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# **JUSTICE DELAYED, DEVELOPMENT DENIED: REFORMS IN INDIA'S LEGAL SYSTEM**

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Shivangi Mishra, Kirit P Mehta School of Law, NMIMS, Mumbai

## **ABSTRACT**

India's aspiration to become a developed nation by 2047, i.e., Viksit Bharat, is a far-fetched ambition, but it is not possible without an efficient, updated, advanced, and inclusive justice delivery system. This essay examines the relationships between the legal system, national development, and their respective aspects, grounded in the principle that "justice delayed is justice denied." India's historical commitment to its constitution and legal system is inspiring; however, it still has its limitations and suffers from systematic delays, a backlog of cases, and unequal access for marginalized communities. These issues have led to judicial and legal erosion, which falters public trust, giving rise to harm to the economy, societal harmony, and administrative accountability.

The essay analyses and examines the current socio-economic impacts of delays in justice and the reforms that have been implemented so far, such as fast-track courts, e-courts, the use of electronic media, and alternative dispute resolution. Following it, the essay highlights the gaps and challenges faced in the implementation of these reforms across legal institutions.

The essay aims to draw on the best global practices and successful cases and practices, and it envisions an India of timely, affordable, and accessible justice for all. It emphasizes that a just society is the foundation of a developed nation. Without timely and fair justice, the country will lack economic growth, democratic power, and social cohesion. Justice is not just a want; it is a need and a necessity for Viksit Bharat.

## 1. Introduction

A nation's progress is not measured by just its growing economic conditions but by how timely, smoothly, and fairly it delivers justice to its people. The ambition of Viksit Bharat 2047 is not merely a material achievement, but an idea of creating a just, equitable, advanced, and dignified society where citizens live with freedom to grow and develop. The legal system plays a crucial role in laying the foundation of this aspiration. Justice is interdependent with development, as it is the bedrock of a democratic society, which serves as a prerequisite for economic and social development, citizen unity, and empowerment. The commonly used quote, which should not be common, "Justice delayed, Justice denied," reflects the reality that millions are still suffering and have not received their deserved justice, even after decades in India.

India has been facing judicial delays for decades, with over 5 Crore (4,92,67,373) cases across all judicial levels, specifically 69,000 in the Supreme Court, pending, giving rise to backlash and consequences beyond courtroom drama.<sup>1</sup> These delays cause erosion of public trust in the rule of law, but also become an obstacle to the social and economic development of the country.

A lagging legal system disappoints the person seeking judgment, weakens contract enforcement, discourages some people from even seeking justice, seeing no potential outcome due to failure in delivering timely justice in situations of gender-bias violence, environmental degradation, or government wrongdoing. This leaves an aftermath on victims awaiting justice, corporate deals stuck in litigation for far too long, accused in jail under trial waiting, and other people who are stuck in the court due to legal matters with no final date coming. A certain specific section of the Indian Society: Women, Dalits, SCs, STs, and the poor, Justice is either inaccessible, unaffordable, unequal or a forgotten concept.

The essay establishes that to realize the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, Legal reforms in India's legal system and judiciary institutions are of utmost importance. A thorough research and analysis are made to identify gaps, understand challenges, and study existing reforms to construct a strategy to achieve the vision.

A well-defined, digitalized, advanced, inclusive, efficient, and fair legal system lays down the

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<sup>1</sup> "NDTV, "Nearly 5 Crore Pending Cases in Courts, over 69,000 in Supreme Court", Feb 09, 2023"  
<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/nearly-5-crore-pending-cases-in-courts-over-69-000-in-supreme-court-3768720>

footprints for swift and timely justice to the citizens. It opens the door for broader aspects of development and growth in society. Justice is a need, development is a desire of the people and their society, which are both dependent and necessary for Viksit Bharat.

The essay delves into the gaps, challenges, reforms, and impacts backed by cases and references, along with the goals to achieve the ambition and global comparisons to understand the relationship between granting justice and the development of a nation.

