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GOVERNMENT OF PUDUCHERRY
LAW DEPARTMENT

No. 2757/LD/2026.

Puducherry, dated 25th August 2026.

NOTIFICATION

“The Madras High Court Video Conferencing Rules, 2026” as framed by the Hon’ble High Court of Judicature at Madras, is hereby published for information of the general public.

(By order)

JHANAZ RAFFI alias JHANSI,
Under Secretary to Government (Law).

[845]

THE MADRAS HIGH COURT VIDEO CONFERENCING RULES, 2026**INDEX****RULES****1. Preliminary**

1.1 Title, Application and Commencement

2. Definitions**3. General Principles Governing Video Conferencing**

3.1 Applicability and Relationship with Applicable Law

3.2 Permissibility of Video Conferencing

3.3 Discretion of the Court

3.4 Nature of Proceedings

3.5 Application of Statutory Provisions

3.6 Use of Secure Technology

3.7 Security and Breach Reporting

3.8 Prohibition on Unauthorised Recording

3.9 Decorum and Conduct of Participants

3.10 Verification of Identity

3.11 Recording of Presence and Participation

3.12 Audio-Visual Quality

3.13 Timing of Proceedings

3.14 Consent to Recording

3.15 Proceedings Not Ordinarily Conducted through Video Conferencing

3.16 Applicability to Commissioners and Inquiry Officers

3.17 Overriding Control of the Court

4. Availability of Video Conferencing

- 4.1 General Availability
- 4.2 Mentioning through Video Conferencing
- 4.3 In Camera Proceedings
- 4.4 Security and Access Control

5. Application for Conduct of Proceedings through Video Conferencing

- 5.1 Power of Court
- 5.2 No Formal Application in Ordinary Cases
- 5.3 Applications when Specific Requirements are made
- 5.4 Criminal Proceedings
- 5.5 Civil Proceedings
- 5.6 Participation of Parties and Advocates
- 5.7 Directions by Court
- 5.8 Costs
- 5.9 Special Situations

6. Service of Summons / Processes

- 6.1 Contents of Summons
- 6.2 Documents with Summons
- 6.3 Application of Procedural Law
- 6.4 Saving of Court's Powers

7. Examination of Witnesses through Video Conferencing

- 7.1 Verification of Identity
- 7.2 Time of Examination
- 7.3 Safeguards in Case of Accused
- 7.4 Administration of Oath

- 7.5 Recording and Authentication of Evidence
- 7.6 Procedure for Signature and Authentication
- 7.7 Recording and Preservation
- 7.8 Protection of Privacy
- 7.9 Role of Remote Site Coordinator
- 7.10 Continuity of Proceedings
- 7.11 Place of Examination
- 7.12 Examination in Exceptional Circumstances
- 7.13 Power to Decline Video Conferencing
- 7.14 Residual Powers

8. Conduct of Criminal Proceedings through Video Conferencing

- 8.1 Electronic Conduct of Proceedings
- 8.2 Appearance of Persons
- 8.3 Production of Accused and Remand
- 8.4 Framing of Charges and Examination
- 8.5 Recording of Evidence
- 8.6 Discharge Proceedings
- 8.7 Examination of Accused in Custody
- 8.8 Pronouncement of Judgment
- 8.9 Multi-Party Video Conferencing
- 8.10 Exceptional Circumstances
- 8.11 Examination of Child Witnesses
- 8.12 Plea Bargaining
- 8.13 Overriding Control

9. Reference to and Exhibition of Documents

- 9.1 General Principles
- 9.2 Mode of Reference
- 9.3 Transmission of Documents
- 9.4 Marking and Exhibition
- 9.5 Procedure for Handling Exhibits
- 9.6 Authentication and Integrity
- 9.7 Custody and Preservation
- 9.8 Power to Issue Directions
- 9.9 Residual Application of Law

10. Public Access to Proceedings

- 10.1 Open Court Principle
- 10.2 Presence of Non-Parties

11. Interpretation**12. Practice Directions****13. Power to Remove Difficulties****14. Residual Provisions****15. Repeal and Savings**

- 15.1 Repeal
- 15.2 Savings

PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS - Video Conferencing No. 1**1. General Conduct and Discipline**

- 1.1 General Conduct
- 1.2 Dress Code and Appearance
- 1.3 Courtroom Protocol
- 1.4 Mode of Address

1.5 Environment and Surroundings

1.6 Control and Regulation

2. Infrastructure, Facilities and Equipment

2.1 Minimum Infrastructure

2.2 Connectivity

2.3 Physical Conditions

2.4 Court Site Facilities

2.5 Remote Site Facilities

2.6 Safeguards at Non-Judicial Locations

2.7 Institutional Video Conferencing Facilities

3. Video Conferencing Platform Requirements

3.1 Functional Capabilities

3.2 Administrative Features

3.3 Security and Data Protection

3.4 Compatibility and Accessibility

3.5 Confidential Communication

3.6 Control and Preservation

4. Preparatory Arrangements

4.1 Appointment of Coordinators

4.2 Designation of Remote Site Coordinator

4.3 Duties of Coordinators

4.4 Advance Notice and Documents

4.5 Pre-Hearing Arrangements

4.6 Assistance to Participants

4.7 Special Provisions

4.8 Payment of Honorarium

5. Technical and Operational Duties

- 5.1 Duties of Court Site Coordinator
- 5.2 Duties of Remote Participants
- 5.3 Technical Compliance
- 5.4 Satisfaction of the Court
- 5.5 Resolution of Technical Difficulties
- 5.6 Publication of Access Details

6. Compliance and Access

- 6.1 Compliance with Practice Directions
- 6.2 Verification of Identity
- 6.3 Access to Video Conferencing Proceedings
- 6.4 Regulation of Proceedings
- 6.5 Satisfaction of Court
- 6.6 Reporting Technical Issues

7. General Procedure

- 7.1 Applicability
- 7.2 Use of Technology
- 7.3 Identification and Verification
- 7.4 Civil Proceedings Confirmation
- 7.5 Criminal Proceedings Confirmation
- 7.6 Scheduling
- 7.7 Witness Examination (Accused in Custody)

8. Oral Arguments

- 8.1 Applicability of Physical Court Procedure
- 8.2 Submission of Authorities and Notes

9. Costs of Video Conferencing

- 9.1 General Principles
- 9.2 Costs in Criminal Proceedings
- 9.3 Costs in Civil Proceedings
- 9.4 Discretion of the Court

10. Recording of Proceedings

- 10.1 Recording in Order Sheet
- 10.2 Preservation of Recordings

11. Presence of Third Parties

- 11.1 Permission of Court
- 11.2 Nature of Participation
- 11.3 Identification and Disclosure
- 11.4 Continuance of Presence

12. Legal Aid, Lok Adalat and Jail Adalat

- 12.1 Conduct through Video Conferencing
- 12.2 Examination by Competent Authority
- 12.3 Legal Effect
- 12.4 Transmission of Orders

Whereas, in order to avoid delay in judicial proceedings arising from the non-availability of parties, Advocates, witnesses and accused persons physically before the Court, it is expedient to formalise and facilitate the use of electronic communication and audio-video electronic means for conducting trials, inquiries and proceedings before the Court including under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (“BNSS”).

Whereas, the “BNSS” under sections 54, 63, 64, 70, 71, 94, 154, 183, 187, 193, 209, 227, 230, 231, 251, 254, 262, 265, 266, 308, 310, 316, 336, 355, 356, 392 and 530, recognises the use of audio-video electronic means and other forms of electronic communication for various stages of judicial proceedings.

Whereas, section 530 of the “BNSS” provides that all trials, inquiries and proceedings under the said Sanhita, including examination of complainants and witnesses, recording of evidence in inquiries and trials, as well as appellate proceedings or any other proceedings, may be conducted in electronic mode through the use of electronic communication or audio-video electronic means.

Whereas, it has become necessary and expedient to formally enable, regulate, and standardise the conduct of proceedings by Courts and Tribunals through video conferencing.

Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred under Articles 225 and 227(2)(b) of the Constitution of India, Section 122 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, Section 523 of the “BNSS”, Clauses 37 and 38 of the Letters Patent, and all other enabling provisions in this behalf, the Madras High Court hereby makes the following Rules:

1. *Preliminary : Title, Application and Commencement.*—

(1) These rules shall be called “The Madras High Court Video Conferencing Rules, 2026.”

