

Court Managers: A globally accepted practice of managing the administrative Functions of a court in a professional manner

Introduction

In India, judges are entrusted with various responsibilities like staff recruitment, looking after infrastructure, etc., in addition to their core duties of adjudicating disputes. Judges are regularly expected to conduct various administrative tasks along with their regular duties. This creates a lot of pressure on the system which is already grappling with colossal shortage of judges. There is a need for specialized court managers to look after the administrative tasks of running a court. Court managers may be responsible for planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, budgeting and controlling functions of the court and, thereby, driving efficiency.

Intervention

The post of court managers was introduced by the 13th Finance Commission in 2010. MBA graduates with relevant work experience were taken on board as court managers and were required to assist judges in handling administrative tasks. They brought in much-needed technical and management skills to the high court and district courts in the country.

The primary objective of introducing the post was to assist judges in carrying out the administrative duties in different districts and high courts, thus, allowing judges to focus on their judicial functions. The Finance Commission set aside Rs 300 crores for setting-up the posts across the country between 2010 and 2015.

Impact

States such as Assam, Tripura, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and High Court of Jharkhand, Punjab and Haryana etc. have already incorporated the post of court manager. The Supreme Court has also stressed upon the need to have qualified court managers to assist managing the court administration. In its 2018 judgment, the apex court stated that these posts must be created in every judicial district and the post should be regularized by the state government.⁴

Countries such as Australia, United States, South Africa, Canada, etc. have introduced court managers/administrators that take care of the administrative functioning of the court. The experience from these countries has shown that court managers can play a crucial role in the administration of courts as they provide support to various stakeholders connected with the judiciary and ensure a proper flow of communication.

⁴ All India Judges Association & Ors. v/s. Union of India (2018)