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COURT PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND CASE DISPOSAL MECHANISMS IN INDIA: ROLE OF MEDIATION AND NATIONAL LOK ADALATS IN EXPEDITING JUSTICE

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I. ABSTRACT

The Indian judiciary is an integral part of the constitutional structure and plays an extremely important role in the true spirit of the rule of law, the protection of fundamental rights and the settlement of disputes between individuals, institutions and the State. This study examines the role of court performance management and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms, particularly mediation, Pre-Institution Mediation (PIM), and National Lok Adalats, in improving the efficiency of justice delivery in India. The study analyses data for 2024–2025 to assess the extent to which these mechanisms contribute to dispute resolution and reduction of judicial burden. The findings indicate that out of 4,72,420 cases received for mediation, 98,406 cases were successfully settled, reflecting a settlement rate of approximately 20.83%. In commercial disputes, 59,568 PIM applications were received, although a substantial number were recorded as non-starters, while 877 cases resulted in settlement. National Lok Adalats demonstrated considerable disposal capacity, with 14,89,61,603 cases taken up across four sessions and 10,42,37,861 cases disposed of, reflecting a disposal rate of approximately 69.98% and settlements amounting to approximately Rs. 75,836.87 crore. The study underscores the importance of strengthening ADR infrastructure, institutional coordination, awareness, and performance-management practices to improve case disposal and judicial efficiency.

II. KEYWORDS

Court Performance Management, Mediation, National Lok Adalat, Alternative Dispute Resolution.

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III. INTRODUCTION

Access to justice denotes not merely the removal of obstacles that prevent individuals from approaching a court, but a constitutional assurance that the adjudicatory system will furnish effective, accessible, speedy and affordable relief. The Supreme Court of India endorsed this broader understanding in *Anita Kushwaha v. Pushap Sudan*, where it held that access to justice is a facet of the rights guaranteed by Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution and identified four facets of that right, namely an effective adjudicatory mechanism, reasonable accessibility in terms of distance, speed of adjudication and affordability of the process.³

Article 39A of the Constitution reinforces this mandate by obliging the State to secure equal justice and to provide free legal aid, and the legal services framework, including Lok Adalats, gives effect to that directive. The Indian judiciary is an integral part of the constitutional structure and plays an extremely important role in the true spirit of the rule of law, the protection of fundamental rights and the settlement of disputes between individuals, institutions and the State. The judicial system comprises the Supreme Court of India, the High Courts, the district and subordinate courts, and specialised courts and tribunals.

The Constitution of India vests the judiciary with the power of judicial review, which enables the courts to test legislative enactments and executive action against constitutional limits, and thereby to adjudicate questions of public importance and examine the legality of governmental decisions. In this manner the judiciary upholds the supremacy of the Constitution and safeguards the rights of citizens.

Court performance management is crucial as the effectiveness of a justice delivery system not only relies on its judges' numbers but also on efficiency of judicial process in managing workloads, resources, procedures and time. (Aithala et al., 2024)⁴ study emphasized that over 1,700 district courts across India find that

³ Anita Kushwaha v. Pushap Sudan, (2016) 8 SCC 509, paras 26 and 31.

⁴ Aithala, V., Sachan, A., Sen, S., Payal, H., & Bhattacharya, C. (2024). Decision time: Illuminating performance in India's district courts. *Data & Policy*, 6, e32. <https://doi.org/10.1017/dap.2024.24>

variables such as workload distribution, case characteristics and case administration, and not number of judges or judicial working days alone, affect court performance

Court management is the systematic planning, coordination, administration and supervision of court resources and processes in order to effectively and timely provide justice. It includes more than the adjudicatory role of judges, but it also involves the administration of human resources, court facilities, case files, finances, technology and administration.

Reform should be comprehensive and systemic in nature and include alternative dispute resolution (ADR), mediation, Lok Adalats, legal aid, judicial infrastructure, human-resource planning, coordination among the judiciary and the executive, the Bar, police, prosecution and litigants, etc. This need for reform is not only at the court level, but also through concerted institutional effort. It is hoped that the system of justice dispensing will be transformed ultimately to provide speedy, affordable, accessible, transparent, accountable and quality justice, so as to restore trust in the justice system and to make the constitutional right to access justice more real.

