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Milord, AI is courting the legal system now

From transcribing witness statements to streamlining petitions, next-gen AI firms are helping tackle India's case backlog

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Anyone who enjoys a courtroom drama on TV will acknowledge that the resolution to a real-life case can be a longer affair. To say nothing of jargon-speaking lawyers, confounding paperwork, and the many adjournments. Though technology has leapt in sectors like finance and banking, for many citizens-turned-litigants, the justice system appears to be stuck in time.

But change may be in the offing with many courts experimenting with using AI for case filing, research and to reduce administrative tasks. Companies like Nyaya AI, Jhana AI and Adalat AI have customised their products for Indian courts, training them on local languages, jargon, and workflows. AI is also being used for multilingual translation, document defect detection, case summarisation etc to bring speed and efficiency that the hallowed court halls have not seen of late.

BACKLOG BURDEN

As many as 50 million cases were pending as of July 2025, according to the National Judicial Data Grid. Heavy caseloads leave many judges with only a few minutes to spare per case. This is aggravated by the shortage of skilled manpower like stenographers, processes that rely entirely on paperwork and a British-era filing system.

In many states, judges pause proceedings to summarise and dictate arguments, reasoning and judgments while the stenographer types it out. Other practices include judges handwriting their orders due to lack of skilled staff or clerks spending an entire day looking for a file piled up in a record room. As a result, bail applications can be rejected on trivial grounds, recording statements or evidence can take days, sometimes years, all of which impacts justice delivery.

TECH TO THE RESCUE?

Following the SC's push towards digitisation starting 2022, many courts have adopted AI tools. Nyaya AI, founded by PanScience Innovations, has developed tools for the SC, 16 of the 25 high courts, and the Supreme Court of Singapore. They offer defect detection, e-filing automation, metadata extraction, among other services. Tanisha Singh, head of operations, says, "Defect detection has helped reduce time lost to filings being returned for minor mistakes, while the case bunching and clustering tech understands context (not just keywords) and brings together cases of similar nature, so judges can resolve large bundles at once, saving months of court time."

The transformative power of some of these tools can be seen. Utkarsh Saxena, founder of Adalat AI, says, "A judge in South India told us that recording a witness statement, which used to take 40 minutes, can now be completed in 10 minutes." Another, he adds, says he no longer has to plan leave around his stenographer. Adalat's transcription tool, unlike general AI transcription products, is trained on legal case law, statute names, and legalese. It is already being used in 3,600 courtrooms and aims to reach 50% of India's courtrooms by 2026. Rahul Hemrajani, law professor at Bengaluru's National Law School of India, says, that courts

JUDGMENT DAY

- > 50 million cases pending as of July 2025, as per National Judicial Data Grid figures
- > At the current pace, it will take over 300 years to clear the case load
- > Nearly 80% of prisoners are undertrials
- > India has a low judge to population ratio at 21 judges per million people



around the world are testing with strict controls so that no confidential material is compromised. "The organising principle should be simple: assistive, not adjudicative," he says.

CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Is the famous Bollywood dialogue "tareek pe tareek" that is almost synonymous with 'court-kacheri ke mamle' finally outdated? Not yet, as concerns over lack of infrastructure, AI hallucinations (making up false information) and privacy remain. And for good reason. In 2023, a Manhattan federal judge fined a lawyer \$5,000 for submitting fictitious legal research generated using ChatGPT. In March, CJI Gopal warned against using AI in decision-making.

Jhana AI, a non-profit incubated at Harvard, is taking on AI hallucinations by creating a corpus of 15 million documents of Indian law, spanning judgments, statutes, acts, textbooks etc. "The system abstains rather than fabricates if a source isn't present. Everything is cited back to our repository, which functions as a primary legal reference layer," co-founder Hemant Bharatha Chakravarthy says. Jhana is currently running pilots across several high courts and is being used by district judges. When it comes to privacy, firms say their data is encrypted and even the software is developed in-house.

Hemrajani cautions that many of these solutions are viable only in higher appellate courts. "Lower courts and tribunals, which face an even worse pendency problem, have basic constraints. They lack modern computers, consistent internet and electricity. Records remain on paper. Files are bulky, poorly indexed, and split across sections. If these basic hardware and tech literacy problems are not solved, AI will not help."

He adds, "I do not think GenAI tools can currently be used in any high-risk judicial function, such as producing draft orders, where an inaccuracy in output will lead to substantive denial of justice. It is better suited to lower-risk tasks like translation and transcription, where minor errors are not as consequential."

A judge in South India found that recording a witness statement, which used to take 60 mins, can now be completed in 10 mins with AI tools

The way judicial system is sinking into delays and arrears, calls for urgent need to tone it up before it becomes too late. Modern technology offers hope but my personal experience in legal practice and use of technology highlights two impediments. First is unwillingness of legal community to change mindset. Both inside the judiciary and in lawyers' circle,

some persons have too much love for feudalistic system. They are allergic to change. It serves their parochial needs. Their personal interests are higher than interests of public at large. This a self-destructive tendency. Public faith in judicial system is eroding. In my law practice, I have closely observed that people are not bothered about lofty principles of law. They do not place lawyers on a high pedestal of respect. The public's practical approach is that if the judicial system solves their problem, and brings some relief, it is acceptable otherwise public tries to go its own way. This is what I observe from my interactions with clients. The system must adapt itself to changing public needs.

