# National Conference of the DISTRICT JUDICIARY

## Strengthening the Frontline Judiciary

**31st August – 1st September**



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# Acknowledgements

This comprehensive overview of the ‘National Conference of the District Judiciary’ has been prepared in line with the vision of the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the distinguished Judges of the Supreme Court, High Courts, and Judicial Officers for their active participation in the sessions, over the course of two days. We also extend our gratitude to the Judges, Supreme Court of India, and Chief Justices of the High Courts who took part in different sessions of the Conference and had interactions with the participants during the respective sessions:

1. Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud
2. Justice Sanjiv Khanna, Judge, Supreme Court of India
3. Justice B R Gavai, Judge, Supreme Court of India
4. Justice Surya Kant, Judge, Supreme Court of India
5. Justice Hrishikesh Roy, Judge, Supreme Court of India
6. Justice Vikram Nath, Judge, Supreme Court of India
7. Justice B V Nagarathna, Judge, Supreme Court of India
8. Justice Bela M Trivedi, Judge, Supreme Court of India
9. Justice Dipankar Datta, Judge, Supreme Court of India
10. Justice K Vinod Chandran, Chief Justice, High Court of Judicature at Patna

11. Justice Alok Aradhe, Chief Justice, High Court for the State of Telangana
12. Justice Sunita Agarwal, Chief Justice, High Court of Gujarat
13. Justice Dhiraj Singh Thakur, Chief Justice, High Court of Andhra Pradesh
14. Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya, Chief Justice, High Court of Bombay
15. Justice Arun Bhansali, Chief Justice, High Court of Judicature at Allahabad
16. Justice N V Anjaria, Chief Justice, High Court of Karnataka
17. Justice Sheel Nagu, Chief Justice, High Court of Punjab and Haryana
18. Justice Shalini Phansalkar Joshi, Former Judge, High Court of Bombay

We are also grateful to the Secretary General of the Supreme Court, Mr Atul M Kurhekar for his constant encouragement and guidance throughout the process. We would further like to extend our sincere gratitude to Mr Rakesh Kumar, Registrar (Judges' Admn & International Relations & Human Resource), Mr H S Jaggi, Registrar (Technology) and Mr Mahesh T Patankar, Registrar (Court & Building) for their invaluable assistance. In the end, we would like to thank all the officers and staff of the Supreme Court Registry who worked tirelessly to ensure the success of the conference, and the team of the Supreme Court Chronicle who worked behind the scenes to bring the document to light.

# Editorial Board


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# Introduction

The National Conference of the District Judiciary (NCDJ) served as a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and knowledge exchange among judicial officers from across the country. The NCDJ emphasised on capacity building and professional development and reaffirmed the importance of a responsive and resilient judicial system.

Organised under the visionary leadership of the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, this conference is a testament to the judiciary's commitment to enhancing the administration of justice at the grassroots level. District courts are the backbone of India's justice delivery system, where the majority of litigants experience their first interaction with the judicial process. Hence, strengthening the district judiciary is essential for ensuring access to justice, maintaining public trust, and upholding the rule of law.

The Supreme Court of India, in collaboration with the High Court of Gujarat, for the first time convened a "District Court Judges' Conference" on 2-3 March 2024 at Kachchh, Gujarat. The Conference was marked as a milestone in the history of the Indian Judicial System, where all tiers of the judiciary came under one roof, over the course of two days, to discuss the experiences, ideas and suggestions.

Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, conceptualised the idea of bridging the gap between the Supreme Court, High Courts and District Courts by organising national conferences for one-on-one interactions amongst all. The Conference laid the foundation for a more collaborative and cooperative judiciary. The Conference was attended by over 300 Judges from across the District Judiciary in person, and more than 2000 joined virtually.

Building on the deliberations initiated in Kachchh, the Supreme Court of India organised the NCDJ, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi on 31 August to 1 September 2024. Over the course of two days, six sessions were held with the aim of strengthening the foundations of the judiciary. It was a rare and significant gathering, with Supreme Court Justices, High Court Chief Justices, and over 800 frontline Judges of the District Judiciary, coming together to discuss the court experiences, ideas and suggestions. The gathering also witnessed deliberation on making the judiciary more robust and accessible.

These key insights on the sessions and interactions from NCDJ prepared by the Centre for Research and Planning capture the discussions and ideas that emerged from the conference. The event is a reminder of the strong sense of fellowship and shared responsibility within the judiciary.

# Inaugural Session

The two-day "National Conference of the District Judiciary," organised by the Supreme Court of India took place from August 31 to September 1, 2024, at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. Prime Minister of India, Mr Narendra Modi inaugurated the Conference on August 31, wherein a commemorative Supreme Court Stamp and a Silver Coin were released on the occasion of the 75 years of the Apex Court's establishment.

The Prime Minister noted that easy access to justice is imperative for improving the ease of living and can only be made possible when the district courts are equipped with modern infrastructure and technology. The Prime Minister while highlighting the pendency of about 4.5 crore cases in district courts, also emphasised the significant efforts made over the past decade to tackle delays in the justice system. He expressed optimism that the discussions during the two-day conference would yield valuable solutions and strengthen the commitment to "Justice for All."

The Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, in his address, discussed the significant advancements in the adoption of technology within the judiciary, including the digitisation of court records, the functioning of e-sewa kendras, and the use of video-conferencing for case hearings. While talking about the importance of the District Judiciary, comparing its function to that of the spine in the body, the Chief Justice of India stated that the spine is the core of the nervous system and in order to sustain the spine of the legal system, we must stop calling the district judiciary as the 'subordinate judiciary'. The Chief Justice also listed the tremendous improvements made in the conditions of service for the District Judiciary along with various technological advancements in judicial infrastructure, painting a picture of a promising judiciary for the future.




31 August 2024, Prime Minister of India, Mr Narendra Modi, along with the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, releases a stamp of denomination of Rs 10 to commemorate the 75 years of Supreme Court's establishment




31 August 2024, Prime Minister of India, Mr Narendra Modi, along with the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, releases a coin of denomination of Rs 75 to commemorate the 75 years of Supreme Court's esta

# Session I
# Infrastructure and Human Resources

The first session ofthe“National Conference of the District Judiciary” focused on ‘Infrastructure and Human Resources’ and featured a panel that included Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice B R Gavai, Judges, Supreme Court of India, Chief Justice of the High Court of Andhra Pradesh, Justice Dhiraj Singh Thakur, and Chief Justice of High Court of Allahabad, Justice Arun Bhansali.




31 August 2024, Chief Justice of India Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice B R Gavai, Judges, Supre




31 August 2024, Justice Sanjiv Khanna discusses case pendency pan India in his presentation in Session

The session commenced with a presentation by Justice Sanjiv Khanna. The presentation provided a comprehensive overview of the current state of judicial recruitment and court infrastructure, highlighting alarming shortages in both areas, and how these issues contribute to a growing backlog of cases across the country. The presentation emphasised the urgent need to address the ongoing vacancies in the judiciary and the gaps in court infrastructure, which are placing significant strain on the entire system. Justice Khanna's call for immediate reforms set the tone for the discussions that followed.