(2) These rules shall apply to all Courts and Tribunals (except those established under Acts of Parliament) situated within the State of Tamil Nadu and the Union territory of Puducherry, and functioning under the supervisory jurisdiction of the Madras High Court.

(3) These Rules shall come into effect from the date notified by the High Court of Madras, by publication in the Official Gazettes of the Governments of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

2. *Definitions.*— In these rules, unless the context otherwise requires:

(1) “Advocate” means, an Advocate as defined under the Advocates Act, 1961 and includes officers of the Department of Prosecution and Government Pleaders.

(2) “Advocate’s Remote Site” means, a place from where an advocate may appear through a live link, including an Advocate’s chamber, office, or any place notified by the Bar for video conferencing.

(3) “Applicable Law” means, any Act and rules made thereunder (whether substantive or procedural) applicable to a Court or proceedings therein.

(4) "Authorised Representative" means, any person, including a Presenting Officer, authorised under Applicable Law to represent a party before a Court or Tribunal.

(5) "Chief Justice" means, the Chief Justice of the High Court of Judicature at Madras.

(6) "Commissioner" means, a person appointed as Commissioner under the provisions of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, the "BNSS", or any other law for the time being in force.

(7) "Coordinator" means, a person nominated to assist and facilitate video conferencing at the Court Site or Remote Site.

(8) "Court" means, the Principal Bench and Madurai Bench of the High Court of Judicature at Madras, all Courts in the District Judiciary of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, Lok Adalats, mediation centres, and all Tribunals within its territorial jurisdiction (except those established under Acts of Parliament), whether functioning physically or virtually.

(9) "Court Site" means, the Courtroom or any other place where the Judge(s) or Presiding Officer(s) is/are physically present, or any place where proceedings are conducted pursuant to directions of the Court, including by a Commissioner or Inquiry Officer.

(10) "Court User" means, a person permitted to participate in Court proceedings through video conferencing at a Court Site.

(11) "Designated Place" means, any one or more places specified where the facilities are made available for use of electronic communication or use of audio-video electronic means with Court's site and shall include Vulnerable Witness Deposition Centres from where such witnesses may be recorded.

(12) "Designated Video Conferencing Technology" means, any software and/or hardware approved by the High Court from time to time for conducting video conferencing or other audio-visual electronic communication.

(13) "e-Filing" means, electronic filing of applications through the e-filing portal or any other portal approved by the High Court.

(14) “Hybrid Video Conferencing” means, a hearing where some participants appear physically and others join through video conferencing.

(15) “Judicial Proceedings” means, proceedings before a Court and includes disciplinary proceedings.

(16) “Justifiable Circumstances” means, circumstances where it is not practicable, in the opinion of the Court, to conduct proceedings in the usual manner, including pandemics, natural calamities, law and order situations, health or safety concerns, or any other similar situation.

(17) “Live Link” means, an audio-visual link enabling live and near-simultaneous communication between the Court Site and Remote Site.

(18) “Participant” includes:

- (a) a party to the proceedings;
- (b) a witness, complainant, or any person to be examined;
- (c) an Advocate, including a Senior Advocate;
- (d) an Authorised Representative; and
- (e) any other person permitted by the Court.

(19) “Practice Directions (Video Conferencing)” means, directions issued by the Chief Justice from time to time for effective conduct of proceedings through video conferencing.

(20) “Remote Site” means, any place other than the Court Site from where a person participates in proceedings through video conferencing.

(21) “Remote User” means, a person participating in proceedings from a Remote Site through video conferencing.

(22) “Required Person” includes:

- (i) a witness, complainant, or any person to be examined;
- (ii) a person in whose presence proceedings are to be conducted, including an accused;
- (iii) an Advocate or party-in-person;

(iv) any person, including a victim, required to make submissions before the Court; and

(v) any other person permitted by the Court.

(23) “Rules” means, The Madras High Court Video Conferencing Rules, 2026.

(24) “Tribunal” includes all Tribunals under the supervisory jurisdiction of the High Court of Judicature at Madras, except those established under Acts of Parliament.

(25) “Video Conferencing” means, live and near-simultaneous audio-visual communication between the Court and Remote Users through designated technology.

3. *General Principles Governing Video Conferencing and Other Modes of Audio-Visual Electronic Communication.*—

3.1 Applicability and Relationship with Applicable Law—

(1) These rules shall be supplementary to the Applicable Law, and the provisions of such law shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to all judicial proceedings conducted through video conferencing or other modes of audio-visual electronic communication.

(2) In the event of any inconsistency between these rules and the Applicable Law, including procedural laws, the provisions of the Applicable Law shall prevail to the extent of such inconsistency.

3.2 Permissibility of Video Conferencing—

(1) Subject to these Rules and the Applicable Law, video conferencing or other modes of audio-visual electronic communication may be used at all stages of judicial or disciplinary proceedings, including but, not limited to (a) hearings; (b) recording of evidence; (c) examination of parties, witnesses, or accused persons; and (d) appellate or ancillary proceedings.

(2) Where any person required to be present before the Court is unable to appear physically, the Court may permit such participation through video conferencing.

3.3 Discretion of the Court–

(1) The Court may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, permit the conduct of proceedings through video conferencing at any stage, where it is satisfied that such mode is necessary or expedient; and the same would not prejudice the fairness of the proceedings.

(2) The Court may impose such conditions as it deems fit to ensure the integrity, security and fairness of the proceedings.

(3) The order sheet or record of proceedings shall clearly indicate that the proceedings were conducted through video conferencing or other electronic means.

3.4 Nature of Proceedings–

(1) All proceedings conducted through video conferencing or other audio-visual electronic means shall be deemed to be judicial proceedings.

(2) All courtesies, decorum, protocol and procedural safeguards applicable to physical Court proceedings shall apply *mutatis mutandis*.

3.5 Application of Statutory Provisions–

All relevant statutory provisions, including those under the “BNSS”; the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023; the Information Technology Act, 2000; and the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, shall apply to proceedings conducted through video conferencing.

3.6 Use of Secure Technology–

(1) Proceedings shall ordinarily be conducted only through designated and secure video conferencing platforms approved by the High Court or the Government.

(2) Such platforms shall, as far as practicable, incorporate end-to-end encryption; access control mechanisms; and safeguards to ensure confidentiality and data protection.

(3) Notwithstanding the above, the Court may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, permit the use of any other suitable technology in a given case.

3.7 Security and Breach Reporting–

(1) Any instance of unauthorised access; hacking attempt; or security breach, shall be reported forthwith to the Court by the Remote Site Coordinator at the remote site and the Ministerial staff / Bench Clerk at the Court site.

(2) The Court shall take appropriate action in accordance with law.

(3) All such incidents shall be:

(a) documented and logged; and

(b) reported to the High Court for review and audit.

(4) The site Coordinator at the remote site of designated place to ensure no electronic devices are carried by anyone during the proceeding.

3.8 Prohibition on Unauthorised Recording–

(1) No person shall record, store, transmit, publish, or disseminate any judicial proceedings conducted through video conferencing or other audio-visual electronic means, except with the prior permission of the Court.

(2) Any violation of this provision shall be dealt with in accordance with law, including action under the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 and other applicable statutes.

3.9 Decorum and Conduct of Participants–

(1) All participants shall maintain punctuality; keep microphones muted when not speaking; avoid interruptions, disturbances, or background noise; and conduct themselves in a manner befitting the dignity of the Court.

(2) All participants, including Advocates, parties, witnesses, Police officials, and Court staff, shall adhere to the dress code prescribed for physical Court proceedings, subject to such relaxation as may be permitted by the Court.

(3) Any disturbance, misconduct, or breach of decorum may result in exclusion from proceedings; recommencement of proceedings; or such other orders as the Court may deem fit.

(4) All proceedings shall comply, as far as practicable, with the provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 to ensure meaningful access to justice.

3.10 Verification of Identity–

(1) The identity of all participants shall be verified through a valid proof of identity recognised by the Government of India, State Government or Union Territory.

(2) Such proof may be furnished through electronic means or produced during the proceedings, as directed by the Court.

(3) Where such proof is not available, the Court may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, permit participation upon being otherwise satisfied as to the identity of the person.

3.11 Recording of Presence and Participation–

(1) Prior to commencement of proceedings, the presence of all participants shall be recorded.

(2) Participants shall join the proceedings through the designated platform and where applicable, remain in the virtual waiting area until admitted.

3.12 Audio-Visual Quality–

The Court shall ensure that all participants are able to clearly see and hear the proceedings; and the proceedings are conducted with adequate audio and video clarity at all times.