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Police witness examination via VC: Lawyers to boycott work

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Hours after the Delhi police commissioner's office on Thursday wrote to the principal district and sessions judges that formal police witnesses may be permitted to be examined through virtual means, the All District Bar Association coordination committee announced "complete indefinite abstention from work" in all district courts of Delhi from Sept 8.

The committee said the communication was "not in line with the final outcome and assurance" given by the representative of Union home minister Amit Shah to the delegation of the committee and representatives of the Bar Council of Delhi.

"There shall also be agitation in a more intensified manner against the arbitrary and illegal notification, which is not only against the concept of a free and fair trial, but is anti-public and curtails the right of an accused to defend," it added.

Earlier in the day, a letter signed by special commissioner of police (crime) Devesh Chandra Srivastava, which was sent to the judges, stated: "Only formal police witnesses

may be permitted to be examined through video-conferencing. The examination of material police witnesses may continue to be conducted in physical mode, pending further consultations among various stakeholders."

This would ensure expedited proceedings and reduced delays, as well as maintain the sanctity and efficacy of examination of crucial witnesses, the letter said, adding, "In the event of any request from the defence counsel for examination of a police witness in physical mode, the same may be considered by the learned presiding judge on merits."

On Aug 13, lieutenant governor V K Saxena had issued a notification designating all police stations in Delhi as places where police personnel could present evidence and depose before courts through video-conferencing. This triggered a protest from lawyers, who said this could lead to manipulation. Beginning Aug 22, the lawyers abstained from work for six days. The strike ended on Aug 28 after a meeting with Shah's representative and the Delhi police commissioner's clarification that the notification would become operational only after all stakeholders were heard.

Take for example the way recording of police evidence by electronic means is being opposed in Delhi. Lawyers have gone on strike. It is a time-saving measure. A police official who needs one hour to record his deposition through video-conference, would spend full day, or at least half day to be physically present in court. Would it not be better if she spends more time in her law and order duties than sitting idle in courts? So is the case with doctors and forensic science lab officials produced as prosecution witnesses. As far as watching demeanour of the prosecution witness is concerned, this can be done by replaying the video-recording. But somehow, the legal fraternity is averse to all these things. They are doing it to their own disadvantage in the long run. Public faith in judicial system will keep eroding.

But at the same time, there is need to be cautious against excessive use of AI in legal practice. Presently, AI is not so developed to completely replace a lawyer. It is only an assistive tool. I have used several AI models such ChatGPT, Perplexity, DeepSeek, Gemini, Copilot, etc.

They have their own limitations. Once you open Microsoft Office, Copilot will jump in to offer you to prepare a document for you but it cannot prepare a legal document to the desired satisfaction. You will find some shallowness and artificiality in it. It does not have flavour of legal expertise. Take for example, I asked both ChatGPT and Copilot to provide a draft agreement for live-in relationship. It took them one second to provide draft. ChatGPT incorporated the following clause regarding the children born out of relationship, "In the event the parties have or adopted a child, they shall mutually decide issues of custody, guardianship, education, and upbringing, in the best interest of the child" Copilot suggested as follows, "If the partners have children, additional agreement regarding custody, education and financial responsibilities should be documented separately" Both these drafts do not properly take care of Indian law and do not provide sufficiently elaborate provisions regarding children born out man-woman relationship. Similarly, both

these documents proceed on the presumption that live-in partners would live like a nuclear family. Elders have been overlooked. After all it is an intelligence which is artificial. It lacks naturality. If a lawyer has to make several changes in the draft, she will prefer to prepare the whole draft from beginning to end, instead picking some portions from AI provided draft and something from his own knowledge.

Likewise, I have tried AI on drafting of pleadings but this too did not yield satisfactory results. The drafts are too general in nature. They do not have customised approach needed in the context of facts and circumstances of a particular approach. Reason is that the general model of AI do not incorporate specialised features of law. It may be that a team of retired judges, lawyers having expertise in different fields and AI experts collaborate to create model suited to law. At present, it is not there.

However, existing AI tools are useful for assistive purpose. They can organise the documents you

need to prepare yourself for a case so that your time and labour is saved. You can highlight important portions so that you remain focused and close your arguments in shortest possible time. These documents are quite useful inside court. Likewise, there are Apps which can provide assistance is scheduling your activities.

Ultimately, the supervised and judicious use of AI can be useful in a judicial system but its wanton use without employing a judge or a lawyer's skill in law, is disastrous. Everyone in legal field must decide for himself what to use from AI and what to avoid.



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