## **2. The Current Legal System: Strengths and Limitations**

Everything has its boon or bane, so does the Indian legal system. A country full of history, culture and knowledge stands to have the world's most complex and detailed judicial structure and legal framework.<sup>2</sup> It does not disappoint by being multifaceted, with its constitutional strengths and weaknesses that contribute to the failure of the justice system.

### **A. Strengths of the Indian Legal System**

#### **I. Constitutional Framework**

India has the longest written constitution in the world. It caters to the needs and rights of all citizens, while also protecting them. Justice is a necessity and is the heart of the Indian Constitution. Preamble states that "JUSTICE, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL," meaning justice is the beginning of an equal, fair, and free society. Part III, Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, i.e. Right to Equality, emphasizes that everyone should be treated equally in the eyes of the law; hence, Justice will be provided to all. Article 21 guarantees the Right to life and personal liberty, making sure justice is accessible to all.

The government has established NALSA (National Legal Service Authority) and SALSA (State Legal Service Authority) to implement 39A added by the 42<sup>nd</sup> Amendment in Directive Principles of State Policy, Part IV. It holds the state responsible for ensuring the legal system promotes justice on the grounds of Equality, with free legal aid provided to individuals who cannot afford legal fees, women, and people with disability.

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<sup>2</sup> "Law Blend, "The Indian Legal System: Structure, Evolution, and Contemporary Challenges," Feb 10, 2025" <https://lawblend.com/articles/the-indian-legal-system/>

## II. Judicial Independence

Judicial independence is a principle that says the judiciary should stay away from external influence and operate freely by ensuring free and impartial justice to all. It ensures that courts and judges perform their function without any pressure from governmental authorities or any private individual. The Indian judiciary is free from legislative and executive interference and plays a crucial role in giving verdicts based on law and facts rather than personal biases. This independence allows the judiciary to conduct judicial review under Article 13 of the Indian Constitution to declare the laws or proceedings that violate the interests of the Constitution.

Taking an example, there might be certain cases where political leaders are involved, or any wealthy, renowned individual is involved. In such a situation, the political party tries to threaten the court or judge to give an order in their favour, whereas a wealthy individual might try to bribe the judge. However, judicial independence assures that courts and judges are protected from such threats and influence and can grant verdicts freely and fairly. This framework helps in preserving civil liberties and protecting constitutional integrity.

## III. Public Interest Litigation (PIL)

Public Interest Litigation is an important legal framework of the judiciary, which is a legal action that has been established to protect the public interest in situations where issues affect society at large. PIL helps individuals and groups to seek legal intervention for matters affecting the public. PIL was formed to serve the poor, marginalized people, women and individuals who are unable to ask for justice. PIL makes sure the injustices of these people can be addressed through it. It can only be filed in the Supreme Court or the High Courts of India.

PIL is not an act, law, or statute but a tool of legal obligation for the legislative and executive. It ensures that justice is provided to all and maintains the welfare of the state. Any individual can file a PIL under Article 32 for the Supreme Court and Article 226 for the High Court under the Constitution of India, but the matter should affect the public. The case *Vishaka & Others v. the State of Rajasthan and Others (1997)* is a landmark case in the matter of a PIL filed by Vishakha and other women about the rape of women.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Vishaka & Others v. the State of Rajasthan and Others (1997)* 6 SCC 241  
<https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-9849-case-analysis-vishaka-v-s-rajasthan.html>

## IV. Evolving Jurisprudence

Evolution in law over the decades, driven by justice, fairness, transparency, and awareness, has come a long way. It has helped to accept customs, refer to precedents, and understand legal interpretations. The judiciary is a transformative machinery to make new laws or elaborate on the older ones through landmark rulings:

- *Vishaka & Others v. the State of Rajasthan and Others (1997)* – workplace sexual harassment guidelines (POSH Act).<sup>3</sup>
- *Navtej Singh Johar & Ors v. Union of India (2018)* – Decriminalized Homosexuality<sup>4</sup>
- *Selvi v. State of Karnataka (2010)* – Protection against self-incrimination<sup>5</sup>

