

It may take 30 years to settle all criminal cases in Mumbai: Praja

MUMBAI: How long would it take to render judgments on all serious ICC offenses pending in Mumbai courts from 2020? Analysis from the nonprofit Praja Foundation indicates it could take 30 years, assuming no further cases go to trial. The figure was obtained after taking into account the average number of judgments rendered and withdrawals (2,550 cases) over the past five years. The expectation of trials for crimes against women was alarming 98% by the end of last year, data from the NGO revealed.

“The high waiting times for trials and low conviction rates for serious crimes could end up wreaking havoc on society,” said Nitai Mehta, administrator of the Praja Foundation. For example, 85% of those charged with serious IPC-related crimes (known as Class II offenses) were acquitted by courtrooms last year. Massive shortages of personnel within the police service, scientific officers in the forensic service, prosecutors and magistrate court judges were cited as a major cause. “All sanctioned scientific officer positions are vacant. It borders on the absurd that these positions cannot be filled,” added Mehta. Data from Praja show that 50% of cases sent to the forensic service were pending last year. High Court attorney Aditya Pratap added that on several occasions indictments are filed without forensic reports because labs take several months to prepare them.

There appears to be an urgent need for infrastructure overhaul. “The magistrates of the lower courts are severely overworked. Each magistrate hears the offenses found in three to four police stations and sometimes, there are 200 cases listed per day. It is necessary to increase the district courts to have a magistrate per police station,” says Pratap. Experts have suggested that lower and district courts digitize as a priority. “The main requirement is to increase the number of courts and prosecutors. Second, a more liberal approach is needed to bring a larger category of offenses into plea bargaining and summary trials through legislation” said former IPS SPS officer Yadav.

Praja’s research also showed delays in police investigations. Indictments were only filed in 21% of serious police offenses last year. RTI activist Arati Chauhan said any hole left in the evidence by investigators would ultimately benefit the accused. The police department also had a staffing deficit of 19% in July 2021. “Every police officer who has completed seven years of service should be given the task of laying charges to make up for the lack of investigating officers,” said the former DGP Praveen Dixit. With the increase in the urban population of Mumbai, it is not only important to fill the remaining sanctioned positions, but also to review the number of sanctioned positions each year to cope with the increasing number of lawsuits.

Police reforms in the form of the implementation of the Police Complaints Authority (PCA) are needed at the division level. The PCA may receive complaints and has the power to conduct investigations, hearings and issue final orders in the form of recommendations to the state government regarding a serious violation of the law or a legitimate abuse of power by the authorities. policewomen. It was established in Maharashtra, but the divisional PCAs are not set up for the Konkan division which includes Mumbai. The State Security Commission (SSC), which sets broad political guidelines and assesses the performance of the police, has also not been established.

Link: <https://india.on-24.com/local/18816.html>