

Rajasva Vaad Avlokan (RVA)

A Web Based System for Efficient Management of Revenue Court Cases & Information Dissemination

<http://sultanpur.nic.in>

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ABSTRACT

National Informatics Centre (NIC) has taken a lead role in last one and half decade to incorporate Communications and Information Technologies (ICT) in modernizing the Judicial System of the country. Computerization of Supreme Court of India and scores of High Courts has now started giving its benefits to the mass. The MIS developed and implemented in the District Civil Courts all over India is further enhancing the efficiency in the working of the Courts. In addition, other significant services to the litigants and lawyers are also available through web-based systems. However, web enabling of District Revenue Court Cases has not been so momentous and still needs appropriate consideration. In this context, NIC Sultanpur has taken an initiative and developed a web based application software 'Rajasva Vaad Avlokan' (RVA). It has been implemented in the revenue courts of the District Magistrate and *tehsils*. The system has proved of enormous help to clients, advocates as well as Presiding Officers of the concerned courts in online retrieving the case information or planning the court activities. The features of the software are described in detail for a lucid understanding of RVA system and its implementation in other districts.

1.Introduction:

Providing justice to the citizens has always been a basic philosophy of any cultured and sophisticated society of the world. This does not involve only a solid and effective judicial system but it also asks for a methodology for associating the citizens in this process.

With the growing trend of application of Communications & Information Technology (ICT) tools in almost every aspects of public utilities worldwide, the access to information to the citizens is now becoming faster and easier day by day. The web has paved the way for instant access to the information and prompt return feedback to the serving agencies. Due to these benefits, the countries all over the globe have now started using IT in judiciary also. The speed of this computerization process is although not very rapid presently, but definitely to get momentum when softwares become readily available for instant local needs. In United States scores of courts have already eliminated paper in the case file, storing millions of pages of court proceedings in text files or images. E-filing documents with the courts will definitely become important service one day not very far off. Use of XML (Extensible Mark-up Language) for information interchange, and use of digital or electronic signatures, Pretty Good Privacy (PGP) etc. will remove the reservations regarding the security aspects, which might be hindering the application of ICT in this area.

The issue about the security of the archives may be minimized by adopting online to 'near line' concept of information exchange in the initial stages. Here a lawyer can use the online docket (which is the index to every pleading in the case file and a list of all hearings held and actions taken by the court) to identify and request a file, which is then sent digitally by the court, rather than by legal messenger or as an intermediate step the digital file is given to the legal messenger at the courthouse [1]. Moreover, the security of Internet networks requires tackling it seriously from different angles separately.

It is due to sensitive nature of legal documents, which is more cared by the judiciary, the court computerization has been slow even in western countries like United States, France and Britain etc. This is evident from the fact that though there are over 17000 courts in United States, only 20 have adopted paperless system and bare 1000 or so have their websites [2].

In the process of using Information Technology in judicial processes, use of local language and its script as the medium of documentation also plays a great role for the wide acceptability of the services by general public. Though this may become a bottleneck for information interchange among the judges or lawyers belonging to different states or countries having their own local languages, however, this may be overcome by adopting bilingual process as in India where English is used for interstate communications. In addition to above, the web based dynamic font technologies may also be used, besides conversion of files in PDF format.

"Courts first need to implement computerized case management system before they can accept the documents over the Internet."