The integration of ICT into court administration has facilitated e-filing, digital maintenance of case records, virtual hearings, online court listings, and electronic case-tracking systems. These components are closely interconnected, and deficiencies in any one area may adversely affect the overall efficiency and effectiveness of judicial functioning (Fabri & Langbroek, 2000)⁵.

A. Research Objectives

1. To examine the role of mediation, Pre-Institution Mediation and National Lok Adalats in facilitating speedy and effective resolution of disputes in India.
2. To analyse the reported performance of these alternative dispute resolution mechanisms during 2024–2025 in terms of cases received, cases settled or disposed of, settlement rates and disposal outcomes.

⁵Fabri, M. & Langbroek, P.M. (2000). The challenge of change for judicial systems : developing a public administration perspective. *International Institute of Administrative Sciences*, 14, 1382-4414.

3. To examine the statutory framework governing mediation, Pre-Institution Mediation and Lok Adalats and assess how their respective legal designs influence their operational outcomes.
4. To assess the relevance of ADR mechanisms to court performance management and case disposal, particularly in the context of judicial pendency and the objective of improving access to speedy, affordable and effective justice.

B. Research Questions

1. To what extent did mediation, Pre-Institution Mediation and National Lok Adalats contribute to dispute resolution and case disposal during 2024–2025?
2. What do the reported settlement and disposal outcomes of these mechanisms reveal about their contribution to court performance management and the reduction of judicial burden?
3. How does the statutory framework governing mediation, Pre-Institution Mediation and National Lok Adalats influence their respective settlement and disposal outcomes?
4. What institutional and operational challenges affect the effectiveness of these ADR mechanisms in promoting speedy and accessible justice in India?

C. Research Methodology

The study adopts a doctrinal and empirical research methodology based primarily on secondary data. The doctrinal component examines the constitutional, statutory and judicial framework governing mediation, Pre-Institution Mediation and Lok Adalats, including the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, the Commercial Courts Act, 2015, the Mediation Act, 2023, and the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, together with relevant decisions of the Supreme Court of India.

The empirical component analyses officially reported secondary data for the period 2024–2025 relating to mediation, Pre-Institution Mediation and National Lok Adalats. The principal data sources include the Indian Judiciary Annual Report

2024–2025, government reports and parliamentary material, National Judicial Data Grid information, and publications of the National Legal Services Authority. The study uses descriptive analysis to examine the number of cases received, taken up, settled or disposed of, and the corresponding settlement or disposal rates.

The data are presented through tables and interpreted in the context of the statutory framework applicable to each ADR mechanism. The study also undertakes a comparative assessment of the three mechanisms, while recognising that their respective jurisdictions, case categories and procedural designs are different. Accordingly, the study does not treat their aggregate figures as directly comparable measures of judicial performance. The research is based on secondary sources and does not involve primary surveys, interviews or field-based data collection.

D. Review of Literature

Xu (2017)⁶ examined the digitalisation of judicial processes through the “intelligent court system” of China. The study acknowledges that online case resolution, electronic filing and the online payment of court fees reduce the time and effort borne by litigants. It cautions, however, that the pilot e-court models gave insufficient consideration to the potential adverse effects of the project. The article therefore presents digitalisation as a development that carries efficiency gains and institutional risks in equal measure, rather than as an unqualified improvement upon conventional procedure.

Procopiuck (2018)⁷ examined the significance of digitalization in the court management system and compare it with the convention way of dealing. The study found that digitalisation did not consider minimization of time taking in all process of cases; it means digitalization is not alone considering the factor to reduce the backlog of cases.

⁶ Xu, A. (Lu) (2017). Chinese judicial justice on the cloud: A future call or a Pandora’s box? An analysis of the “intelligent court system” of China. *Information & Communications Technology Law*, 26(1), 59–71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600834.2017.1269873>

⁷ Procopiuck, M. (2018). Information technology and time of judgment in specialized courts: What is the impact of changing from physical to electronic processing? *Government Information Quarterly*, 35(3), 491–501.

