



TATHASTU
Institute Of Civil Services

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Topics Covered

- **Lessons from the past**
- **Justice on hold: courts are clogged**
- **NISAR satellite mounted on GSLV for launch tomorrow**
- **Why antitrust regulations are pertinent**

International Tiger Day – 29 July



Tiger population soars

An analysis by the Wildlife Institute of India puts the average number of tigers in India at 3,682. A look at how the tiger population has increased over the years



Lessons from the past

Lessons from past

The Chola legacy includes good governance, not just grand temples

The visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Tamil Nadu had a subtle political message. In his address at the valediction of the annual Aadi Thiruvathirai festival at Gangaikonda Cholapuram to mark the birth anniversary of Rajendra Chola I, he focused on the legacy of the Chola emperor and his father Rajaraja Chola I to underline that contemporary India would be as enterprising as ancient India under the imperial Cholas, in expanding trade, and in guarding India's sovereignty. The festival was also organised to commemorate 1,000 years of the maritime expedition of Rajendra Chola to south-east Asia as well as the construction of the iconic temple, a World Heritage Site. The grandeur of the Chola dynasty is fascinating to recall, but there are other mundane facets of the Chola rule which are of modern relevance – its water management, tax and land revenue collection, and democratic processes.

In creating infrastructure, especially, the Cholas hold many lessons. In recent months, there have been fatal accidents involving civic structures. The resilience of the Brihadisvara temples, which have stood tall for over 1,000 years, could provide learnings. Studies show that the southern peninsula was the epicentre of several earthquakes in the last 200-odd years. Archaeologists are of the view that the superstructure of the temples holds the key to modern building techniques when it comes to seismic resilience. A close study of the temples for structural stability can be of immense value in the contemporary context. Apart from focusing on the heritage and culture of the Cholas, India could try and replicate their success in administration. Management of water resources, especially, could be an important learning. The Cauvery delta, where Gangaikonda Cholapuram is located, may experience floods, with a large volume of water draining into the sea without being harnessed for periods of scarcity. More than 30 years have passed since the adoption of the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution, but a large number of local bodies, even in the major cities, are functioning without elected representatives. The celebration is an opportunity for an analysis of the functioning of grassroots-level democratic bodies. Mr. Modi announced that the Centre would install the statues of Rajaraja Chola and Rajendra Chola to remind the country of its historical consciousness. But this exercise would have greater purpose if it reminds the country of the administrative acumen of the Cholas, and nudges those in governance to address many of the chronic flaws and problems.





Justice on hold: courts are clogged

Justice on hold: India's courts are clogged

Civil cases in district courts face the longest delays, exposing a stark mismatch between caseload and capacity

DATA POINT

Kartik Singh

Timely justice is a cornerstone of public trust in the legal system, as captured by the classic maxim 'justice delayed, is justice denied'. Prolonged delays often deter people from approaching courts. Last year, President Droupadi Murmu termed this hesitation the 'black coat syndrome'.

Although this has been a perpetual issue in India, the scale is now striking. Over 86,700 cases are pending in the Supreme Court (SC), over 63.3 lakh cases in High Courts (HCs), and 4.6 crore cases in district and subordinate courts. Added up, the total number of pending cases in India amounts to more than 5 crore (Chart 1).

While the principal actors in the judicial process – judges, lawyers, litigants and witnesses – generally act in good faith and with rational intent, their functioning is often hindered by structural bottlenecks, procedural delays, and systemic constraints. These constraints in case resolution arise from several interlinked factors, including inadequate infrastructure and court staff, complex case facts, the nature of evidence, and degree of cooperation from key stakeholders. Delays are exacerbated by the lack of mandated timelines for different case types, frequent adjournments, and weak mechanisms to monitor, track, and bunch cases for hearing. A major contributor is the absence of effective case management and scheduling, with no clear timelines for filings, witness examinations, or hearings.