## B. Limitations of the Indian Legal System

### I. Procedural Delays & Pending Cases

Delay in justice can be most of the time due to the long, complex procedures of the justice system. It leads to the piling of stacks of pending cases in all the courts. Seeing continuous delays often deters people from believing or depending on the justice system. Indian courts are clogged, and President Droupadi Murmu called this ‘Black Coat Syndrome’. The Supreme Court has 86,700 cases, the High Court has 63.3 lakh cases, and the district and subordinate courts have 4.6 crore cases or above pending in India.<sup>6</sup>

### II. Undertail Prisoners

Justice is not only to protect the rights of victims, but also to ensure the rights of the accused who are kept in undertrial prisons until the date of their trial or final judgment. However, the delays in trials have led to overcrowding in undertrial prisons, which could have been avoided if not for the country's faulty legal system. This prolonged detention violates their liberty as

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<sup>4</sup> *Navtej Singh Johar & Ors v. Union of India AIR 2018 SC 4321*

<https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-6402-case-summary-navtej-singh-johar-v-s-union-of-india.html>

<sup>5</sup> *Selvi v/s State of Karnataka AIR 2010 Sc 1974*

<https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-6517-case-analysis-selvi-v-s-state-of-karnataka.html>

<sup>6</sup> “The Hindu, “Justice on hold: India’s courts are clogged”, July 30, 2025”

Justice on hold: India’s courts are clogged - The Hindu

well as their human rights.

### **III. Cost of Litigation**

Being able to afford legal expenses for poor families or even middle-class families is a luxury. Cost of advocate, cost of court, cost of gathering evidence or documents and after that, if the case is prolonged for a long duration keeps on increasing money investment. It makes the legal system unaffordable for the highest percentage of the total population. It makes people lose trust in the legal justice system, as well as advocates for such a large sum of money. According to the Prison Statistics India 2022 Report, undertrial prisoners make up to 75.8% of total prisoners.

### **3. Impact of Delayed Justice on Development**

Delayed justice is like developing a bottleneck, meaning failure to deliver a timely outcome, not only affects advocates, victims, accused and convicts but also impacts society economically, socially, and politically. For India, with such long delays and pending cases, it has shaken the spheres of society, making it impossible to have stable development.

#### **A. Economic Impact**

An organized, efficient, and predictable legal system is indispensable for economic growth. People dependent on economic transfers, like businessmen, investors or entrepreneurs, rely on the legal system of legally enforceable contracts, quick dispute resolution, and protected property rights. However, these long delays have started affecting the Ease of Doing Business (EoDB), as it has increased the spending but decreased the effectiveness due to missing the major point of doing business. It had been noted by a senior finance report, "Delay in contract enforcement majorly affects the Ease of Doing Business in India." Even if the first obstacle has been resolved, the uncertainty of future commercial disputes remains, and when it arises, it might drag on for long years, which makes India not so great destination for investors or any legal business.

Ineffective and delayed dispute resolution often starts to deter foreign and domestic investors. It emphasizes that India's contract enforceability delay discourages Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and hampers domestic business growth, affecting the GDP and GNP of the country. In the Investor-state arbitration, *White Industries v. India*, an investor successfully argued that

India took over nine years to enforce an arbitration award, a “denial of justice” under fair-treatment rules.<sup>7</sup> Judicial delays have become a rising red flag for investors, which keeps on degrading India’s image as a developing country.

Legal uncertainty and delays have also derailed infrastructure and real-estate development projects. Courts and tribunals have been a bottleneck for environmental, labour, land, and contractual disputes. For example, a single environmental dispute can stop many approvals for hundreds of housing projects in a district after all the investment and planning. Disputes over property or purchase agreements often take years or decades to be resolved, which stalls capital addition and ties up funding.

