

MAHARASHTRA TOPS IN JUSTICE DELIVERY

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Judiciary in India: its Structure, Organization & Functioning, Judges of SC & High Courts, Judgments and related Issues

Maharashtra has topped the list of 18 large-medium States in the overall first-ever ranking of Indian States on justice delivery, followed by Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Haryana. In this category, Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are at the bottom, while among the list of seven smaller States, Goa leads the group.

This is according to the India Justice Report 2019, released on Thursday by the Tata Trusts in collaboration with Centre for Social Justice, Common Cause, and Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, among others.

Public data

The report has been prepared based on publicly available data of different government entities on the four pillars of justice delivery — police, judiciary, prisons and legal aid.

Releasing the report, Justice (Retd.) Madan B. Lokur called it a pioneering study and said: “The findings establish beyond doubt very serious lacunae in our justice delivery system. It is an excellent effort to mainstream the issues concerning our justice system, which in fact affect every aspect of society, governance and the economy.”

The report highlights the fact that even the best performing States scored less than 60% in their performance on capacity across the police, judiciary, prisons and legal aid.

The country has about 18,200 judges with about 23% sanctioned posts vacant, notes the report, adding that women are poorly represented in these pillars, constituting just 7% of the police.

“Prisons are over-occupied at 114%, where 68% are undertrials awaiting investigation, inquiry or trial. Regarding budgets, most States are not able to fully utilise the funds given to them by the Centre, while the increase in spending on the police, prisons and judiciary does not keep pace with the overall increase in State expenditure,” the report said.

Budget constraints

It added that some pillars also remain affected by low budgets. For instance, India’s per capita spend on free legal aid is 75 paise per annum, the report said.

The report looked at data indicators from the four pillars, covering themes like infrastructure, human resources, diversity (gender, Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe/Other Backward Class), budgets, workload and trends over the last five years.

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