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The Institutionalised Sluggishness of the Legal System

Context

- For millions of Indians, the judicial system is not a beacon of justice but a **complex maze** marked by delays and uncertainty.
- While high-profile cases often progress swiftly, the average citizen remains trapped in a cycle of adjournments and procedural hurdles.
- The phrase **justice delayed is justice denied** has become less of a warning and more of a lived reality.
- This situation highlights the urgent need to reimagine India's judiciary as a system that prioritises the citizen and ensures timely, fair outcomes.

The Crisis of Pendency and Delay

- **Massive Backlog of Cases**
 - One of the most pressing issues in the Indian judiciary is the staggering number of pending cases, exceeding **five crores**.

- This overwhelming backlog creates a system where justice is not only delayed but often rendered meaningless.
- For many litigants, **prolonged legal battles** consume years of time and financial resources, making the eventual verdict hollow.

- **The Process is the Punishment**

- The excessive delays and frequent adjournments have institutionalised inefficiency. In many cases, **individuals suffer long** before a judgment is delivered.
- Undertrial prisoners, for example, may spend years in jail only to be acquitted later, losing their livelihoods and dignity in the process.
- This reflects a system where the procedure itself becomes punitive.

Challenges in Ensuring Fairness and Liberty

- **Stringent Laws and Prolonged Incarceration**

- Laws such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) often result in **extended pre-trial detention** due to strict bail conditions.
- This raises serious concerns about the protection of personal liberty and the presumption of innocence.

- **Need for Time-Bound Justice**

- To uphold constitutional rights, it is **essential to introduce strict timelines** for trials.
- Ensuring that cases are resolved within a reasonable period would prevent undue suffering and restore faith in the justice system.

The Role of Technology in Judicial Reform

- **Outdated Systems and Practices**

- Despite advancements in other sectors, the **judiciary continues to rely heavily on physical documentation** and traditional processes.
- This slows down case management and contributes to inefficiency.

- **Digital Transformation and AI Integration**

- The adoption of digital tools, including artificial intelligence and data-driven systems, can significantly improve efficiency.
- Automation of administrative tasks, better case tracking, and **enhanced legal research** can allow judges to focus on delivering quality judgments.

Inclusivity and Representation in the Judiciary

- **Lack of Diversity on the Bench**

- The judiciary has often been criticised for limited representation of women and marginalised communities.

- This lack of diversity restricts the range of perspectives in **judicial decision-making**.

- **Importance of a Representative Judiciary**

- A more inclusive Bench would better reflect India's social realities, leading to more empathetic and nuanced judgments.
- Representation is not merely symbolic but essential for improving the quality of justice.

Accessibility and Affordability of Justice

- **High Cost of Legal Services**

- Legal proceedings in India are expensive, making justice inaccessible to a large section of society.
- The **high cost of competent legal representation** often discourages individuals from pursuing legitimate claims.

- **Strengthening Legal Aid Systems**

- To address this issue, the legal aid system must be strengthened to provide high-quality representation to the underprivileged.
- Justice should be treated as a fundamental public good, accessible to all citizens regardless of economic status.

Geographical Barriers to Justice

- **Centralisation of Higher Courts**

- The concentration of the Supreme Court in the capital creates logistical challenges for litigants from distant regions, particularly from southern India.

- **Need for Regional Benches and Virtual Hearings**

- Establishing regional benches or expanding virtual hearing systems can make justice more accessible and reduce the burden on litigants.

The Way Forward

- **Judicial Independence and Accountability**

- **Maintaining Independence**

- An independent judiciary is essential for safeguarding democracy and ensuring that power is held accountable.
- Judges must be able to function without external pressure.

- **Enhancing Transparency and Accountability**

- At the same time, transparency in judicial appointments and proceedings, such as live-streaming cases, can strengthen public trust and reinforce accountability.

- **Towards a Systemic Overhaul**

- **Beyond Incremental Reforms**

- Judicial reform must be treated as a national priority rather than a gradual process. The current system represents a slow erosion of the rule of law.