Start-ups and small businesses are very vulnerable. They must be careful of legal disputes or actions, and if anything, avoid them because they are starting from ground level and are tight on margins and funds. If an important customer or supplier causes a delay, there might be a need for legal initiation, which may take a long time to grant a verdict, and they only have limited resources to spend. It has been observed in published studies that the collapse of one Small and Medium-sized enterprise causes a domino effect on others.

## **B. Social Impact**

Justice is not merely a word or an abstract principle but an aim or objective to achieve for the betterment of society. Justice delayed often means a prolonged period of suffering, pain and fear for vulnerable individuals, victims and even for the wrongfully accused group. The people, the society, the citizens, whatever we name them, are all watching and observing how the delay in judgment has made survivors of sexual abuse, domestic violence, and inhumane crimes face not only trauma but also years of courtroom battles waiting for justice to be delivered. For example, Cases related to POCSO take years, and the trials extend beyond the timeline, making victims and their families lose hope in justice.

Individuals who have been accused and held as undertrial prisoners might have to wait for a longer duration due to delays in trials. The accused are innocent until proven guilty; their delayed stay in prisons violates their right to life and liberty, deepens inequality and human rights violations at multiple levels. It is noticed that individuals in undertrial prisons end up

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<sup>7</sup> ABC Research, “Why India Lost Majority of Investment Arbitration Cases”, July 19, 2025  
Explained: Why India Lost Majority of Investment Arbitration Cases - ABC Live

being incarcerated for a longer duration than their alleged offence would have entailed. At least people with money somehow find a way around it and can push for early judgment; however, people belonging to poor families and marginalized groups are unable to afford bail or legal aid.

Justice is a luxury for Rural Citizens, Adivasis, Dalits, women, and other marginalized members of society. For them, justice is not easily available, accessible, or affordable. Lack of awareness does not help much in creating a gap in understanding how to get justice and how long justice takes to be delivered. Even if Justice is delivered, the compensations that need to be provided in cases like motor accident claims, labour disputes, harassment, insurance disputes, etc., always take a prolonged time, denying the families timely relief who depend on the compensation for survival.

### **C. Political Impact**

Justice is not just limited to private disputes; they are central part of democracy that has a political system and governance machinery in it. Delay in justice also affects the governance and accountability in Politics. It undermines legitimacy, transparency, the rule of law, and trust in the government. A country aiming to be developed by 2047 cannot have such degrading political governance.

Elections are a common occurrence in a democratic country like India. Elections of Prime Minister, Member of Parliament or State Legislature are conducted with an ideology of free and fair elections. Yet, election-related petitions are always filed, and they remain delayed and unfinished for long. In certain cases, even when the tenure of a specific elected individual is about to end or is over, there is still no verdict, making the entire legal procedure inefficient. This delays justice and undermines the credibility of electoral outcomes and voters' trust in a fair election system.

Cases of corruption involving high-profile politicians, public servants, or their workers, if not dealt with at the earliest, end up getting delayed and might even take decades to get a final judgment. This gives rise to administrative inefficiency where the accused officials continue to hold office and evade accountability for their acts. A culture of impunity is created because of this, where the accused officials live normally, still hold the office, have power and authority, and continue to climb up the ladder without any interference. This concludes with the public

losing trust in the governance and justice system.

#### **4. Reforms Initiated**

The Indian judiciary has always been admired as the guardian of the constitution and protector of rights. However, seeing the prolonged delay in the justice system and the impact it left on every sphere of society has made the government take upon initiative. Various legislative, judicial, and infrastructural reforms have been implemented to address the issue of delayed judgment and pending cases.

##### **A. Legislative and Policy Reforms**

###### **a) E-Courts Mission Mode Project**

It was initiated in 2005 under the National e-Governance Plan, aimed to digitize the case records, online cause lists, and enable e-filing for ease of access. Phase-II for the same project was introduced in 2015, which introduced video-conferencing for undertrials to fasten the trials to avoid prison overcrowding and unfair prolonged imprisonment of accused, integration of Case Information System (CIS), and virtual court pilots for traffic challans. In the year 2023, with the approximate funding of Seven Thousand Crore, the project envisioned interoperable and paperless courts, which could be accessed anywhere and a unified digital platform across all levels of the judiciary.