31 August 2024, Mr Krishnamurty Mishra, Principal District Judge of Jabalpur, during his presentation at Session I of th




31 August 2024, Justice B R Gavai during Session I on 'Infrastructure and Human Resources' at the "NCDJ"

Mr Krishnamurty Mishra, Principal District Judge of Jabalpur, shared valuable insights from his on-ground experience in the District Judiciary, acknowledging that while some districts have progressed in infrastructure, many still lack essential facilities. The presentation emphasised the necessity of addressing uneven development across regions, as court complexes in many areas remain ill-equipped to provide basic amenities, such as accessible waiting areas and facilities for women. A comprehensive, long-term plan to modernise these outdated complexes was proposed.



31 August 2024, Justice D S Thakur, Chief Justice of High Court of Andhra Pradesh, during Session I




31 August 2024, Justice Arun Bhansali, Chief Justice of High




31 August 2024, Dr Sukhda Pritam, Director-cum-Additional Registrar, Centre for Research and Planning, Supreme Co
on 'Judicial infrastructure and Human resources', in Session I of the "NCDJ"

Dr Sukhda Pritam, Director-cum-Additional Registrar of the Centre for Research and Planning, Supreme Court of India, and Mr Amarendra Kumar, Research Consultant, provided a detailed analysis of the challenges within the judiciary. The presentation included quarterly data illustrating the rising pendency of cases and emphasised that functioning at the sanctioned strength of judges could significantly reduce this backlog. Additionally, the presentation addressed the current state of judicial infrastructure, focusing on creche facilities, e-filing systems, electronic video linkage (EVL), and medical services. A




31 August 2024, Mr Amarendra Kumar, Research Consultant, during his presentation on 'Judicial Infrastructure and Hu
"NCDJ"



31 August 2024, Interactive session between the panelists and the participants at the "NCDJ"

strategy involving regular audits of physical and technological infrastructure, functional services, and the creation of a recruitment calendar to systematically address vacancies was proposed.

The interactive discussions that followed focused on strategies for improving court infrastructure and addressing the ongoing shortage of judges and staff. The panel emphasised the urgency of recruiting more judges and staff to fill vacancies. The vacancies stand at 21 percent for judges and 27 percent for court staff, as highlighted in the State of the Judiciary Report of the Supreme Court released in November 2023.

Another critical issue discussed was the lack of medical facilities in court complexes. The Supreme Court, in *All India Judges Association v. Union of India* (2024) mandated that every district court should have a fully equipped dispensary with medical staff.

However, as of 22 August 2024, only 8.7 percent of district court complexes meet this requirement, according to iJuris Application. Given the large number of people visiting courts daily, the panel emphasised the necessity of having accessible medical services on-site to ensure everyone's safety and well-being. The Chief Justice also spoke about the revamped Creche facility of the Supreme Court which can accommodate up to 100 children.

Panelists agreed that prioritising these issues are essential for the well-being of litigants, lawyers, judges and staff.

# Session II
# Courtrooms for All: Creating Inclusive Spaces in the Judiciary

The second session of NCDJ focused on enhancing inclusivity in the judicial system, especially for women, marginalised communities, and persons with disabilities. The panel included the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice B V Nagarathna, Judge, Supreme Court of India, Justice Sunita Agarwal, Chief Justice of the High Court of Gujarat, and Dr Shalini Phansalkar Joshi, former Judge, High Court of Bombay. The panel discussed the importance of making courtrooms more accessible to all sections of society, and ensuring that justice is not only accessible but also equitable and inclusive.




31 August 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice B V Nagarathna, Judge, Supreme Court of India, Jus




31 August 2024, Justice B V Nagarathna, Judge, Supreme Court of India, discusses her experiences as a Judge during Session II at the “NCDJ”

The session also touched on the topic of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, which plays an integral role in ensuring access to justice for marginalised groups by providing free legal aid. The discussion emphasised that affordability, accessibility, and efficiency—key elements highlighted in the *Anita Kushwaha v. Pushap Sudan case* (2016) are essential for an equitable legal system.

Dr Shalini Phansalkar Joshi delivered a presentation on the importance of addressing gender dynamics within the judiciary, calling for comprehensive policies to make courtrooms more inclusive, with a particular focus on women’s rights and the rights of marginalised groups. Drawing from her work with Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, at the Maharashtra Judicial Academy, Dr Phansalkar Joshi through her presentation urged for the sensitisation of judges to gender issues and advocated for courts to adopt practices that promote gender equity in legal proceedings.

Justice B V Nagarathna shared personal insights on the importance of representation in the judiciary and stressed that having more women in judicial positions is essential, not just for fairness but also, for creating a more balanced and understanding approach to decision-making. She pointed out a specific case where maternity leave was used to try to prevent a female officer from rising in ranks among the judiciary. Justice Nagarathana expressed her disapproval towards the typecasting of judges based on their genders, such as the practice of assigning cases of juvenile justice and family disputes to female judges, which perpetuates gender stereotypes.




31 August 2024, Dr Shalini Phansalkar Joshi, former Judge, High Court of Bombay, during her presentat

In the meantime, the cases that are deemed to be 'macho cases' such as Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA) matters and Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 matters are marked for male counterparts, she said. Justice Nagarathna noted that diverse perspectives can lead to better discussions and more thoughtful judgments, improving the overall quality of justice.

Justice Sunita Agarwal, Chief Justice of Gujarat High Court, spoke about the importance of gender sensitisation training to judicial officers. She emphasised on the need for gender inclusive policies at High Court levels.




31 August 2024, Justice Sunita Agarwal, Chief Justice of the High Court of Gujarat, during Session II at t




31 August 2024, Mr Anurag Bhaskar, Deputy Registrar, Centre for Research and Planning, addressing the Supreme




31 August 2024, Ms Nivedhitha K, Legal Consultant, Supre

During the session, Ms Nivedhitha K, Legal Consultant at the Supreme Court of India, gave a presentation on the Supreme Court's *Handbook on Combating Gender Stereotypes*, emphasising the importance of avoiding stereotypical language and promoting gender-sensitive communication in courtrooms. The *Handbook* advocates for eliminating gendered language and stereotypes in legal proceedings, aligning with the Supreme Court's landmark judgement in *Aparna Bhat v. State of Madhya Pradesh* (2021), which calls for gender equality and neutrality in the judiciary. Ms Nivedhitha stressed that inclusivity begins with language and judicial attitudes, both of which significantly impact how justice is perceived and delivered.

Mr Anurag Bhaskar, Deputy Registrar at the Centre for Research and Planning started his address by quoting Dr Ambedkar followed by a presentation which emphasised the importance of using appropriate language to avoid stereotypes regarding marginalised communities. The landmark judgments of the Supreme Court including *Nipun Malhotra v. Sony Pictures* (2024) and *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh* (2024) were also discussed. It was pointed out that certain indigenous tribes that were called 'criminal tribes' during the Colonial era, are still referred to in the same manner in judgments, and this further perpetuates the stigma associated with them.