3.13 Timing of Proceedings–

Video conferencing shall ordinarily be conducted during Court working hours, unless otherwise directed by the Court.

3.14 Consent to Recording–

Participation in proceedings through video conferencing shall be deemed to constitute consent to recording of such proceedings at the Court Site, where recording is undertaken in accordance with law.

3.15 Proceedings Not Ordinarily Conducted through Video Conferencing—

The following proceedings shall not ordinarily be conducted through video conferencing, unless otherwise permitted by law or by specific order of the Court:

- (a) recording of judicial confessions of an accused person;
- (b) such other proceedings as the Court may, for reasons to be recorded, consider inappropriate for conduct through video conferencing.

3.16 Applicability to Commissioners and Inquiry Officers—

These Rules shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to proceedings conducted by Commissioners appointed by the Court; and Inquiry Officers or other authorised authorities.

3.17 Overriding Control of the Court—

Notwithstanding anything contained in these Rules, the Court shall retain complete control and supervision over proceedings conducted through video conferencing and may issue such directions as are necessary to secure the ends of justice.

4. *Availability of Video Conferencing.*—

4.1 General Availability—

(1) Hybrid video conferencing facilities shall ordinarily be made available during Court working hours, subject to such directions as may be issued by the Court.

(2) During the hearing of cases, the video conferencing platform may remain active, enabling participants to join proceedings, subject to the control and directions of the Court.

4.2 Mentioning through Video Conferencing—

The Court may permit mentioning through video conferencing, either before or after physical mentioning, subject to the convenience of the Court.

4.3 In Camera Proceedings–

(1) In proceedings directed to be conducted *in camera*, a separate and secure video conferencing link shall be used.

(2) The Court shall ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place to maintain confidentiality and integrity of such proceedings.

(3) Where *in camera* proceedings are conducted physically, the video conferencing facility shall be disabled or suspended for the duration of such proceedings, as directed by the Court.

4.4 Security and Access Control–

Any unauthorised access, attempted breach, or technical compromise shall be reported forthwith to the Court and dealt with in accordance with law by the Remote Site Coordinator at the remote site and the Ministerial staff/ Bench Clerk at the Court site.

5. Application for Conduct of Proceedings through Video Conferencing.—

5.1 Power of Court–

(1) The Court may, either *suo motu* or on application by any party, witness, or other permitted person, direct that proceedings be conducted through video conferencing or other audio-visual electronic communication.

5.2 No Formal Application in Ordinary Cases–

Except where otherwise directed, no formal application shall ordinarily be required for participation through video conferencing, particularly in hybrid hearings or for appearance of Advocates.

5.3 Applications when Specific Requirements are made–

(1) Where a formal application is made, it shall ordinarily be supported by an affidavit specifying the justifiable circumstances; and particulars of the proposed Remote Site, where relevant.

(2) Except in urgent matters, such application shall be decided after notice to the other parties.

5.4 Criminal Proceedings–

In criminal proceedings, the Court may regulate participation through video conferencing in accordance with applicable law, having regard to the nature of proceedings and rights of the accused.

5.5 Civil Proceedings–

In civil proceedings, the Court may permit or direct conduct of proceedings through video conferencing at its discretion.

5.6 Participation of Parties and Advocates–

(1) Parties required to appear may be permitted to do so through video conferencing, subject to compliance with Rule 3 and other safeguards.

(2) Advocates may appear from any remote site for the purpose of making submissions or conducting examination, subject to directions of the Court.

5.7 Directions by Court–

The Court may, while permitting proceedings through video conferencing, issue such directions as may be necessary, including:

- (a) fixing the schedule of proceedings;
- (b) appointment of Coordinators, where required, in accordance with Practice Directions;
- (c) mode of transmission of documents and evidence;
- (d) provision for *in camera* proceedings, where necessary;
- (e) filing of written submissions or compilations;
- (f) allocation of costs and expenses; and
- (g) any other incidental or ancillary directions.

5.8 Costs—

Where conduct of proceedings through video conferencing requires additional arrangements, the Court may direct payment of reasonable expenses by such party as it deems fit.

5.9 Special Situations—

(1) The Court may permit participation through video conferencing in appropriate cases, including matrimonial matters or where parties are located at different jurisdictions.

(2) Proceedings shall ordinarily be scheduled with reference to Indian Standard Time, unless otherwise directed.

6. *Service of Summons / Processes.*—

6.1 Contents of Summons

(1) A summons or process issued for appearance through video conferencing shall, where applicable:

- (a) specify the date and time of the proceedings;
- (b) indicate the Remote Site or designated place, if any;
- (c) require the person to attend with valid proof of identity, in accordance with Rule 3; and
- (d) provide contact details or mode for obtaining access to the video conferencing platform.

6.2 Documents with Summons—

Where a witness is to be examined with reference to any document, the Court may direct that a copy of such document be made available in advance, in accordance with Rule 9.

6.3 Application of Procedural Law—

All provisions relating to service of summons or processes, including consequences of non-attendance, under applicable procedural laws shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to proceedings conducted through video conferencing.

6.4 Saving of Court's Powers—

Nothing in this Rule shall preclude the Court from conducting proceedings through electronic means in accordance with applicable law, even where service is effected by conventional modes.

7. *Examination of Witnesses and Other Persons through Video Conferencing and Audio-Visual Electronic Communication.*—

7.1 Verification of Identity—

(1) Any person to be examined through video conferencing or other audio-visual electronic communication shall, prior to such examination, establish his or her identity in accordance with Rule 3.10.

(2) In the absence of a valid proof of identity, the Court may permit such examination upon the person furnishing an affidavit, duly attested by a Competent Authority, affirming that he or she is the same person who is to depose before the Court.

(3) A copy of such proof of identity or affidavit shall be made available to the opposite party, where required.

7.2 Time of Examination—

The examination of a person through video conferencing shall ordinarily be conducted during Court working hours, unless otherwise directed by the Court.

7.3 Safeguards in Case of Accused—

Where the person to be examined is an accused, the Court shall ensure that:

- * the identity of such person has been duly established in accordance with Rule 3.10; and
- * such person is afforded adequate opportunity to consult with his or her Advocate before and after the proceedings.

7.4 Administration of Oath–

The oath or affirmation to the person examined shall be administered by the Court or by such person as may be authorised by the Court, including the Court Site Coordinator, in accordance with law.

7.5 Recording and Authentication of Evidence–

(1) The Court shall record the evidence of the person examined and, upon completion, shall read over and explain the recorded evidence to such person; and obtain confirmation of its correctness.

(2) The transcript of such evidence shall be authenticated and shall form part of the judicial record in accordance with the procedure specified in this Rule.

7.6 Procedure for Signature and Authentication of Transcript–

(A) Where Digital Signature Facilities are Available

(1) The transcript digitally signed by the Judge or Presiding Officer shall be transmitted electronically to the Remote Site.

(2) The person examined shall take a printout of the transcript; and sign the same;

(3) The signed copy shall be scanned; be digitally certified by the Remote Site Coordinator; and be transmitted back to the Court Site.

(4) The electronically transmitted copy shall form part of the judicial record.

(5) A physical copy shall be dispatched to the Court, preferably within three days, through recognised courier or speed post.

(6) Upon receipt, the Judge shall verify and endorse the document as follows: “Verified and compared with the scanned copy and found to be identical.”

(B) Where Digital Signature Facilities are Not Available

(1) The transcript signed by the Judge shall be transmitted to the Remote Site in non-editable scanned format.

(2) The person examined shall take a printout; and sign the same;

(3) The document shall be countersigned by the Remote Site Coordinator.

(4) The signed document shall be retransmitted to the Court Site in non-editable format.

(5) A printout shall be taken at the Court Site and signed by the Judge, and shall form part of the record.

(6) A physical copy shall be dispatched to the Court within three days, and upon receipt, shall be verified in the manner specified above.

7.7 Recording and Preservation–

(1) An audio-visual recording of the proceedings shall be made at the Court Site and shall form part of the judicial record.

(2) The recording shall be preserved till disposal of appeal or revision in accordance with applicable rules and directions of the Court or the High Court.

(3) Where feasible:

(a) an encrypted master copy, including hash value, may be maintained to ensure integrity of the record; and

(b) a secure backup recording may also be maintained for verification purposes, subject to directions of the Court.

