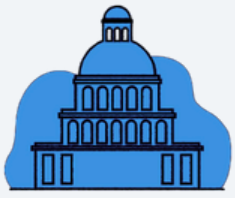
DAKSH
ANNUAL REPORT
2024

DAKSH is a Bengaluru-based civil society organisation working on judicial reforms and access to justice. We are focused on solving the problem of pendency of cases in the Indian legal system. We approach the problem from the perspectives of data, efficiency, process, technology and administration.

The justice system affects everyone

SAMAJ



SARKAR

BAZAAR

Over **4,56,33,122** disputes are pending in district courts across India

These 37M disputes, on an average take **1,446 days** to get resolved

31% of the claim value [is spent on] legal and court fees

Source: National Judicial Data Grid, 24 October 2024

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DAKSH's Vision

Promoting the **rule of law** by working towards robust institutions that are responsive to the needs of citizens.

DAKSH's Mission

India's leading think tank for high-quality, independent, data-based, non partisan research to make public institutions more accessible, fair and effective from a citizen's perspective.

A knowledge partner of choice for courts, tribunals, governments and other institutions in India.

A hub for businesses, the legal community, academia, and other organisations in the domain, to collaborate.

An open, trusted environment that attracts talent as employees, collaborators, volunteers and interns that values, recognises and rewards their contributions.

Our Partners and Supporters

Organisations

Rohini Nilekani philanthropies

Tree of Life Foundation

LAL Family Foundation

Samāgata Foundation

Individuals

TV Mohandas Pai

Parag Dhol

Malini B Mallikarjun

Harish Narasappa

Co-Founder

Dear DAKSH Supporters,

I look back at 2024 with gratitude for all that has happened at DAKSH. This past year has been a testament to our growth, vision, improvement, and the power of collaboration.

We have numerous accomplishments to celebrate. Throughout the year, we expanded our horizons, welcomed new team members, and initiated exciting new collaborations. We had meaningful interactions with citizens, the judiciary, policymakers, the legal fraternity and the industry, listening to their concerns and sharing our research findings.

Two initiatives stood out. The Listing Project, which is working on listing processes in courts to improve transparency, event certainty, and access to justice, gained significant traction. We released a working paper 'The Case for Improved Causelists', that emphasises the vital role of causelists in the legal system and is based on an analysis of causelists in courts across the country. Along with the paper, we launched an interactive prototype showcasing what an ideal causelist could look like. Such a prototype makes it easier for decision-makers and champions to visualise our suggestions.

Another project we are proud of is our 'We the People' campaign, which celebrates 75 years of the Indian Constitution. A collaboration with RBANM's Trust, Alternative Law Forum, Dhwani Legal, and Bangalore International Centre, this campaign engaged students and citizens on the Constitution's legacy and its relevance to modern challenges. We hosted workshops for over 1000 students in ten schools and organised inter-school competitions on constitutional awareness. Through quizzes, talks, lectures, and panel discussions, we introduced our work to new audiences and hosted guests like Karthik Muralidharan, Rajeev Bhargava, and Barkha Dutt.

We had a productive year collaborating with the Kerala High Court and the Karnataka High Court, where we initiated new projects. The Supreme Court's NCMS Committee released Baseline Reports, drafted by the Sub-Committee, including on case management systems and human resource development, for which we provided research support.

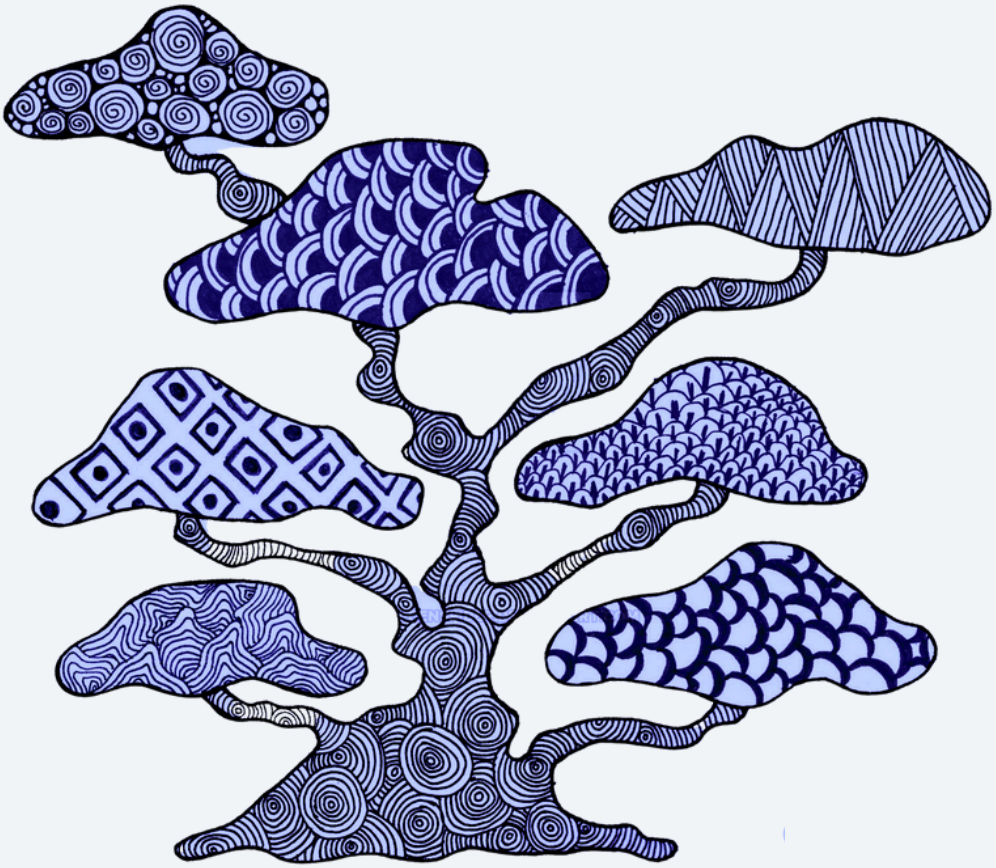
We launched two new collaborative projects: the Pathways to Digital Courts and the NCLT/NCLAT Coalition. The Pathways project builds on DAKSH's work on the Vision Document for Phase 3 of the eCourts. It will explore how the eCourts Project will benefit from planning, iteration, and engagement with top experts while generating enthusiasm for realising the vision for Phase 3. The NCLT Coalition will take stock of the working of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) and explore common challenges. It will also bring together experts and practitioners to share insights and explore areas of reform for these institutions.

Beyond research, this year marked the third season of the DAKSH Podcast, which was ranked the No. 1 Government & Policy podcast on Apple Podcasts for 10 consecutive weeks in April. Through in-depth conversations with experts, we critically explored India's laws, elections, judicial administration, access to justice, rule of law, and other vital topics to help citizens better understand our justice system and its impact on their lives.

As we reflect on these achievements, my sincere thanks for your unwavering support and partnership. As we look ahead, I'm excited about the opportunities 2025 holds.

Harish Narasappa

Co-Founder



Creating impact **shaping possibilities.**

OUR TEAM

Meet our dedicated team of professionals who contributed to our mission.