An analysis of the justice delivery timeline in Indian courts reveals stark disparities across court levels and case types (Chart 2). Criminal cases, generally considered as offences against the State, are resolved faster than civil ones, such as property, family or con-

tractual disputes at every tier. HCs lead by disposing of 85.3% criminal cases within a year, followed by the SC at 79.5%, and district courts at 70.6%. The real concern lies in civil litigation at the district level, which handles the bulk of India's pending cases, where only 38.7% civil cases are resolved within a year, and nearly 20% stretch beyond five years. This means that courts serving the most litigants are the least equipped to ensure timely justice.

Although the judiciary and the government consistently introduce various reforms, a major systemic cause of judicial delay is the persistent gap between the sanctioned and actual strength of judges across courts (Chart 3). India's judiciary functions at just 79% of its capacity. Out of 26,527 sanctioned posts, 5,665 are vacant, resulting in overwhelming workloads. District and subordinate courts, which handle the bulk of litigation, have a sanctioned strength of only 25,771 judges, averaging 18 judges per 10 lakh population. India operates with just 15 judges per 10 lakh population. Even at full sanctioned strength across all courts, it would reach only 19 judges per 10 lakh population – far below the 1987 Law Commission's recommendation of 50.

Alongside broader legal and procedural reforms, alternative dispute resolution offers a promising way forward to ease the burden on traditional courts and deliver quicker, more affordable, and citizen-friendly justice. Mechanisms such as mediation, arbitration, and Lok Adalats provide flexible alternatives for resolving disputes outside the traditional courtroom. The success of National Lok Adalats, which are organised simultaneously in all taluks, district courts, and HCs on a pre-fixed date (Chart 4), demonstrates this potential: between 2021 and March 2025, they resolved over 27.5 crore cases, including 22.2 crore pre-litigation and 5.34 crore pending court cases.



Chart 1: Number of pending cases across courts in crore, as per latest data

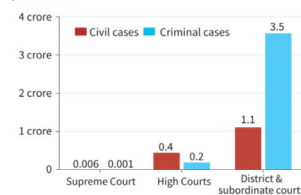


Chart 3: The % of vacant posts of judges across courts, as per latest data

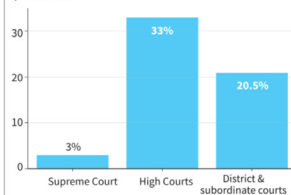


Chart 2: Time taken to resolve/dispose of cases across courts in civil and criminal cases, as per latest data

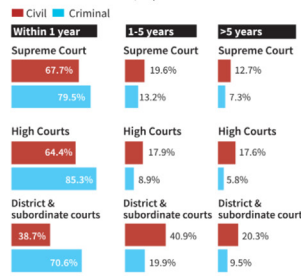
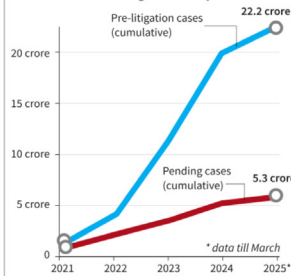


Chart 4: Cumulative number of cases disposed of in National Lok Adalats during the last four years



* data till March

Key Takeaways from the Article

Magnitude of Judicial Pendency

- Over **5 crore** cases are pending in Indian courts:
- **Supreme Court:** ~86,700 cases.
- **High Courts:** ~63.3 lakh cases.
- **District & Subordinate Courts:** ~4.6 crore cases.

Delays in Civil vs. Criminal Cases

- **Criminal cases** are resolved faster than **civil cases** across all court levels.
- **District Civil Courts** – the biggest backlog:
- Only **38.7%** of civil cases are resolved within a year.
- Nearly **20%** stretch beyond 5 years.





Judge Strength and Structural Gaps

- Indian judiciary operates at only **79% of its sanctioned capacity**.
 - ◆ **Vacant posts:** 5,665 out of 26,927.
 - ◆ District courts have **just 18 judges per 10 lakh population**.
 - ◆ Even at full capacity, India will only have **19 judges/10 lakh** — far short of the **Law Commission's 1987 recommendation of 50 judges/10 lakh**.