7.8 Protection of Privacy–

The Court may, either on application or *suo motu*, direct appropriate measures to protect the privacy, identity, or dignity of the person examined, having regard to age, gender, physical or mental condition, or other relevant factors.

The anonymity of victims and witnesses shall be maintained in all records and proceedings through the use of dummy names, face-masking, pixelation, avatar masking, electronic distortion of voice, or such other protective measures as the Court may deem fit.

7.9 Role of Remote Site Coordinator–

(1) The Remote Site Coordinator shall perform duties assigned under Practice Directions, including ensuring that:

- (a) no unauthorised person is present at the Remote Site;
- (b) the person examined is not coached, prompted, or influenced;
- (c) the integrity and decorum of proceedings are maintained;

(2) All such functions shall be carried out subject to the control, supervision and directions of the Court.

(3) The Court may, where necessary, call for CCTV footage of the Remote Site, where available and as directed by the Court.

7.10 Continuity of Proceedings–

The examination shall, as far as practicable, proceed without interruption or unnecessary adjournment; however, the Court or Commissioner may grant adjournments on such terms as deemed fit.

7.11 Place of Examination–

(1) The Court may permit a person to be examined from a designated place; or any other appropriate location, including residence or workplace, for reasons to be recorded.

(2) Provided that, the evidence of a witness shall ordinarily be recorded from a designated place, except in exceptional circumstances.

7.12 Examination in Exceptional Circumstances–

Where a person is unable to attend the Court Site or designated place due to illness; physical infirmity; or undue hardship, delay, or expense, the Court may permit examination from such place where the person is located and may direct use of appropriate safeguards, including portable video conferencing systems.

7.13 Power to Decline Video Conferencing—

The Court may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, decline to permit examination through video conferencing where it is of the opinion that such examination would not be conducive to the effective or fair conduct of proceedings.

7.14 Residual Powers of Court—

The Court may impose such further conditions or directions as may be necessary in the facts and circumstances of the case to ensure the fairness, integrity, and effectiveness of the examination.

8. *Conduct of Criminal Proceedings through Video Conferencing and Audio-Visual Electronic Communication.*—

8.1 Electronic Conduct of Proceedings

(1) Subject to the provisions of the “BNSS” and these Rules, all criminal proceedings, including:

- (a) trials;
- (b) inquiries;
- (c) recording of evidence;
- (d) examination of complainants and witnesses; and
- (e) appellate or ancillary proceedings, may be conducted through video conferencing or other audio-visual electronic communication.

(2) Such proceedings shall be conducted in accordance with section 530 of the "BNSS" and other applicable provisions of law.

8.2 Appearance of Persons through Video Conferencing—

(1) Any person required to appear before the Court, including an accused, may be permitted to appear through video conferencing, subject to the provisions of law and these Rules.

(2) Provided that, the first appearance of an accused before the Court shall ordinarily be in physical form, unless the Court,

for reasons to be recorded in writing, permits such appearance through video conferencing.

8.3 Production of Accused and Remand Proceedings–

(1) An accused in judicial custody may be produced before the Court through video conferencing for the purposes of remand, except for the first remand or such proceedings as are not ordinarily permissible through video conferencing under law.

(2) The Court may authorise Police custody or extend judicial custody through video conferencing, subject to satisfaction of legal requirements.

(3) Where the accused is already in custody in the same or any other case, or is undergoing a sentence, the Court may extend remand during inquiry or trial through video conferencing.

8.4 Framing of Charges and Examination of Accused–

(1) Charges may be read over and explained to the accused through video conferencing, and the *plea* of the accused may be recorded.

(2) The examination of the accused under the relevant provisions of law may be conducted through video conferencing.

(3) Authentication of such statements shall be carried out in accordance with the procedure prescribed under these Rules.

8.5 Recording of Evidence–

(1) The evidence of witnesses may be recorded through video conferencing in accordance with Rule 7 of these Rules.

(2) Public servants, Police officers, and expert witnesses may depose through video conferencing from appropriate locations, without the necessity of appearing at a designated place, unless otherwise directed by the Court.

(3) The Court may permit Police Personnel to depose from designated place, including witness rooms in District Police Headquarters or other appropriate locations.

(4) The accused shall be present during the recording of evidence, either physically or through video conferencing, in accordance with law.

8.6 Discharge Proceedings–

The Court may, where necessary, examine the accused through video conferencing prior to passing orders of discharge, in accordance with law.

8.7 Examination of Accused in Custody–

Where an accused in custody is examined through video conferencing, the Court shall ensure proper identification of the accused, in accordance with Rule 3; and authentication of statements or signatures within a reasonable time, preferably within seventy-two hours, through appropriate means including biometric or other legally recognised methods.

8.8 Pronouncement of Judgment–

(1) The pronouncement of judgment may be conducted through video conferencing, in accordance with applicable law.

(2) An accused in custody may be permitted to hear the pronouncement of judgment through video conferencing, subject to compliance with legal requirements.

8.9 Multi-Party Video Conferencing–

(1) In cases involving recording of evidence where the accused is in custody, the Court may direct a multi-party video conferencing arrangement enabling simultaneous participation of the Court; the witness; and the accused.

(2) The Court shall ensure that such arrangement does not prejudice the right of defence of the accused and that all safeguards under law are complied with.

8.10 Exceptional Circumstances–

The Court may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, permit examination of witnesses through video conferencing in exceptional circumstances, subject to ensuring that there is no coercion, inducement, or undue influence; and all safeguards under the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023 and other applicable laws are complied with.

8.11 Examination of Child Witnesses—

(1) The testimony of child witnesses may be recorded through video conferencing from Vulnerable Witness Deposition Centres; Court video conferencing facilities; or offices of the District Legal Services Authority, within whose jurisdiction the child ordinarily resides.

(2) In inter-State or inter-District cases, such examination shall be conducted with due regard to:

- (a) the best interests of the child; and
- (b) safeguards relating to privacy and protection.

(3) Where the child resides outside the jurisdiction of the Court, intimation shall be given to the concerned District Judge or authority at the Remote Site to facilitate such examination.

8.12 Plea Bargaining—

The Court may conduct proceedings relating to plea bargaining through video conferencing in accordance with the provisions of Chapter XXIII of the “BNSS”.

8.13 Overriding Control of the Court—

All criminal proceedings conducted through video conferencing shall be subject to the overriding control and supervision of the Court in accordance with Rule 3.17, and the Court may issue such directions or impose such conditions as may be necessary to ensure fairness of the trial, protection of the rights of the accused, and integrity of the judicial process.

9. *Reference to and Exhibition of Documents through Video Conferencing.*—

9.1 General Principles—

(1) Where any judicial proceeding is conducted through video conferencing or other audio-visual electronic communication, documents may be referred to, transmitted; shown; or exhibited, through electronic means, in accordance with these Rules and applicable law.

(2) The admissibility, proof and evidentiary value of such documents shall be governed by the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023; the “BNSS”; and other applicable laws.

9.2 Mode of Reference to Documents–

(1) Where a document is required to be shown to a person examined through video conferencing:

(A) Where the document is at the Court Site:

- (a) the document may be displayed using a document visualiser or equivalent device; or
- (b) an electronic copy may be shared through screen-sharing or other secure electronic means.

(B) Where the document is at the Remote Site:

- (a) a copy or image of the document shall be transmitted electronically to the Court Site;
- (b) the same shall be simultaneously shown to the person being examined; and
- (c) the Remote Site Coordinator shall ensure immediate transmission of such document to the Court.

9.3 Transmission of Documents–

(1) Documents may be transmitted through designated video conferencing platforms; official e-mail; or such other secure electronic means as may be approved by the Court.

(2) All documents transmitted electronically shall be in a non-editable format, wherever practicable; and be accompanied by sufficient identification details.

(3) The Court may issue directions to ensure authenticity; integrity; and proper custody of such documents.

9.4 Marking and Exhibition of Documents–

(1) The Court may, upon being satisfied as to the identity and relevance of a document, permit such document to be marked or exhibited, subject to objections, if any.

(2) The marking or exhibition of documents shall be recorded in the order sheet or deposition record.

9.5 Procedure for Handling Exhibits–

(A) Where the Document is at the Remote Site–

- (1) The document shall:
 - (a) be signed or acknowledged by the person concerned, where required;
 - (b) be certified by the Remote Site Coordinator; and
 - (c) be endorsed with the exhibit number assigned by the Court.
- (2) The document shall thereafter:
 - (a) be transmitted electronically to the Court; and
 - (b) be dispatched in physical form to the Court, preferably within three days, through recognised courier or registered post.
- (3) With permission of the Court, such document may also be uploaded through the e-filing system.