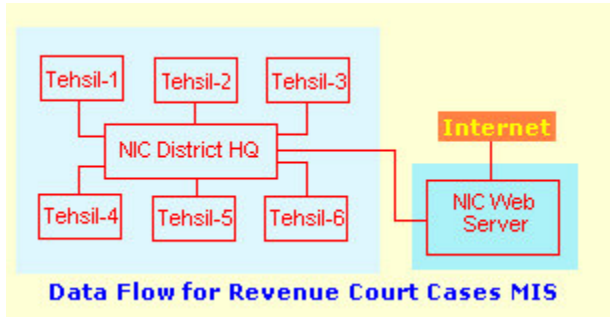
-- Richard Susskind

The Government of India, on the other hand, has always been at the forefronts in the application of ICT not only in other governmental sectors but also in judiciary and its impact on masses is now discernible widely. The litigants, after the computerization of Supreme Court of India, which took place in 1990, have been provided with different online services regarding the cases filed in Supreme Court as well as High Courts of the states. List of Business Information System (LOBIS); filing counter computerization; COURTNIC, launched in 1993 through which various information by litigants/advocates, pending case status etc. may be obtained from any internet kiosk nationwide; the Judgment Information System (JUDIS) which consists of complete text of all reported judgments of Supreme Court of India during 1950-1998 (later judgments are also on the Internet); availability of status of pending cases through Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS); posting of Cause Lists of the Supreme Court and over 18 High Courts of India on the web are some special noteworthy features of court computerization in India. Apart from it, the National Informatics Centre (NIC), an apex ICT organization of Govt. of India, has also taken up computerization of all the District Courts in 1997.

The present application software named as '**Rajasva Vaad Avlokan**' extends the above ICT services for the District Revenue Courts, which are, in fact, equally important for general public. A database already existing at the local server at the district head quarter for offline monitoring of revenue court cases has been posted on the net for its ubiquitous role and connected with this web software. The use of *hindi* font in the application database provides an opportunity to citizens to see the status of their court case information themselves, verify it, utilize it for their benefit and provide their suggestions for further reforming the system. Thus they have now become a part of the whole setup, which is a prerequisite for e-governance [3]. Moreover, the present system gives a better and handy facility to clients to search their case status by the case number, plaintiff's name wise, defendant's name wise or case name wise etc. in *devnagri* script. Moreover, adding the daily cause list, case history and providing some other useful services specific to the advocates is an extra feature of the system. Monitoring of revenue court cases by concerned presiding officers using this software has also proved advantageous to them. In the following paragraphs I shall be describing the technical details of the application. I will further describe the database used at the back end, its parameter fields and the programming methodology used at the front end. Various services provided to the clients, advocates and presiding officers of the courts are also highlighted along with the menus' items in the forthcoming sections.

2.The Database and SW Development:

The data for the District Magistrate's Court and other courts existing at the Collectorate Campus are entered at the clients installed in these courts. However, the revenue cases data of the courts at *Tehsil* headquarters are fed into the computer established there. A dial-up connection exists between each of these computers and the data server at NIC District Centre, and is used for transferring the updated data to the NIC for uploading the data files on the web server of NIC. It may be expected that once the proposed Uttar Pradesh State Wide Area Network (UPSWAN) becomes operational, the existing data transfer system will be switched over to that. The web-based services to the users are available through connecting to the Internet from their own computer or from any kiosk serving in their area. The illustration below shows this graphically.



E-Governance is "the continuous optimization of government service delivery, constituency participation and governance by transforming internal and external relationships through technology, the Internet and the new media".
--Shilubane, J

We have used Microsoft Access at the back end for database. The database does not require large memory. The other reason that supported to adopt MS Access for this application is its simplicity in installing on low-end personal computers as well as on laptops as the presiding officers some times prefer to monitor the court cases offline also. However, porting the data on any other platform may be done easily if so required.

The Front Page 98 is used for designing the web HTML pages, along with some help from Macromedia web designing tools. In addition, a major part of the application consists of Active Server Pages (ASP) with server side coding in VBScript. A major part of the application development is done on the local web server before publishing the files on the net using remote login.

Database Parameters:

As mentioned earlier, the data entry part is also performed at the clients installed at the *tehsils*. The main server existing at district headquarter is used to transfer these *tehsils*' data onto it. This also acts as a safeguard solution for data security in case of any failure or data loss at the *tehsils*. The data are entered in *hindi* using the *devnagri* script with the help of 'Kruti Dev 010' font. The software processes the information of all the revenue cases of all the courts at the district headquarter and *tehsils*. A case is identified mainly by serial number and also by '*vaad sankhya*' which are so allotted to the case that they are unique. The following list describes the input parameters of the application.

