

# **The Standard Operating Procedure (S.O.P.) for receiving complaints and redressing the grievances of the complainants across the state at the level of the Vigilance Committee working in all the Judgeships of Bihar**

## **1. Introduction**

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) outlines a structured mechanism for receiving, processing, and redressing grievances/ complaints against Ministerial Officers and Staff through Vigilance Committees in Judgeships regarding corruption and bribery in Civil Courts/ Offices across the state of Bihar. It regulates the composition and duties of Vigilance Committees and also establishes a uniform procedure for handling complaint boxes installed in Civil Courts of Bihar to ensure transparency and accountability.

## **2. Objectives of the S.O.P.**

- (i) To create a systemic framework for receiving and addressing grievances/ complaints in Vigilance Committees of Judgeships of Bihar regarding ministerial Officers/ staff of Civil Courts.
- (ii) To ensure that Vigilance Committees of Judgeships function effectively in combating corruption and malpractices in Civil Courts.
- (iii) To safeguard the confidentiality and integrity of the complaints received by the Vigilance Committees of Judgeships.
- (iv) To standardise a transparent method for handling and managing complaint boxes relating to Vigilance Committees of Judgeships.

## **3. Composition of the Vigilance Committee in Districts-**

**3.1 The Vigilance Committee shall consist of the following Ex-officio & Non-Ex-officio members-**

- i. The Principal District & Sessions Judge (Chairperson)
- ii. The Chief Judicial Magistrate (Member Secretary)

- iii. Sub-Judge-I
- iv. Government Pleader
- v. Public Prosecutor
- vi. District Prosecution Officer
- vii. Court Manager
- viii. Chief Administrative Officer-cum-Head *Sheristedar*
- ix. Two Senior Members of the Bar
- x. One enlightened member of the Public
- xi. One lady advocate
- xii. Besides the above, two young advocates shall be called in the meeting of the Vigilance Committee as invitees, by the Principal District & Sessions Judge.

### **3.2 Annual Revision of the List of the Members of the Vigilance Committee-**

- (i) The Principal District & Sessions Judge shall revise the list of membership every year with a view to taking in new Non-Ex-officio Members in place of old ones.
- (ii) The Principal District & Sessions Judge shall nominate suitable persons who can be helpful in the Committee.
- (iii) The Principal District & Sessions Judge shall decide as to who should be retained or excluded as a member of the Vigilance Committee.
- (iv) Nevertheless, the Principal District and Sessions Judge shall follow the directions of the High Court, if any are issued in future, regarding the nomination of members of the Committee.

## **4. Duties of the Vigilance Committee**

- 4.1 The Vigilance Committee shall perform the following duties:-



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(i) To receive and review complaints against ministerial officers/staff.

(ii) To enquire and take necessary steps in cases of corruption or bribery/ misconduct/ abuse of power or position.

(iii) To issue necessary direction(s) on petitions to redress genuine grievances of petitioners and their follow-up.

(iv) To maintain strict confidentiality regarding its minutes, complaints, enquiries and result(s) thereof. Minutes of the Vigilance Committee cannot be provided to anyone/ everyone as it contains several internal and confidential measures/ directions to keep check on the corruption and the corrupt staff which cannot be divulged in the interest of justice. No communication of the result of the enquiry, in respect of any allegation petition received by the Vigilance Committee, shall be sent to the person concerned making the allegation.

(v) To ensure proper handling of complaint boxes as per the prescribed procedure.

(vi) To impress upon the litigant public, the members of the Bar, advocate-clerks and all concerned that the practice of giving and taking bribes is not only a crime but degrades society as a whole and that malpractice should not be indulged in.

(vii) To conduct its meeting every month without fail on the date fixed by the Principal District & Sessions Judge/ Chairperson, and positively send minutes of its meetings to the High Court narrating the discussion and compliance made on each complaint for monitoring purposes and direction(s), if any.

#### **4.2 Roles and Responsibilities towards meetings of the Committee:-**

**(i) The Principal District Judge & Sessions Judge (Chairperson):-**

(a) Supervise vigilance activities and ensure compliance.

(b) Fix a date for the meeting of the Vigilance Committee in every month and convene regular meetings and address complaints received.

