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From Digitisation to Intelligence: How AI is Enhancing Access to Justice in India

Technology as an Enabler of Justice, not a Substitute for Judgement

AI IN INDIA
FROM VISION TO IMPACT

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Key Takeaways

- Government investment under **eCourts Phase III** signals a long-term commitment to strengthening India's justice delivery through responsible technology use.
- AI is supporting courts through tools like **SUPACE and AI-based transcription** and **translation** deployed by the Supreme Court and several High Courts.
- These tools improve efficiency by **automated filing, intelligent scheduling, enhancing the Case Information System** and **communicating with the litigants through chatbots**.
- AI adoption is **cautious and controlled**, ensuring that technology assists but **never replaces judicial decision-making**.

Introduction: India's Measured Shift to AI-Enabled Courts

On any ordinary morning, India's courts reveal a busy rhythm: **files moving, cause lists being called, lawyers navigating packed corridors and litigants waiting for brief hearings.** For decades, this system has managed rising caseloads, linguistic diversity, and the tension between access and procedural rigour.

Recently, digital transformation is modernising the judiciary through a co-ordinated push. Under **e-Courts Phase III starting from** 2023**,** courtrooms and registries have begun to change in steady, visible ways. **Paper-based submissions have been progressively replaced by digital filings; cause lists are**

updated in real time; video-conferencing hearings are routinely conducted; and judicial records are accessible seamlessly across the country.

Within the broader lens of digital transformation, **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** has begun to play a careful - calibrated role. **Supported by the Government, the Supreme Court, High Courts, National Informatics Centre (NIC) and institutions such as IIT Madras**, AI tools are now assisting various functions such as:

- **Transcription of oral arguments**,
- **Translation of judgments**,
- **Identification of defects in e-filing**,
- **Legal research**, and
- **Metadata extraction**.

DID YOU KNOW?

Cause list contains the details of cases listed for hearing on a particular date.

eCourts is a Pan-India Mission Mode Project under the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law & Justice to make judicial processes across courts more efficient, transparent, and accessible by using Information and Communication Technology.

Latest technologies like AI and its **subsets Machine Learning (ML), Optical Character Recognition (OCR), Natural Language Processing (NLP)** are being used in the e-Courts software applications developed under the eCourts Project. New application like **Digital Courts 2.1** and tools such as **LegRAA** and **SUPACE** represent early but significant steps towards smarter judicial workflows.

What is emerging today is **an ecosystem where technology complements judicial work, improving speed, accuracy, and transparency, while preserving the independence and centrality of human decision-making.**

From Digitisation to AI: The Judicial Technology Continuum

The integration of AI into India's judiciary is part of a steady and deliberate digital transformation, not a sudden technological leap. Over the past decade, courts have moved **from basic computerisation to nationwide digital platforms, real-time data systems, virtual courts and multilingual judgment access**.

The initial steps toward digitisation began with the **launch of the e-Courts Mission Mode Project in 2007**, which focused on:

• **Computerising court records** so that case files could be stored, retrieved, and managed digitally.
• **Digitising cause lists** to allow daily case schedules to be published and updated online in real time.
• **Enabling electronic Case Information Systems (CIS)** to give courts a unified platform for tracking case progress and administrative actions.

Phase I was primarily about making court information more visible and easily accessible to both administrators and litigants.

As digitisation matured with Phase II and Phase III, the **challenge shifted from availability of data to managing scale**. Under the **successive phases of the e-Courts project**, following were introduced:

- **Tools for e-filing**
- **Electronic scrutiny of defects**
- **Digital service of summons**
- **Automated case listing**