Djamaludin et al. (2023)⁸ found that implementation of e-Court in Indonesia positively influenced efficiency of judicial processes. They emphasize the e-court system helps in improvement of accessibility and effectiveness of judicial procedures.

Gopal (2024)⁹ highlighted the mechanism to improve justice delivery system in India. In his study the author focused towards major concerns like delayed justice and inefficiency in judicial functioning.

Chauhan (2025)¹⁰ in study analysed the need for judicial reforms in India to provide fair and timely justice. The study highlighted establishment of All India Judicial Service (AIJS), adoption of ADR mechanisms of judicial accountability. These two aspects are helpful for more accessible and responsive justice delivery system in India.

The studies examined above address court digitalisation and general judicial reform. Scholarship and official material dealing directly with alternative dispute resolution in India supply a further and more proximate strand. The Law Commission of India, in its 222nd Report on *Need for Justice-dispensation through ADR etc.*, recorded that formal courts remain inaccessible to large sections of society on account of poverty, illiteracy, procedural formality and inordinate delay, and recommended wider recourse to ADR as a corrective.¹¹ The Commission subsequently examined the operational defects in Section 89 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 in its 238th Report, which followed the analysis of that provision by the Supreme Court in *Afcons Infrastructure Ltd. v. Cherian Varkey Construction Co. (P) Ltd.*¹²

⁸ Djamaludin, M. F. A., Ar-Rasyid, Y., & As-Sayyis, I. A. (2023). Assessing the impact of electronic court systems on the efficiency of judicial processes in the era of digital transformation. *Volksgeist: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum dan Konstitusi*, 6(1), 1–18.

⁹ Gopal, G. (2024). Evaluating the impact of judicial reforms on access to justice in India. *Indian Journal of Law*, 2(5), 32–37.

¹⁰ Chauhan, S. (2025). Judicial reforms in India: Strengthening the rule of law for a just and equitable society. *VIDYA: A Journal of Gujarat University*, 4(2), 250–260.

¹¹ Law Commission of India, *Need for Justice-dispensation through ADR etc.* (Report No. 222, April 2009).

¹² Law Commission of India, *Amendment of Section 89 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 and Allied Provisions* (Report No. 238, December 2011); *Afcons Infrastructure Ltd. v. Cherian Varkey Construction Co. (P) Ltd.*, (2010) 8 SCC 24.

Institutional practice has developed alongside this scholarship. The Mediation and Conciliation Project Committee, constituted by the Chief Justice of India in 2005, standardised mediator training and supervised the court-annexed mediation centres through which the mediation data examined in this study are generated.¹³ The literature nevertheless remains divided between two strands that do not meet.

Studies of digitalisation measure procedural efficiency without examining consensual dispute resolution, while writing on ADR analyses doctrine and institutional design without testing recent disposal data against it. The present study addresses that gap by examining the reported outcomes of mediation, Pre-Institution Mediation and National Lok Adalats for 2024-25 against the distinct statutory framework that governs each mechanism.

IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK GOVERNING MEDIATION AND LOK ADALATS

Three distinct statutory regimes govern the mechanisms examined in this study, and their design determines the outcomes recorded in the tables that follow. Section 89 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 empowers a civil court, where it appears that elements of a settlement exist, to refer a pending suit to arbitration, conciliation, judicial settlement or mediation, or to a Lok Adalat. The Supreme Court clarified the scope and operation of this provision in *Afcons Infrastructure Ltd. v. Cherian Varkey Construction Co. (P) Ltd.*, holding that the court must consider every case for such reference.¹⁴ The mediation figures reported in Table 1 arise principally from references of this character.

Pre-Institution Mediation rests on a separate and compulsory footing. Section 12A of the Commercial Courts Act, 2015, inserted in 2018, requires a plaintiff in a commercial suit of Specified Value that contemplates no urgent interim relief to exhaust pre-institution mediation before instituting the suit. In *Patil Automation Pvt. Ltd. v. Rakheja Engineers Pvt. Ltd.*, the Supreme Court held that requirement to be

¹³ Mediation and Conciliation Project Committee, Supreme Court of India, constituted by the Chief Justice of India in April 2005 under Section 89 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908.