The session concluded with a strong call for the judiciary to continue its efforts in making the court system more inclusive. A key focus was the creation of model court policies that prioritise inclusivity for women, marginalised communities and persons with disabilities.

In the interactive session that followed, the non-uniformity in maternity leave policies across the country was pointed out by one





31 August 2024, Interactive session between the panelists and the participants during the “NCDJ”

of the audience. Discussions also revolved around developing gender-neutral judicial processes, increasing female representation in the judiciary, and ensuring that vulnerable groups have access to the legal protections they deserve. The Chief Justice stressed on the need for designation of more women lawyers as Senior Advocates, pointing out that twenty two women advocates have been designated as Senior Advocates at the Supreme Court in the year 2024. While designating young lawyers as Arbitrators, an equal number of women and men are appointed to promote a healthy gender ecosystem. He applauded the increase in the number of women judges qualifying the district judicial examinations. The consensus was clear: true justice is only possible when all individuals, regardless of their background, can fully and equally participate in the judicial process.

# Session III

# Judicial Wellness for Judges in India: A Comprehensive Perspective

The Session III of the Conference included panelists: Chief Justice of India, Dr Justice D Y Chandrachud, Justice Bela M Trivedi, Judge, Supreme Court of India, Mr Madan Padaki, Founder and CEO, 1BRIDGE, and Dr Tanuja Nesari, Director, All India Institute of Ayurveda, New Delhi.




31 August 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Bela M Trivedi, Judge, Supreme Court of India, Mr M




31 August 2024, Justice Bela M Trivedi shares her valuable insights on the ways a judge can handle work pressure and

The session focused on the judicial profession, which is marked by high responsibility, relentless workloads, and emotional strain, which can significantly affect a judge's wellbeing. The need for judicial wellness, encompassing personal and professional wellbeing, including job satisfaction, engagement, and reduced burnout was highlighted. Given the demanding nature of judicial work, the session works essentially to address the wellbeing of judges, ensure their effectiveness, and maintain public confidence in the judiciary.

In a powerful display of empathy, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud and Justice Bela M Trivedi acknowledged the workload pressure and complexities of the cases that judges of the High Courts and the District Judiciary deal with daily. Their recognition of the growing climate of hostility towards the courts, often reflected in tabloid media commentary, and their understanding of the challenges faced by the judges made the audience feel deeply understood and valued.

The need to incorporate the practices of yoga, meditation, balanced nutrition, and adequate sleep along with physical health and wellbeing, as well as creating opportunities for judges to interact with colleagues and build supportive relationships were recognised. Regular social events, peer support groups, and mentorship

programmes were propounded to promote a sense of community, which can benefit the judges by reducing and even eliminating the sense and feeling of isolation.

The panelist Mr Madan Padaki, Founder and CEO of 1BRIDGE, shared his encounters and experiences, suggesting that with constant and consistent practice and perseverance, one can transform into one's true ideal and successful self. Thus, the same consistent work practice can help judicial officers cope with their mental health. By retreating from the situation, one finds one's own solutions to problems.

Panelist Dr Tanuja Nesari, Director, All India Institute of Ayurveda, discussed stress management techniques with judicial officers, enlightening them about the benefits of alternative medicines and the necessity of having medical facilities within the court premises. Dr Nesari highlighted the need and importance of holistic wellness and happiness that can be achieved through the practices of






31 August 2024, Mr Madan Padaki, Founder and CEO of 1BRIDGE, shares his valuable life experiences on the value of

AYUSH, which works on the fundamentals of 'Care and Cure', including preventive and promotive diet, lifestyle and sleep along with oral medications and practices like yoga.

The session was followed by an interaction on the employment of security measures for judicial officers, followed by initiatives and ideas that can be used to improve the quality of life and help combat mental health issues. It concluded with a 15-minute meditation session for the audience and panelists. The session was a reminder that judicial wellness is not just a personal concern for judges; it is a collective responsibility, integral to

upholding the rule of law and maintaining public confidence in the judicial system. Strategies and tools emphasising on resilience-building, stress management and balanced decision-making to streamline processes and create work-life balance were discussed during the session. Each member of the audience was reminded of their role in this collective effort, empowering them to contribute to the wellbeing of the judicial system. The Session was concluded with a 15 minutes Yoga and Meditation exercise to remind everyone of the importance of taking the time out from their busy schedules to practice mindfulness










31 August 2024, Dr Tanuja Nesari, Director, All India Institute of Ayurveda, gives a presentation on stress







31 August 2024, Panelists and participants practice yoga and meditation at the “NCDJ”

# Day 2:
# National Conference of the District Judiciary






1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud releases a documentary on the Supreme

On 1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud released a documentary on the Supreme Court's 75-year history with landmark Judgments and the digital publication of *Courts of India* in eight Indian languages. Earlier, between 2016 and 2021, it was published and printed in 6 Indian languages. The digital publication in 8 languages along with PDFs of previous 6 languages (a total of 14 languages), will be available under the 'Publication Tab' on the Supreme Court of India website.






1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud and Justice Vikram Nath, felicitate the of


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HINDI
MARATHI
KANNADA

# Session IV
# Case Management

Session IV of the Conference addressed the issue of reducing pending cases in the District Judiciary. The panel for the session included the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Dipankar Datta, Judges, Supreme Court of India, Chief Justice of the High Court of Patna, Justice K Vinod Chandran, and Chief Justice of the High Court of Punjab and Haryana, Justice Sheel Nagu.




1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Vikram Nath, Justice Dipankar Datta, Judges, Su

The session started with the presentation by Justice Dipankar Datta on the judge-population ratio, which is 21 judges per million population, exemplifying the need for maximum utilisation of the given workforce under the judicial system. More data was highlighted on the decadal comparison of pending cases and state- wise comparison of judges' strengths. Later, the Supreme Court's 'Action Plan for Arrears Reduction (APAaR-DJ)' was presented which is a crucial initiative focused on dealing with the prolonged accumulation of cases. This plan, with its profound implications on the justice delivery system, reinforced the urgent need to address the strain on the judicial system. The Action Plan, formulated by the Committee for '*Model Case Flow Management Rules for Trial Courts, District Appellate Courts, High Courts and to suggest a plan for reduction of arrears in the High Courts and District Courts*,' that was chaired by Justice Abhay S Oka along with Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Dipankar Datta, is based on the principles of prioritisation of long- standing cases, accelerating the progression of cases to finalisation, effective utilisation of Alternative Dispute Resolution, managing updated cases and regular monitoring and review of case progress.

Justice Datta explained the action plan's operational framework, which worked in three phases wherein Phase I (April to June 2024) was the preparatory phase, laying the foundation for implementing the Action Plan. It focused on the formation of a District Case Management Committee in every district, physical verification of cases, preparing lists of targeted cases, identifying undated cases, reconstruction of record of lost files, equitable distribution of oldest/targeted cases, meetings with senior police officers/public prosecutors and appointment of senior nodal officer from the revenue department for expedited final decree proceedings.