(B) Where the Document is at the Court Site–

The Court Site Coordinator shall:

- (a) mark the document with the exhibit number assigned by the Court; and
- (b) ensure that the document forms part of the judicial record.

9.6 Authentication and Integrity–

- (1) The Court shall ensure that all documents referred to or exhibited through video conferencing are:
 - (a) properly authenticated; and
 - (b) protected against tampering or unauthorised alteration.
- (2) Where necessary, the Court may direct use of digital signatures; hash values; or other technological safeguards.

9.7 Custody and Preservation—

(1) All documents transmitted, referred to, or exhibited through video conferencing shall form part of the judicial record.

(2) The Court shall ensure proper custody and preservation of such documents in accordance with applicable rules and practice directions.

9.8 Power of Court to Issue Directions—

The Court may, at any stage, issue such directions as may be necessary to ensure:

- (a) proper identification of documents;
- (b) prevention of misuse or unauthorised access;
- (c) secure transmission and storage; and
- (d) compliance with evidentiary requirements.

9.9 Residual Application of Law—

Nothing in this Rule shall derogate from the provisions of applicable law governing admissibility of evidence; proof of documents; or evidentiary standards.

10. *Public Access to Proceedings.*—

10.1 Open Court Principle

(1) Except where proceedings are directed to be conducted *in camera* for reasons to be recorded in writing, the Court shall endeavour to provide access to proceedings to the public, including through video conferencing or other audio-visual electronic communication.

(2) Such access shall be subject to availability of adequate infrastructure and bandwidth; and such conditions and limitations as may be imposed by the Court in the interest of justice, privacy, or orderly conduct of proceedings.

10.2 Presence of Non-Parties at Remote Site—

(1) Where any person, not being a party to the proceedings, is present at a Remote Site such person shall be identified by the Remote Site Coordinator at the commencement of proceedings; and the purpose of such presence shall be disclosed to the Court.

(2) Such person shall be permitted to remain present only with the leave of the Court and subject to such conditions as may be imposed.

11. *Interpretation.*—

Words and expressions used but not defined in these Rules shall have the meanings respectively assigned to them under the applicable laws, including the "BNSS"; the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023; the Information Technology Act, 2000; and the General Clauses Act, 1897, as amended from time to time.

12. *Practice Directions.*— (1) The Chief Justice may, from time to time, issue, amend, or withdraw Practice Directions for the effective implementation and regulation of proceedings conducted through video conferencing or other audio-visual electronic communication.

(2) Such Practice Directions shall be consistent with these Rules and shall be substantially complied with by all Courts and participants.

13. *Power to Remove Difficulties.*— (1) If any, difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of these Rules, the High Court may, by general or special order, make such provisions or give such directions, not inconsistent with the provisions of these Rules, as may appear to it to be necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the High Court may, in any particular case and for reasons to be recorded in writing, relax or dispense with the requirements of any provision of these Rules, subject to such conditions as it may deem fit, in order to secure the ends of justice.

14. *Residual Provisions.*— All matters with respect to which no express provision has been made in these Rules shall be decided by the Court in a manner consistent with the principles of fairness; the requirements of due process; and the interests of justice.

15. *Repeal and Savings.*—

15.1 Repeal—

The Madras High Court Video Conferencing Rules, 2020, and any corresponding rules governing video conferencing for Courts within the State of Tamil Nadu and the Union territory of Puducherry, shall stand repealed from the date of commencement of these Rules.

15.2 Savings—

Notwithstanding such repeal:

(1) All actions taken, proceedings conducted, or orders passed under the repealed Rules shall be deemed to have been validly taken or made and shall not be affected.

(2) All proceedings pending as on the date of commencement of these Rules shall be deemed to have been instituted under these Rules and shall be continued and disposed of accordingly.

(3) All notifications, orders, directions, or instructions issued under the repealed Rules shall, to the extent they are not inconsistent with these Rules, be deemed to have been issued under these Rules and shall continue to remain in force until superseded or withdrawn by the High Court.

PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS

Video Conferencing No. 1

1.1 *General Conduct and Discipline.*— (1) All proceedings conducted through video conferencing or other modes of audio-visual electronic communication shall be conducted with the same degree of solemnity, discipline, and decorum as is observed in physical court proceedings, and all Participants shall conduct themselves accordingly.

(2) All Advocates, Authorised Representatives, parties-in-person, witnesses, required persons, Court staff, and any other persons permitted to participate (hereinafter collectively referred to as “Participants”) shall:

- (a) join the video conferencing proceedings punctually at the time specified by the Court;
- (b) remain present throughout the proceedings unless permitted otherwise by the Court;
- (c) adhere strictly to the sequence in which cases are taken up, as determined by the Court; and
- (d) comply with all directions issued by the Court from time to time.

1.2 *Dress Code and Appearance.*— (1) All Participants shall maintain appropriate standards of attire consistent with the dignity and decorum of judicial proceedings:

- (a) Advocates shall appear in professional attire as prescribed under the applicable laws, Bar Council rules and High Court rules, subject to such relaxation as may be permitted by the Court;
- (b) Police officials shall appear in the prescribed uniform unless specifically exempted by the Court;
- (c) Judicial Officers and Court staff shall adhere to the dress code prescribed by the High Court; and
- (d) Parties-in-person, witnesses, and other Participants shall be suitably and properly dressed in a manner befitting judicial proceedings.

(2) The Presiding Officer shall have the discretion to determine whether the attire of any Participant is appropriate and such determination shall be the final.

1.3 *Courtroom Protocol and Behaviour.*— (1) All Participants shall observe proper Courtroom etiquette and shall:

- (a) maintain courtesy, dignity, and respect towards the Court and other Participants;
- (b) refrain from interrupting the Court or other Participants;
- (c) avoid engaging in any parallel activity unrelated to the proceedings; and
- (d) maintain attentiveness throughout the proceedings.

(2) Participants shall ensure that:

- (a) microphones are kept muted when not speaking;
- (b) microphones are unmuted only when permitted by the Court; and
- (c) audio clarity is maintained without disturbance.

3. Participants shall, as far as practicable:

- (a) position themselves in a manner that ensures clear visibility;
- (b) maintain steady camera positioning; and
- (c) ensure proper framing of face and surroundings.

1.4 *Mode of Address.*— Participants shall:

- (a) address the Court in a respectful and appropriate manner consistent with established conventions;
- (b) address Court Officers by their official designation; and
- (c) address Advocates in accordance with professional norms and conventions.

1.5 *Environment and Surroundings.*— (1) Every Participant shall ensure that the place from which he or she is participating is:

- (a) quiet and free from disturbance;
- (b) adequately lit; and
- (c) conducive to the conduct of judicial proceedings.

(2) Participants shall ensure that:

- (a) no unauthorised person is present at the location during proceedings;
- (b) no external influence, interference, or distraction affects participation; and
- (c) mobile phones and other devices are placed in silent mode.

1.6 *Control and Regulation by Court.*— (1) All video conferencing proceedings shall be conducted subject to the overriding control and supervision of the Court in accordance with

Rule 3.17, and the Court may issue such directions, pass such orders, or take such measures as may be necessary to ensure orderly, fair and effective conduct of proceedings.

(2) Without prejudice to its inherent powers, the Court may:

- (a) mute any Participant;
- (b) restrict participation of any person;
- (c) remove any Participant from the video conferencing session; and
- (d) pass such other orders as may be necessary to ensure orderly conduct of proceedings.

2. Infrastructure, Facilities and Equipment.—

2.1 Minimum Infrastructure Requirements—

(1) The following infrastructure shall, as far as practicable, be available at both the Court Site and the Remote Site:

- (a) computers, laptops, or other electronic devices with compatible software;
- (b) cameras capable of transmitting clear video images;
- (c) microphones and audio output devices ensuring clarity of sound;
- (d) display units for proper viewing of Participants and documents;
- (e) scanning and printing facilities for handling documents;
- (f) facilities for transmission and sharing of documents; and
- (g) uninterrupted power supply systems.

2.2 Connectivity and Network Requirements—

(1) Adequate, stable and reliable internet connectivity shall be ensured at all locations to facilitate uninterrupted proceedings.

(2) All systems shall incorporate reasonable safeguards, including:

- (a) protection against unauthorised access;
- (b) secure authentication mechanisms; and
- (c) appropriate data protection measures.