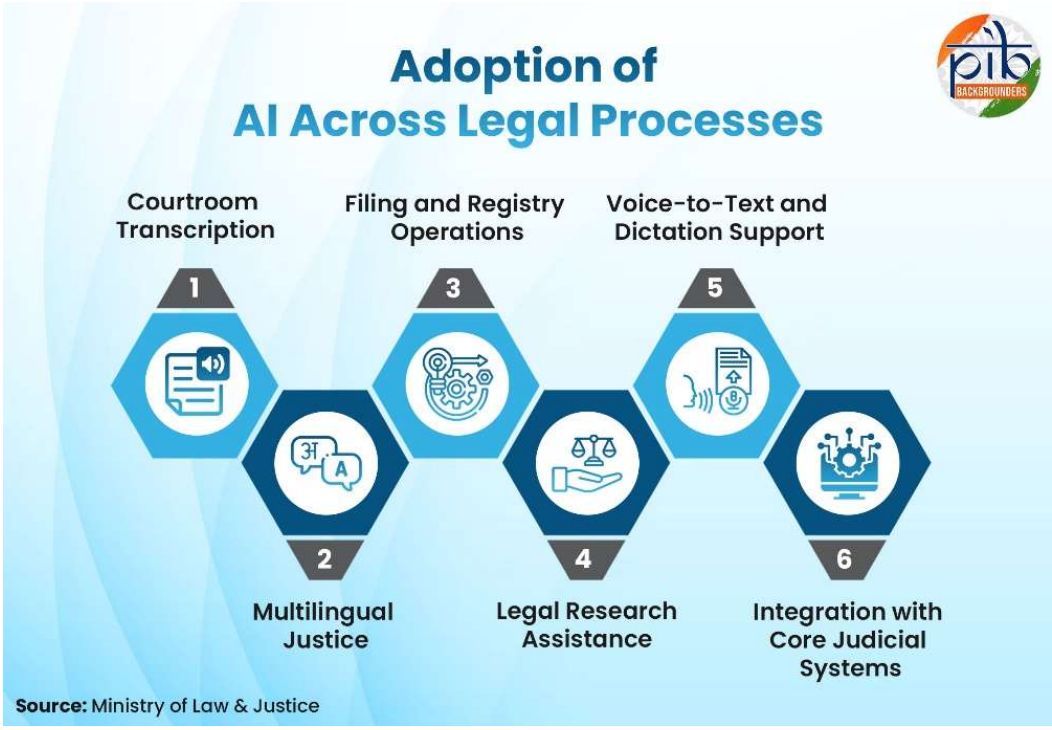
AI represents the next layer in this continuum. Unlike earlier digital tools, AI systems are now capable of:

- **Processing language**
- **Recognising patterns**
- **Assisting with complex data-intensive tasks**.

Importantly, AI in the Indian judiciary has been positioned **not as a replacement for existing systems**, but as an augmentation of them, embedded within platforms such as the **Integrated Case Management & Information System (ICMIS)**, **e-filing modules and judgment databases**.

AI Advancing Across Multiple Domains: Live and Pilot Deployments

AI is already operational in the judiciary, **used selectively and with institutional supervision** in defined administrative and support areas. These deployments are either **fully operational** or in **controlled pilot stages**.



AI in Courtroom Transcription: Capturing the Spoken Record

One of the earliest and most visible uses of AI in the Supreme Court has been in the **transcription of oral arguments**, particularly in Constitution Bench matters. Traditionally, court proceedings relied on handwritten notes, selective dictation, or post-hearing summaries.

AI speech recognition is enabling near **real-time transcription of oral arguments**, with **transcripts released on Supreme Court's official platforms** for greater transparency and record accuracy. The system is being gradually extended to regular hearing days after successful use in Constitution Bench proceedings.

This deployment uses **Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR)**, a subset of ML, trained to recognise legal vocabulary, accents, and courtroom dialogue, while final validation remains human-led.

AI for Multilingual Justice: Translation of Judgments

Language accessibility has long been a structural barrier in India's justice system. While judgments are authored primarily in English, a large section of litigants operates in regional languages. AI has been deployed to bridge this gap through large-scale **judgment translation**.

In collaboration with the NIC, AI tools using **Natural Language Processing (NLP)** are translating Supreme Court judgments into **18 Indian languages**. For this, **SUVAS (Supreme Court Vidhik Anuvaad Software)**, an AI-driven translation tool of the Supreme Court, converts English judgments and orders into vernacular languages, enhancing accessibility and regional language use in courts. These translated judgments are hosted on the **e-SCR portal**, significantly expanding public access.

DID YOU KNOW?

The **eSCR (Electronic Supreme Court Reports) portal** is a free, digital, and user-friendly service to search, read, and download Supreme Court judgments.

Supreme Court and High Court AI Translation Committees oversee quality and constitutional accuracy. AI use remains assistive, with translations reviewed within judicial frameworks to support access to justice.

AI in Filing and Registry Operations: Reducing Procedural Friction

AI is also being **deployed in court registries**, where procedural scrutiny is resource-intensive. The Supreme Court Registry, with IIT Madras, has built AI tools to **flag defects in e-filings**.

These tools use **Machine Learning (ML) and Optical Character Recognition (OCR)** to examine petitions, annexures, formatting, metadata, and compliance with filing rules. Instead of manual scrutiny alone, AI systems flag potential defects, allowing registry officials to focus on substantive checks.

Currently, this system is in a pilot phase, with **access provided to a limited group of Advocates-on-Record for testing and feedback**. The objective is not automation of acceptance, but **early detection and faster correction**, reducing delays at the threshold stage.

AI in Legal Research Assistance: LegRAA and SUPACE

AI tools have been developed to assist judges in navigating large volumes of case law without substituting judicial analysis. The **Legal Research Analysis Assistant (LegRAA)** supports **judges by analysing documents, extracting relevant legal references, and organising research material**. These tools rely on NLP and ML techniques but operate strictly as **research aids**, with no role in recommending outcomes or drafting judgments autonomously.

The **Supreme Court Portal for Assistance in Court Efficiency (SUPACE)** is an AI-based system **designed to help identify relevant precedents and understand the factual matrix of cases**. SUPACE remains in an experimental stage and is not yet deployed for regular judicial use.