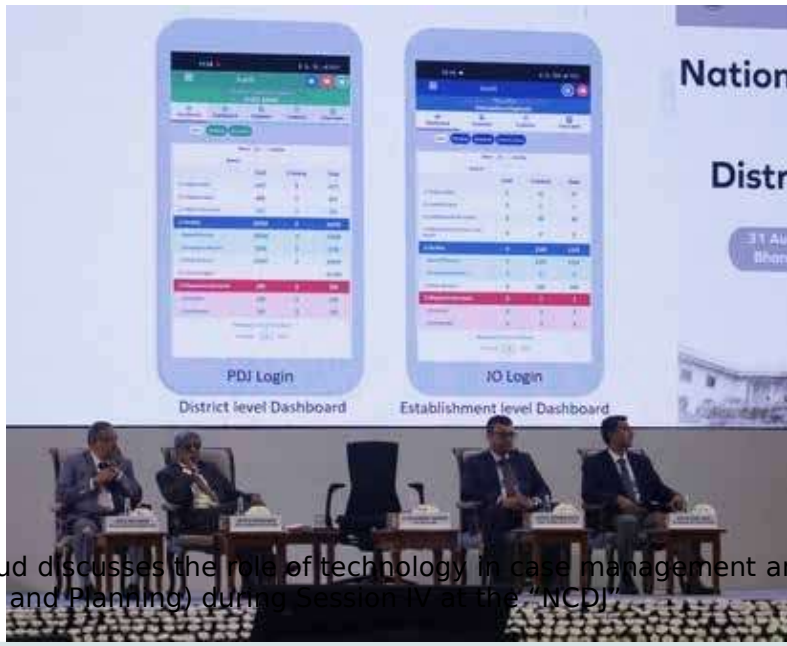

1 September 2024, Justice Dipankar Datta, Judge, Supreme Court of India, gives a presentation of APAaI

Phase II (July to December 2024) was also discussed. It aims to resolve cases pending for 10-20 years, 20-30 years, and more than 30 years within the timelines provided under the Action Plan. It also involves identifying and disposing of the 50 oldest cases in courts and special courts.

The last Phase, Phase III (January to June 2025), which aims to dispose of the remaining pending cases for more than ten years and reiterate the targets of Phase II in Exclusive Courts. It will also focus on resolving the oldest execution petitions, framing issues/charges in cases where there is a delay beyond one month even after completion of pleadings, and disposing of interim applications pending for more than three months. The concerns of the Appointment of Public Prosecutors/Additional Public Prosecutors on retainer/contractual basis in District Courts and the issue of posting judicial officers on deputation on non-essential posts performing purely non-judicial work were highlighted in the presentation. Finally, Justice Datta concluded his presentation with a note to his fellow sisters and brothers of the judiciary to uphold their pledge to be dutiful in their work in the justice delivery system.

Mr Ashish J Shiradhonkar, Registrar (Technology, Innovation and Planning), Supreme Court of India, illuminated the pivotal role of technology in case management wherein he focused on utilising the JustIs App, the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG), and the 'Urgent Case' feature in the Case Information System (CIS), addressing the shortage of public prosecutors in district courts, using Lok Adalat and mediation, and using virtual court hearings in the targeted cases.




1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud discusses the role of technology in case management a
Mr Ashish J Shiradhonkar, Registrar (Technology, Innovation and Planning) during Session IV at the "NCDJ"

A detailed presentation on various tools that could be used to make the courts more efficient, highlighting the use of the PDJ login, a dashboard for monitoring district and establishment-wise case pendency statistics was given. Then, the use of the National Judicial Data Grid, which acts as a nationwide judicial data warehouse with the feature of the case monitoring system, was highlighted. Again, the use of eSCR was underlined, which has helped translate 36,803 reports into Hindi and other Indian Languages. Mr Shiradhonkar thus summarised how these applications could be instrumental in keeping the court track of the progress of the cases, along with translating orders and judgments into vernacular language with the help of artificial intelligence.

Furthermore, the session included an in-depth discussion and interaction with the attendees on using pre-litigation strategies for resolving disputes. This commitment to resolving disputes promptly is vital for maintaining the populace's faith in the judicial institutions and the growth of any civilisation. The interaction focused on amicable settlement between parties using alternative dispute resolution (ADR). ADR methods like mediation, conciliation, arbitration, plea bargaining, and Lok Adalat were recognised as essential adjudication techniques in modern-day courts.

The session concluded with an interactive session that pondered upon issues arising from new criminal laws, "Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita" (BNS), "Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita" (BNSS), and "Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam" (BSA), as they mark a significant move in India's legal framework.




1 September 2024, Interactive session between the panelists and the participants at the "NCDJ"

# Session V
# Judicial Training: Curriculum and Methods

The second last session of the two-day conference comprised discussion on Judicial Training which focused on the curriculum and the training methods for judicial officers. The panelists for the session included the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Hrishikesh Roy, Judge, Supreme Court of India, Justice Alok Aradhe, Chief Justice, High Court of Telangana, Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhayaya, Chief Justice, High Court of Bombay, and Justice N V Anjaria, Chief Justice, High Court of Karnataka.




1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Hrishikesh Roy, Judge, Supreme Court of India, Chief Justice of High Court of Telangana, Justice Alok Aradhe, Chief Justice of the High Court of Bombay, Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhayaya, and Chief Justice of High Court of Karnataka, Justice N V Anjaria, during the panel discussion on 'Judicial Training: Curriculum and Methods' at the "NCDJ"

The session focused on the teaching-learning process in judicial training, emphasising the need for structured experiences at different stages of legal career to support effective development. Discussions centered on the current judicial curriculum and the importance of incorporating structured training. The roles of the National Judicial Academy and State Judicial Academies in India were highlighted, particularly in equipping newly inducted judges with essential knowledge and skills and keeping the serving judges updated on recent developments in law and the justice system.

The session commenced with a presentation by Mr Alva Shantanna Muthappa, District and Sessions Judge and Additional Director of the Karnataka Judicial Academy, discussing the various facets of training curriculum and methods presently being employed by the state judicial academies.




1 September 2024, Mr Alva Shantanna Muthappa, District and Sessions Judge and Additional Director of the Karnataka Judicial Academy, gives a presentation on 'Ju

During the session, the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud outlined seven key points to aid in the evolving role of judges, highlighting the importance of mentorship, and advocating for continuous support from senior judges and peers throughout a judge's career. Citing his experience at the Maharashtra Judicial Academy, where exposure to non-legal materials like literary festivals and films helped broaden perspectives, his address asserted the necessity for judges to engage with social realities. Noting that learning is a two way

process, the Chief Justice of India stressed on the need for active engagement. Additionally, addressing the greater ripples created by decisions of the judiciary, focus on training in clear written and verbal communication, developing media sensitivities, and the need for sensitisation of judges through training was also stressed. In his closing remarks, the Chief Justice announced that the Supreme Court of India is preparing a white paper on the National Judicial Curriculum which is set to be released soon. This document will focus on key themes essential for the evolution of judges, reflecting the principles necessary for advancing judicial education and training.

