasion in the history of our nation. The Supreme Court of India marks the commencement of the Diamond Jubilee year of the moment of its inception on 28 January 1950.
2. First and foremost, I thank the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, who graciously agreed to be with us, address the audience and launch the new initiatives of the Supreme Court of India. I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to my esteemed counterparts from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Mauritius, Nepal, and Sri Lanka for joining us and commemorating this occasion together. India has long-standing cultural bonds with them, and the presence of the Chief Justices today strengthens India's ties with their nations.
3. A conversation about this Court must be necessarily prefaced with a conversation about the Constitution of India. It was through the Constitution that the people of our country gave to themselves this Court. The Constitution is not just a legal document. Its soul lies in the feeling which it engenders. A feeling of mutual respect towards fellow citizens. A feeling of responsibility in the institutions which it creates. The constitutional ideals permeate the fabric of our nation, guiding the actions and interactions of both the governed and those who govern.
4. The Supreme Court was established with a sense of *idealism*— that laws would be interpreted by a Constitutional Court in accordance with the rule of law and not by colonial values or social hierarchies. It affirmed the belief that the judiciary should serve as a bulwark against injustice, tyranny, and the arbitrariness. The Supreme Court is an institution of resolution and justice. The

fact that people approach it in large numbers, speaks to how far we have succeeded in discharging that role.

5. Today is not only a celebration of that one day when the Supreme Court came into being. It also is a celebration of the decades' worth of hard work by succeeding generations of judges and lawyers that went into making this a 'people's court'. In celebrating the history of this day, we must look back and look forward in equal measure.
6. Since the founding of the court, our actions have been guided by Mahatma Gandhi's profound words: "Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man whom you have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him."<sup>1</sup> Our decisions both in the judicial and administrative realms, have been aimed at enhancing accessibility to the Indian judicial system for common citizens.
7. Through its judgments, the Supreme Court has enhanced the rights of citizens by diluting the standards of *locus standi* and by recognizing a set of new rights under Article 21 of the Constitution, such as the right to a speedy trial. On the administrative side, the Supreme Court has been identifying and eliminating as many barriers to justice— unequal access to legal resources, unfamiliarity of the English language, issues of physical accessibility of courts— in order to create procedural fairness.

### **SLIDE 1 – Title Slide**

---

<sup>1</sup> Mahatma Gandhi - *The Last Phase*, Vol. II (1958), p.65

8. The **e-Courts** project of the Supreme Court of India attempts to enhance accessibility and transparency of the justice delivery system. At the heart of these initiatives is the desire to transform the judicial system into a technology-enabled, efficient, accessible and environment-friendly institution.

## **SLIDE 2 – Milestones**

9. Let me briefly summarize the achievements of the Court in simplifying its process.

### **e-Filing of Cases**

10. The front-desk experience of approaching courts has changed completely. As opposed to lawyers lugging trolley-carts of papers, we now have the facility of filing cases at the click of a button. An upgraded version of the Supreme Court's **e-filing platform** was launched in May, 2023. It offers a host of improved features that have made 24x7 filing of cases simpler, faster and convenient.
11. Nearly 1,28,000 e-filings have been done so far, with a consistent rise in the share of e-filings compared to physical filings.
12. E-filings are available in 25 states. They have recorded over 29 Lakh case filings. With the immense support of the Bar and the Bench, we were able to swiftly shift to virtual hearings during COVID-19.
13. Even after the pandemic, hybrid hearings continue to be a feature of our courts. That is, any Indian lawyer sitting in any part of the country, or the world can argue before this Court through video conferencing. This has

democratised access to the Supreme Court. It has opened the space for those who were unable to approach the Supreme Court due to physical distance.

14. Even yesterday, one of the judges joined the Bench through video conferencing for a special hearing. Till now, we have dealt with over 5 lakh cases through hybrid hearings.
15. The live proceedings of the Supreme Court Constitutional Bench hearings are popular and speak to the genuine curiosity that people have towards our courts and procedures.

#### **Focus on Scanning and Digitization**

16. The Supreme Court of India today operates in a near complete paperless mode, with almost all Benches using digitized paper-books. Judges are provided with scanned, bookmarked, and digitally signed case records which they access, read, annotate and preserve for their reference at their residence and in Courtrooms. More than 13 lakh legacy and live case records with approximately 10 crore pages have been digitized.

#### **Futuristic Courts**

17. The Supreme Court has enabled 'Futuristic Court Technology' in three courtrooms and soon other Court rooms shall be equipped with such technology. This technology facilitates paperless proceedings, a comprehensive digital library for the Bench and the Advocates, state-of-the-art video conferencing, large video walls, smart monitors and document visualizers, all of which redefine the courtroom experience.

### **Office Automation**

18. Adoption of e-Office has enabled the officers of the Supreme Court Registry to perform their routine works in paperless mode. 36 branches have been onboarded on e-Office and more than 4,000 office files have been processed online so far.

### **Su-Swagatam**

19. Launch of the *Su-Swagatam* portal has enabled visitors to generate entry passes online, in a paperless mode. A total of 1,23,000 entry passes have been generated so far using Su-Swagatam.