- **Shifting Legal Culture**

- There is a need to move away from an adversarial approach toward one that **emphasises resolution and efficiency**. Legal professionals must prioritise timely justice over prolonged litigation.

Conclusion

- As India moves toward its vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047, the **effectiveness of its judicial system will be a key indicator of its progress**.
- Justice must not remain an elusive ideal but become a practical reality for every citizen.
- Without meaningful reform, the law risks being perceived as a tool of the powerful rather than a safeguard for the weak.
- However, with decisive action, India can build **a justice system that is fast, fair, inclusive, and truly reflective** of its democratic values.

The Institutionalised Sluggishness of the Legal System FAQs

Q1. What is the main problem in the Indian judicial system?

Ans. The main problem is the massive backlog of cases, which causes significant delays in delivering justice.

Q2. What does the phrase “the process is the punishment” imply?

Ans. It implies that long legal procedures themselves cause suffering even before a final judgment is given.

Q3. How can technology help improve the judiciary?

Ans. Technology can speed up case management and reduce delays through digital systems and AI tools.

Q4. Why is inclusivity important in the judiciary?

Ans. Inclusivity is important because a diverse judiciary can better understand and represent different social realities.

Q5. What is needed to make justice accessible to all citizens?

Ans. A stronger legal aid system is needed to ensure affordable and fair representation for everyone.

Source: **The Hindu**

India’s Rural Models are Shaping Development Diplomacy

Context

- The launch of the **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)** in 2011 marked a transformative moment in India’s approach to rural poverty.
- Introduced under the Ministry of Rural Development, the programme **aimed to tackle multidimensional poverty** by promoting sustainable livelihoods, financial inclusion, and skill development.
- Over the past 15 years, the NRLM has not only exceeded expectations domestically but has also emerged as an influential model for development across the Global South.

Scale and Impact of NRLM in India

- **Expanding Reach and Participation**

- By mid-2025, the mission had expanded to 742 districts, reaching over 100 million rural households and mobilising more than nine million **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)**.
- This large-scale mobilisation reflects the programme's ability to penetrate deeply into rural India.

- **Financial Inclusion and Women's Empowerment**

- Over 50 million women have accessed bank credit, while more than 20 million SHG members now earn annual incomes exceeding ₹1,00,000.
- Additionally, women banking correspondents operate in over 60% of local governments, strengthening grassroots financial systems and boosting female labour force participation.

- **Institutional and Financial Achievements**

- The programme has facilitated ₹51,368 crore in capitalisation support and enabled bank linkages worth ₹12 lakh crore.
- The **Union Budget 2026-27** further reinforced its importance with an allocation of **₹19,200 crore**.
- These achievements highlight not only financial expansion but also the creation of a robust institutional ecosystem.

The NRLM Ecosystem: A Unique Development Model

- **Decentralised Institutional Architecture**

- Unlike traditional welfare schemes, the NRLM operates through **a decentralised structure** of village organisations, cluster-level federations, and block-level institutions.
- This layered system ensures effective governance and community participation.

- **Community-Led Implementation**

- The programme relies on trained **community-based cadres** who deliver last-mile services.
- This approach enhances accountability, reduces administrative costs, and ensures that interventions remain responsive to local needs.

- **Sustainability Through Capacity Building**

- By combining social mobilisation with skill development and financial access, the NRLM builds long-term capacity within communities.
- This makes it **a sustainable model** rather than a short-term poverty alleviation scheme.

Global Expansion: NRLM Beyond India

- **Rising Interest in the Global South**

- The NRLM's success has attracted attention from several African nations, including Ethiopia, Tanzania, Malawi, Kenya, and Rwanda.
- Delegations from these countries have studied its implementation, focusing on its scalability and institutional mechanisms.