¹⁴ Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, s. 89; *Afcons Infrastructure Ltd. v. Cherian Varkey Construction Co. (P) Ltd.*, (2010) 8 SCC 24, paras 24 and 26.

mandatory and directed that a plaint filed in breach of it be rejected under Order VII Rule 11 of the Code.¹⁵ Section 5 of the Mediation Act, 2023 renders pre-litigation mediation voluntary in civil and commercial matters generally, but its proviso preserves the Section 12A regime for commercial disputes of Specified Value.¹⁶ Because Section 12A compels the claimant to initiate mediation while leaving the opposite party at liberty to decline participation, the statutory design itself explains, in substantial measure, why 88.52% of the applications recorded in Table 2 ended as non-starters.

Lok Adalats operate under Chapter VI of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. Section 19 authorises the Legal Services Authorities and Committees to organise Lok Adalats, Section 20 governs the reference of pending and pre-litigation matters to them, and Section 22 confers upon them the powers of a civil court. Section 21 determines the legal effect of their outcome: every award is deemed to be a decree of a civil court, is final and binding upon all parties, and attracts no appeal to any court.¹⁷ A mediated settlement, by contrast, derives its binding force from the recorded settlement agreement, and a settlement reached under Section 12A takes effect as an arbitral award on agreed terms under Section 30(4) of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996. The disposal figures in Table 3 therefore record outcomes that are immediately executable as decrees, which distinguishes them in legal character from the mediation outcomes recorded in Tables 1 and 2.

V. COURT PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND CASE DISPOSAL MECHANISMS

Bakshi, Kim and Randhawa (2025)¹⁸ model case management at the Supreme Court of India as a case-management queue, in which the same bench hears a matter across multiple service encounters spread over time. Using data-driven calibrated

¹⁵ Commercial Courts Act, 2015, s. 12A (inserted by Act 28 of 2018); *Patil Automation Pvt. Ltd. v. Rakheja Engineers Pvt. Ltd.*, (2022) 10 SCC 1.

¹⁶ Mediation Act, 2023, s. 5(1) and the proviso thereto.

¹⁷ Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, ss. 19 to 22, particularly s. 21(1) and s. 21(2).

¹⁸ Bakshi, N., Kim, J., & Randhawa, R. S. (2025). Service operations for justice-on-time: A data-driven queueing approach. *Manufacturing & Service Operations Management*, 27(1), 305–321. <https://doi.org/10.1287/msom.2023.0530>

simulations, the study identifies the allocation of judicial time between the pre-admission and post-admission stages as a principal driver of congestion, and reports that improved scheduling can reduce the expected disposition time by as much as 65%, from an average of approximately 275 days to approximately 96 days, without any increase in judicial strength. The study thus establishes that delay and pendency respond to the management of judicial resources and not to numerical strength alone.

Court performance is conventionally assessed through three indicators, namely pendency, the case clearance rate, which expresses cases disposed of as a proportion of cases instituted in a given period, and the average time taken to disposal. Current figures disclose the scale of the task. As on 31 December 2025, 4,76,57,328 cases were pending before the district and subordinate courts, 63,66,023 before the twenty-five High Courts and 92,101 before the Supreme Court of India, according to data placed before Parliament by the Ministry of Law and Justice on the basis of the National Judicial Data Grid.¹⁹ Pendency before the district judiciary rose by 5.84% over the preceding three years, which indicates that institution continues to outpace disposal and that the aggregate clearance rate remains below unity. These figures constitute the baseline against which the ADR outcomes examined below must be read.

Table 1: Cases Settled through Mediation

Year	Cases Received	Cases Settled through Mediation
2024-25	472420	98406

Source: Indian Judiciary Annual report 2024-25, Published by Supreme Court of India. <https://sci.gov.in>

Analysis: Table 1 presents the performance of mediation as an important mechanism of ADR during 2024-25. Out of a total of 4,72,420 cases received for mediation, 98,406 cases were successfully settled, representing approximately 20.83% of the total cases received. This indicates that mediation contributed significantly to the

¹⁹ Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India, reply to Lok Sabha Unstarred Question (answered 13 February 2026), based on National Judicial Data Grid data as on 31 December 2025.

resolution of a substantial number of disputes without requiring prolonged adjudication through conventional court proceedings. These outcomes are particularly important for justice dispensation, as successful mediated settlements can reduce the burden of pending cases before courts, save judicial time and enable parties to arrive at mutually acceptable solutions. Thus, the data highlight the growing importance of mediation as an effective ADR mechanism in promoting timely, accessible and efficient delivery of justice.