Harish Narasappa
Co-Founder

Surya Prakash BS.
Programme Director

Leah Verghese
Research Manager

Smita Mutt
Data Lead

Harshita Kesarwani
Communications

Bhavya Sudhir
Research Associate

Ritima Singh
Research Associate

Aishwarya K
Research Associate

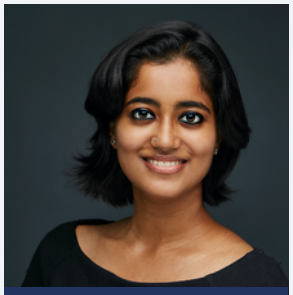
Rohith Kumar,
Data Analyst

Gokul R Krishnan
Project Associate

Shruti
Namboodari
Community
Manager

Atishya Kumar
Senior Research
Associate

Past team members



Ninni Susan Thomas
Sr. Research Fellow

Pratik Kumar
Research Associate

GLIMPSES from 2024

Work with **Institutions**

Transforming justice through strategic partnerships with institutions for a fair and equitable legal system.

KERALA HIGH COURT

NCMS Pilot Project

A collaboration with the Kerala High Court

In 2012, the Supreme Court, in consultation with the Ministry of Law and Justice constituted the National Court Management Systems Committee (hereinafter, 'NCMS') to enhance the quality, responsiveness, and timeliness of courts.

In October 2023, Justice C.M. Joshi (Judge, High Court of Karnataka) and Justice A. Muhamed Mustaque (Judge, High Court of Kerala), chairing the sub-committee on Case Management Systems, presented draft recommendations to the NCMS including:

- Creation of a complexity-based system of classifying and placing cases in tracks
- Implementation of an algorithm-based, transparent, secure, adaptable, and interoperable system for case management that ensures that the control of the court always vests in the judge.
- Use of the case management system to allocate cases between courts.
- Amendments to Case Flow Management Rules to align them to the subcommittee's recommendations.

At the NCMS meeting dated 04.11.2023, it was resolved that pilot studies be conducted in the trial courts in the states of Karnataka and Kerala based on the recommendations made by the subcommittee.

We embarked on a pilot project with the Kerala High Court to create a framework for the calculation of complexity parameters which will aid in scheduling cases in trial courts. The pilot courts for the project have been identified based on their levels of case pendency, diversity of case types, and geographical representation.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on April 3, 2024, between DAKSH and the Kerala High Court to formalise this initiative. Currently, data on disposed and pending cases is being collected for further analysis.

Case Scheduling Project

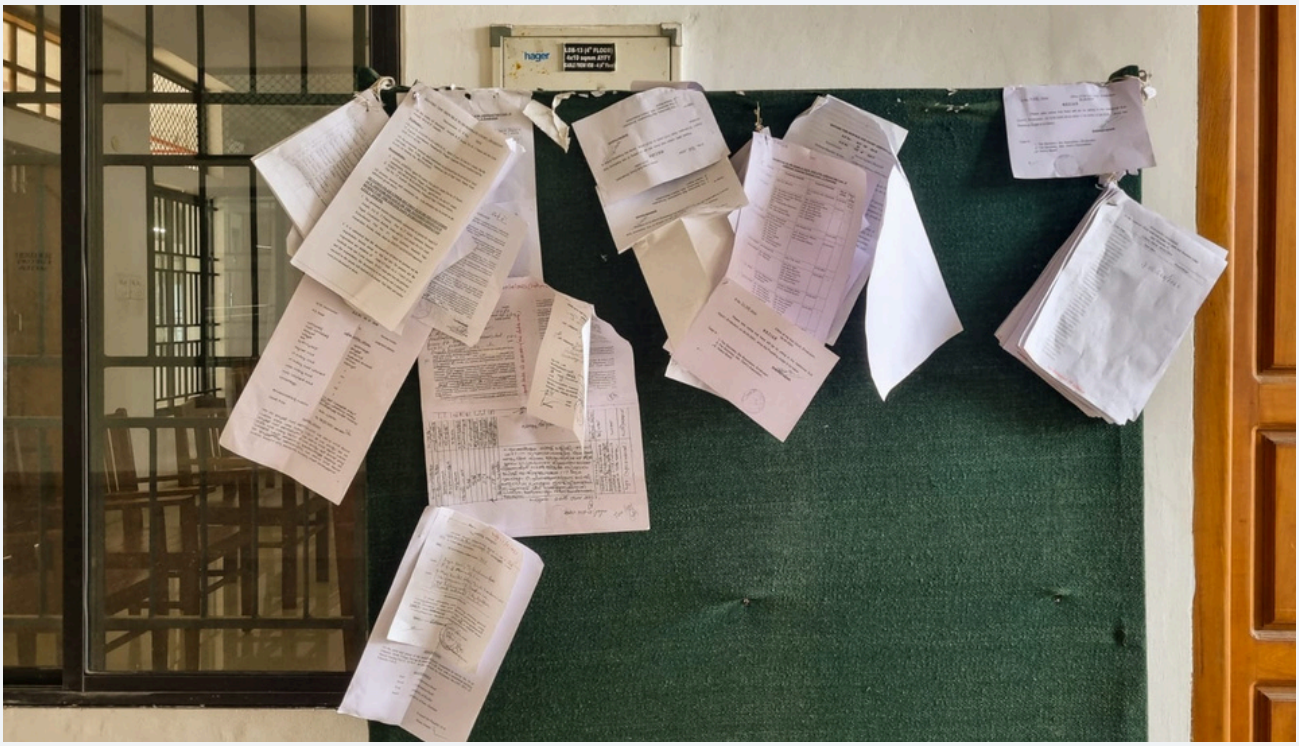
While the system for the first listing of cases has been streamlined in the Kerala High Court, there is an urgent need to implement a more efficient case scheduling system for subsequent listings. Such a system should align with the specific demands of each case type and address the individual urgencies that may arise during the progression of a case.

Justice A. Muhamed Mustaque asked DAKSH to come up with a better system to schedule criminal cases in the Kerala High Court based on the priority of each case. This project will create a scheduling framework that improves case scheduling by prioritising cases based on various case-specific and party-related factors.

What have we done?

- A stagewise mapping of criminal cases in the Kerala High Court has been developed based on:
  - Reviewing disposed criminal case files,
  - Analysing the ripe register of criminal cases.

- An initial framework for prioritising criminal cases in the Kerala High Court has been created by combining insights from the stage-wise mapping and a review of the literature on case prioritisation.



KARNATAKA HIGH COURT

Litigation Project

The Karnataka Litigation Management project was launched to tackle the challenges faced by the Advocate General's (AG) office in coordinating with government departments on litigation. A key issue has been the lack of streamlined communication and accountability in managing writ petitions, leading to delays, inefficiencies, and growing case pendency.

Aligned with the Karnataka Conduct of the Government Litigation Act, 2023, the initiative focused on creating a robust system to track case statuses, enforce real-time compliance with statutory obligations, and enhance transparency in litigation management.