Location Based Data :

1. District Name and District Code
2. *Tehsil* Name and *Tehsil* Code
3. Block Name and Block Code
4. Village Name and Village Code
5. *Thana* Name and *Thana* Code

Case Based Data :

1. Serial Number
2. Court Name and Code
3. Section Number and Name
4. *Vaad* Number
5. Case type and Name
6. Case admission date
7. Plaintiff's Name
8. Defendant's Name
9. Plaintiff's Advocate Name and his Registration Number
10. Defendant's Advocate Name and his Registration Number
11. Next date of hearing
12. Reason for next hearing
13. Order date
14. Order Dispatch No. and date
15. Order Description
16. Case Disposed status
17. Full text of Order

It may be mentioned here that different types of reports such as case history, daily cause list, list of pending cases etc. are being obtained online now by using the above information. In addition, some

of the reports, which are specifically useful to clients or lawyers, are also being generated online. The detail of these reports will be given in the following sections.

Project Implementation:

The District Magistrate's Office, Collectorate, already has a furnished Computer Centre. The data entry is done by the regular staff who have been trained in computer operation and other applications such as MS Access, Word, Excel etc. In fact, capability building [4] process undertaken by NIC in past years has created a group of data entry staff with sound knowledge of day-to-day computer operations who are working in different government offices or departments of the district. In case of *tehsils*, the staffs deputed there for land records computerization have been assigned the job of supporting the concerned court personnel in data entry of revenue court cases. These data are sent through a dial-up connection to the District NIC Centre for uploading the same on the web server.

3.Features of the Application:

The main emphasis in the application is given to providing online case status information to the clients besides assisting the presiding officers of revenue courts for effective monitoring of the same. The transparency in the whole case proceedings thus obtained is obviously an associated advantage to all the persons involved or having some kind of stake in that. Availability of case history and cause list on the net by a click of mouse has already proved its utility.

In the words of Ms. Kamini Chauhan Ratan, District Magistrate, Sultanpur: "in addition to providing easy access to the latest status of the court cases, the project will also provide a mechanism to the presiding officers to monitor the cases pending in their courts. This will reduce the time delay in deciding the case and bring efficiency too. Moreover, the transparency brought by the system will also help curb the malpractices of the unscrupulous intermediaries etc."



Figure –1: The Main Index Page of RVA

The web services provided to the users are categorized in five broad groups:-

- General Information
- Services to Clients
- Information to Advocates
- Presiding Officers Section and
- Other Important Notices

All these categories are shown on the upper part of the main index page of the RVA application. A pop-up menu opens when the pointer is brought over the related heading. A simple Java code is used to obtain this feature. The popped-up menu contains different sub-headings, which may be clicked for

getting the next page or the required results. The following layout gives a clear perception of the services available in different categories mentioned above:

<p>General Information</p> <p>Some Useful Facts General Information reg.Courts</p>	<p>Services for Clients</p> <p>Vaad Sankhya Wise Case Detail Thana Wise List Block Wise List Case Name Wise Detail Client's Name Wise Detail Copy of Case Orders</p>	<p>Information to Advocates</p> <p>Advocate's Name Wise List Advocate's Regi.No.Wise List Vaad Sankhya Wise Case Detail</p>
<p>Presiding Officer's Section</p> <p>Type Wise Cases Section Wise Cases Date Wise Cause List Order Sheet for Particular Case Summary of Disposed off Cases Cases Disposed Off by DMs</p>	<p>Other Important Notices</p> <p>GO/6-10-05, Commissioner,BOR GO/13-10-05, Chairman,BOR GO/9-11-05, Commissioner,BOR DO/28-11-05, Member,BOR</p>	<p>Figure –2: Different Pop-up Menus</p>

Brief Description of the Services:

1.General Information:

This section is meant for providing some useful facts and general information about the number of revenue courts in the district, the sections dealt with in these courts, their jurisdiction and other related matters of common interest. More information may be added or redundant matters may be deleted from this section in course of time depending upon necessity.

