

# **Inauguration of the New Administrative Block**

## **Calcutta High Court**

*1 March 2023*

### **Inaugural Speech**

**Dr. Justice DY Chandrachud**

*Chief Justice of India*

A very good evening to Justice Prakash Shrivastava, Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, judges of the Calcutta High Court, staff members, ladies, gentlemen, and all those who are attending this event, both in-person at the Calcutta High Court as well as virtually. The inauguration of any new venture is cause for celebration because it is usually a sign of progress. Today, we are inaugurating not one, not two, but **six** new initiatives. I am therefore nothing short of delighted to be delivering the inaugural address this evening. My only regret is being unable to visit the Calcutta High Court in person. But perhaps it is only fitting that I deliver this address virtually, seeing as how most of the initiatives inaugurated today relate to technology.

In a sense, technology has enabled us to travel across space in a fraction of a second. We need not wonder when the futuristic technology which allows us to travel from city to city or country to country in a few minutes or seconds will be invented because that technology is already before us in the form of video conferencing. The virtual tour of the New Administrative Block which enabled me

to access and view the building did so at a level of detail that none of us would have imagined possible a few years ago. I must say that the new building looks spacious and functional, and also has a pleasing architectural design. The addition of nine stories to the administrative division of the High Court will no doubt streamline the functioning of the High Court now, and in the future. Infrastructural expansions require foresight so it is not only the requirements of present which must be kept in mind when a new project is planned and executed but also the requirements of the future.

Similarly, my personal motto on the adoption of technology is “for the needs of tomorrow, act today!” Rather than choosing a strategy where we design technology to respond to problems which have already arisen, we must embrace a strategy where we periodically revamp our existing systems by using technology. If we do this, we will be able to meet any challenge head on, regardless of whether it is foreseen. An example that comes to mind is the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus. The e-Committee of the Supreme Court, which I head, had been expanding the technological capacities of our courts long before the pandemic began. It is because of this that we were able to conduct virtual hearings during the pandemic. Public institutions must therefore not lag behind private entities or individuals when it comes to the adoption of technology. They must instead lead the way – I am glad that the Calcutta High Court is doing exactly this.

Today, we launch the Calcutta High Court Mobile Application, a Justice Clock for the High Court, Personal Information System software, e-filing, and inaugurate an eSewa Kendra. The Calcutta High Court Mobile Application will be available in both

Android and iOS operating systems. Mobile phones are now ubiquitous in society. I remember an era when mobile phones were banned in many courtrooms and here we are today, releasing a mobile application for the High Court!

All features and functionalities of the website have been replicated in the mobile application. Advocates will undoubtedly be benefited by the easy access to the online display boards, cause lists, and the case status tab. Litigants, too, will find the application useful. This is especially because the citizenry is able to afford mobile phones more easily than desktops or laptops. If a litigant wants to check the status of their case, for example, they will find it far easier to use the mobile application than the web browser. In these small ways, technology makes the justice system more accessible to different strata of society.

Speaking of websites, I take this opportunity to encourage the Calcutta High Court to revamp and modernize its website. We, at the Supreme Court, are also in the process of assessing the changes that our website requires. A periodic review and upgradation of the website will ensure that it remains user-friendly.

The implementation of e-filing in the City Civil Court, Calcutta and at the Commercial Court Complexes at Alipore, Asansol, and Rajarhat and the inauguration of the eSewa Kendra at Bankura, Purulia, South 24 Parganas and Purba Medinipur are also cause for celebration. I hope that e-filing will be implemented in every district of West Bengal. The many advantages of eSewa Kendras require no explication. Foremost amongst their virtues is that they ensure that every lawyer and litigant is able to reap the fruits of our collective technological progress. The choice is not (and must never be) between using expensive

technology, on one hand, and in-person processes which may take more time, on the other hand. The reality is that lakhs of people do not know how to use technology for a variety of reasons. But such people must not be deprived of the convenience of technology. eSewa Kendras assist litigants and lawyers with the use of technology in court processes, ensuring that the speed and convenience of technology is available to one and all. They provide the third, hybrid choice of visiting a physical location to access virtual services.

The Personal Information System software contains all information pertaining to judicial officers in West Bengal and enables the filing of their annual confidential reports. All judicial and administrative work which is currently carried out on paper may now be conducted virtually. Judges at all levels will certainly welcome this move as it will enable more efficient record keeping and save precious time.

I am certain that litigants, lawyers, and judges will all walk away happy at the end of today's event for the lives of people belonging to each of these groups has been enriched by the initiatives launched today.

I wish the Calcutta High Court continued success with its initiatives.

Thank you.