###### **b) Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR)**

Lok Adalats by Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 initiated for speedy settlements of small disputes like insurance claims, labour disputes, family disputes or motor accident claims. The Arbitration and Conciliation Acts improved institutional arbitration and helped align India with global best practices. The Mediation Bill, launched in 2023, has made mediation an important legal aspect and made pre-litigation mediation compulsory in case of civil and commercial disputes.

###### **c) Fast Track Courts (FTCs)**

It was set up following the 11<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission (2000) recommendations. It was revived after the 2012 Nirbhaya Case to focus on gender-based violence and the Protection of Children

from sexual offences Act (POCSO) cases. According to a report gathered in March 2023, there are around 1023 FTCs and 418 POCSO fast-track courts that were operational. FTCs have really helped in faster justice delivery, and people have also started to rely on and trust in their efficiency and effectiveness.

#### **d) Criminal Law Reforms (2023)**

Introduction of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) to replace IPC, CrPC, and Evidence Act. It aims to modernize criminal law, digitize procedures, prioritize victim rights and introduce community service and other rehabilitation methods. These reforms also draw from the Malimath Committee Report (2003), which highlighted the need to balance victim rights with speedy trial.

### **B. Judicial Reform**

#### **a) Case Management and Court Efficiency**

The Supreme Court has encouraged the adoption of Case Flow Management Rules to fix timelines for different categories of cases. Some high Courts like Delhi, Kerala, and Gujarat have experimented with differentiated case management. In *Salem Advocate Bar Association v. Union of India* (2005), the Supreme Court upheld the amendments to CPC introducing “case management” to reduce adjournments and delays. Delhi High Court’s “Commercial Courts” post 2015 Act has disposed of high-value contract disputes, boosting business confidence.

#### **b) Judicial Infrastructure Development**

Centrally Sponsored Scheme (1993-94) has allocated funds for court halls, residential units, record rooms, investigation rooms, prisons, and digitization of locks. In 2021, the government announced a Rupee 9,000 crore scheme for upgrading district courts over five years. This has helped in creating and maintaining the data and records of cases in a systematic order. The labelling and specific rooms for specific work helped in keeping the work segregated.

### **C. Legal Aid and Legal Literacy Reforms**

#### **a) NALSA (National Legal Service Authority)**

It was established under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, to provide free legal aid to individuals who cannot afford legal services. They organise Lok Adalats, run legal clinics, and ensure representation for undertrial prisoners who have been in prison for a prolonged period. In *Hussainara Khatoon v. State of Bihar* (1979), the SC held that free legal aid and speedy trial are fundamental rights under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.

### **b) Tele-Law Programme**

It was launched in 2017, implemented by the Department of Justice in partnership with CSC e-governance India and NALSA. It connects marginalised citizens to panel lawyers via video conferencing or telephone, accessible through Common Service Centres (CSCs) located at the village level.<sup>8</sup>

### **c) Legal Literacy Campaigns**

NALSA actively promotes and encourages legal awareness across the nation. Campaign tools that have been implemented are such as seminars, lectures, field work, and media engagement via Doordarshan programs, Nukkad nataks, short documentaries, and school competitions, training for paralegal volunteers for establishing Legal Aid clinics in law colleges and the community.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the above initiatives and reforms, the Indian legal system still faces issues in its implementation. Even if the fast-track court and e-courts system have reduced backlogs but there are still cases that cannot be sorted out through fast-track or e-court applications. Coming to the modernization of infrastructure, the usage of electronic means for recording data and conducting video conferencing might have been the best solution, but lower courts and courts in rural areas are still facing issues in using these technologies and connectivity.