2.Services for Clients:

As already mentioned, the main beneficiaries of the system are clients of the court cases. So the major part of the web services comprises of various reports for them. In view of the fact that majority of Indian population still belongs to rural areas and is not much literate, different options are provided to them to search their case. The *vaad sankhya* of a case is a main parameter to obtain the required information of a particular case including the serial number of the case which has a unique value. The *vaad sankhya* was till now not unique in all the cases. The decision to allot it a unique and standard value in future is now taken by the administration. In case the client does not know his *vaad sankhya*, he may find the same through *thana* or block wise listings.

Thana List				
बल्दीराय				
Vaad No	Clients Name	Village	Section	Order Description
151	सरकार बनाम राम मिलन	दुर्गापुर	115 पी०ज०वि०अ०	पत्रावली दिनांक 23.01.06 को वास्ते आदेश हेतु नियत
153	सरकार बनाम राम कृपाल	दुर्गापुर	115 पी०ज०वि०अ०	पत्रावली दिनांक 23.01.06 को आदेश हेतु नियत
155	सरकार बनाम दयाराम	दुर्गापुर	115 पी०ज०वि०अ०	पत्रावली दिनांक 23.01.06 को आदेश हेतु नियत
200	अब्दुल कमर बनाम ठाकुर प्रसाद	बघौना	115 पी०ज०वि०अ०	पत्रावली दिनांक 30.01.06 को बहस हेतु नियत
203	रामकृपाल बनाम फूलचन्द	महुली	115 पी०ज०वि०अ०	दावा वादी निरस्त (22.12.05)
214	परसराम बनाम रामफेर अदि	विश्वनाथपुर	115 पी०ज०वि०अ०	आदेश हेतु नियत
683	सरकार बनाम तुलसीराम	बल्दीराय	198 (4ज०वि०अ०)	पट्टा यथावत बाहल (09.11.05)
759	रामतेज बनाम जियावन आदि	गोबिन्दपुर	198 (4ज०वि०अ०)	पत्रावली दिनांक 31.01.06 को साक्ष्य हेतु नियत
763	शिवशंकर बनाम सोमई आदि	रैचा	198 (4ज०वि०अ०)	पट्टा निरस्त 03.01.06
766	बहाल बनाम नेऊर	बीहीनिदुरा	198 (4ज०वि०अ०)	दावा निरस्त
770	मंगली प्रसाद बनाम टीड़ी	कांपा	198 (4ज०वि०अ०)	पैरवी के अभाव में निरस्त

Figure –3: Thana Wise Case List

The drop down menu on separate pages contains names of all the *thanas* and blocks of the district (or of a *tehsil*, as the case may be) from where the client may select the name of the same in geographical jurisdiction of which he or she resides. He thus obtains list of all the cases pertaining to that *thana* or block. This list provides the *vaad sankhya* of his case and corresponding latest order description. These lists may also be used by the presiding officers of different courts for monitoring the cases of a particular *thana* or block.

Details of the Case are as follows	
1. Serial No.	704
2. Vaad No.	12
3. Court Name	D.M.COURT
4. Section No.	25
5. Section Name	15 क मूदान अधिनियम
6. Case Name	राजस्व
7. Name of Clients	हौसिला प्रसाद बनाम मूदान आदि
8. Thana Name	कुड़वार
9. Village Name	सोहगौली
10. Date of Case Admission	7/26/2005
11. Next Date of Hearing	
12. Order Description	पट्टा निरस्त (06.12.05)
13. Order Date	12/6/2005
(Note: Dates are in Month/Date/Year format)	
Presented to you by National Informatics Centre, Sultanpur	

Figure –4: Detail of a Particular Case

Clients may also get required information using the case name, which they have to type in *devnagari* script in hindi. Similarly, using the options of giving plaintiff's or defendant's name may also retrieve the concerned case information.