(c) Direct enquiry through any Officer and take a final decision in the matter raised in the Vigilance Committee.

**(ii) The Chief Judicial Magistrate (Member Secretary):-** With the assistance of the Court Manager, the Chief Judicial Magistrate shall perform the following responsibilities-

(a) Maintain records of complaints, investigations, and action taken by the Committee.

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- (b) Liaise with all concerned in Civil Courts regarding the matters of the Vigilance Committee, as directed by the Principal District Judge & Sessions Judge (Chairperson).
- (c) Monitor administrative and procedural compliance within court premises.
- (d) Handle documentation and coordinate meetings and vigilance activities.

**(iii) Members of the Committee:-**

- (a) To bring complaint(s), they may get about a particular ministerial officer/ staff, to the notice of the Principal District & Sessions Judge, and to give inputs in vigilance matters during discussion.

**5. Procedure for Receiving Complaints**

**5.1. Modes of Receiving Complaints:-**

Complaints regarding corruption, misconduct and bribery in Civil Court offices shall be received through the following channels:-

- (i) Through Complaint Boxes (somehow already in practice): A complaint box coupled with a Notice Board shall be installed in secure and designated/ conspicuous areas within Civil Courts premises under the direct control of the respective Principal District & Sessions Judge. The Complaint box shall be separate from the '*Dedicated Vigilance Complaint Box*' installed under the direction contained in the Court's letter no. 23636-23672/Vig. Cell/XLIII-01-2011 dt. 20.03.2025, dedicated to the matters of Judicial Officers. The Notice Board shall clearly display the following points-

- (a) The Complaint petition(s) with full name, address and signature of the petitioner shall only be entertained.

- (b) The complaint petitions shall clearly reveal the grievances/ allegations with specific details of the alleged corruption, bribery, misconduct and abuse of power/ position with specific case number(s), date and time of the alleged event, along with the name and designation of the Ministerial Officer/Staff against whom the allegation(s) are levelled.

- (c) Complaint petition(s) should be brief, typed and supported by legible, verifiable materials/ details/ evidence, if any.

- (d) The complaint petition(s) having vague, trivial and absurd allegations shall not be entertained.



(e) Documents/petitions of an administrative nature/ petition having no complaint or concern with the working of Civil Court's Offices and its staff, dropped in the complaint box, shall not be entertained.

(ii) E-mail and Online Portals: A designated e-mail ID or portal for submitting complaints online to the Vigilance Committee of Judgeships shall be created and displayed in Civil Court premises. Necessary guidelines to be followed by complainants regarding filing complaints shall also be displayed on the Online Portal, along with the e-mail I.d.

(iii) Written Complaints sent otherwise to the Vigilance Committee/ Principal District & Sessions Judge shall also be placed before the Vigilance Committee.

Proviso: Complaints or petitions forwarded by the High Court with specific directions shall be complied with as per the prevailing practice/ specific direction of the High Court.

## **6. Procedure for Handling Complaint Boxes**

### **6.1- Installation and Security of Complaint Boxes.**

(i) As already mentioned above, Complaint boxes shall be installed in secure, visible and accessible locations within Civil Courts premises, displaying therewith necessary guidelines to be followed by complainants regarding filing complaints.

(ii) The keys to the complaint boxes shall be securely kept with the Court Manager/ Administrative Officer of the Judgeship.

### **6.2- Uniform Method for Sealing and Opening Complaint Boxes:**

(i) The boxes shall be opened during monthly meetings of the Vigilance Committee.

(ii) The opening of complaint boxes shall be conducted in the presence of at least two attending members of the Vigilance Committee including the Chairperson or any other Officer/ Member duly authorised by him for the purpose.

(iii) The complaint boxes shall be locked and re-sealed duly with sealing wax in the presence of the attending members of the Vigilance Committee in the same meeting.

(iv) A register shall be maintained to record the date and time of opening the boxes, the number of complaints received, and actions taken thereon/ outcome.

(v) The members in whose presence the complaint box shall be opened shall put their signatures on the register as a mark of certification.