## **5. Gaps and Challenges in Current Reforms**

The Indian legal system has seen many changes, reforms and developments over the years, and these changes always face a barrier in their way in the form of either a gap or a challenge to access, afford and avail free, fair, timely and efficient justice delivery. These challenges were observed as hindrances to the growth of the justice system, and thus, they need to be addressed

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<sup>8</sup> “Drishti IAS, Tele-Law, Nov 05, 2020.” Tele-Law

<sup>9</sup> Legal Awareness/Literacy | NATIONAL LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY (NALSA) | India

on an urgent basis to make the justice delivery procedure smooth and swift without unnecessary delay.

#### **a. Lack of Public Awareness**

The lack of education, awareness, sensitization or advocacy about the Legal system and its procedures has created a huge gap in understanding of its operations. Citizens still lack knowledge about tribunals such as the endowments and consumer commissions, which makes it difficult to understand which type of cases to approach in which court. For most of the time, the cases end up in the High Court, where they are too trivial to be given immediate attention thus end up getting stacked in a list of pending cases. This implies that a well-written and explained law is only useful if people know it exists and how to implement it.

#### **b. Reform Implementation gap in gender justice**

India is a country with many landmark judgements that have also given birth to new laws and acts like the Protection of Women from Workplace Harassment, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, and other acts that are said to be gender neutral, but if understood, can be seen as gender-biased. For example, there is no specific act relating to men for their protection against workplace harassment, although the POSH Act mentions it in its definitions, but it does not elaborate further on it.

UN Women officials echo this concern, citing norms and safety issues as deeper barriers than the law itself.<sup>10</sup> Feminist Scholars argue that there is no legitimate legal reform without social reform, which is more of an action rather than empty words. With the victim shaming, no proper trauma dealing was presented in that court, making the trauma turn into controversy, leaving behind an unwanted experience. It gives enough reason for victims not to come forward for justice, not wanting to be exposed to judgmental eyes.

#### **c. Judicial Overturns Undermine Investment Stability**

Finality of judgment is important for understanding the economic position, irrespective of the fact that it is a civil or criminal case. Yet, the case where millions or billions of dollars are involved or an insolvency case, it can change the entire economic conditions of the private or

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<sup>10</sup> India advancing in gender equality; social norms, safety issues remain barriers: UN Women officials - The Hindu

public company. For example, cases where years-old billion-dollar insolvency resolutions are getting reversed years later certain specific grounds, can cause huge money loss for investors and even disruption in planning. This unpredictability deters investors from investing in long-term projects in India, corroding and making an unstable foundation for Viksit Bharat.

#### **d. Enforcement Deficit in Judicial Orders**

Indian courts tend to pass strong legal judgments on every legal matter. These judgments sometimes are not just for the parties involved in the case but also for the public at large. These can be rules & regulations, public policy, consumer laws, etc. However, their enforcement is the biggest challenge. Not knowing which policy applies or what the procedure of implementation is creates a conflict of opinions, leading to failure of enforcement and causing disturbance in the stable equilibrium of the legal justice system.

#### **e. Inadequate Infrastructure and Lack of Support Staff**

A courtroom with multiple lawyers but a lack of technology or copies of case documents to conduct the case over talks highly about the lack of infrastructure. Severe overcrowding in courtrooms has made it impossible for a lot of legal officials to be inside the room due to no space, causing a lack of support staff due to failure in crowd management. This structural inadequacy raises frustrations and inefficiency. With half the staff working on well-functioning laptops while the other half on barely working ones, in rural courts or even old lawyers do not know how to access technology, it creates a challenge in the functioning of the legal system as well as delays justice.

### **6. Vision 2047: A Justice System for a Developed India**

#### **A. Goals for Viksit Bharat 2047**

##### **▪ Timely Justice**

On-time delivery of justice is crucial for the ambition of Viksit Bharat. The aim is to make sure that there is a decrease in the stacks of piles of old cases. Disposing of cases at a faster speed to reduce the pile by 60% in the coming couple of years is the way to go. Pending cases lead to a delay in justice delivery, which degrades the integrity of the Indian legal system as well as is unfair to the people seeking justice. Development is the key to achieving the goal of Viksit

Bharat, which cannot be achieved without timely justice delivery.

