

SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

Standard Operating Procedure for limited physical hearing before Hon'ble Court

In continuation of directions already notified regarding functioning of the Supreme Court of India, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, more particularly through Circulars dated 14.03.2020 and 23.03.2020, and on consideration of the requests received from the Bar Associations, the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India has been pleased to direct as follows:

1. On an experimental basis, and as a pilot scheme, physical hearing of matters may initially commence in three [3] Court-rooms; eventually, number of matters or the number of Court-rooms may be increased or reduced, as the situation may warrant or permit;
2. Despite consent by the Ld. Advocates/Parties-in-Person, only such number of Counsels/parties may be permitted to appear during physical hearing inside Courtrooms, so that the total number does not exceed the working capacity of the Court(s) as determined considering the physical distancing norms;
3. If in a matter the number of parties is more, then one AOR and one Arguing Counsel per party will be allowed entry; one registered Clerk per party, as may be chosen by the AOR, shall be allowed entry to carry paper-books/journals etc. of the Counsels upto the Court-rooms;
4. Entry into the High Security Zone through proximity cards/long term passes shall be kept suspended, till further orders; entry of counsels/parties or such other stakeholders to appear for such limited physical hearing will be through daily "Special hearing passes" which will be issued by the Registry, on the basis of authorization by the concerned Advocate on Record.
5. Multiple sets of one chair and table are being placed inside the Court Rooms, in the areas demarcated for Ld. Advocates/Parties-in-Person, and it shall be incumbent upon the users to maintain minimum prescribed physical distancing norms between each set, which should not be removed from their positions;
6. Ld. Advocates/Parties-in-Person/Clerks or other stakeholders, who have been issued Special Hearing Passes, upon completion of necessary formalities, online or otherwise as may be notified in due time, shall enter the High Security Zone through the designated Gate, after subjecting themselves to the thermal and such other scanning devices as may be installed for detecting body temperature, infection status, etc.

7. On entering the High Security Zone, Ld. Advocates/Parties-in-Person would proceed to the staging areas/vacant Court-rooms as may be designated, and wait for their turn to enter respective Court Rooms where physical hearing of their respective case(s) may be scheduled, and they would proceed only through the movement corridors created and demarcated for the purpose;
8. At the staging/waiting area(s), concerned volunteers may also guide the Ld. Advocates/Parties-in-Person further, as and when their turn comes for entering the designated Court Room for hearing;
9. The entry into and exit from each Court Room shall be by separate doors; entrants into the Court Rooms are advised to use the sanitization devices for sanitizing their hands and also the papers and other items/articles, that they may seek to carry into the Court Rooms with them;
10. It may be noted that wearing of mask, frequent use of hand sanitizer and maintaining physical distancing norms is mandatory for all entrants into the Supreme Court premises, including the Court-rooms;
11. On completion of hearing of their respective case, the Ld. Advocates/Parties-in-Person/Clerks, etc. shall move out of the High Security Zone through the movement corridor and exit from the designated gates;
12. Ld. Advocates/Parties-in-Person having more than one case for physical hearing in the Court Rooms shall be issued separate Special Hearing Pass for each case and after hearing of one case is complete, they may wait in the designated staging/waiting area(s) for the purpose for appearing for the next hearing(s);
13. It is reiterated that in order to facilitate video/tele-conferencing for the Ld. Advocates/Parties-in-Person, a dedicated VC Facilitation Centre is located in Block 'C', Ground Floor, Additional Building Complex, Supreme Court of India, which can be accessed through Gate No.1 of that Complex;

Sd/-
[Secretary General]
30th August, 2020