The other remarkable feature of the application is facility to get a printout of the full case orders. Presently these are according to the dates on which they are pronounced. However, this mode will soon be replaced by more effective and convenient system of searching and retrieving. The orders are in PDF format and available from December 2005 onwards. Thus the clients are now in a position to get the copy of their orders downloaded and printed for easy reference.

3.Information to Advocates:

An advocate of the plaintiff or defendant may also view the status of all the cases pending in the court by just typing his name or registration number in the form obtained by clicking the related link. If he has forgotten the registration number, which is unique, then he can check it from the list retrievable by clicking a link provided on the same page. As a result, the problem of same name of two or more advocates may be resolved. The lawyer may also find out the status of a particular case under him if he knows the *vaad sankhya* of the case.

List of All Cases of an Advocate (using Reg.No.)

Type your Registration Number accurately.
(click [HERE](#) to see your Reg.No.)

Figure –5: Text Box for Advocate’s Registration Number

4.Presiding Officers’ Section:

This section has also got major emphasis while developing the application. Entertaining a case with full transparency and efficiency and also within a reasonable time are some of the main requirements of providing justice to the clients. The computerization of court cases inherently brings the transparency as the court proceedings and other activities get become open to the public scrutiny. Moreover, as the retrieval of information from the written documents or loads of files is not so easy, the computerization of same plays a great role in overcoming this shortcoming. Preparation of cause list or getting the case history of an old case becomes very fast by adopting ICT in this situation.

The presiding officer may also visualize the list of all the pending cases and their status for civil as well as criminal cases in his court. He may also have a view of the cases section wise. The software provides drop down combo box from where a particular section may be selected to see the corresponding list, as shown in Figure-6. Next important feature of the application is to get date wise cause list. Any party to the case, lawyer or the presiding officer may check the cases listed for hearing on a particular day by typing the date only. This on the one hand avoids the visits of the clients to courts to find out the fresh date of hearing (in case he did not attend the proceeding himself or due to some other reasons) and on the other hand shortens the time delay in preparing the cause list for a particular date manually.

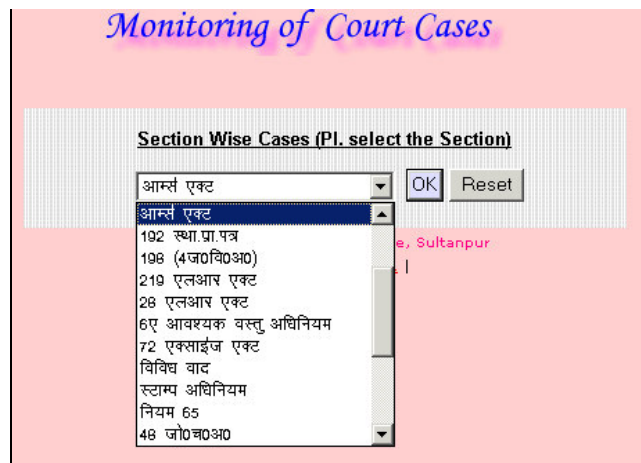


Figure –6: Menu to Select a Particular Section

Date Wise Cause List of Cases				
(Date is in mm/dd/yy format)				
01/31/2006				
Vaad No	Clients Name	Village	Section	Date
197	रामफेर आदि बनाम लीलावती	गरयें	115 पी०जा०वि०अ०	1/31/2006
775	राम शिरोमणि बनाम मूलचन्द	बढ़नपुर	198 (4जा०वि०अ०)	1/31/2006
773	यशोधरा बनाम समाजीत		198 (4जा०वि०अ०)	1/31/2006
101	राज्य बनाम नरहे मिश्रा	सरकौड़ा	गुण्डा एक्ट	1/31/2006
92	राज्य बनाम मकबूल अहमद	परकपुर	आर्म्स एक्ट	1/31/2006
759	रामतेज बनाम जियावन आदि	गोविन्दपुर	198 (4जा०वि०अ०)	1/31/2006
750	ठाकुर प्रसाद बनाम रामफेर	रामनगर लोटिया	198 (4जा०वि०अ०)	1/31/2006
754	रामनाथ बनाम मू०प्र०स०	बेहरामारी	198 (4जा०वि०अ०)	1/31/2006
150	सरकार बनाम सुन्दर बाई	खेममऊ	198 (4जा०वि०अ०)	1/31/2006
778	अच्छेलाल बनाम पुल्लन	गोपनाथपुर	198 (4जा०वि०अ०)	1/31/2006
148	सरकार बनाम राम कुमार	पीड़ी	198 (4जा०वि०अ०)	1/31/2006
94	राज्य बनाम मशूर अहमद उर्फ कोलई	परकपुर	आर्म्स एक्ट	1/31/2006
216	विक्रमाजीत बनाम राम मूरत	रुदौली	115 पी०जा०वि०अ०	1/31/2006
107	राज्य बनाम प्रभात कुमार	गाजनपुर दुअरिया	आर्म्स एक्ट	1/31/2006