Endorsing the assimilation of humane touch in training and a departure from the traditional method of judicial training, Justice Hrishikesh Roy shared his experience of using films as training tools, like “Laapataa Ladies,” and “Xāko” (The Bridge), a bilingual short film used



1 September 2024, Justice Hrishikesh Roy, interacts with District Judges during discussion on ‘Judicial Tra

to introduce mediation concepts. Sharing an anecdote about law students observing judges and how body language can be misinterpreted, the importance of demeanour in the courtroom was also discussed. To illustrate this, Justice Roy conducted an exercise showing how a smile, even when dismissing a case, can convey a better message and improve outcomes. Justice Roy also lauded the comfortable atmosphere of the Chief Justice’s courtroom, noting its positive impact on lawyers, litigants, and fellow judges.







1 September 2024, Justice Alok Aradhe, Chief Justice of High Court of Telangana and Justice N V Anjaria

During the interaction, attendees listed several challenges plaguing the training of judges. One of the attendees brought up the issue of postings far from home and suggested proximity could ease new judges into their roles. The idea of Human Resource training to bridge communication gaps between younger and senior judges was also deliberated upon. The panel discussed the value of incorporating non-legal materials in training, addressing the impacts of social media, and enhancing communication skills.

The collective suggestions, resonating with a clear aim to formulate a more adaptable training framework, that addresses both professional competencies and personal well-being, captured the overarching theme of the session.




1 September 2024, Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhayaya, Chief Justice, High Court of Bombay, discusse









1 September 2024, Interactive session between the panelists and the participants at the “NCDJ”

# Session VI Bridging the Gap

In the final session of the Conference, on 'Bridging the Gap', the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Sanjiv Khanna, and Justice Surya Kant, Judges, Supreme Court of India, interacted with the district judges from across the country to hear their opinions, valuable suggestions and grassroot level experiences.




1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Surya Kant, during the




1 September 2024, Interactive session between the panelists and the assemblage at the “NCDJ”

The final session, on the theme ‘Bridging the Gap’, focused on a relationships-based model of governance of the judiciary. The discussions centred around the collegiality within India’s judiciary, particularly between District Court Judges and High Court Judges to ensure smooth operations. Key points discussed included the need for standardised transfer policies for District Judges, which often appear inconsistent and lack clarity. The panel recommended developing clear guidelines and a transparent process for transfers, along with regular reviews, to align these policies with current needs and ensure fairness.

Additionally, the role of Inspecting Judges was emphasised, noting that their responsibilities extend beyond financial audits and include comprehensive administrative review along with addressing issues such as reluctance to grant bail, security of judges and adherence to Supreme Court directives.

The session also addressed the media perceptions of the judiciary, stressing the need for imparting training on proper judicial conduct. The high levels of stress faced by judges and the need for psychological support were emphasised, with examples cited from the Gujarat High Court’s counselling services and Karnataka High Court’s initiative to limit the daily caseload for judges to prevent a burnout.

Justice Surya Kant shared his experiences as a High Court judge and administrator, and stressed upon the importance of trust and faith in judicial evaluations. He mentioned that administrative judges are required tocarefully assess the credibility and sources of information before reviewing the performance of judicial officers. Justice Sanjiv Khanna expressed similar sentiments. Stating the significance of ‘evaluation work’ undertaken by Administrative Judges, the address analysed the practice of ‘bunching’ all judges together for evaluation and highlighted the need for a more nuanced approach using the 20:70:10 formula. This formula would categorise outstanding judges in the top 20 percent, average judges in the middle 70 percent and those requiring improvement in the bottom 10 percent.



1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Surya K



1 September 2024, Interactive session between the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice S

Serving as a forum for discussing the challenges and opportunities facing state judicial academies, the session provided a platform for participants to offer insights and recommendations, guiding the enhancement of judicial training and development.




1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Surya Kan




1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Surya

Towards the final leg of the session, the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud invited all the Registrars of the Supreme Court of India on stage for a group photograph and expressed his sincere appreciation for their contributions in organising the conference.




Judges, Supreme Court of India, with officers of the Supreme Court Registry at the “NCDJ”

# Valedictory Session

The Valedictory Session was graced by the presence of President of India, Ms Droupadi Murmu, the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Surya Kant, Judge, Supreme Court of India and Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Law and Justice, Mr Arjun Ram Meghwal. Justice Surya Kant, Judge, Supreme Court of India, delivered the welcome address and stressed upon the role of the judiciary to serve with excellence and integrity.




1 September 2024, President of India, Ms Droupadi Murmu, the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Union Minis







1 September 2024, President of India, Ms Droupadi Murmu, addresses the judges across the country at the Valedictor

Furthering the idea of 'Viksit Bharat' by contributing to an efficient legal ecosystem using individual and collective potential in nation building, the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Law and Justice, Mr Arjun Ram Meghwal spoke about the transparency brought by the National Judicial Data Grid. The platform resolves cases faster, reduce pendency of cases before courts and enable speedy justice.

Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, while speaking at the valedictory ceremony, discussed addressing the communication gaps between the district judiciary and the High Courts, calling this gap a product of colonial times and of colonial subordination.




1 September 2024, Justice Surya Kant delivers the welcome address at the Valedictory Session of the "




1 September 2024, President of India, Ms Droupadi Murmu unveils the Supreme Court's new flag and insignia. The new




In addition, to mark the celebration of the Supreme Court's 75 years, 75 saplings from 12 indigenous varieties were planted in Delhi's Central Ridge Reserve Forest area. These saplings were dedicated to the President, after which, President Murmu unveiled the Supreme Court's new flag and insignia, designed by the National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi. The new flag features the Ashoka Chakra, the Supreme Court building, and the Constitution. Addressing the gathering, the President said that since its establishment, the Supreme Court of India has made invaluable contributions as a vigilant sentinel of the judicial system of the world's largest democracy.