Table 6.2: Pre-Institution Mediation in Commercial Disputes

Period	No. of applications received for mediation	No. of application where mediation remains non-starter	No. of applications where parties reached a settlement
2024-2025	59568	52730	877

Source: Indian Judiciary Annual report 2024-25, Published by Supreme Court of India. <https://sci.gov.in>

Analysis: Table 2 presents the status of Pre-Institution Mediation (PIM) in commercial disputes during 2024-2025. During the period, a total of 59,568 applications were received for mediation, indicating considerable reliance on mediation as an alternative mechanism for resolving commercial disputes before initiating formal litigation. However, 52,730 applications remained non-starters, representing a significant proportion of the total applications and indicating challenges in securing the participation or cooperation of parties in the mediation process.

Despite this limitation, 877 applications resulted in settlement, demonstrating the effectiveness of PIM in facilitating consensual resolution of commercial disputes. The data highlight both the potential and implementation challenges of pre-institution mediation in India. By enabling parties to resolve disputes without immediately

approaching courts, PIM can reduce litigation, save time and costs, and contribute to reducing the burden on commercial courts.

Table 3: Total Disposal in National Lok Adalats Organised During the Financial Year 2024-2025

Dated	Total		
	Taken Up	Disposed Of	Settlement Amount (in Rs.)
11.05.24	41902115	22839988	169213339961
14.09.24	32214348	23231070	195818862075
14.12.24	35722698	27256254	211214157315
08.03.25	39122442	30910549	182122300352
Total	148961603	104237861	758368659703

Source: Indian Judiciary Annual report 2024-25, Published by Supreme Court of India. <https://sci.gov.in>

Note: The session-wise figures reproduced above are the consolidated figures published in the Annual Report 2024-25. They exceed the provisional figures released by the National Legal Services Authority on the day of each session, which were compiled before all State Legal Services Authorities had submitted their returns. The third National Lok Adalat held on 14.09.2024, for example, was provisionally reported as having settled 1,14,56,529 cases involving approximately Rs. 8,482.08 crore.²⁰ The totals further aggregate pre-litigation matters with cases already pending before the courts, and only the latter category represents a direct reduction in judicial pendency. The disaggregated split between pre-litigation and pending matters is accordingly necessary before these figures are read as a measure of relief afforded to the courts.

²⁰ National Legal Services Authority, press releases dated 14 September 2024 and 14 December 2024 (provisional same-day figures).

Analysis: Table 3 presents the overall disposal performance of National Lok Adalats conducted during 2024–2025. Across four sessions, a total of 14,89,61,603 cases were taken up, out of which 10,42,37,861 cases were disposed of, which represents a disposal rate of approximately 69.98%, involving a settlement amount of approximately Rs. 75,836.87 crore. The data demonstrate the extensive reach and effectiveness of Lok Adalats in resolving disputes through consensual settlement. Their large-scale disposal capacity contributes to lowering litigation costs and to promoting speedy, affordable and accessible ADR-based justice dispensation in India, although a substantial proportion of the caseload comprises pre-litigation matters that were never instituted before a court.

VI. FINDINGS

The findings demonstrate that mediation, Pre-Institution Mediation and National Lok Adalats contribute to case disposal and to the consensual resolution of disputes outside conventional adjudication. During 2024–2025, mediation resulted in the settlement of 98,406 of the 4,72,420 cases received, a settlement rate of 20.83%. Pre-Institution Mediation produced 877 settlements from 59,568 applications, while 52,730 applications, amounting to 88.52%, ended as non-starters, which discloses a persistent difficulty in securing the participation of the opposite party under a provision that compels only the claimant to initiate the process. National Lok Adalats disposed of 10,42,37,861 of the 14,89,61,603 cases taken up across four sessions, a disposal rate of 69.98%, involving settlements of approximately Rs. 75,836.87 crore.