- **Why the Model Travels Well**

- The NRLM's adaptability stems from several factors:

- Its emphasis on women's collective empowerment
- Cost-effective, community-driven implementation
- Compatibility with informal economies
- Focus on long-term institution-building
- These features make it suitable for countries with similar socio-economic conditions.
- **Shift Towards South-South Learning**
 - The growing adoption of NRLM principles reflects a broader shift in **development thinking**.
 - Countries in the Global South are increasingly turning to each other for contextually relevant solutions rather than relying solely on Western models.

India's Emerging Development Diplomacy

- **From Aid to Knowledge Sharing**
 - India's development cooperation has **traditionally focused on financial assistance** and technical support.
 - The global spread of the NRLM signals a shift towards sharing institutional models and governance practices.
- **Strengthening International Partnerships**
 - By exporting the SHG-based framework, India is creating long-term partnerships between governments, agencies, and communities.
 - This approach opens **avenues for collaboration** in areas such as digital governance, agriculture, and financial systems.
- **Future Opportunities**
 - To build on this momentum, India could establish a dedicated Rural Livelihoods Knowledge Exchange Platform.
 - Expanded training programmes, **fellowships, and joint pilot projects** would help adapt the model to diverse local contexts.

Conclusion

- The National Rural Livelihood Mission has **evolved from a national poverty alleviation initiative into a globally relevant development model**.
- Its success lies in its integrated approach, combining financial inclusion, institutional development, and community empowerment.
- As countries across Africa and beyond look to replicate its framework, **the NRLM stands as a powerful example** of how locally rooted innovations can shape global development paradigms.

India's Rural Models are Shaping Development Diplomacy FAQs

Q1. What is the main objective of the National Rural Livelihood Mission?

Ans. The main objective of the NRLM is to reduce rural poverty by promoting sustainable livelihoods, financial inclusion, and skill development.

Q2. How has the NRLM contributed to women's empowerment?

Ans. The NRLM has empowered women by enabling millions to access bank credit, join Self-Help Groups, and increase their incomes.

Q3. What makes the NRLM different from traditional welfare schemes?

Ans. The NRLM is different because it focuses on community-led institutions and long-term capacity building rather than short-term aid.

Q4. Which regions have shown interest in adopting the NRLM model?

Ans. Several African countries such as Kenya and Rwanda have shown interest in adopting the NRLM model.

Q5. How does the NRLM influence India's development diplomacy?

Ans. The NRLM strengthens India's development diplomacy by promoting knowledge sharing and institutional models with other developing countries.

Source: **The Hindu**

India's Migration Governance - From Crisis Response to Continuous Architecture

Context:

- India's **evacuation** of over 4.75 lakh citizens from **West Asia** by March-end has been widely celebrated as a diplomatic and logistical achievement.
- However, beneath this visible success lies a more **uncomfortable policy question** — whether India's migration governance is built for sustained welfare or merely crisis response.

India and Gulf Migration - The Scale of Dependence:

- The Gulf region is not a peripheral concern for Indian policymakers — it sits at the heart of household welfare and macroeconomic stability.
- For instance,
 - The six GCC countries hosted nearly **35 lakh** Indians as of December 2025.
 - The region contributed **9%** of India's total remittance inflows in 2023-24.
 - Disruptions in West Asia transmit rapidly into districts, households, and state welfare systems.
- This dependence makes the region a **strategic vulnerability** as much as an economic asset.

The Crisis-Centric Framework - Strengths and Limits:

- India's current approach has demonstrated genuine strengths — **diplomatic reach**, consular coordination, and repatriation mechanisms. The Gulf evacuations are proof of that machinery working.
- But a framework that activates only at moments of disruption carries structural **blind spots**.
- **For example,**
 - It defers foundational questions: How were workers recruited? What protections existed abroad? What awaits them in return?
 - It struggles to detect slow-burn **stresses** — rising cost of living, LPG price hikes, sectoral slowdowns — that erode worker stability without triggering visible crisis signals.
 - Workers may continue to move, work, and remit even as conditions around them quietly deteriorate.