Based on the gap analysis the following recommendations were given :

- Streamline the appointment of litigation conducting officers by reducing the required approvals.
- Automated reminders and tracking for prompt user responses and actions.
- Mapping each Government Advocate to the cases assigned to them
- Automated matching to analyze case attributes from different sources to reduce duplication.
- Role-based features for case management with relevant access for different users
- Tailored reports and dashboards for different users for real-time case alerts, updates, escalations and workload tracking.
- A central help desk to provide advanced technical support.
- Identify and deploy Master Trainers in each department to support users in day-to-day operations.
- Conduct regular user testing and skill gap analysis for targeted training.

Project Collaborators

Piramal Foundation

Rules Project

The High Court of Karnataka requested DAKSH to re-draft its Rules to address inefficiencies and inconsistencies in the High Court of Karnataka Rules, 1959 and streamline court procedures. Key challenges included outdated provisions, lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities, redundant practices, and manual workflows that slowed judicial processes.

Overview of research

The project aims to remove, harmonize, consolidate, and update the Rules relating to the Karnataka High Court. This involves eliminating outdated provisions, addressing inconsistencies, merging fragmented rules into a unified framework, and incorporating modern practices and technology. The goal is to create a simplified, consistent, and current rulebook that supports efficient judicial processes and provides clarity to litigants. This includes formalizing practices that are followed but not legally backed, ensuring a more streamlined and effective system.

What have we done so far?

- **Review of Karnataka High Court Rules:**

The review focuses on identifying gaps, ambiguities, and redundancies in the existing Karnataka High Court Rules to align them with contemporary judicial practices.

- **Process mapping of sections and branches:**

We have mapped processes in all the sections and branches connected to litigation at the High Court. Through this process we have been able to identify inefficiencies, redundancies, and opportunities for improvement.

Collaborator

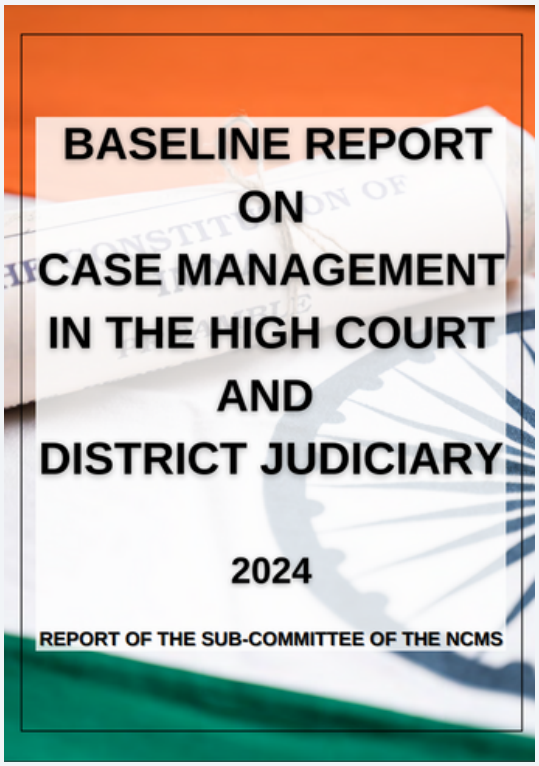
SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

NCMS Report

Recently, the NCMS Committee released its updates on the NCMS Baseline Reports on ‘Case Management System' and ‘Human Resources Development Strategy.’

DAKSH provided the Sub-Committee with research support. This report suggests reforms for case management in High Courts and the district judiciary.

Surya Prakash B S, Leah Verghese and Ninni Susan Thomas were part of the DAKSH team that contributed to these report.



NCMS Baseline Report on Case Management System in the High Court and District Judiciary

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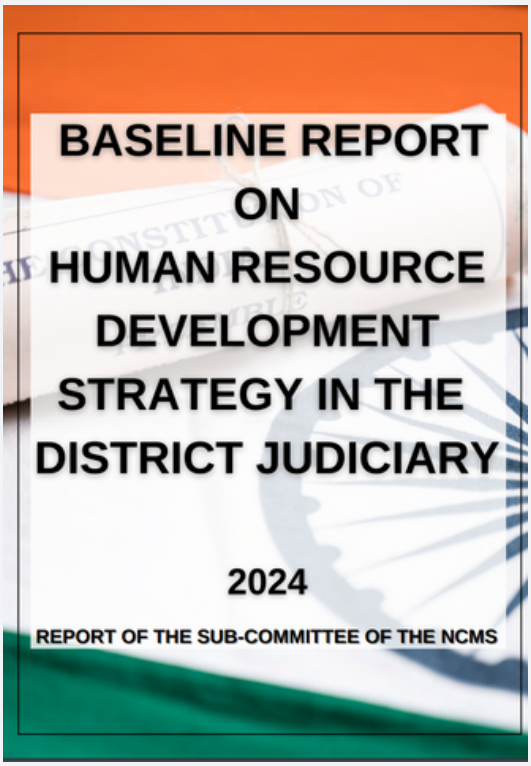

NCMS Baseline Report on Human Resource Development Strategy in the District Judiciary

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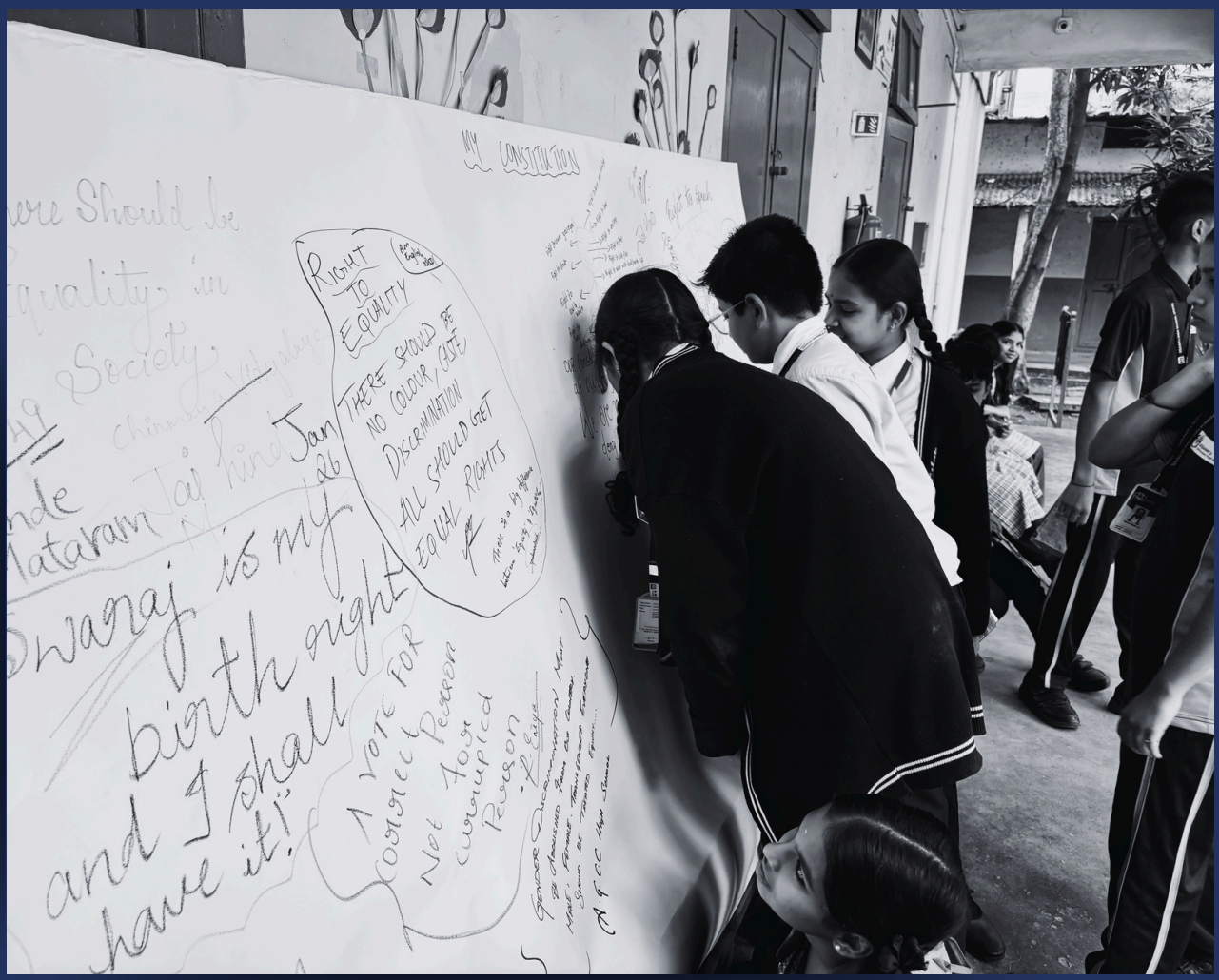
Envisioning Tomorrow, **Embracing Opportunities**



