Judicial Transparency Index Report

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Polity*

Why in News?

Recently, the Justice Access and Lowering Delays in India (JALDI) Initiative released the Judicial Transparency Index, a first-of-its-kind assessment of the Supreme Court (SC) and 25 High Courts (HC).

Key Findings

- **Collegium Decisions –**
  - SC resolutions provide only generic reasons (merit, integrity, competence), lacking substantive detail.
  - No reasons given in last five transfer resolutions.
- **RTI Implementation –**
  - 15 High Courts prescribe additional exemptions beyond Section 8 of RTI Act.
  - Exemptions are often vague, overbroad, contradictory.
- **Financial Transparency –**
  - 8 High Courts have not published budgets.
  - None publish audit reports.
- **Judicial Processes**
  - **Live Streaming –** 13 HCs adopted rules; only 4 (Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Telangana, Guwahati) streamed >75% proceedings.
  - **Case Allocation –** No court publishes criteria for bench constitution.
  - **Recusals & Discipline –** No clear policies; transparency gaps persist.
- **Personnel and Asset Disclosures**
  - **Supreme Court –** 90% judges disclosed assets (post-2025 resolution).
  - **High Courts –** Wide variation; Kerala (90%), Madras (11%), Delhi (13.6%).
  - **Voluntary Nature –** Leads to inconsistency over time.
- **Sanctioned and Working Strength**

    - **Judges –** 19 HCs provide updated sanctioned/working strength.
    - **Staff –** Only 5 HCs provide updated staff strength; 16 lack data.
    - **Best Practice –** Allahabad, Calcutta, Manipur, Patna, Tripura publish both judges & staff data.
- **Registry and Appointments**
    - **Registry –** All HCs publish list of officials; 23 provide contacts; 20 specify roles.
    - **Recruitment –** 24 HCs publish shortlisted names for district judges; only 14 has disclosed marks.
    - **Transfers –** All 25 publish orders; 18 provide reasons. Only 14 HCs have formal transfer policy. SC publishes resolutions but no transfer policy.
- **Code of Conduct**
    - **High Courts –** None publish code of conduct for judges.
    - **Supreme Court –** Publishes ***Restatement of Values of Judicial Life*** but lacks complaint procedure or sanction orders.
    - **Sanctions –** Only J&K and Tripura publish information on disciplinary actions against district judges.
- **Rankings**
    - **Leaders –** Himachal Pradesh HC (institutional governance), Tripura HC (judicial personnel disclosures).
    - **Lagging –** Meghalaya and Bombay HCs (budgetary disclosures, public access).
    - **Supreme Court –** Strong in institutional governance, moderate in judicial processes/personnel transparency.

Reference

The Print | Judicial Transparency Index Report

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