Structural Fragilities in India's Migration Architecture:

• **Fragmented institutional mandates:**

- India's governance was never built around the worker's journey. Instead, responsibilities are **siloed**.
- **For example,**
 - The mandate of the Ministry of External Affairs is emigration clearances, diplomatic coordination.
 - The Union Ministry of Labour oversees recruitment regulation, worker welfare.
 - The focus of State governments is skilling programmes, welfare funds (varying capacity).
- A worker's journey — from a source district through recruitment networks, across borders, and back — cuts across all these mandates but falls fully under none.
- At each stage, the worker is visible to some part of the system, rarely to the whole.

• **The data deficit:**

- India still lacks granular and dynamic **migration data** for anticipatory governance.
- In normal times, this is an administrative gap, but in extraordinary times, it becomes a welfare emergency.
- The absence of real-time information prevents early detection of stress patterns at the source, transit, or destination stage.

The Internal-External Continuum - A Missed Connection:

- A critical insight from this analysis is that internal and international migration are variations of the same **fragmented**
- A worker leaving Jharkhand for Surat faces structurally similar **vulnerabilities** to one leaving for Riyadh — weak recruitment oversight, thin support systems, and uncertain return pathways.
- The **Covid** pandemic made this visible for internal migrants — millions were suddenly immobilised with no safety net.

- The current West Asia stress is the international equivalent. Yet policy continues to treat these as separate domains.

Challenges:

- Partial **institutional** visibility at each stage of the migration journey.
- Inter-ministerial **fragmentation** with no single nodal authority overseeing the worker's full lifecycle.
- Uneven **state capacity** — Kerala's robust migration data infrastructure cannot be assumed elsewhere in major sending states like UP, Bihar, or Jharkhand.
- Absence of **anticipatory governance** tools — systems activate post-disruption rather than pre-empting stress.
- Slow-accumulating **vulnerabilities** that do not register as crises but steadily hollow out worker welfare.

Way Forward:

- **Overseas Mobility Facilitation and Welfare Bill:**

- The pending bill offers a legislative opportunity to institutionalise welfare across the entire mobility arc — not just at the moment of departure or return.
- It must embed protections that apply whether the worker moves domestically or internationally.

- **Unified migration data architecture:**

- Building a granular, dynamic, and interoperable migration information system is a prerequisite for anticipatory governance, and can enable early warning systems.

- **Continuum-based governance:**

- Covering pre-departure skilling and informed recruitment, destination-side welfare and legal recourse, and structured return and reintegration support.

- **Strengthening State-level institutions:**

- Replicating **Kerala's model** of sustained political attention to migration data and welfare institutions. The district administrations must be equipped to absorb and support returning migrants.

- **Bilateral labour agreements:**

- India's maturing diplomatic relationships with GCC countries must be leveraged to negotiate stronger worker protection clauses, portability of social security, and transparent recruitment standards.

Conclusion:

- The harder test for India is building a continuous, integrated governance architecture that treats mobility, whether across districts or across continents, as a connected social and economic system.
- This requires governing migration as a steady-state responsibility, not a crisis-triggered duty.

India's Migration Governance FAQs

Q1. Why migration governance in India needs to be reformed?

Ans. India requires a lifecycle-based migration framework covering recruitment, welfare, mobility, rather than reactive emergency evacuations alone.

Q2. What is the economic significance of the Gulf region for India's migration ecosystem?

Ans. It hosts nearly one crore Indians and contributes significantly through remittances.

Q3. What are the major institutional challenges in India's migration governance architecture?

Ans. Fragmented responsibilities among ministries, weak coordination, poor data systems, etc.

Q4. How can lessons from Kerala improve migration management in other Indian states?

Ans. Kerala's strong migration data systems, welfare institutions, and policy attention offer a replicable model.

Q5. How is internal and international migration part of one connected labour mobility system?

Ans. Both forms of migration involve similar issues of recruitment, worker protection, requiring unified policy treatment.

Source: IE

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