

Believe it or not, Bihar too takes a technological leap

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A NOVEL innovation, which has the promise of ushering in a revolution of sorts in the system of administration of justice, besides ensuring that undertrials do not remain in jails beyond the period of their sentence, has taken off here.

Bihar has become the first state where the courts and jails have been connected through video conferencing to ensure an interface between the magistrates and undertrials even if the latter are not physically produced in court.

The results have been overwhelming. In just three days, 20 prisoners were released after the concerned magistrates recorded their statements.

These prisoners had already spent more time behind bars than their sentence provided. They confessed their guilt and the magistrates ordered their release.

The National Informatics Centre (NIC) implemented this system in consultation with Chief Justice Ravi S Dhavan of the Patna High Court.

It is common knowledge that undertrials are not produced before the courts on the dates fixed resulting in trials getting delayed and jails bursting at the seams.

The reasons for the undertrials not being produced in courts are many. Lack of adequate number of vehicles for transportation, shortage of policemen, inadequacy of handcuffs or ropes are some of them.

Add to this inability of the prosecution in producing witnesses in time and lawyers seeking adjournments.

Special ISDN lines were subscribed by the High Court paving the way for the NIC to bring in its equipment and connect the Patna Civil Court with the Beur Central Jail. The work began on August 16.

Initially, the undertrials, who

had to be produced before the courts on those dates, were produced before a magistrate specially deputed in the jail. The concerned magistrates then communicated with them through video conferencing.

Then a list of persons willing to confess their guilt was prepared. Between August 22 and 24, the concerned magistrates went to the jail and recorded the confessional statements of such persons.

Some 20 persons were released and 15 others who also confessed their guilt will be released as and when their sentence is completed.

The equipment used belongs to the NIC, but the High Court is learnt to have indicated to the state government to provide funds to carry on the arrangement.

And this time, the exercise will not remain limited to Patna alone, but will be implemented in all the other districts of the state.