Figure –7: A Sample Cause List

Order Sheet of the Case			
244			
Vaad No	Clients Name	Village	Section
712	छोटेलाल बनाम पुरदुल	कौरो	198 (4जा०वि०अ०)
12/6/2005	विरत / हडताल		
12/12/2005	उपस्थिति हेतु		
2/3/2006	साक्ष्य हेतु		
7/19/2005	पी०अ०व्यस्त		
8/9/2005	सुनवाई हेतु		
10/13/2005	सुनवाई हेतु		
12/6/2005	साक्ष्य हेतु		
12/12/2005	साक्ष्य		
1/2/2006	तलबी		
1/10/2006	उपस्थिति हेतु		
1/2/2006	पी०अ०व्यस्त		
1/24/2006	साक्ष्य हेतु		

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By National Informatics Centre, Sultanpur

Figure –8: A Sample Order Sheet

5. Other Important Notices:

This section is used to display important Government Orders, Board of Revenue Orders and other significant letters from government for presiding officers of revenue courts or even for general public. Important notices from the presiding officers to the clients etc. may also be included in this menu, if required.

4. Conclusion:

Incorporation of ICT tools in delivery of services to citizens results into improving efficiency in government processes, bringing transparency in the system for open public scrutiny and making the concerned people feel more responsible and accountable. These are the factors, which have inherent potential to bring in an era of good governance and transforming the country in a principled, disciplined, elegant and prosperous one. Internet, becoming popular day-by-day, and falling prices of computers need

a vision from professionals and executives to plan accordingly in advance for moving shoulder to shoulder with developed nations. Moreover, once computers become a home appliance, more and more services will be expected by the people from the government as well as other agencies.

The present attempt is an effort in this direction where we have applied ICT to manage and monitor the revenue court cases and delivery of some basic services to common man, the litigant in this case. The courts' proceedings and other records kept in archives of District Collectorate have been digitized in a span of few months. Initially, an application software to manage and monitor the court cases offline was developed and used to prepare various types of reports to plan the court activities for prompt and efficient delivery of justice to aggrieved parties. This system worked very successfully to achieve the defined objectives. Thereafter, as the data are in the computer now, it is felt more useful to put them on the net and develop a mechanism so that plaintiffs, defendants and concerned lawyers, could utilize the same by retrieving the information of their interest from remote places through Internet. The application RVA so developed is a product of this concept and has now been proved worthwhile. Initially it was comprised of only District Magistrate's court but its popularity led us to include all the *tehsil* courts also.

The RVA is a service delivery system from the clients' viewpoint and management tool for the presiding officers. The system is a contribution to the e-governance objectives of our nation's policy and may be extended further for empowering citizens in achieving prompt justice.

It must be noted that if any ICT service proves its benefit in a particular sector and brings convenience to public at large, the resistance to its adoption [5] automatically get eliminated gradually. This has been proved in case of some already implemented projects in different states of India. As the revenue court cases' computerization has been undertaken in a number of districts, a switch over to its online version is not very difficult if necessary software tools are available readily. The present endeavor is an step forward to fill up this gap.

5.Acknowledgements:

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Note: Views expressed in the paper are solely of the author.