### ▪ **Universal Legal Access**

Making legal services accessible, affordable, and available to all is the aim to make the Indian Judiciary one of the best in the world. Multiple initiatives and reforms have been taken, like as legal aid, to make legal help affordable to every member of society. The goal is to ensure that legal aid is accessible 100% at the Gram Panchayat Level, to make sure advocates are provided to rural litigants irrespective of their literacy or income. Over 75% of the accused are undertrial because of a lack of an advocate to represent them, which impacts the socio-economic condition of their families gravely. Indian Bail Prediction System (IBPS), an AI legal aid that has been created to help in such situations.<sup>11</sup>

### ▪ **Digital and AI-Powered Justice**

Artificial Intelligence has been on the rise in recent years, and coming decades, it will be the one leading all aspects of development. Use of digital technology makes the entire procedure of justice delivery convenient and efficient. There is a way to store data and information for decades in better quality and carry multiple case files in one laptop, rather than carrying paper bundles of it. All courts, with AI tools integrated into their systems, can help with case rescheduling, case tracking, and legal research and analysis. AI and digital technology are beneficial for the country's development, as they provide faster and more effective solutions, as well as a more efficient working culture.

## **B. Pillars of Reforms**

### **1) Structural and Institutional Reforms**

All India Judicial Service was established to create a unified, merit-based, and transparent system for the appointment of judicial officers. This was highly needed as India currently has only 15 judges per million, whereas the Law Commission recommended 50 per million, which is lower than the strategy followed in the U.S. and Europe. This would reduce political interference and attract diverse and high-quality candidates with varied opinions for the country. IJS is open to all to apply, emphasizing equal representation for SCs, STs, OBCs,

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<sup>11</sup> Cornell University, "IBPS: Indian Bail Prediction System", August 11, 2025.  
<https://arxiv.org/abs/2508.07592?utm>

women, persons with disabilities, etc. The target is to halve the judicial vacancies by 2035 and achieve the 50 judges per million benchmarks with quotas and mentorship programs.

Gram Nyayalayas established under the Gram Nyayalayas Act, 2008, were created to bring speedy and affordable justice in rural areas. The target is to activate the maximum number of gram nyayalayas with proper infrastructure and establish mobile courts in remote areas with local ADR centres funded by a central-state partnership. These categories will simplify the procedure, encourage conciliation, and resolve minor civil and criminal matters.

## **2) Technological Transformation**

With Artificial Intelligence on the rise, the Indian judiciary is undergoing a digital revolution under the e-courts Project Phase-III, approved in 2023 which is embarked on for future technologies like AI, ML, NLP, blockchain through 2027. AI-driven case management is at the heart involving intelligent scheduling, predictive backlog analysis, and proactive alert systems to boost judicial work, reduce the number of adjournments, and improve case proceeding rates. These systems leverage smart analytics to forecast case timelines, enabling the judiciary to prioritize cases effectively and allocate resources strategically.

Supreme Court's e-committee has formed a high-level sub-committee comprising 6 high court judges and technical experts, tasked with overseeing the data security, authentication, and privacy protocols for AI deployments. The aim is to create a paperless judicial platform having e-filing, e-payments, virtual courts, etc., that connects courts, litigants, advocates, and stakeholders on one platform smoothly. It makes time management and transparency an easy factor for passing verdicts timely making litigants and judges satisfied. An AI-driven Indian judicial system is crucial for achieving Viksit Bharat's vision of timely and fair justice.

