

## A MARCH TOWARDS NEW INDIA



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A new aspirational India is on the march. A mature democracy, India at 70, needs strong Institutions evolving with the changing times to fulfil rising aspirations. Land - the summum bonum of rural existence, and agricultural structure is the most important determinant of India's development. As land is the critical income generating asset of rural India, effective administration of land is a vital function of the State. The critical Land Reforms legislations are the Land Ceiling Act, the Tenancy Act and the Land Revenue Act.

The implementation of India's Land Reforms policies is mandated on 2 critical institutions – the Board of Revenue and the District Collector/ Sub-Divisional Officer. The Boards of Revenue in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar were established in 1944 as the apex appellate authorities and were led by ICS officers in pre-independence years. These institutions of governance will continue to exist for another 100 years as critical pillars of Indian democracy. It is important that they are strengthened and remain vibrant. Today many of the Boards of Revenue and the District Collector offices are in acute need of modernization.

The Board of Revenue is Rajasthan's greatest Institution dating back to 70 years. It has 21 Courts and supervisory responsibilities over 1327 subordinate revenue courts. The Board of Revenue currently has 65000 appeals, the largest pendency of court work in any Board of Revenue in India. The cases pertain to appeals for partition of land holdings, declaration of tenancy rights, land ceiling, reference cases from District Collectors for protection of common lands and revision cases filed by petitioners against interim orders of subordinate courts. A manual system dealing with case-files makes effective supervision and timely disposal extremely challenging. Several trial courts are having case-loads of over 2000 cases. The first appellate authorities are having case-loads of over 2500-3000 cases. The Board of Revenue and the trial courts are witnessing a scenario where cases being filed are far higher than the cases being decided. Further judgments of the Board of Revenue and District Collectors are permanent records and require efficient document management systems if they are to sustain over the next

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century. A manual system of handling case files of this magnitude makes the Boards of Revenue resemble a slowly sinking Titanic. There is only one way to save the Titanic. The solution lies in embracing technology modernization – a Digital Rajasva Mandal. To usher in a Digital Revolution in Revenue Court Administration.

The Digital Rajasva Mandal would represent a fully online Institution meeting the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century land reforms. It represents a significant step in the March towards a New India. Technology modernization to be implemented over a period of 12 months will cover the Courts in the Board of Revenue, the Courts of Revenue Appellate Authorities, the Courts of Divisional Commissioners, the Courts of District Collectors, the Courts of Sub Divisional Officers and Courts of Tehsildars.

The Digital Rajasva Mandal components are judgment copies, daily orders, classification and bunching of cases in cause lists; online follow-up of files in revision cases called from Subordinate Courts; online follow-up of service of summons notices; conveying the decrees for implementation to Tehsil offices; SMS messages to Advocates on the listing of cases in cause lists; and Digital panels for display of cases being heard in the court. The Revenue Courts Management Systems (RCMS) software for Revenue Courts of Rajasthan has been designed to ensure speedy implementation of these activities.

In a historical first step, the Board of Revenue for Rajasthan has started placing all judgments in public domain on its website from September 2017. The Revenue Appellate Authorities and District Collectors/ Sub Collectors would be placing cause lists and judgments from November 2017. The Board of Revenue for Rajasthan would create a Rajasthan Revenue Courts Grid which would provide the litigants with a wide array of judgments of Revenue Courts on a common platform. This would represent the First Digital Revolution in Revenue Court Administration in India.

There has been a transformation in rural administration with the Jan Dhan - Aadhar - Bhim applications and direct benefits transfers. India's institutions must keep pace with the changes. Institutional reform in Revenue Courts is a major step forward. The Digital Rajasva Mandal would provide the roadmap for Revenue Courts of India for providing timely justice. It would signify the First Digital Revolution in Revenue Courts Administration and the March towards a New India.

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