## **7. Processing and Redressal of Complaints/Petitions**

### **7.1- Initial Scrutiny of Complaints/Petitions**

(i) Upon receipt, the complaint-petition shall be reviewed meticulously by the Vigilance Committee in its monthly meeting to determine its nature, authenticity and severity.

(ii) If the complaint is found to be prima facie valid, further enquiry/ action shall be initiated to take them to the logical conclusion.

(iii) Necessary direction shall be issued to redress genuine grievance(s) of the petitioner, including the grievance of indolence/ facing obstacles placed by the office.

(iv) In case of receipt of general types of complaints relating to other government departments having no connection with the working of Civil Courts and its Officers/ staff, the Complainant may simply be informed to write to the appropriate/ concerned authority, if he thinks it proper.

(v) The complaint/petition, if any, is found unworthy to be pursued further, it shall be disposed of assigning valid reason(s) for the same.

(vi) The identity of complainants shall be kept confidential to prevent retaliation.

(vii) Anonymous complaints, only in exceptional circumstances, shall be entertained if supported by verifiable materials/ credible evidence.

(viii) If any complaint against a particular Ministerial Officer and Staff is brought to the notice of the Principal District & Sessions Judge by any member of the Vigilance Committee, it shall be discussed, and necessary direction may be issued/ steps may be taken.

### **7.2- Enquiry Process**



(i) If it is considered necessary, a preliminary enquiry shall be conducted under orders of the Principal District & Sessions Judge/ Chairperson concerned through an officer nominated by him to gather relevant facts and evidence in connection with the petition received by the Vigilance Committee.

(ii) If required-

(a) Report/ comment/ reply may be sought from the Court/Staff concerned/others.

(b) Relevant records/ registers/ documents may be perused.

(c) Statements from relevant individuals may be recorded.

(iii) Officials in the Judgeship shall promptly comply with the directions/ requisitions made by the Vigilance Committee.

### **7.3- Report and Follow-up**

(i) The Vigilance Committee shall include a status report/ action taken report/ outcome for each complaint/ petition in its minutes of the monthly meeting of the Committee to be sent to the High Court in every month for monitoring purposes/ direction, if any.

(ii) The Principal District & Sessions Judge may send reports separately to the A.D. (Misc.) Department of the High Court through Registrar (Vigilance) regarding those Class-III employees against whom constant complaints are received by him/her for placing before the High Court.

(iii) Follow-up actions shall be monitored to take the complaints/ grievances to a logical conclusion and to ensure prompt compliance with directives issued in response to complaints/ petitions.

(iv) The Principal District & Sessions Judge shall prepare a consolidated list of all complaints received against ministerial Officers/staff of the Civil Courts, addressing each matter through the Vigilance Committee of the Judgeship. This list along with an action taken report, shall be duly recorded in the minutes of the monthly Vigilance Committee meeting and shall then be forwarded to the High Court for perusal by the Hon'ble Inspecting Judge in the usual course.

### **8. Periodic Review**

The Vigilance Committee of Judgeship shall hold quarterly reviews to assess and improve the effectiveness of the complaint redressal mechanism.

## **9. Compliance and Accountability**

Integrity must be maintained in all proceedings of the Vigilance Committee in Judgeship.

## **10. Handling Complaints against Judicial Officers:**

There are separate 'Dedicated Vigilance Complaint Boxes' installed in every judgeship pursuant to the direction contained in the Court's letter no. 23636-23672, dated 20.03.2025 under direct control of the Registrar (Vigilance), High Court, Patna (Court's letter no. 60307-60343 dt. 22.07.2025) concerning the judicial officers working in the judgeship. However, if a complaint is received in the complaint box of the vigilance committee of a Judgeship against a judicial officer, it shall be referred to the Principal District & Sessions Judge who shall treat it as a complaint received in the 'Dedicated Vigilance Complaint Box' and shall act according to the directions issued by the court regarding complaints found in the 'Dedicated Vigilance Complaint Box'.

## **11. Modification Clause**

This SOP can be modified based on specific legal provisions/ Rules and administrative requirements as deemed necessary and proper by the High Court.

Sd/-

**Registrar (Vigilance)**

**Patna High Court, Patna**

**Dt. 06.05.2026**