2.3 Physical Conditions at Video Conferencing Locations–

All video conferencing locations shall ensure:

- (a) adequate lighting;
- (b) proper seating arrangements;
- (c) privacy and confidentiality; and
- (d) restricted access to authorised persons only.

2.4 Facilities at Court Site–

(1) Courts shall, as far as practicable, be equipped with integrated video conferencing systems.

(2) Court staff shall ensure:

- (a) proper functioning of audio and video systems;
- (b) clarity and continuity of communication; and
- (c) readiness of systems prior to commencement of proceedings.

2.5 Facilities at Remote Site–

(1) The Remote Site shall, as far as practicable, ensure:

- (a) availability of appropriate devices and connectivity;
- (b) facilities for document transmission;
- (c) adequate lighting and proper environment; and
- (d) secure and controlled access.

2.6 Safeguards at Non-Judicial Locations–

(1) Where the Remote Site is not under the control of the Court or Judicial Department, reasonable safeguards shall be ensured, including monitoring mechanisms, where available and as directed by the Court.

(2) Where required, appropriate methods may be adopted for authentication or execution of documents in accordance with the Rules.

2.7 Institutional Video Conferencing Facilities—

Dedicated video conferencing facilities may, as far as practicable, be established at:

- (a) Court complexes;
- (b) prisons;
- (c) Police establishments;
- (d) forensic laboratories; and
- (e) other designated institutions.

3. *Video Conferencing Platform - Functional and Administrative Requirements.*—

3.1 Functional Capabilities—

The video conferencing platform designated by the High Court shall provide, at a minimum:

- (a) real-time audio and video communication;
- (b) screen sharing and document sharing facilities;
- (c) participant management and control features; and
- (d) facility for recording proceedings at the Court Site, where permitted.

3.2 Administrative and Management Features—

The system shall, as far as practicable, provide:

- (a) scheduling mechanisms for hearings;
- (b) integration with case management systems, where available;
- (c) waiting room or lobby functionality;
- (d) maintenance of access logs of Participants; and
- (e) administrative control mechanisms at the Court Site.

3.3 Security and Data Protection—

The platform shall incorporate reasonable safeguards to ensure:

- (a) confidentiality of proceedings;
- (b) integrity and protection of data; and
- (c) secure access limited to authorised Participants.

3.4 Compatibility and Accessibility—

The platform shall support:

- (a) access across commonly used devices and operating systems; and
- (b) participation by multiple users simultaneously, as required by the Court.

3.5 Confidential Communication Facilities—

Where required, the platform may provide facilities for confidential interaction between Participants, including between an accused person and his or her Advocate, subject to the directions of the Court.

3.6 Control and Preservation—

The Court shall retain control over:

- (a) the conduct and regulation of proceedings; and
- (b) recording and preservation of proceedings in accordance with applicable law and rules.

4. *Preparatory Arrangements.*—

4.1 Appointment of Coordinators—

(1) For every proceeding conducted through video conferencing or other audio-visual electronic communication, there shall be a Coordinator at the Court Site (hereinafter referred to as the “Court Site Coordinator”), who shall be responsible for facilitating and supervising the conduct of such proceedings from the Court Site.

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- (2) The Court Site Coordinator shall ordinarily be:
- (a) the Video Conferencing Host; or
 - (b) such officer or member of the Court staff as may be nominated by the Court for the purpose.
- (3) A Coordinator at the Remote Site (hereinafter referred to as the “Remote Site Coordinator”) shall be appointed in the following cases:
- (a) where a witness in a criminal proceeding is to be examined through video conferencing; and
 - (b) where a person accused of an offence is to be examined or produced through video conferencing.
- (4) In all other cases, the Court may, having regard to:
- (a) the nature of the proceedings;
 - (b) the status of the person participating;
 - (c) the location of the Remote Site; and
 - (d) the necessity to ensure the integrity and fairness of the proceedings, direct the appointment of a Remote Site Coordinator, for reasons to be recorded in writing.
- (5) Notwithstanding anything contained herein, the Court may, in appropriate cases and for reasons to be recorded in writing:
- (a) appoint any fit and proper person as Coordinator; or
 - (b) dispense with the requirement of a Remote Site Coordinator, where it is satisfied that adequate safeguards exist.
- (6) All requests for appointment of a Remote Site Coordinator shall be communicated through official electronic means, including but not limited to e-mail, e-office systems, or such other digital platforms as may be approved by the High Court, so as to ensure expeditious coordination and avoid delay in proceedings.

4.2 Designation of Remote Site Coordinator–

(1) The Remote Site Coordinator shall, as far as practicable, be an officer or person holding a responsible position at the location from which participation is to take place.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the above, the Remote Site Coordinator shall ordinarily be appointed as follows:

Sl. No.	Remote Site	Coordinator
(1)	(2)	(3)
(i)	Overseas location	Official of the Indian Consulate, Embassy, or High Commission of India.
(ii)	Court in another State / Union Territory.	Authorised official nominated by the concerned District Judge.
(iii)	Mediation Centre / District Legal Services Authority (including Taluk Legal Services Authority).	Officer nominated by the Chairperson or Secretary.
(iv)	Jail / Prison	Jail Superintendent or Officer-in-Charge.
(v)	Government Hospital	Medical Superintendent or authorised Officer.
(vi)	Police Headquarters / Special Police Units.	Officer nominated by the Competent Authority.
(vii)	Child Care Institutions	Superintendent or authorised officer
(viii)	Women's Institutions	Superintendent or authorised officer
(ix)	Other Government Institutions	Officer-in-Charge
(x)	Forensic Science Laboratory	Administrative Officer-in-Charge or nominee.
(xi)	e-Sewa Kendra (Court Complex)	Technical staff deputed therein.

(3) In cases not covered above, the Court may appoint any person deemed fit and proper, including:

- (a) a Retired Judicial Officer;
- (b) an officer of the Legal Services Authority; or
- (c) any other responsible person capable of ensuring compliance with these rules.

4.3 Duties and Responsibilities of Coordinators.—

The provisions contained in this Practice Direction are intended to facilitate and operationalise Rule 3 and shall be implemented subject to the control, supervision, and directions of the Court.

4.3.1 General Duties (Applicable to Both Court Site and Remote Site Coordinators)—

The Coordinators shall:

- (1) Ensure that the video conferencing facilities, including hardware, software and connectivity are functional, properly configured, and capable of supporting uninterrupted and effective conduct of proceedings;
- (2) Ensure strict compliance with the provisions of these Rules and Practice Directions, including the prohibition against unauthorised recording, storage, transmission, or publication of any part of the proceedings;
- (3) Immediately bring to the notice of the Court any:
 - (a) technical failure affecting the conduct of proceedings;
 - (b) breach of prescribed protocol or procedure; or
 - (c) suspected compromise of the integrity, confidentiality, or fairness of the proceedings;
- (4) Facilitate smooth, continuous, and effective communication between the Court Site and the Remote Site throughout the duration of the proceedings, including coordination between participants and technical personnel where necessary.

4.3.2 Duties of the Remote Site Coordinator–

The Remote Site Coordinator shall:

- (1) Ensure that all persons required to participate in the proceedings are present at the Remote Site sufficiently in advance, and in any case not less than thirty minutes prior to the scheduled commencement of proceedings;
- (2) Verify the identity of every person present at the Remote Site in accordance with Rule 3.10, and ensure that such verification is completed prior to commencement of proceedings and, where required, is duly recorded or certified;
- (3) Ensure that no unauthorised person is present at, or has access to, the Remote Site during the proceedings, and that access is restricted strictly to authorised participants;
- (4) Ensure that the person being examined:
 - (a) is not coached, prompted, tutored, induced, influenced, or coerced in any manner whatsoever;
 - (b) does not refer to any document, electronic device, communication, or external aid without the express permission of the Court;
- (5) Ensure that the environment at the Remote Site is:
 - (a) quiet and free from disturbance, interruption, or external interference;
 - (b) adequately illuminated to ensure clear visibility of the participant;
 - (c) conducive to the proper, dignified, and effective conduct of judicial proceedings;
- (6) Ensure that any CCTV system or other monitoring mechanism, where available at the Remote Site, is functional during the proceedings and that any recording or footage is preserved, secured, and made available, if so directed by the Court;

- (7) Maintain decorum, discipline, and order at the Remote Site at all times, and ensure that all participants comply with the directions issued by the Court during the proceedings;
- (8) Assist in the secure and prompt transmission of documents, audio-visual material, recordings, or any other material as directed by the Court, ensuring integrity and confidentiality of such transmission.

