

# Time for a Justice Stack

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Need to work on technology-driven presence-less, paperless, and consent-based justice delivery

Respectively, CEO, senior specialist, and former OSD, NITI Aayog Views are personal

**CHALLENGES IN MANY** of our key governance and justice delivery components are well-known and well-documented. Addressing them, however, required mindset shifts and the development of long-term solutions. How justice delivery can be made more accessible, efficient and affordable is a key issue. A 360-degree solution-set that helps on-board technology to bring ease of access to justice is critically important.

An excellent segue from the current scenario into one of technology as an integral part of justice delivery is laid out by draft Vision document for Phase 3 by the Supreme Court of India's e-Committee. It is a progressive, tech-forward framework that sets the foundation for what could eventually be a comprehensive technology stack. Based along the lines of the India Stack and, further downstream, the National Health Stack and the Unified Payment Interface (UPI), the proposed justice stack could help enable a variety of diverse functions. Built as a "Common Public Good", it would avoid duplication of efforts and help achieve systemic convergence towards citizen-centric governance. Essentially, like in several other sectors in India, the time might now be ripe

to work on a technology stack for justice towards a presence-less, paperless, cashless and consent-based justice delivery.

Rooted in the principles of Data Empowerment and Protection Architecture (DEPA), the stack would empower individuals to have control over their personal data and the extent to which external agencies may have access to this data. The goals of financial inclusion, ease of living and ease of doing business are inevitably intertwined with ease of access to justice. Strong data governance coupled with a stronger consent framework will ensure their realisation. There have already been several forays made into using technology for enhanced convenience, access and efficiency across the judiciary. Therefore, through an integrated framework that relies on a federated architecture and essential building blocks, the justice stack, through consensus, can help several key areas become accessible and addressable.

A layered, federated architecture that uses unbundled components called 'building blocks', is tied together by interoperable standards into a common technology stack. This is available via micro-services and APIs for shifting

benefits to the common man and increasing access to justice. To strengthen this and drive greater adoption, a set of reference solutions and apps via innovation sandboxes may be made available, while ensuring courts' autonomy and data guardrails.

A federated architecture will help ensure the security and privacy of personal and sensitive information without compromising on interoperability, technological flexibility, independence and compatibility with legacy systems. A federated architecture at the base level is modular in nature, and thus allows evolution as technology advances. Also, by allowing each administrative level to maintain grades of autonomy, it operates collaboratively, balancing organisational autonomy with ecosystem needs. The central architecture can focus on the dynamics of economies of scale, standards, interoperability and commonality requirements, while the constituent units' architectures have the flexibility to pursue autonomous strategies and independent processes.

The 'building blocks' form the basis of a loosely coupled 'need-to-connect basis' framework, which helps unify the

federated architecture into a holistic, solution-providing interface. To enhance efficiency, ensure data consistency, interoperability and enable national portability, only the minimum required number of building blocks are designed, developed, open sourced, held and managed centrally.

Within the building block options/categories that should be identified for the justice stack envisioned, some are immediately identifiable as foundation tools for the possible rollout. These include—infrastructure, interoperability standards and specifications, federated identities, registries and reference data, sandboxes, assistive technology, governance, finance, administration, learning, and analytics. Specific building blocks under these categories can help create a reusable, interoperable set of units that can be deployed across all levels of the judicial ecosystem of the country. With the positive and proactive approach of the SC e-Committee, the key initiatives of the law ministry, and work being done in areas such as virtual courts and Online Dispute Resolution, this is the right time to start thinking seriously about the designing and building of a Justice Stack.