1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, dedicates 12 Indigenous plant varieties planted in the

# Group Photos of Officers from different District Courts at the National Conference of the District Judiciary







1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Surya Kant, Judge, Supreme Court o







1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Surya Kant, Judge, Supreme Court




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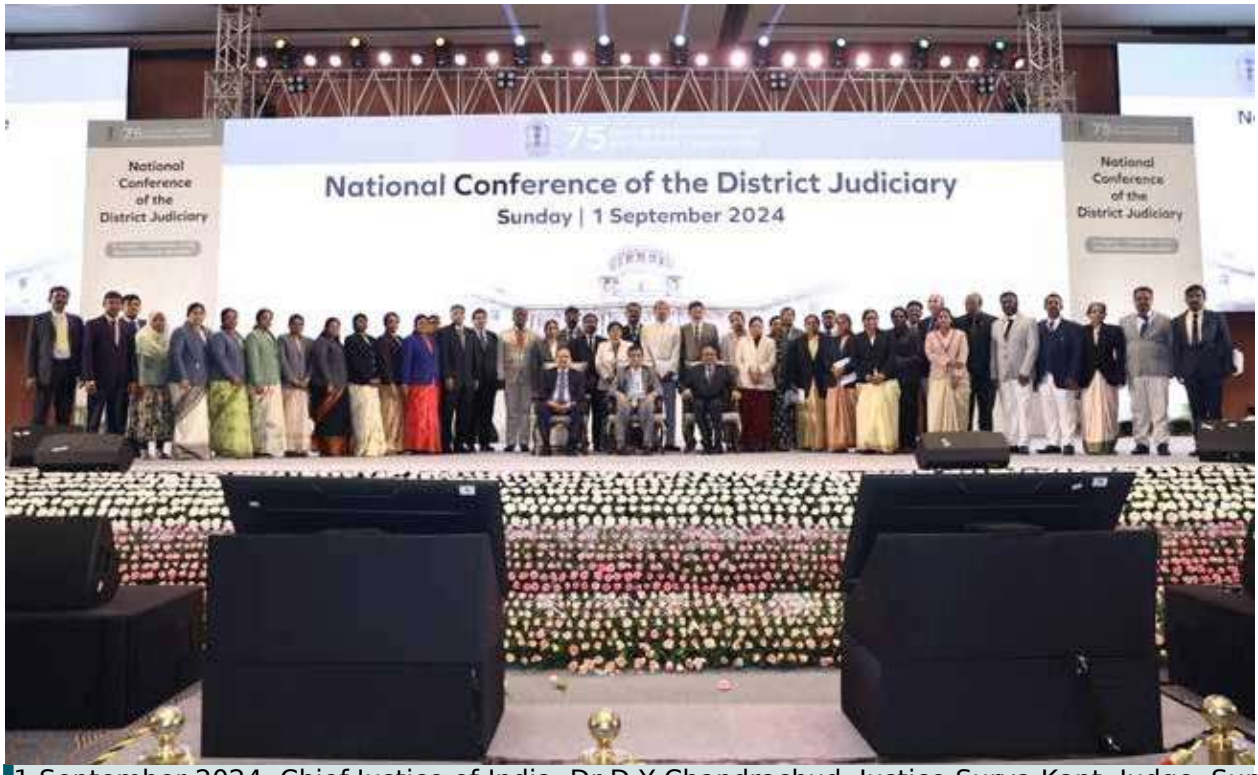




1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Surya Kant, Judge, Supreme Court




1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Surya Kant, Judge, Supreme Cour




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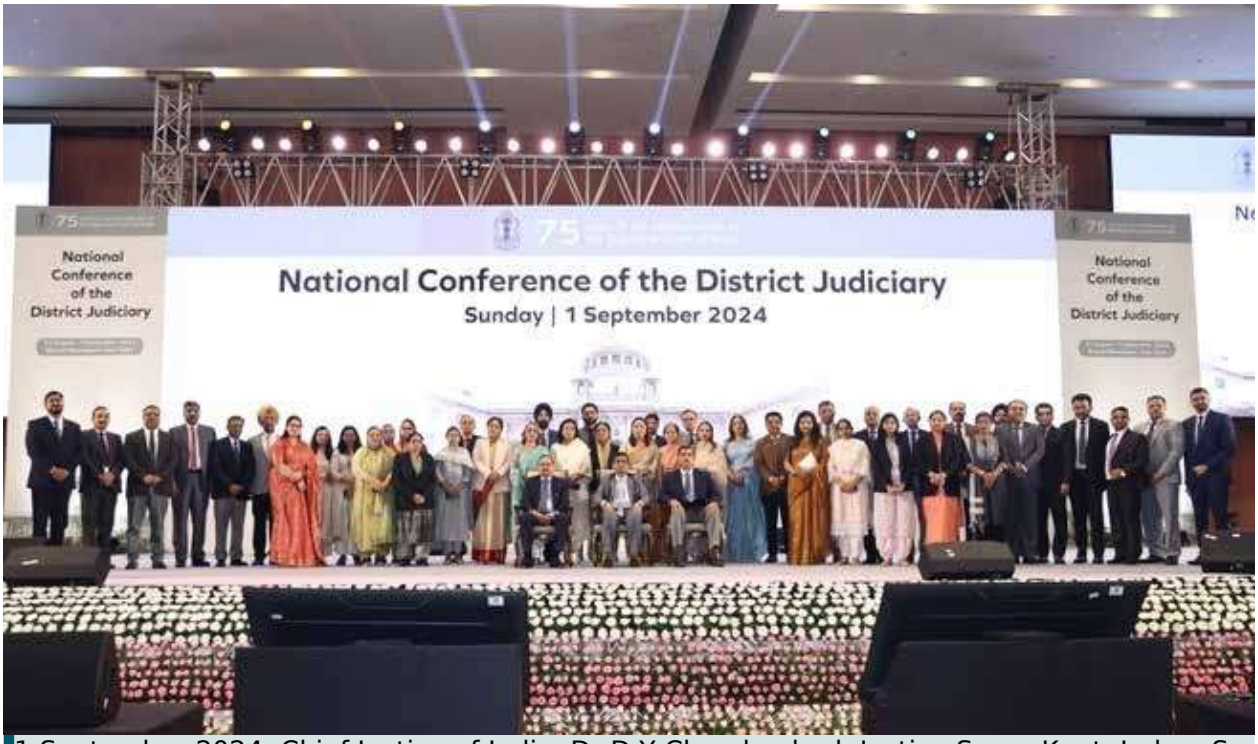

1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Surya Kant, Judge, Supreme Court