AI in Voice-to-Text and Dictation Support: ASR-SHRUTI and PANINI

To support judicial writing and reduce manual drafting time, AI-enabled dictation and translation tools have been introduced within applications like **Digital Courts 2.1**.

- **ASR-SHRUTI** enables voice-to-text dictation for orders and judgments.
- **PANINI** supports translation and linguistic structuring.

These tools **assist judges in drafting while preserving full editorial and judicial control**. They enhance efficiency without altering authorship or reasoning.

AI in Integration with Core Judicial Systems

All AI tools are being integrated within existing judicial infrastructure such as:

- Integrated Case Management & Information System (ICMIS)
- Case Information Systems (CIS) 4.0
- E-Filing and Judgment Search portals

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Supreme Court's ICMIS **enables e-notices, e-cause lists, digital case access, online monitoring of cases and interlinking with High Courts, government departments, jails and police stations**.
- The CIS, developed under the e-Committee initiative, **enhances transparency and litigant-friendliness in the judiciary**. **CIS 4.0** offers **refined user interfaces, dashboards, and improved case management tools for High Courts and District Courts**.

It ensures **AI functions within institutional boundaries**, not as standalone or external systems reinforcing judicial independence and constitutional accountability.

AI and the Criminal Justice Ecosystem

AI's role in the criminal justice ecosystem spanning **investigation, evidence, prosecution and adjudication** is expanding alongside structured digital reforms. By digitally **connecting police, forensics, prosecution, prisons, and courts**, AI is helping address longstanding interoperability that once caused delays and information gaps.

AI within the Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS)

AI-enabled tools are being layered onto the ICJS, which digitally links police, courts, prisons, forensic systems, and prosecution databases on the **principle of 'one data, one entry'**. AI assists in managing large volumes of **criminal case data, tracking procedural milestones, and improving the reliability of information exchange between agencies**.

For courts, this enables **faster access to verified FIRs, charge sheets, custody status and forensic reports, reducing reliance on manual files.** AI-based data handling improves consistency and timeliness **without altering evidentiary standards**.

The **National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS)** has been developed to **create a centralised, searchable national repository of criminal fingerprints, comprising over 1.23 crore records**. It replaces legacy systems and **ensures accurate, timely and uniform fingerprint-based identification across law enforcement agencies nationwide**.

AI-Supported Recording of Proceedings and Evidence

AI-enabled systems are also improving the recording and preservation of court proceedings. Daily proceedings are digitally captured within the CIS, while live-streaming of hearings in selected courts enhances transparency.

Applications such as **Nyaya Shruti**, introduced under ICJS, **facilitate virtual appearances and testimonies** through **secure video conferencing**. AI-supported voice processing ensures clarity, continuity, and accurate documentation, particularly in criminal trials involving multiple stakeholders across locations. Additionally,

digital recording of evidence on platforms like **e-Sakshya improves accuracy and reduces procedural disputes** related to record integrity.

Institutional Governance, Safeguards and Investments

To ensure structured oversight, **the Supreme Court constituted an AI Committee**, later reconstituted to strengthen its mandate. The Committee, chaired by a **sitting Supreme Court judge**, oversees AI initiatives in the judiciary such as **translation, research assistance and process automation and reviews pilots before wider adoption**.

Most AI tools are being developed under the e-Courts Project Phase III within **Detailed Project Reports (DPRs)** approved boundaries. The **Supreme Court's eCommittee sets policy and strategy**, while **High Courts handle implementation** allowing local adaptation within national standards.

Safeguards around data privacy, security and bias mitigation have been explicitly acknowledged by the judiciary. Dedicated **sub-committees comprising High Court judges and technical experts** have been constituted to examine secure connectivity, authentication mechanisms, and protection of judicial data.

In regards to Investments and capacity building, AI integration in India's judiciary is being driven by sustained government efforts in this direction. Under **Phase III of the e-Courts Project, with an outlay of ₹7,210 crore**, funds have been earmarked for **"Future Technological Advancement"** including AI, ML and blockchain.

Conclusion: Technology with Constitutional Temperament

At the end of a long cause list, a judge still pauses, listens, weighs facts and applies the law. That moment has not changed. What has changed is everything around it, the **time taken to find precedents, the effort required to sift records, the delay caused by language and logistics**. AI is quietly working in these spaces, reducing friction without touching the core of judicial decision-making.

As India moves forward with technological reforms, **digital tools in the justice system are increasingly shaped by ideas like the democratisation of technology, ensuring access across all courts; technology for "Welfare for All, Happiness for All," grounding innovation in public good; and AI for Humanity, ensuring that AI upholds dignity, fairness, and trust.** India's judiciary is integrating AI in a **balanced, constitutionally grounded manner** leveraging technology for efficiency while **ensuring human judgment remains paramount**. This measured approach reinforces justice delivery without compromising constitutional values.

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