## **3) Procedural Reforms**

Several procedural reforms need to be stabilized to ensure judicial effectiveness, efficiency, and timely delivery of justice with a systematic procedure. The anytime adjournment of cases always extends the cases for a longer duration required; cases that needed to be done in one hearing take multiple, especially for trivial matters, hence, the policies relating to adjournment need to be strict and ask for accountability. For instance, Odisha's government issued a Standard Operating Procedure restricting adjournments in criminal trials, no adjournments if

witnesses are present unless reasonably justified, a cap of two delays per case regardless of other court engagements, and penalties for unjustified adjournments.<sup>12</sup> The launch of special dedicated benches targets high-age criminal backlogs. On August 19, 2025, the Madras High Court initiated Suo-motu writs to fast-track petty criminal cases pending over three years, constituting benches in Chennai and Madurai, recommending mediation, prosecution withdrawal when needed, and involvement of DGP-appointed nodal officers.<sup>13</sup> This will encourage the judicial system to move from a passive procedure to towards proactive procedure for timely and equitable justice delivery.

#### **4) Human Resources and Training**

The main stem of challenge in confronting the Indian Judiciary arises from the low budget allocation, which hinders the growth of reforms. The judiciary receives merely 0.08% of GDP, which is barely any useful which proves to be an indicator of an underfunded branch of the Indian Government. Without any meaningful investment, there would not be any development of infrastructure, an increase in staffing, enforcement of reforms and judicial orders, thus blocking the progress of the judiciary. The National Judicial Academy (NJA) exists to provide the much-needed judicial education, and e-committee initiatives have taught over a million people during the pandemic; however, such initiatives remain underfunded to be taken ahead systematically.

To address the issues of lack of experience or training, the beginning should be by prioritizing budgetary requirements; judiciary funding should be increased to underpin staffing and capacity enhancement. An improved and organized judiciary framework that is well funded with technology-trained staff will support and encourage current judges and court staff to be competent and active in the work of the judiciary.

#### **5) Inclusion and Legal Literacy**

Legal literacy has been institutionalized through government frameworks like the *Pan-India*

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<sup>12</sup> Times of India, "Govt issues SOP to prevent unnecessary defence adjournments in trials", May 28, 2025. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/govt-issues-sop-to-prevent-unnecessary-defence-adjournments-in-trials/articleshow/121472253.cms>

<sup>13</sup> The New Indian Express, "Madras High Court forms two benches to clear pending petty criminal cases", Aug 19, 2025. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2025/Aug/19/madras-high-court-forms-two-benches-to-clear-pending-petty-criminal-cases?>

*Legal Literacy and Legal Awareness Programme* (2021-26) under the DISHA initiative, which has created access to justice projects by sensitizing people with legal awareness materials and forging institutional partnerships for sustained outreach, like NALSA with legal aid volunteers in colleges. This fusion ensures a structured legal aid ecosystem led by paralegal volunteers who are trained to bridge gaps between communities and the legal justice system.

A systematic exclusion still exists even after so many changes to reduce it; women still face discrimination and are underrepresented in judicial appointments, and caste-based sidelining persists, with SCs, STs, and OBCs having minimal representation in the collegium. Reforms must be there; however, it should not be some quota or reservation kind of reform only, but also legal education targeted towards specific groups with well-needed modules and empowering underprivileged groups with both representation in the system and access to it.

## **7. Conclusion**

As India marches towards the Viksit Bharat 2047, the proverb “Justice delayed, justice denied” screams for the call of reforms, reminding us that development is inseparable from the Indian legal system and timely and equitable justice delivery sits at the heart of the development plan for all spheres of society. Fast, accessible, and reliable judicial processes will boost the Ease of Doing Business, help in safeguarding investments, and pave the way for global capital flow and networking. Justice is the demand of all the people of the society and should be granted to all communities, including marginalized groups, from rural to under-trial prisoners, giving them the right to live life with dignity. Infrastructure development, with the stepping into an AI and technology-integrated institution, will give a chance for an efficient and effective decision-making process and timely justice delivery.

Ending the essay to begin the journey of Viksit Bharat 2047 with a resolve to achieve the ambition. A victim cannot afford judicial stagnation, nor can India, as the one suffering will be the socio-economic condition of the country as well. The demand and aim are for the Nyay Bharat, a justice system rebuilt on fairness, equality, accountability, transparency, and trust.