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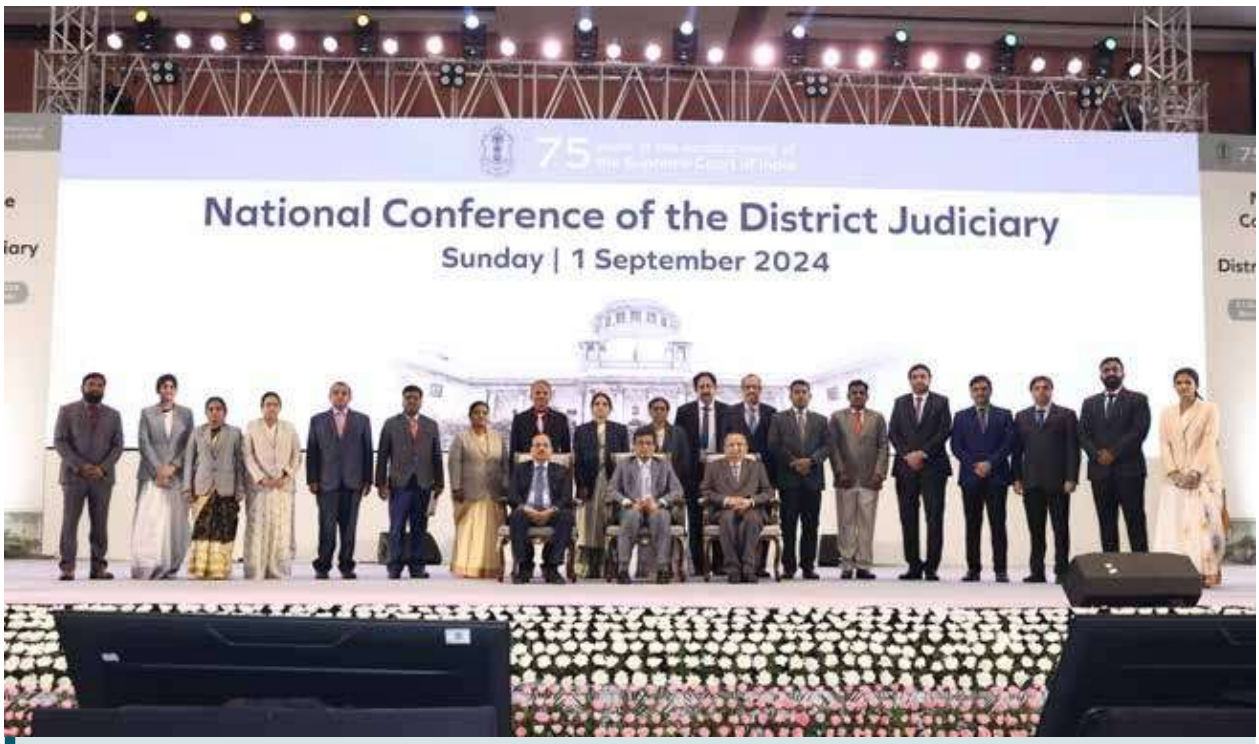




1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Surya Kant, Judge, Supreme Court of India, Chief Justice of the High Court of Rajasthan, Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava with the District




1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Surya Kant, Judge, Supreme Cou




1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Surya Kant, Judge, Supreme Court




1 September 2024, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, Justice Surya Kant, Judge, Supreme Cour




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# Resolutions of the Conference

***After the conclusion of the National Conference of the District Judiciary, Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud invited members of the judiciary to share their suggestions. Within a span of only one month, over 300 invaluable suggestions were received. Resolutions were drawn up, enriched by the insights on infrastructure, management of cases, inclusivity, and judicial well-being which were meticulously addressed during the Conference along with the suggestions received from across the Country. Consequent to this, the Chief Justice of India, Dr D Y Chandrachud, sent a letter addressed to all members of the judiciary to share these resolutions.***

# NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE DISTRICT JUDICIARY

## RESOLUTIONS TO CONTINUALLY STRENGTHEN THE DISTRICT JUDICIARY

The National Conference of the District Judiciary, held in New Delhi under the aegis of the Supreme Court of India on 31 August and 1 September 2024, brought together key judicial stakeholders to deliberate on crucial issues facing the District Judiciary. Vital discussions were held concerning the state of judicial infrastructure, vacancies in the District Judiciary and amongst support staff, case management rules and techniques, judicial training, the need for inclusive courts, the importance of judicial security and wellness, and the need for collegiality and effective communication between High Courts and the District Judiciary. The Conference marked a critical milestone in the ongoing efforts to strengthen the District Judiciary. This gathering of judges and experts discussed strategies to address the challenges faced by District Courts across the nation. To ensure that these strategies are adopted, effectively implemented, and yield tangible results, the following resolutions are formulated. These resolutions represent the collective commitment to strengthen the District Judiciary and will serve as a framework for monitoring progress. The intention is to revisit and evaluate the implementation of these measures in future conferences, allowing for continuous improvement and adaptation to evolving needs.

### ***Strengthening the capacity of District Courts***

1. **A data-driven approach to strengthening the District Judiciary:** All High Courts shall adopt a data-driven approach to strengthening the District Judiciary by collecting and analysing comprehensive data on infrastructure, budget utilisation, human resources, and other essential facilities such as CCTV cameras and medical services within courts under their jurisdiction. This data should be utilised to evaluate judicial performance and improve court operations.

2. **Publication of data:** The High Courts shall publish data concerning physical infrastructure, case pendency, budget utilisation, human resources, etc. for District Courts under their jurisdiction as part of their annual reports.

3. **Establish a recruitment calendar for support staff:** All High Courts and District Courts shall establish a standardised recruitment calendar for the timely recruitment of support staff for their courts and courts under their jurisdiction to ensure that vacancies are filled without undue delay.

4. **Adoption of e-filing and video conferencing:** All High Courts and District Courts shall ensure that e-filing, online payments, and video conferencing facilities are offered to citizens along with e-Seva Kendra services to assist citizens.

## *Reduction of pendency and expeditious disposal of cases*

5. **Monitoring and disposal of long-pending cases:** All High Courts and District Courts shall identify and begin monitoring the oldest (longest pending) cases within their courts and adopt an action plan to ensure their disposal as a priority. The action plan may include the equitable distribution of the oldest cases amongst judges and awarding additional performance credits or units to the disposal of long-pending cases.

6. **Institutionalisation of Lok Adalats in High Courts:** All High Courts shall develop and adopt a Standard Operating Procedure for the regular conduct of Lok Adalats in High Courts for the expedient disposal of cases that can be settled and regularly conduct such Lok Adalats.

7. **Facilitating testimony for official witnesses:** An up-to-date centralised national registry for official witnesses, including their e-mail addresses and contact numbers, shall be established to facilitate their testimony in ongoing cases irrespective of transfer or retirement.

## *Ensuring inclusive courts*

8. **Formation of Accessibility Committee:** All High Courts and all District Courts shall constitute an Accessibility Committee to ensure that all courts are physically and digitally accessible to all persons.

9. **Conduct an Accessibility Audit:** All High Courts and District Courts shall conduct an audit of physical and digital infrastructure to ensure that the court complex and facilities are equipped with accessible physical and digital infrastructure and publish the results of such audit.

10. **Establishment of creche facilities:** All High Courts and District Courts should establish creche facilities commensurate with the size of the Court to ensure that courts support families interacting with the justice system and constitute inclusive workplaces.

11. **Separate washrooms and menstrual hygiene products:** All High Courts and District Courts should ensure that there exist separate washrooms for men, women, and transgender persons. The washrooms for women should have sanitary pad dispensing machines and

incinerators should be installed in courts to dispose of waste generated from menstrual hygiene products.

12. **Conduct sensitisation workshops:** All High Courts and District Courts shall conduct regular workshops to sensitise judges, court staff, and the local bar, regarding issues of gender, disability, caste, and other forms of marginalisation and the importance of ensuring inclusive and discrimination-free courts.

13. **Provision of medical facilities:** All High Court and District Court complexes shall be equipped with medical facilities, including dispensaries staffed by qualified medical professionals, readily available ambulances, and essential emergency equipment such as automated external defibrillators.

## *Human resource development and judicial well-being*

14. **Development of mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of training:** All judicial academies shall develop and adopt strategies and protocols for assessing the effectiveness of the training conducted for judges, judicial officers, and court staff.