### **MoU with IIT, Madras**

20. We are also transcribing oral arguments in matters before Constitution Benches- which can be accessed on the Supreme Court website. The Supreme Court has entered into an MOU with IIT-Madras to explore areas that can be completely automated, and to leverage technology and artificial intelligence for enhancing process efficiency. As we speak today, a team of Generative AI researchers at a premier management institute has built an end to end demo of an actual open source Gen AI model trained in public domain Motor Accident cases. It is trained to automatically extract parameters from petitions, documents and files and give a recommended compensation figure.

#### **SLIDE 4 – Quadrangle of Transformation**

21. Together, e-filing, digitization, paperless Courts and e-office constitute the golden **quadrangle of transformation** within whose enabling perimeter, the Supreme Court of India is set to uplift the experience of everyone who is either a part of the judicial system or who comes in contact with it.

#### **SLIDE 5 – The Future**

22. The Supreme Court is soon going to migrate its digital data to a safe, secure and sovereign cloud. This would be a shot in the arm for the I.T. setup of the Court. Cloud storage would ensure privacy, integrity, high availability, and secure accessibility of Supreme Court's domain data.
23. We are also on the verge of opening a War Room equipped with technology that would enable the Supreme Court to monitor judicial data of the entire country in real time by using National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) and iJuris, both of which are information sharing platforms for the district judiciary. iJuris has been launched by the Supreme Court to monitor statistics of vacancies and infrastructure relating to the district judiciary.

#### **Slide 6 (Initiatives under e-Courts project)**

24. Facilitating free accessibility of judgments for citizens and litigants has always been a priority of the e-Courts project. As of today, 36,209 judgments are uploaded online on the e-SCR portal in English, out of which about 36,000

judgments are translated in Hindi, and around 11,000 judgments in other languages.

25. The Virtual Courts initiative has been a game changer in courtroom access and online dispute resolution. Implemented in 20 States, the initiative has received 4.37 Crore Challans, leading to a total collection of ₹502.25 Crores in fines. Interestingly, according to the electronic transaction analyzer of the Government of India, in 2018, **e-courts had surpassed even the Indian railways in terms of total electronic transactions.**<sup>2</sup>
26. All 713 District Court websites have been migrated to the S3WaaS framework of the National Informatics Centre, which offers a user-friendly interface, greater customization and compliance with the Guidelines for Indian Government websites, thereby ensuring better accessibility for differently-abled users.
27. On the NJDG, a repository of nation-wide judicial data, information on 3256 country-wide courts, the High Courts, and the Supreme Court of India is now a click away.

### **Changing Demographics**

28. Just as we make our courts tech-savvy, we must also realize that India is going through a period of social and demographic transformation. Anyone who visits India will notice a striking feature of the changing demographics. Now, women can be seen in important positions. There is a focus on greater inclusion of the

---

<sup>2</sup> Case Management through CIS 3.0 (Case Information system 3.0), pg 2 at <https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s388ef51f0bf911e452e8dbb1d807a81ab/uploads/2020/08/2020082670.pdf>



marginalized sections of society. Equally inspiring is the confidence of the younger population to succeed in their professional lives.

29. Traditionally, the legal profession was a profession of elite men. Times have changed. Women, traditionally underrepresented in the profession, now constitute 36.3% of the working strength of the district judiciary. In the recruitment examination for Junior Civil Judges conducted in several states namely Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, more than 50% of the selected candidates were women. In the Supreme Court of India, we hire law clerks-cum-research associates to assist the judges, out of which 41% candidates are women this year.
30. We, as judges and administrations, cannot be ignorant of these rising aspirations. Before the beginning of 2024, only 12 women were designated as 'Senior Advocates' in the history of the Supreme Court over the last 74 years. Last week, the Supreme Court designated 11 women coming from different parts of the country, as Senior Advocates at one selection. Our legitimacy will endure from the inclusion of diverse sections of the population in our system. Therefore, we need to make more efforts to bring different sections of the society into the legal profession. For instance, the representation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is quite low both at the Bar as well as on the Bench.

31. In the near future, we must address the structural issues affecting the judiciary, such as pendency of cases, archaic procedures, and the culture of adjournments. Our effort in our work as Judges and administrators must be to ensure dignity to the district judiciary, which is the first point of contact for citizens. Our ability to remain relevant as an institution requires us to recognise challenges and begin difficult conversations:

First, we must emerge out of the adjournment culture to a culture of professionalism;

Second, we have to ensure that the length of oral arguments does not interminably delay judicial outcomes;

Third, the legal profession must provide a level playing field for first generation lawyers – men, women and others from marginalised segments who have the will to work and the potential to succeed; and

Fourth, let us begin the conversation on long vacations and whether alternatives such as flexitime for lawyers and judges is possible.

32. The seventy-fifth year since the founding provides an opportunity to meet these challenges and step into the future with an honest assessment of our progress. We must reflect on the journey that we have traversed and renew our pledge to uphold the Constitution within and beyond the courtrooms.

33. Our mission to make the judiciary accessible to all would be incomplete without the support of our High Courts. I thank the judges and the staff of all the High Courts as I thank my own colleagues and staff in facilitating our initiatives, which are being launched today.

34. Thank you!