WE THE PEOPLE

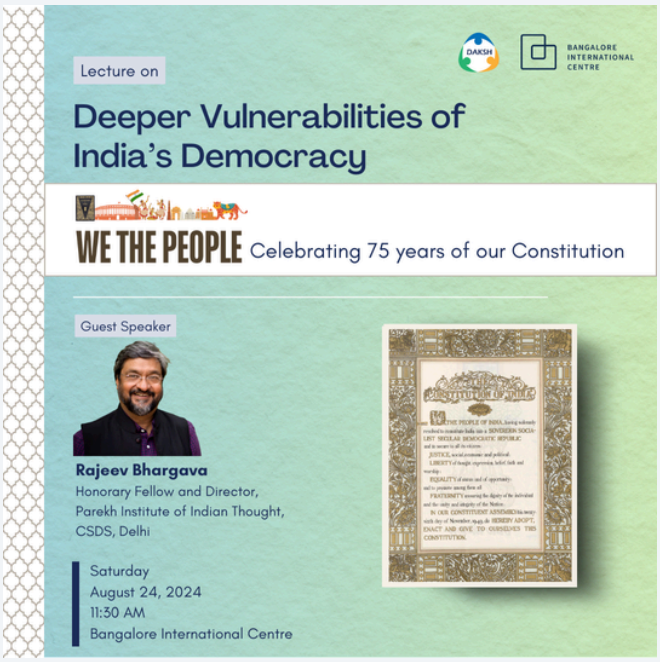
DAKSH's "We the People" campaign celebrated 75 years of the Indian Constitution. Through this campaign, we engaged with Indian citizens about the rich legacy and enduring principles of this foundational document. The campaign featured a diverse array of activities, including workshops and inter-school competitions for school children to foster awareness and appreciation of constitutional values. We also organised a series of lectures and panel discussions featuring prominent scholars, legal experts, and regular citizens and their perspectives on the current relevance of the Constitution and future challenges.

Public campaigns like these help us reach new lay audiences and introduce them to our work.

- Our first event was an inter-school, "Constitution Fest", in collaboration with RBANM's Educational Charities where Shruti Viswanathan from the Equals Project hosted the Model Constituent Assembly. This exercise helped students understand the process of working collaboratively and negotiating for a common goal. Himadri Banerjee of 4 Edge Quizzing Solutions led an engaging quiz competition on the Constitution.

- The second part of the fest was a collaboration with RBANM's Educational Charities, Alternative Law Forum, and Dhwani Legal, where we engaged students on the Constitution's legacy and its relevance to modern challenges. We hosted workshops for over 1000 students in 10 schools and organised inter-school debate and essay writing competitions.

- We hosted a series of lectures and panel discussions on various aspects of the Constitution in collaboration with the **Bangalore International Centre** as part of '**We the People**.'



Lecture on "Deeper Vulnerabilities of Indian's Democracy" by Rajeev Bhargava

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Talk on "Unpacking Economic Freedom Under the Indian Constitution" between Karthik Muralidharan and Harish Narasappa

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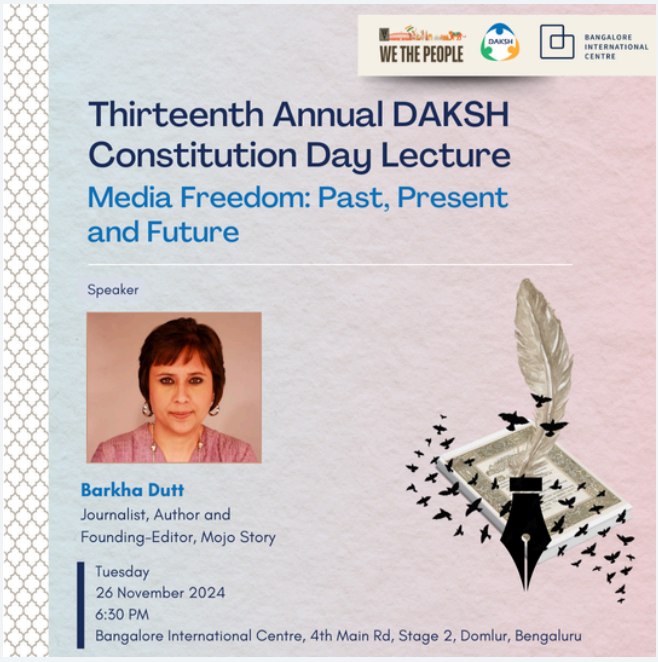

Lecture on "Media Freedom: Past, Present and Future" by Barkha Dutt

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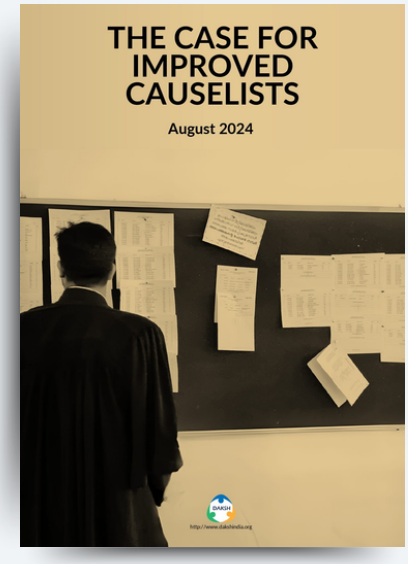
- DAKSH, in collaboration with the Karnataka Quiz Association, and media partner, Bar and Bench, hosted a quiz on the Indian Constitution and Freedom Struggle on Saturday, March 2, 2024.

