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Sikkim — India's First Fully Paperless State Judiciary

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POLITY

GS2

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Sikkim — India's First Fully Paperless State Judiciary

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WHY IN NEWS

Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant declared **Sikkim** the country's **first fully paperless state judiciary** at the **National Conclave on Technology and Judicial Education** held at Chintan Bhawan, Gangtok on May 1, 2026. The milestone coincides with **Sikkim's 50th statehood year** (it became India's 22nd state on May 16, 1975). The initiative is part of the broader **e-Courts Mission Mode Project** under India's **Digital India** programme.

WHAT DOES "FULLY PAPERLESS" MEAN?

A fully paperless judiciary replaces physical documents across every stage of the judicial process:

PROCESS	PAPER-BASED (EARLIER)	DIGITAL (NOW IN SIKKIM)
Case filing	Physical filing at court counters	e-Filing via online portal
Case tracking	Manual registers	Digital Case Management System (DCMS)
Summons service	Physical delivery	Electronic summons via SMS/email (NSTEP)
Hearings	In-person only	Video conferencing enabled
Public access	Visiting court	e-Seva Kendras + online access
Records	Paper files	Digitised case records

KEY SYSTEMS DEPLOYED IN SIKKIM

1. e-Filing

- Online submission of cases, petitions, and documents
- Eliminates need for physical presence at filing counters
- Accessible from anywhere with internet connectivity

2. Digital Case Management System (DCMS)

- Real-time case status tracking
- Automated cause list generation
- Judge-to-judge digital file routing

3. NSTEP (National Service and Tracking of Electronic Processes)

- Electronic summons delivered via SMS and email
- Tracks delivery and acknowledgement
- Reduces delays from physical summons delivery

4. Video Conferencing

- Remote hearings for undertrial prisoners, witnesses in distant locations
- Particularly valuable in Sikkim given mountainous terrain
- Reduces cost and risk of prisoner transport

5. e-Seva Kendras

- Physical facilitation centres at district level
- Assist litigants without internet access in using digital systems
- Bridge the digital divide for rural and elderly litigants

E-COURTS MISSION MODE PROJECT

PHASE	PERIOD	KEY OUTCOMES
Phase I	2007–2015	Computer hardware in courts, basic LAN
Phase II	2015–2023	Case management software (NJDG), video conferencing in districts
Phase III	2023–2027 (ongoing)	AI-assisted research, e-filing nationwide, paperless courts

National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG): Real-time database of pendency, disposal, and case status across all District and Subordinate Courts — launched under Phase II; covers 18,500+ courts.

JUDICIAL PENDENCY IN INDIA — CONTEXT

LEVEL	PENDING CASES (APPROX.)
Supreme Court	~83,000
High Courts	~62 lakh
District & Subordinate Courts	~4.3 crore
Total	~4.7 crore

(Source: National Judicial Data Grid, 2025–26)

Technology adoption aims to reduce pendency through:

- Faster filing and tracking
- Reducing adjournments caused by document unavailability
- Enabling simultaneous hearings across locations

SIKKIM — BACKGROUND

FEATURE	DETAIL
Capital	Gangtok
Area	7,096 sq km (smallest state by area after Goa)
Statehood	May 16, 1975 (22nd state of India)
2026 milestone	50th statehood year
Population	~6.1 lakh (2011 census; least populous state)
High Court	Sikkim High Court (established 1975)
CJI	Surya Kant (appointed November 2024)

Geographical challenge: Sikkim’s mountainous terrain creates natural barriers to court access — making digital alternatives especially impactful for litigants in remote valleys.

UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS2 — Polity	Judicial reforms, technology in courts, e-Courts Mission
GS2 — Governance	Digital India, access to justice, pendency
GS1 — Geography/Society	Sikkim — geography, statehood, demographics

Mains Keywords: Paperless judiciary, e-Courts Mission Mode Project, NJDG, NSTEP, Digital Case Management, e-filing, Sikkim statehood, access to justice, judicial pendency, CJI Surya Kant, video conferencing in courts

Prelims Facts Corner

ITEM	FACT
Sikkim paperless judiciary	First fully paperless state judiciary in India
Declared by	CJI Surya Kant at National Conclave, Gangtok, May 1, 2026
Statehood	May 16, 1975; 22nd state; 50th year in 2026
Systems used	e-filing, DCMS, NSTEP (electronic summons), video conferencing, e-Seva Kendras
NSTEP	National Service and Tracking of Electronic Processes — SMS/email summons
e-Courts Phase III	2023–2027; AI-assisted research + paperless courts
NJDG	National Judicial Data Grid — real-time pendency data
Total pending cases	~4.7 crore (all courts combined)
Sikkim High Court	Est. 1975

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