Systemic Causes of Delay Lack of:

- **Mandated timelines** for different case types.
- **Efficient case management** and scheduling.
- **Monitoring & tracking mechanisms**.
- **Frequent adjournments**, procedural hurdles, and infrastructure inadequacies.
- **Nature of civil disputes** (e.g., property, contracts) adds to complexity.

President's Remark – "Black Coat Syndrome"

- Citizens are increasingly hesitant to approach courts due to delay concerns, affecting **public trust in the judiciary**.
- **Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR): A Way Forward**
- Tools like **mediation, arbitration, and Lok Adalats** can ease pressure on courts.
- **National Lok Adalats (2021–Mar 2025):**
 - ◆ Resolved **27.5 crore cases**., **22.21 crore** pre-litigation cases., **5.34 crore** pending cases

Judicial Reforms

Fill Vacancies

Address rising caseloads by promptly filling judicial vacancies.



Strengthen Infrastructure

Provide more courts, digital tools, and support staff.



Mandate Timelines

Avoid prolonged litigation by mandating timelines for cases.



Implement Systems

Use digital docketing and time-bound hearings for case management.



Promote ADR

Increase legal awareness, institutional support, and incentives for ADR.



Increase Budget

Allocate more funds to the judiciary for improvements.

NISAR satellite mounted on GSLV for launch tomorrow

NISAR satellite mounted on GSLV for launch tomorrow

All systems of the launch vehicle checked, says ISRO; the rocket will inject the 2,392-kg earth observation satellite into a 743-km sun-synchronous orbit to enable a wide range of applications

The Hindu Bureau
 BENGALURU

Ahead of the launch of the NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite on Wednesday, the Indian Space Research Organisation on Monday announced that the satellite had been mounted on a geosynchronous satellite launch vehicle (GSLV).

All systems of the rocket had been checked, it said.

After lifting off from the second launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota at 5.40 p.m. on Wednesday, the GSLV-F16 rocket will inject the satellite into a 743-km sun-synchronous orbit.

Watching earth

The 2,392-kg satellite will be the first satellite to observe earth with a dual-frequency synthetic aperture radar (SAR) – NASA's L-band and the ISRO's S-band – both using NASA's 12-metre unfurlable mesh reflector antenna, integrated with the ISRO's modified I3K satellite bus.

With a mission life of five years, the satellite will observe earth with a swathe of 242 km and high spatial resolution, using



Priming for lift-off: The NASA-ISRO joint satellite NISAR being readied for launch in Sriharikota on Monday. ANI

the SweepSAR technology for the first time.

"The satellite will scan the entire globe and provide all-weather, day-and-night data at 12-day intervals, and enable a wide range of applications. NISAR can detect even small changes on earth's surface, such as ground deformation, ice sheet movement,

and vegetation dynamics. Further applications include sea ice classification, ship detection, shoreline monitoring, storm characterisation, changes in soil moisture, mapping and monitoring of surface water resources, and disaster response," the ISRO said.

The NISAR mission is broadly classified into

launch, deployment, commissioning, and science phases.

In the first phase, the satellite will be launched by the GSLV-F16 launch vehicle, while in the next, a 12-metre reflector antenna will be deployed in orbit nine metres from the satellite by a complex multi-stage deployable boom.

This will be followed by the commissioning phase.

In-orbit checkout

"The first 90 days after launch will be dedicated to commissioning, or in-orbit checkout, the objective of which is to prepare the observatory for science operations. Commissioning is divided into sub-phases of initial checks and calibrations of mainframe elements followed by JPL engineering payload and instrument checkout," the ISRO said.

The final science operations phase begins at the end of commissioning, and extends till the end of NISAR's five-year mission life.

"During this phase, the science orbit will be maintained via regular manoeuvres, scheduled to avoid or minimise conflicts with science observations," the ISRO said.



Why antitrust regulations are pertinent

Why antitrust regulations are pertinent

While arguing for the Sherman Act, Senator John Sherman said in 1890, "If we will not endure a king as a political power, we should not endure a king over the production, transportation, and sale of any of the necessities of life." The law would eventually mark the beginning of antitrust regulation in the United States, while also laying the groundwork for similar statutes preserving market competition worldwide, including in India.