THE LISTING PROJECT

Often, lawyers and litigants travel long distances to check case hearings as per information in causelists, only for the case to not be heard after waiting for a whole day or to find out that the hearing has been cancelled. Such experiences not only waste time and money but also cause significant frustration among lawyers, litigants, and government officials. This is what prompted us to examine the listing of cases in courts through the Listinf Project.

DAKSH under the **Listing Project** released a working paper, "**The Case for Improved Causelists.**" This paper examines causelists and listing practices across courts to understand the challenges faced by various stakeholders as a result of the design and timing of causelists.



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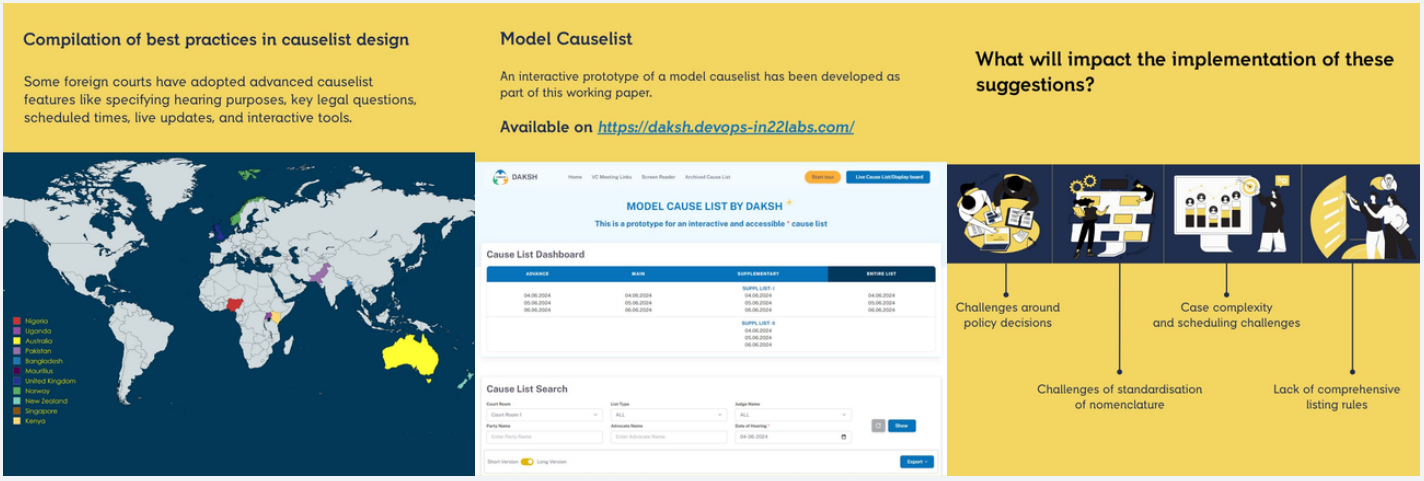
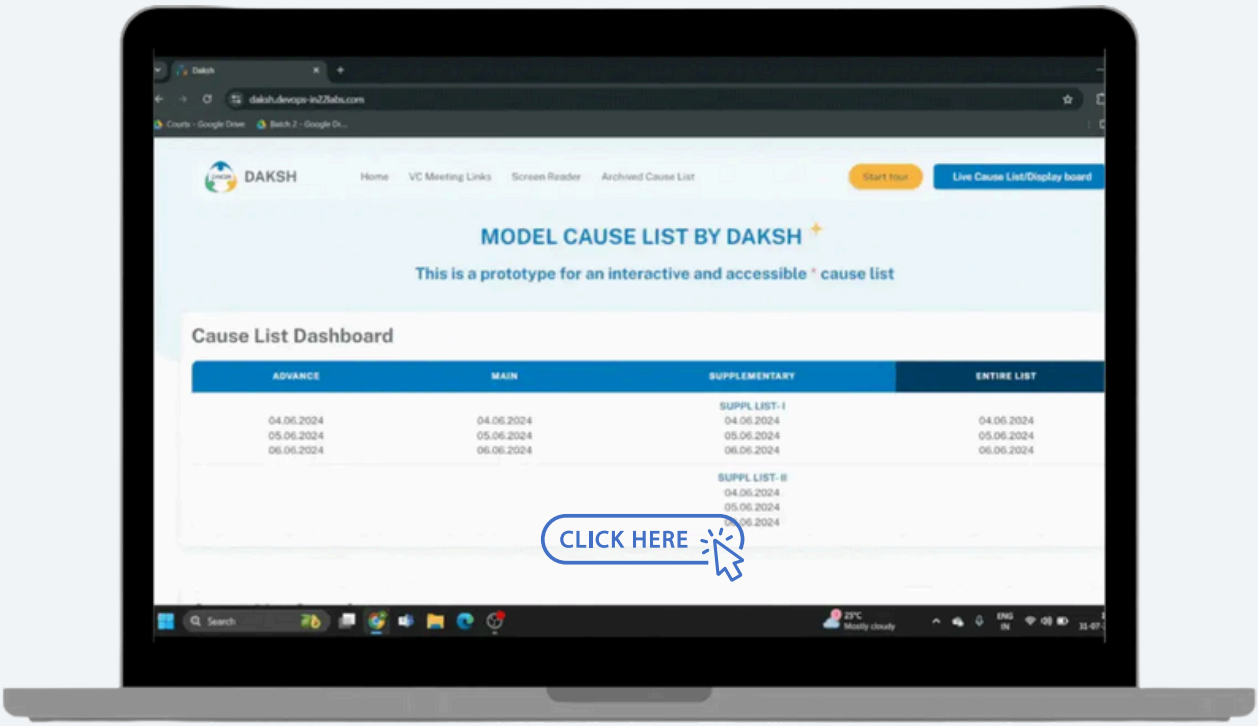
What did we learn?



Model Causelist by DAKSH

We have also created a prototype for an interactive and accessible causelist. This serves as a prototype for visualising a model causelist.