15. **Bar on administrative appointments based on gender stereotypes:** The appointment of judges to particular courts or rosters within the District Judiciary shall be non-discriminatory and not founded on gender or other stereotypes associated with the judge and shall be based on the competencies and capabilities of the judge in question.

16. **Development of personnel training database:** The High Courts, National Judicial Academy, and State Judicial Academies shall develop and maintain a database of which judges in every state have attended state judicial academies, and what training was imparted to them. This database shall be utilised to ensure uniformity and equal opportunity of training opportunities for all members of the District Judiciary and inform the appointments of judges as they develop specific legal competencies through their training.

17. **Regular district-level meetings:** In each district, the concerned administrative judge should have a regular monthly meeting with all judicial officers under their administrative jurisdiction to facilitate the identification and resolution of local issues facing the judges within the concerned district.

18. **Programmes to improve the quality of life of judicial officers:** All High Courts and District Courts should implement programmes to assist Judges and Judicial Officers deal with stress. This can include the creation of gymnasiums and yoga centres within court premises or accommodations built for judges, the offering of confidential counselling or therapy sessions, and ensuring that all court employees receive regular health check-ups.

19. **Security at court complexes:** All High Courts shall ensure that all District Courts under their jurisdiction are equipped with functioning CCTV cameras and baggage scanning equipment and that the design of court complexes ensures the security of judicial officers through separate alighting points for judges (separate from lawyers and litigants).

The steps taken in furtherance of these resolutions will constitute the foundations for future discussions on these issues.

# ***Letter by Chief Justice of India***

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your presence and valuable contributions at the National Conference of the District Judiciary held on 31 August and September 1 2024. Your participation enriched our discussions and demonstrated the collective commitment of our judiciary towards strengthening the foundations of our justice delivery system.

The conference proved to be an exceptional platform for meaningful dialogue on critical issues facing our district judiciary. The frank and constructive discussions on judicial infrastructure, vacancies and transfers, case management, judicial training, inclusive justice delivery, and judicial wellness have helped us formulate a comprehensive roadmap for the future.

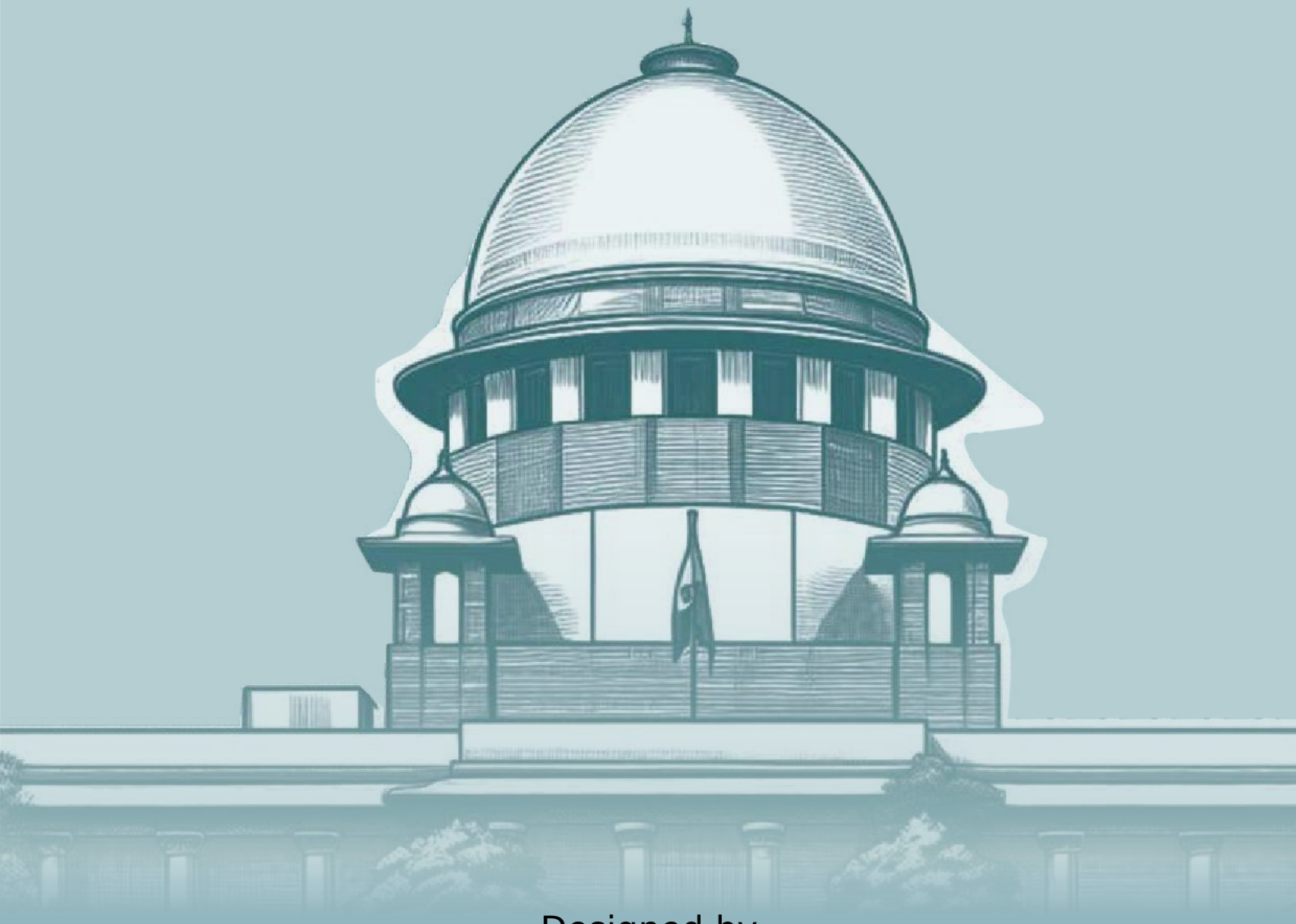
I am pleased to inform you that the Supreme Court of India has undertaken a detailed exercise of collating and analysing the numerous insights shared during the conference sessions and prepared a comprehensive overview documenting the issues discussed. Additionally, the Supreme Court has also examined hundreds of suggestions received from District Judges and Judicial Officers from across the country. These two exercises have culminated in the formulation of specific resolutions that will serve as building blocks for future conferences and reforms. These Resolutions have been framed as actionable items to facilitate their effective implementation and monitoring. This approach will enable us to begin future conferences and discussions regarding the District Judiciary by assessing compliance with these Resolutions and building upon the foundation laid at the conference in 2024.

You will find attached the Resolutions and the overview of the Conference's key discussions. I request those of you who hold an administrative charge regarding the areas covered by the Resolutions to study them and take the necessary steps for the implementation of these Resolutions. Your leadership will be crucial in translating these resolutions into meaningful change at the ground level.

I thank you for your collaboration in strengthening the district judiciary and ensuring that we fulfil our constitutional mandate of providing accessible and efficient justice to all our citizens.

With regards,
Dr Justice Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud
Chief Justice of India

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