4.3.3 Duties of the Court Site Coordinator–

The Court Site Coordinator shall:

- (1) Generate, manage, and securely communicate access links, meeting IDs, passwords, or other credentials for participation in the video conferencing proceedings sufficiently in advance, ensuring that such access is restricted to authorised participants;
- (2) Provide separate, secure, and restricted access mechanisms for *in camera* proceedings, confidential hearings, or proceedings involving sensitive material, where so directed by the Court;
- (3) Ensure that participants are admitted into the virtual hearing room in an orderly, controlled, and secure manner, strictly in accordance with the directions of the Court;
- (4) Facilitate verification of identity of participants, where required, in coordination with the Remote Site Coordinator or as directed by the Court;
- (5) Ensure that all documents, records, pleadings, exhibits, or electronic materials required for the proceedings are duly received, processed, and transmitted to the Remote Site Coordinator or other participants as per Rule 9, as directed by the Court;
- (6) Conduct a test session prior to commencement of proceedings, preferably at least thirty minutes in advance, to verify and ensure:
 - (a) clarity and audibility of audio transmission;
 - (b) quality, resolution, and continuity of video transmission;

- (c) adequacy and stability of network connectivity; and
- (d) proper functioning of all equipment, software, and systems to be used during proceedings;
- (7) Remain available and accessible throughout the duration of the proceedings to monitor performance, address any technical issues, and coordinate with technical personnel for immediate resolution of any disruptions;
- (8) Ensure that access to the video conferencing session is strictly restricted to authorised persons and that such access is terminated, disabled, or revoked immediately upon conclusion of the proceedings.

4.4 Advance Notice and Transmission of Documents–

- (1) The Court may, wherever necessary or expedient, issue advance notice specifying:
 - (a) the date and time of the video conferencing proceedings;
 - (b) the mode and manner of access;
 - (c) any special arrangements, requirements, or instructions to be followed by participants;
- (2) The Court may transmit documents, records, pleadings, exhibits, or other materials in electronic form to the Remote Site Coordinator for the purposes of:
 - (a) examination of witnesses;
 - (b) reference during proceedings;
 - (c) any other judicial or procedural purpose;
- (3) The Remote Site Coordinator shall ensure that:
 - (a) such documents or materials are made available to the concerned person only with the prior permission and direction of the Court;
 - (b) such documents are not copied, reproduced, transmitted, or accessed by any unauthorised person, and are handled in a secure and confidential manner.

4.5 Pre-Hearing Arrangements–

(1) Prior to the scheduled hearing, the Court shall ensure that all necessary arrangements are completed, including:

- (a) transmission of relevant documents and materials to the Remote Site;
- (b) confirmation of availability and readiness of all required participants;
- (c) readiness and adequacy of technical infrastructure at both Court Site and Remote Site;

(2) The Remote Site Coordinator shall confirm readiness of the Remote Site, including technical setup and participant availability, to the Court Site Coordinator before commencement of proceedings.

4.6 Assistance to Participants–

(1) The Court may, where necessary and in the interest of justice, direct the Coordinator at the Court Site or Remote Site to arrange for appropriate assistance, including:

- (a) a translator, where the participant is not conversant with the language of the Court;
- (b) a sign language expert, where the participant is speech or hearing impaired;
- (c) an interpreter, special educator, or facilitator, where the participant is differently-abled;
- (d) a reader, scribe, or assistant, where the participant is visually challenged;
- (e) any other assistance necessary to ensure meaningful, effective, and fair participation in the proceedings;

(2) The provision of such assistance shall be in conformity with applicable laws relating to persons with disabilities and principles of access to justice.

4.7 Special Provisions–

4.7.1 Child Witnesses–

In cases involving examination of child witnesses, the Remote Site Coordinator shall preferably be:

- (a) the Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority; or
- (b) a Retired Judicial Officer or any other competent and suitable person nominated by the District Judge.

4.7.2 Absence or Inadequacy of Facilities–

Where adequate video conferencing facilities are not available at the designated Remote Site:

- (1) The Court may request the concerned District Judge or Competent Authority to:
 - (a) appoint a Remote Site Coordinator; and
 - (b) arrange suitable and appropriate facilities at a nearby Court, institutional location, or other approved premises;
- (2) The Court may also direct deputation of staff, technical personnel, or support personnel to ensure continuity and proper conduct of proceedings.

4.7.3 Examination of Witnesses Outside India–

Where a witness is located outside India, the procedure prescribed under applicable law, including provisions relating to Letters Rogatory and Mutual Legal Assistance, shall be followed to the extent consistent with these Rules and Practice Directions.

4.8 Payment of Honorarium–

The Coordinator at the Remote Site, and any translator, interpreter, expert, or other person engaged for facilitating video conferencing proceedings, shall be paid such honorarium, fees, or expenses as may be determined by the Court in accordance with applicable rules, regulations, or administrative instructions.

*5. Technical and Procedural Safeguards.—**5.1 Duties and Responsibilities of Remote Participants—*

Without prejudice to the duties of Coordinators specified in Clause 4.3, every participant appearing through video conferencing shall:

- (1) Ensure that the device used is equipped with a functional camera, microphone, and audio output system capable of providing clear, continuous, and uninterrupted communication;
- (2) Preferably utilise a desktop or laptop system, particularly in proceedings involving recording of evidence, and avoid the use of mobile devices where practicable;
- (3) Ensure availability of stable, secure, and high-speed internet connectivity sufficient to sustain uninterrupted participation throughout the proceedings;
- (4) Ensure that the device used is secure, free from malware or unauthorised software, and protected by appropriate cybersecurity measures;
- (5) Ensure compliance with all provisions relating to identity verification, decorum, conduct, and participation in accordance with Rule 3.10 and these Practice Directions.

5.2 Technical Compliance at Remote Site—

Where proceedings are conducted from a Remote Site or any place other than the Court Site, the Coordinator at such location, where appointed, shall ensure that all technical, infrastructural, and procedural requirements prescribed under these Rules and Practice Directions are fully complied with in all respects.

5.3 Satisfaction of the Court—

- (1) At the commencement of proceedings conducted through video conferencing or other modes of audio-visual electronic communication, the Court shall ensure compliance with the requirements relating to clarity of audio and video, and effective participation of all participants in accordance with Rule 3.12;

- (2) The Court shall satisfy itself that:
 - (a) all participants are able to clearly see and hear the proceedings; and
 - (b) all participants can be clearly seen and heard by the Court and by other participants, to the extent necessary for the conduct of proceedings;
- (3) Where the Court is not so satisfied, it may:
 - (a) direct the Court Site Coordinator or Remote Site Coordinator, as the case may be, to take immediate corrective steps;
 - (b) require adjustment of equipment, positioning, lighting, or connectivity;
 - (c) suspend or defer the proceedings until such deficiencies are rectified; or
 - (d) pass such other directions as may be necessary to ensure that the proceedings are conducted in a fair, effective, and reliable manner;
- (4) The Court may, at any stage of the proceedings, reevaluate the adequacy of audio-visual quality in accordance with Rule 3.12 and issue such further directions as may be necessary to maintain compliance.

5.4 Resolution of Technical Difficulties—

- (1) Any participant experiencing any technical difficulty, including issues relating to connectivity, audio clarity, video quality, or effective participation, shall immediately inform the Court through the Court Site Coordinator, particularly where such difficulty affects compliance with Rule 3.12;
- (2) The Court Site Coordinator shall promptly take steps to identify, address, and resolve such difficulty in coordination with technical personnel, and shall inform the Court of the steps taken and the status of resolution;

(3) Where any participant asserts that inadequate audio or video quality or technical disruption has caused prejudice to such participant, such assertion shall be immediately placed before the Court for consideration;

(4) The Court may, upon being satisfied that such grievance is substantiated and that there has been non-compliance with Rule 3.12, pass such orders as may be necessary, including:

- (a) declaring the proceedings, or any part thereof, to be incomplete;
- (b) directing reconnection, repetition, or re-recording of the relevant portion of the proceedings;
- (c) directing physical appearance of the concerned participant; or
- (d) passing such other orders as may be necessary to secure the ends of justice.

5.5 Publication of Access Details—

All Courts shall ensure publication of official contact details, including e-mail addresses and mechanisms for accessing video conferencing proceedings, through official platforms within a reasonable time, so as to facilitate effective access and participation by authorised persons.