Causelist Repository

DAKSH has created a repository of existing listing regulations in India's High Courts, Supreme Court and tribunals. You can access them through the link below:

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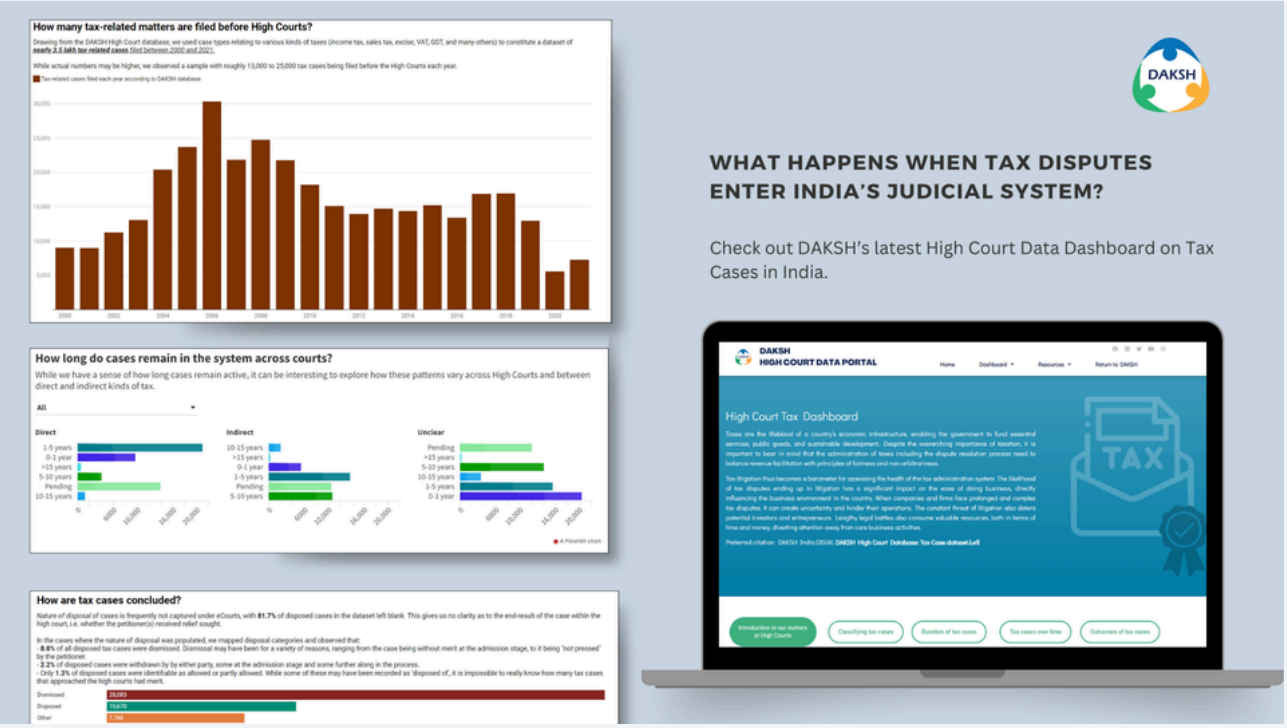
DAKSH HIGH COURT DATABASE



DAKSH launched a new addition to the DAKSH Dashboard - the High Court Tax Dashboard!

Analysing data from tax cases in high courts sheds light on the health of the tax administration system of the country. We compiled data across numerous kinds of taxes, providing insights into the variety and complexity of the direct and indirect tax regimes. We also looked at when tax disputes would approach courts and how lengthy timelines for resolution in high courts get added to an already long-winded process.

Judicial data yields valuable insights, however, any effort at meaningful institutional and policy reform requires engaging with stakeholders in the system. We hope this dashboard can spark a broader discussion on tax litigation: what information should be tracked and made available, which processes contribute most to delays, and how tax justice is delivered through judicial institutions.

Check out the DAKSH High Court Tax Dashboard!

CLICK HERE

Gratitude,
Collaboration.

PATHWAYS TO DIGITAL COURTS

Technology can facilitate access to justice, enhance judicial capacity, and facilitate the delivery of justice, but it will take a structured and collaborative approach to drive sustainable impact in this area.

DAKSH, in December 2025, announced a new collaborative research project on building digital courts across India's district courts under eCourts Phase 3. The Pathways to Digital Courts initiative brings together subject matter experts, tech innovators, researchers, and policymakers to co-develop the tools, frameworks, and strategies required to make digital courts a reality.

We've begun to craft a roadmap to turn the ambitious vision of eCourts Phase 3 into a reality. We're gearing up for a series of events and discussions, bringing together judicial leaders, policymakers, and tech experts to collaborate on these frameworks.

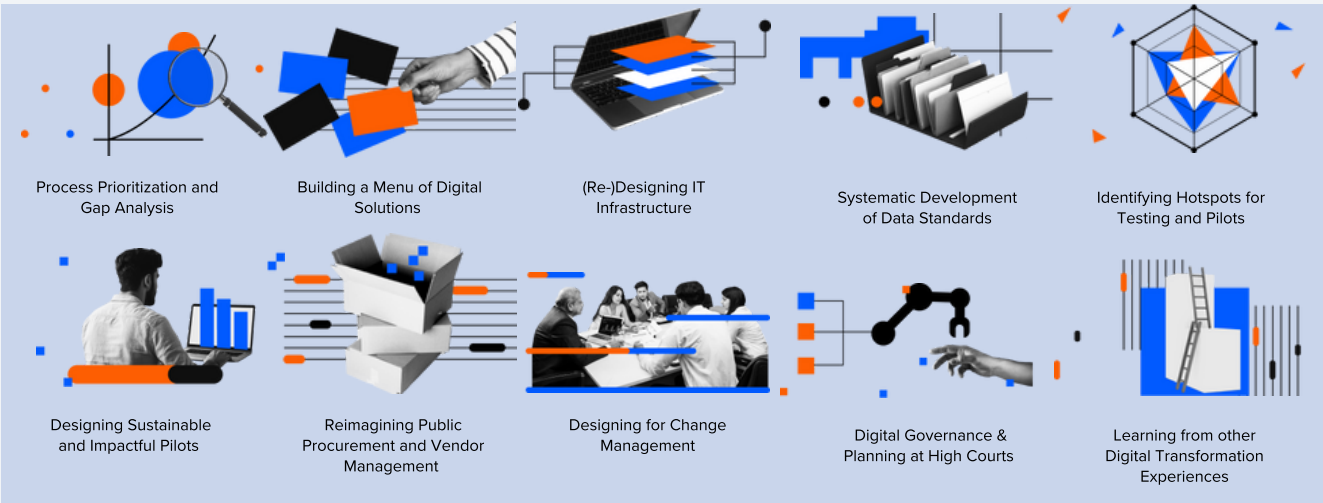
Why Pathways to Digital Courts?

Setting the Stage
India's eCourts program is advancing the justice system with Phase 3, building on Phases 1 and 2, which established digital infrastructure and a nationwide Court Information System (CIS).

A Vision: Technology for Justice
Phase 3 aims to enhance access, efficiency, and governance through technology, requiring a clear roadmap and collaboration to achieve its goals.

Pathways Forward
The "**Pathways to Digital Courts**" project brings stakeholders together to craft adaptable frameworks and action plans, enabling High Courts to customise solutions for Phase 3.

