
To clear backlog, SC calculates: 1,500 judges in HCs, 23,000 in lower courts

Tannu Sharma Posted online: Wednesday, Aug 12, 2009 at 0441 hrs

New Delhi : Making the point that courts do not have a “magic wand” to do away with pendency of cases, the Supreme Court , after examining figures for both civil and criminal cases over seven years, has for the first time assessed that the judiciary needs “1,547 High Court judges and 23,207 subordinate court judges, only to clear the backlog in one year.”

This requirement took into account vacancies that existed on January 1 this year, both in the High Courts and subordinate courts. Also factored in was average disposal of cases per judge.

Against a sanctioned strength of 886 High Court judges, the working strength was 606 — 280 vacancies. With the average number of cases disposed by an HC judge working out to 2,504, the Supreme Court calculated that 1,547 HC judges would be needed to clear the backlog in one year.

For a subordinate court judge, the average rate of disposal was 1,138 cases. On the basis of cases disposed last year and the working strength on December 31, 2008, it was calculated that 23,207 judges would be needed to clear the backlog in subordinate courts.

With arrears increasing almost every year, this assessment by the Supreme Court will be one of the key issues that will be discussed at a conference of chief justices in New Delhi later this week. To be chaired by Chief Justice of India K G Balakrishnan and other apex court judges, it will discuss ways to streamline and improve the justice delivery system.

Among High Courts, the maximum pendency is at the Allahabad High Court — a total of 9,11,858 cases were pending as on December 12, 2008. In the district and subordinate courts, the maximum pendency is again in Uttar Pradesh — 51,60,174 cases as of December-end.

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