Sherman's idea of what constitutes a "necessity of life" has evolved since then. Technology is reshaping societies and markets – it now shapes the production, transportation, and sale of most goods and services, leading to the rise of what we now term the global 'digital economy'. India is a significant player, with its domestic digital economy contributing 11.74% to its GDP (2022-23). This success has partially been driven by technology start-ups, which rose from just 2,000 in 2014 to over 31,000 in 2023. The government recognises their potential and leans on them to build a \$35 trillion 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

Yet Sherman's concern about a few players dominating economies still applies. In Digital India, the kings are located in foreign waters, dictating selective terms to home-grown start-ups building the country's digital future. As a result, the ability of Indian start-ups to scale is often stunted. While these global firms connect societies, they also wield immense monopolistic power. A recent case by a leading Indian online gaming company against Google, filed with the Competition Commission of India (CCI), highlights the risks posed by such dominance.

On start-ups and monopolies
Discriminatory practices by gatekeepers in the digital economy harm India's economy, business environment, and consumers.

Google, for example, dominates



Alwyn Didar Singh

Former Secretary to the Government of India and former Secretary General, FICCI

Discriminatory practices by gatekeepers in the digital economy harm India's economy, business environment, and consumers

distribution and discovery of digital services. With Android holding about 95% of the of the mobile operating system market share in India, it is nearly impossible for consumers to discover new online businesses without the latter hawking their services on Google's superior search engine, app store, or online advertising ecosystem. This dominance has led to discriminatory outcomes for Indian start-ups. For example, high commissions levied by Google on transactions taking place within its payments ecosystem have dampened the revenues of start-ups using these services. These issues have led domestic antitrust regulators to crack down on the tech giant, preventing Google from restricting app developers from using third-party payment systems or from communicating with their users to promote their apps.

The gaming start-up's CCI filing is an addition to this long list of concerns with Google's anticompetitive behaviour in India. In its complaint, the gaming industry leader alleged that Google abused its dominant position via a discriminatory Real Money Gaming (RMG) Pilot Program operated through the Play Store, and restrictive advertising policies. Google's Pilot Program, launched in September 2022, selectively permitted two specific formats of RMG on the Play Store – Daily Fantasy Sports (DFS) and rummy – limiting market access for other formats of RMG, such as the casual games offered by the gaming company. While Google discontinued similar pilots in Mexico and Brazil in June 2024, its Indian iteration continues to date, offering DFS and rummy operators relatively unfettered access. For example, the complaint notes that a DFS operator with 90% of the market share acquired 150 million users over 16 years, but upon joining the Pilot, it added another 55 million users in just one year. Google similarly amended its advertising

policies following the launch of the Pilot, limiting gaming advertisements to DFS and rummy operators, which earlier allowed advertisements by all games of skill. Before these amendments, the online gaming leader claimed that 68.21% of its app downloads were derived from Google's ad program. Now, they have stopped – a deep cut for an Indian start-up with proven global credibility and scale. CCI, the forward-looking and progressive digital regulator, has begun an investigation into these concerns.

Costs to India

Such market distortions carry serious economic consequences, compromising India's ability to reach its digital economy ambitions. Most importantly, lack of competition leads to "reductions in quality and consumer choice[s]", and excessive reliance on few powerful players. Net-net, everyone loses, except the gatekeepers.

India cannot afford such a loss in innovation – and nor can its people, who will ultimately benefit from competitive growth, driven by ambitious start-ups. Sherman's homeland offers some insight into what the future holds for markets where the antitrust issue is not addressed head-on. Antitrust scholars suggest that rising monopolisation across American industries has increased the cost of doing business for growing businesses, leading to a dramatic decrease in Initial Public Offerings. The economic consequences of such lopsided markets are too severe for India to bear.

Ultimately, global tech giants play a critical role in powering these new-age businesses. What the future requires is recognition from Indian adjudicators that avenues for distribution and monetisation must be democratised, without gatekeeping, for domestic start-ups to thrive. The gaming industry leader's case carries on Sherman's legacy – it is one step towards a fairer field for everyone.