FOCUS AREAS



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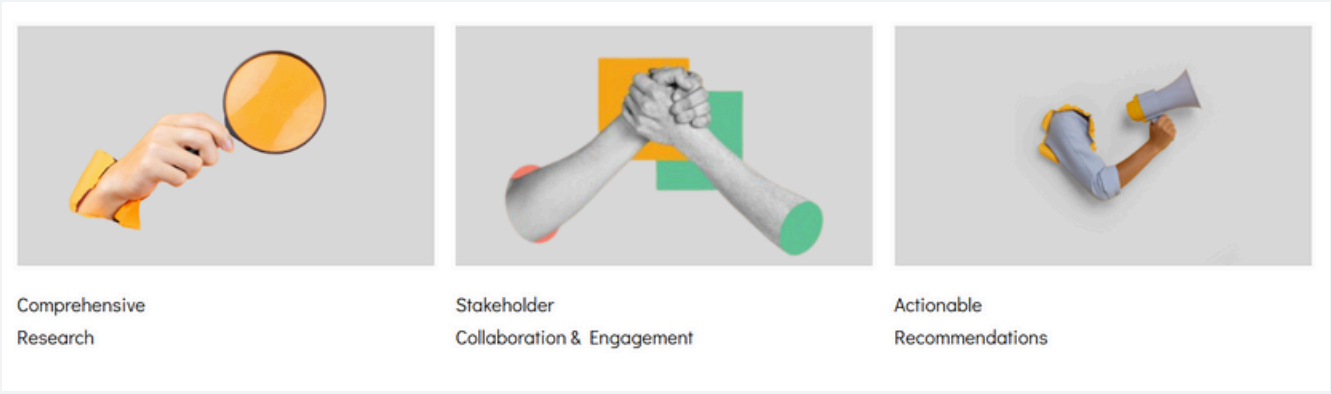
TRANSFORMING THE NCLT & NCLAT

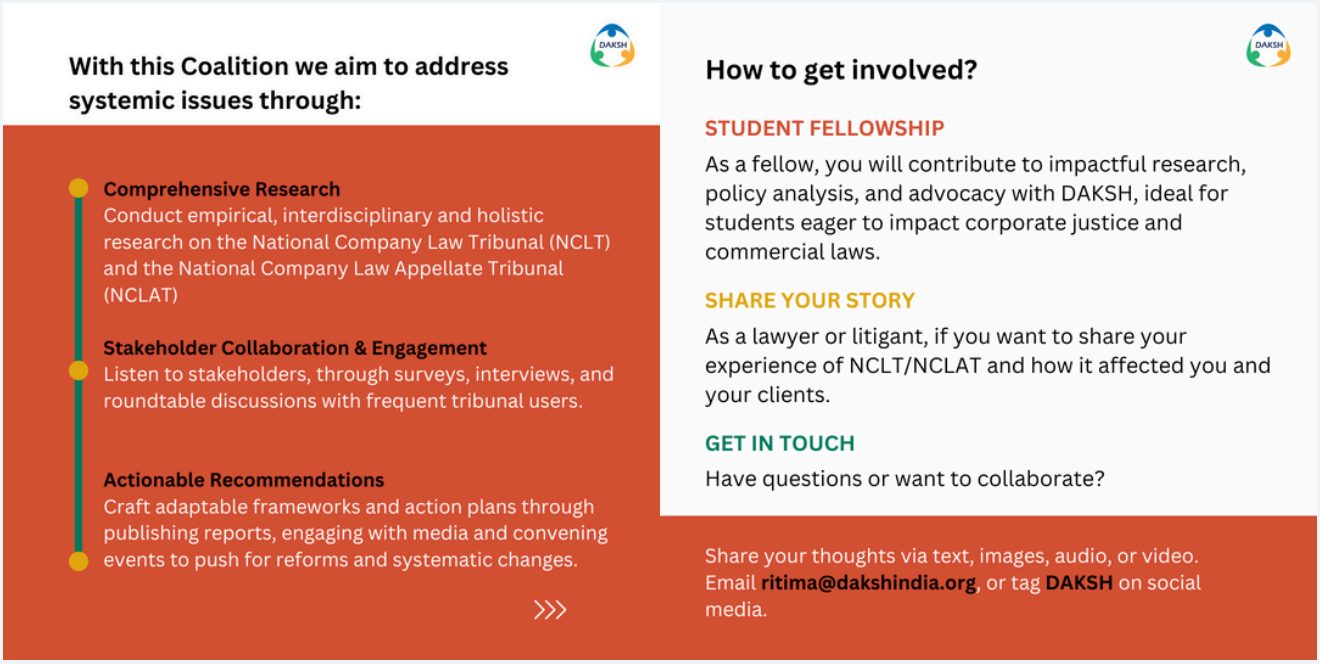
A Coalition for Change

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) are critical institutions in India's corporate and insolvency landscape. These tribunals play a pivotal role in adjudicating complex commercial disputes, directly influencing the country's business environment and economic stability.

While these tribunals play a vital role, they have immense potential for improvement in areas such as streamlining procedures, addressing staffing gaps, and adopting modern technologies. Tackling these areas can significantly enhance their effectiveness, strengthen business confidence, and unlock greater economic value.

We aim to address systemic issues through:





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COALITION FOR THE GOODS AND SERVICES TAX APPELLATE TRIBUNAL IN INDIA (GSTAT)

The Coalition for the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal in India ('GSTAT Coalition India') has been convened to advocate for the speedy constitution of and develop an inclusive and shared imagination of a modern digital Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal ('GSTAT').

DAKSH in collaboration with NASSCOM organised a roundtable on the GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) in New Delhi on February 28, 2024. The Roundtable builds on the work over the last couple of years we have done at the Coalition for GSTAT convened by DAKSH. The Coalition has been convened to advocate for the speedy constitution of a modern, digital GSTAT.

Participants included key policymakers from the Department of Revenue, GST Council, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, and GST Network, legal practitioners and industry leaders. deliberated upon the operational aspects of digital workflows, a transition plan, and its institutional structure.

This event is another step towards working closely with industry, trade bodies, and policymakers to transform the dispute resolution landscape. While we will continue to focus on reforming the courts, we believe that tribunals represent an opportunity to demonstrate the possibilities to the ecosystem and spark a transformation.

The three sessions of the roundtable were moderated by ex Chairpersons, CBIC/member CBIC.

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JUDICIAL DATA COLLABORATIVE

DAKSH convened the Judicial Data Collaborative (JDC) in February 2023, to bring together researchers, practitioners and technology experts who regularly consume data put out by courts and tribunals in India.

The Justice Definitions Project

The Justice Definitions Project is an initiative of the Judicial Data Collaborative (JDC), convened by DAKSH. Aligned with the JDC's mission to enhance the accessibility, quality, and reliability of judicial data in India, the project aims to create a publicly accessible and community-driven wiki repository of legal concepts.

By consolidating and organizing terms from official literature, databases, and academic research, the project seeks to address significant gaps in accessible legal knowledge. Each wiki page provides detailed insights into a concept, incorporating regional variations, procedural nuances, database references, and relevant research.

Key components of the project include:

- **Student Research Associate Program:** A part-time program where law students create wiki pages on assigned definitions. These entries undergo review and refinement by community members to ensure quality and accuracy.
- **Justice Definitions Edit-a-thon:** Inspired by Wikipedia's edit-a-thons, this event brings students together on campus to collaboratively update and enhance the wiki. Guided by subject matter experts, these events focus on predetermined thematic areas.

Engagement

150+

A community of over 150 law students

250+

Curated more than 250 wiki pages across various legal themes

To sustain and expand the project, we are actively building a community of legal professionals, including lawyers and researchers, who can review and enhance the wiki pages while mentoring student contributors. With an aim to make the legal knowledge commons inclusive and accessible to all Indians, translations of English entries to Indian regional languages is underway.