These three datasets cannot be ranked against one another, because the scope of each mechanism differs. Court-referred mediation operates upon suits already instituted, mediation under Section 12A operates only upon commercial disputes of Specified Value, and National Lok Adalats take up pre-litigation matters alongside pending cases, including large volumes of traffic challan, bank recovery and motor accident claims. Each mechanism must therefore be assessed on its own terms. A further limitation follows from the data themselves. The reported Lok Adalat figures are not disaggregated into pre-litigation and pending matters, and only the latter reduce

institutional pendency. Measured against a pendency of 4,76,57,328 cases before the district judiciary as on 31 December 2025, the aggregate ADR outcomes are substantial in volume, but the available data sustain the conclusion that these mechanisms contribute to case disposal rather than the stronger conclusion that they have demonstrably reduced the burden upon the conventional courts.

VII. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

First, the non-starter rate of 88.52% in Pre-Institution Mediation requires a legislative and administrative response. Section 12A compels only the claimant to initiate mediation and attaches no consequence to the refusal of the opposite party to appear. The Central Government should consider amending the Commercial Courts (Pre-Institution Mediation and Settlement) Rules, 2018 to require the recording of reasons for non-appearance, and to enable the commercial court to take unexplained non-participation into account while awarding costs. Mediation centres should additionally be directed to effect service through electronic modes in addition to the existing modes of notice.

Secondly, data reporting by mediation centres and Legal Services Authorities should be standardised. Published returns should separate pre-litigation matters from pending cases, state the category of dispute, and record the time taken from reference to settlement. Absent such disaggregation, the contribution of ADR to institutional pendency cannot be measured, nor can the three mechanisms examined in this study be meaningfully assessed against one another.

Thirdly, National Lok Adalat sessions should be deployed more deliberately for pending cases. The National Legal Services Authority and the High Courts should identify categories of long-pending matters amenable to settlement, including motor accident claims, complaints under the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881 and matrimonial disputes, and refer them under Section 20 of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 well in advance of each session, rather than relying upon case identification undertaken shortly before the sitting.

Fourthly, ADR infrastructure requires sustained institutional investment. The Mediation Council of India constituted under the Mediation Act, 2023 should

expedite the recognition of mediation service providers and the accreditation of mediators, so that the voluntary regime under Section 5 of that Act acquires practical content. Awareness programmes conducted by District Legal Services Authorities should accompany this expansion, particularly among litigants in commercial and matrimonial matters.

Fifthly, court performance management should be integrated with ADR policy. The National Judicial Data Grid should publish case clearance rates and average disposal times alongside pendency, and should record ADR referrals and their outcomes as a distinct field, so that the effect of referral upon disposal may be evaluated on a continuing basis rather than reconstructed from annual reports.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study examined whether mediation, Pre-Institution Mediation and National Lok Adalats improve case disposal in India, and what their reported outcomes for 2024–2025 disclose about court performance management. The answer is a qualified one. Mediation settled 20.83% of the cases referred to it and National Lok Adalats disposed of 69.98% of the matters taken up, while Pre-Institution Mediation settled 1.47% of the applications received. These mechanisms accordingly resolve disputes at a scale that conventional adjudication could not absorb, yet the available data do not establish a measurable reduction in judicial pendency, which stood at 4,76,57,328 cases before the district judiciary as on 31 December 2025.

The contribution of this paper lies in reading the reported ADR data against the statutory framework that produces it. The non-starter rate of 88.52% in Pre-Institution Mediation is not an administrative failure alone; it follows from a provision that compels initiation without compelling participation. The finality that Section 21 of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 attaches to a Lok Adalat award explain, in turn, why that mechanism records the highest disposal volume. Court performance management in India therefore requires that ADR be treated not as an adjunct to adjudication, but as a distinct statutory process whose design determines its results and whose outcomes must be reported in a form that permits measurement.

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B. Legislation

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3. Commercial Courts Act, 2015 (India), s. 12A.
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