6. *Compliance and Operational Procedure.*—

6.1 Compliance with Practice Directions—

All Advocates, Authorised Representatives, parties-in-person, witnesses, required persons, and any other participants permitted by the Court (hereinafter collectively referred to as "Participants") shall strictly comply with these Practice Directions, in addition to the provisions of the Rules and any specific directions issued by the Court from time to time.

6.2 Recording of Presence and Verification of Identity–

(1) Prior to commencement of proceedings, the Court Site Coordinator shall verify the identity of all Participants in accordance with Rule 3.10, through valid proof of identity furnished by such Participants through electronic means or otherwise, as directed by the Court;

(2) The Coordinator shall record the presence of all Participants and, where required, maintain a record of such verification for the purposes of the proceedings;

(3) Where any Participant seeks masking of identity or appearance, including partial or full concealment of face or voice, such request shall be communicated in advance to the Court Site Coordinator, who shall place the same before the Court, and appropriate orders shall be obtained prior to commencement of proceedings.

6.3 Access to Video Conferencing Proceedings–

(1) The Court Site Coordinator shall provide the Live Link, Meeting ID, password, or other access credentials to the Participants through the registered e-mail address or mobile number furnished by them;

(2) Access to video conferencing proceedings shall be restricted to authorised Participants, and no person shall join or participate in the proceedings without prior permission of the Court;

(3) Participants shall join the proceedings through the designated platform and shall remain in the virtual waiting area, where such facility is available, until admitted by the Coordinator;

(4) Once the proceedings have commenced, no person shall be permitted to join or rejoin the proceedings except with the express permission of the Court.

6.4 Regulation of Video Conferencing Proceedings–

The establishment, conduct, regulation, continuation, and termination of video conferencing proceedings shall be governed by the orders and directions of the Court, subject to the overriding control of the Court as per Rule 3.17, and no Participant shall interfere with or attempt to control the same.

6.5 Continued Satisfaction of the Court regarding Participation—

The Court shall ensure continued compliance with the requirements relating to visibility, audibility, and effective participation of all Participants in accordance with Rule 3.12 and Clause 5.3, and may, at any stage of the proceedings, verify whether such requirements are being fulfilled and issue such directions as may be necessary.

6.6 Reporting of Technical Difficulties—

Any difficulty relating to connectivity, audio clarity, video quality, or participation shall be reported and addressed in accordance with Clause 5.4, and the Coordinator shall act promptly to ensure compliance with the directions of the Court.

7. *General Procedure.*—

7.1 Applicability—

The procedure set out in this Chapter shall apply to all proceedings conducted through video conferencing or other modes of audio-visual electronic communication, without prejudice to any specific provisions contained elsewhere in these Rules or Practice Directions.

7.2 Use of Designated Technology—

(1) The Coordinator at the Court Site shall ensure that video conferencing proceedings are conducted through the Designated Video Conferencing Technology approved by the High Court.

(2) Provided that, in the event of any technical fault, failure, or other sufficient cause, the Court may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, permit the use of any other appropriate software or technology for that particular proceeding.

(3) Provided further that nothing contained in these Rules shall prevent the Court, for reasons to be recorded in writing, from adopting any suitable electronic mode or technological solution to facilitate the conduct of proceedings.

7.3 Identification and Verification of Persons–

(1) Any person to be examined through video conferencing or other audio-visual electronic communication shall, prior to such examination, establish his or her identity in accordance with Rule 3.10;

(2) The Coordinator shall verify such identity and, where required, record the details for the purposes of the proceedings.

(3) The Court may, for reasons to be recorded, permit participation without production of identity proof where it is otherwise satisfied as to the identity of the person, consistent with Rule 3.10.

(4) The Court may direct any person to display the original identity proof on camera during the proceedings for verification.

(5) Where identity is disputed or appears doubtful, the Court may require additional verification, including confirmation through the Remote Site Coordinator or by such other reliable means as may be deemed appropriate.

7.4 Confirmation in Civil Proceedings–

In civil proceedings, the party seeking examination of any person through video conferencing shall confirm to the Court:

- (a) the location from which such person shall participate;
- (b) the willingness of such person to be examined through video conferencing; and
- (c) the availability of necessary technical infrastructure at the proposed time and place.

7.5 Confirmation in Criminal Proceedings–

(1) In criminal proceedings, where any person is required to be examined or to participate, including prosecution witnesses, defence witnesses, Court witnesses, or accused persons, the concerned Advocate or party shall confirm:

- (a) the location of such person;
- (b) the willingness of such person to participate; and
- (c) the availability of necessary facilities.

(2) Where the person to be examined is an accused, the prosecution shall confirm the location of the accused at the Remote Site.

7.6 Scheduling of Proceedings—

Video conferencing proceedings shall ordinarily be conducted during Court working hours.

Provided that, the Court may, having regard to the facts and circumstances of the case, fix any other time or schedule.

7.7 Examination of Witness where Accused is in Custody—

Where the accused is in custody and is not physically present at the Court Site, the Court shall, where necessary, direct a multi-party video conferencing arrangement enabling simultaneous participation of the Court, the witness, and the accused.

The Court shall ensure that:

- (a) the right of defence of the accused is not prejudiced; and
- (b) all safeguards prescribed under these Rules are fully complied with.

8. *Oral Arguments.*—

8.1 Applicability of Physical Court Procedure—

The procedure governing oral arguments before physical Courts shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to proceedings conducted through video conferencing or other audio-visual electronic communication.

8.2 Submission of Authorities and Notes

Participants intending to:

- (a) cite judicial precedents, statutory provisions, or extracts from authoritative texts; and/or
- (b) rely upon written submissions or notes of arguments,

shall ensure that copies thereof, whether in physical or electronic form, are:

- (i) made available at the Court Site; and
- (ii) served upon all other Participants sufficiently in advance of the hearing.

9. *Costs of Video Conferencing.*—

9.1 General Principles—

In the absence of specific provisions governing costs, the Court may determine and apportion the expenses of video conferencing having regard to the facts and circumstances of the case.

9.2 Costs in Criminal Proceedings—

In criminal proceedings, the Court may direct that the following expenses shall be borne by such party as it deems fit:

- (1) Expenses relating to video conferencing facilities;
- (2) Costs of preparation and transmission of records;
- (3) Fees payable to the Remote Site Coordinator;
- (4) Fees payable to translators, interpreters, or special educators.

9.3 Costs in Civil Proceedings—

In civil proceedings, as a general rule, the party requesting participation through video conferencing shall bear the associated costs, unless otherwise directed by the Court.

9.4 Discretion of the Court—

The Court may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, waive, reduce, or reallocate such costs, in whole or in part.

10. *Recording of Proceedings.*—

10.1 Recording in Order Sheet—

In all cases where proceedings are conducted through video conferencing, the Court shall record in the order sheet that such proceedings were conducted through video conferencing.

10.2 Preservation of Recordings—

Where recording of proceedings is undertaken, such recording shall be preserved in accordance with applicable rules and directions of the High Court.

11. *Presence of Third Parties.*—

11.1 Permission of Court—

Third parties shall be permitted to be present during video conferencing proceedings only upon a specific order of the Court.

11.2 Nature of Participation—

Such third parties shall remain passive participants and shall not address the Court or make submissions except with prior permission.

11.3 Identification and Disclosure—

Where any person not connected with the case is present at the Remote Site:

- (a) such person shall be identified by the Coordinator at the commencement of proceedings; and
- (b) the purpose of such presence shall be disclosed to the Court.

11.4 Continuance of Presence—

Such person shall be permitted to remain present only with the leave of the Court and subject to such conditions as may be imposed.

12. *Legal Aid, Lok Adalat, and Jail Adalat Proceedings.*—

12.1 Conduct through Video Conferencing—

Proceedings relating to Legal Aid Clinics, Camps, Lok Adalats, or Jail Adalats may be conducted through video conferencing in accordance with applicable law.

12.2 Examination by Competent Authority—

Where such proceedings are conducted, the person at the Remote Site shall be examined by the Competent Authority, including the Chairman, Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority, or Members of the Lok Adalat, as the case may be.

12.3 Legal Effect—

Any award or order passed in such proceedings shall have the same force and effect as an award or order passed in physical proceedings.

12.4 Transmission of Orders—

A copy of the award or order, along with the record of proceedings, shall be transmitted to the Remote Site without delay.

High Court, Madras,
29th July 2026.

REGISTRAR GENERAL.