Justice Definition Project Edit-a-thon

By working alongside researchers, academics, and practitioners, students actively participate in research, enhance their understanding of legal concepts, and contribute to building a comprehensive database on the justice system.

We conducted an edit-a-thon with the School of Law, Christ University (SLCU), Delhi (NCR) on April 20, 2024, and April 27, 2024. The students for SLCU worked on definitions related to Technology, Media, and Telecommunications (TMT) law and actively contributed to the project. The students were actively guided and supervised by Bhavya Sudhir from DAKSH, Mr Varun Sen Bahl and Ms Priyanshi Dixit.

The second edit-a-thon was organised with Saraswati Institute of Law, Palwal, where 50 enthusiastic law students came together to contribute to wiki pages on topics like Access to Information and Public Accountability Law.

DAKSH
Digital and Media Outreach

THE DAKSH PODCAST

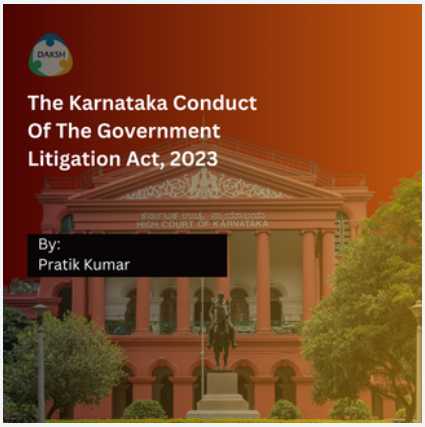
The DAKSH Podcast simplifies the law and justice system for regular Indian citizens. On this podcast, we have spoken to experts in various areas of this domain and discussed our own research. We have explained how the complex and often forbidding law and justice system affects our everyday lives and why we should care about it.

We launched season 3 of the Podcast in February 2024 and released 12 episodes. These also include 4 short episodes, where we break down important legal topics and discuss interesting historical and contemporary nuggets.

In tune with the general elections in April 2024, we had some topical election-related episodes on the Election Commission, the model code of conduct and electoral bonds. We also discussed the rule of law, accessing courts as journalists, the depiction of police violence in films and the marriage equality judgment, among other topics.

The podcast guests included Justice Muralidhar, Milan Vaishnav, Apurva Vishwanath, Ajay Shah, Raju Ramachandran, Vikram Hegde, M R Madhavan, Deepanjana Pal and Valay Singh among many others. Season 3 was hosted by DAKSH's Leah Verghese and Ninni Susan Thomas.

DAKSH Blogs



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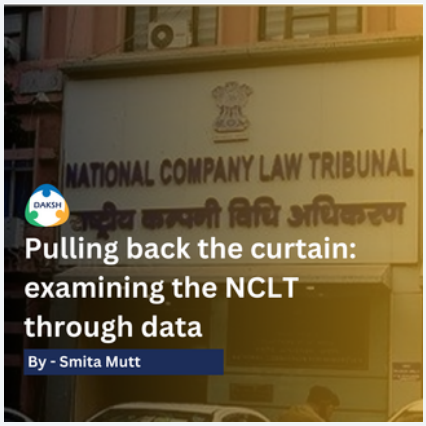

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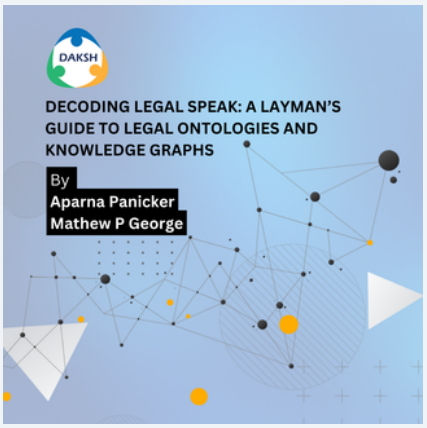

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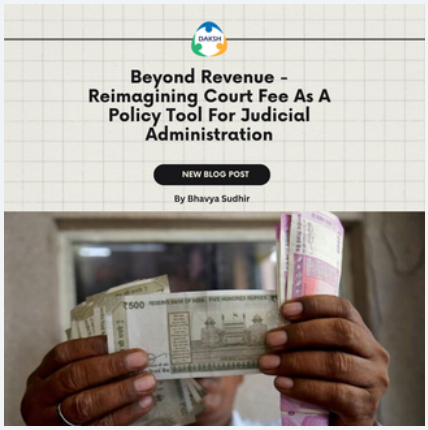

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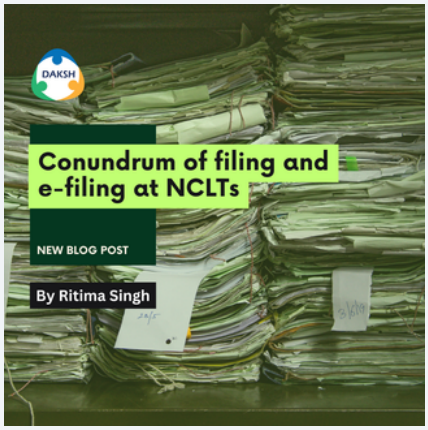

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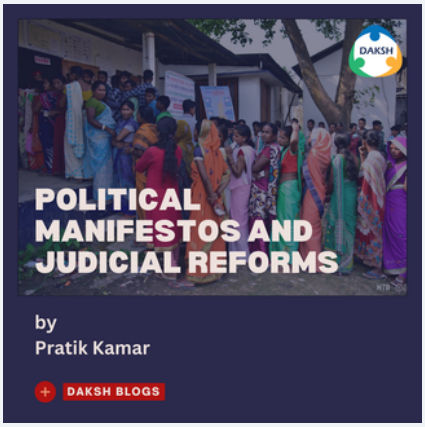

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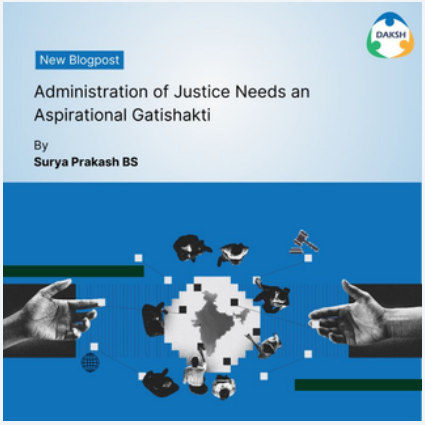

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In the Media

The Bareilly case and a flawed criminal justice system

Leah Verghese and Ninni Susan Thomas's op-ed in unpacks the details of a 'fake' rape trial to reveal several systemic issues - The Bareilly case and a flawed criminal justice system

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Analysis: Bail burden on high courts

The principle of 'innocent until proven guilty' should be upheld.

Prajavani Special

Published : 22 December 2023, 23:30 IST | Last Updated : 22 December 2023, 23:30 IST

Leah V. and Smita Mutt, in this article, on Prajavani online talk about the escalating 'bail burden' in India, shedding light on the increasing number of bail cases in high courts and the extended time it takes to resolve them.

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