

The first Annual Report of this Court was released on 11.05.2007. Judged from that standpoint this report is somewhat delayed. Yet, it endeavours to break new ground.

The Annual Report for the year 2006-2007 being the first in the series, naturally dealt with the history of the Court in some detail. This report is not repetitive on that score and has outlined other features peculiar to the year 2007-2008, which has just gone by. While adhering to the basic framework of the previous Annual Report, certain new features have been added. A greater emphasis on the statistics of the institution and disposal of cases has been placed. The report presents them not only in the form of dry figures, but also through comparative colour coded and pie charts, which are easy to comprehend.

Dr. Justice M.K. Sharma who led the Court as its Chief Justice from 04.12.2006, was appointed as a Judge of the Supreme Court on 08.04.2008; he joins other former Chief Justices of this Court who are currently Judges of the Supreme Court, viz. Justice Arijit Pasayat, Justice S.B. Sinha and Justice Markandey Katju. Two Judges of the Supreme Court namely Justice Dalveer Bhandari and Justice D.K. Jain started their judicial careers from this Court. Justice T.S. Thakur was appointed as Chief Justice, Punjab and Haryana High Court on 11.08.2008 and Justice Manmohan Sarin was appointed as Chief Justice, Jammu and Kashmir High Court on 04.09.2008. During this period, twelve new Judges were appointed to the High Court, and three Judges demitted office upon their attaining the age of retirement.

As in the case with such reports, the most important section is one dealing with judicial work. This shows that 47017 main cases were filed in the Court for the period 2007-2008 and 56612 cases were disposed of. The arrears of main cases which were 79818 as on 01.04.2007 got reduced; they were 74599 by the end of March 2008. The figures disclose that the arrears reduced included 13.46% of civil cases which were older than 10 years and 57.30% criminal cases that were older than 10 years. These, despite the fact that the Court did not function at its full sanctioned strength of 48, and the average number of Judges for the period 01.04.2007 to 12.03.2008 were only 32 or two thirds the sanctioned strength. It was only for less than 3 weeks 13.03.2008 to 31.03.2008 when the Court had a complement of 34 Judges.

Besides the details and statistics, other aspects of Court functioning including the Court's budgetary allocation and expenditure have been shown. An attempt has been made to cost analyze the judicial time. The figures show that there were 3,32,141 "MATTERS", or "LISTINGS" took place before the Court for the period 01.04.2007 to 31.03.2008. These were listed before 24 Benches each of which on an average had to deal with 13,839 listed matters that year, which averaged to 64 cases each day before every Court. The average time available for each of such case was 4 minutes and 5 seconds. The average cost of listing each such case before each Judge worked out to Rs.1,297/- and the average Court expenditure per minute by the Court was Rs.6,327/- or Rs.19,93,180/- for each working day. This expenditure excluded the time spent by the Judges dictating reserved judgments in the chambers and preparing the cases for the next day as well as the time spent for correcting and signing the orders in those 64 odd cases listed each day. These figures only highlight the crushing load which the Courts the Delhi High Court

being no exception have to shoulder. In the previous report a comparison had been made between the Court's Docket and the kind of institution and disposal of cases before Courts in England; on an average each Superior Court Judge (there are about 150 of them) had to decide about 150 cases every year. This comparison serves to make a point.

The year 2007-2008 saw several milestones; the Dwarka Court complex and the National Law school were inaugurated recently. The Delhi High Court played a prominent part in the setting up of the Law School. An Automated Underground Multi Level Car Parking to resolve the endemic parking problem of litigants and lawyers has been conceived. It is proposed to become operational by August 2010 on an estimated cost of Rs.122.69 crores. The digitization and archiving of records of the Court has progressed considerably and by end of September 2008, a record 3,98,373 decided judicial files were scanned and digitized. The process will ensure electronic storage of data and its astonishingly rapid retrieval. It will facilitate speedy availability of certified copies of old documents and pleadings. Nine E-Kiosks were installed in the High Court building to facilitate easy access of information regarding pendency of cases, their dates of listing and scheduled dates of hearing etc.

Alternative dispute resolution initiatives to unclog Court Dockets and hasten process of dispute solving, were given a further impetus during the year. The Mediation Centres, both of the Delhi High Court and the other Courts have shown that with the involvement of the Members of the Bar as well as trained Judge Mediators, a large number of disputes can be resolved. Delhi's Judge Mediators have also been requisitioned in other parts of the country, to impart training. This is a matter of pride to the Delhi Mediation initiatives. Towards achieving the same, the concept of continuous Lok Adalats was introduced in relation to cases pending in the High Court as well as the lower courts. Through this initiative, retired Judges of the Delhi High Court and retired Judicial Officers of other Courts have agreed to spare their time and attempt dispute resolution.

The Chief Justice of India had also recently inaugurated Evening Courts designed to decide and settle small cases. The kind of Evening Courts, manned by regular judges, proposed for Delhi are such that regular offences would be referred to them, unlike in other parts of the country, where petty cases such as traffic challans are usually decided, by evening courts.

This report strives to present an objective picture about the Courts and demystify various aspects of judicial functioning. The Court, as an important institution ordained by the Constitution, has to function in the context of its times and therefore will continue in its efforts to make all information available to members of the public, to retain its vibrancy and relevance. Its motto, as spelt out in the previous Annual Report is, and continues to be speedy and inexpensive justice with easy access to all.

Justice Ajit Prakash Shah
CHIEF JUSTICE