

## Chargesheet In 11 Months, Over 2 Lakh Cases Pending In Courts: Criminal Cases In Mumbai Show Drastic Delay

The delay in investigation and trials is linked to the shortage of workforce in enforcement departments and courts.

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Criminal cases in Mumbai are experiencing long delays due to a shortage of police personnel, prosecutors and judges, revealed a study conducted by Praja Foundation.

The study conducted for Sessions court cases from 2013 to 2017, shows that it took over 11.1 months on an average from the FIR to chargesheet which should normally be done within 90 days. Also, it took more than 2.4 years on an average from first hearing to judgement, reported the Deccan Herald.

According to Praja Foundation founder and managing trustee, Nitai Mehta, there was an 18% shortage of police personnel in Mumbai compared to sanctioned posts in 2019-20. Due to the shortage of personnel, the existing workforce was burdened with work and had to face extended work hours and working conditions that affect the overall health of police officers, reducing their ability to perform their duties effectively.

"Vacancy in sanctioned posts also has a direct impact on performance in case of the judiciary, where there was a 28% shortage in public prosecutors and 14% shortage of Sessions court judges. In 2019, 2,49,922 cases were to be tried in courts for IPC in Mumbai in 2019 out of which judgement was given in just 6% of the cases," said Mehta.

Despite passing laws for timely completion of cases through special courts, high pendency of cases continues.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POSCO) Act, 2012 says that the Special Court taking cognizance of the matter should be able to complete the trial within the period of one year from the date of taking cognizance of the abuse. "However in 2019, while 1,319 cases of POSCO were registered, just 448 cases were tried in courts, of which only half (222) were tried in the special POSCO court. Moreover, only 20% of these judgements in POSCO courts were pronounced within one year (as required by the Act)," said Mehta.

The study has attributed the pendency of investigation and trial to a shortage of workforce in enforcement departments and courts. The Foundation also found a 14% shortage as compared to sanctioned strength among sessions court judges, 18% shortage in the police department, 28% shortage among public prosecutors in sessions court and a 42% shortage in forensic laboratories this year. Mehta also mentioned that it is not just human resources, but the working and living conditions also affect the policeman's job.

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