

FAST TRACK SPECIAL COURTS – POLITY

The Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) in Delhi, established under the FTSCs Scheme 2019 for speedy trial of rape and child sexual abuse cases, have disposed of only around 43% of cases as of June 2025. This is significant as the slow disposal rate undermines public confidence (despite dedicated mechanisms) in the justice system's ability to swiftly address crimes of such severity.

Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) Scheme

Centrally Sponsored Scheme

The scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Law & Justice as a centrally sponsored initiative, with financial assistance drawn from the Nirbhaya Fund, which was created for safety and security of women.

Objective

The FTSCs are designed to ensure time-bound trial and disposal of cases of rape and those registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.

Disposal Target

Each FTSC is expected to dispose of at least 165 cases per year, thereby reducing pendency and expediting justice delivery.

Timeline & Coverage

Originally launched in 2019, the scheme has been extended twice, with the latest extension valid until 31st March 2026, aiming to set up 790 FTSCs across the country.

Judicial Mandate: The POCSO Act, 2012 mandates that Special Courts must complete trials within one year from the date of taking cognizance of the offence.

Need for FTSCs

Case Backlogs

India faces a large pendency of sexual offence cases; the Supreme Court in July 2019 directed that every district with more than 100 pending POCSO cases must establish exclusive Special Courts.

Timely Justice

Harsh punishment alone is insufficient as a deterrent unless justice is delivered quickly and efficiently. Fast-tracking ensures that victims get closure without prolonged trauma.

Deterrence Factor

Swift trials and strict punishment enhance the deterrence value of the justice system, sending a strong signal against crimes like rape and child abuse.

Public Trust

Establishing FTSCs enhances citizens' confidence in the justice system, especially among vulnerable groups like women and children.

Performance of FTSCs

Operational Status (as of June 2025)

A total of 725 FTSCs are functioning across 29 States/UTs, of which 392 are exclusive POCSO courts.

Efficiency Achieved

In 2024 alone, FTSCs achieved an impressive 96% disposal rate of registered cases, showing their ability to significantly reduce pendency.

Geographic Coverage

While most states have operational FTSCs, some lag in fully utilizing the sanctioned numbers due to administrative and resource constraints.

Challenges Facing FTSCs

Insufficient Numbers

Out of 1,023 sanctioned FTSCs, only about 700 are operational, whereas an estimated additional 1,000 courts are required to effectively deal with the existing backlog.

Quality Concerns

Critics argue that fast-tracking one type of case may come at the expense of others, as judges are often reallocated from existing courts, which may delay trials of non-sexual offences.

Lack of Victim-Friendly Infrastructure

Many FTSCs do not have Vulnerable Witness Deposition Centers (VWDCs), separate waiting areas for victims, or female prosecutors, making the trial process stressful for survivors.

Inadequate Human Resources

Shortage of trained judges, prosecutors, counselors, and psychologists reduces the effectiveness of FTSCs in providing justice that is both speedy and sensitive.

Measures to Strengthen FTSCs

Judicial Improvements

Appoint dedicated Special Judges exclusively for POCSO and rape cases. Provide regular sensitization training for judges, prosecutors, and court staff to handle child and sexual assault cases with empathy. Ensure appointment of female public prosecutors wherever possible to improve survivor comfort and trust.

Victim Support Facilities

Establish Vulnerable Witness Deposition Centers (VWDCs) in every district to enable child-friendly, in-camera recording of victim statements. Deploy child psychologists and counselors in FTSCs for pre-trial support and courtroom assistance, ensuring survivors do not face re-traumatization. Provide survivors with legal aid clinics and guidance centers attached to FTSCs for continuous support.

Technology in Courts

Equip FTSCs with audio-video recording facilities, LCD projectors, and IT-enabled tools to ensure transparency in proceedings. Promote e-filing of cases, digital records, and video conferencing, reducing delays due to administrative bottlenecks.

Forensic Strengthening

Expand the capacity of forensic laboratories to ensure timely testing and reporting of DNA, medical, and other forensic evidence. Train forensic staff and court personnel in evidence handling, digital forensics, and victim-sensitive practices. Integrate forensic reports with digital court records for faster case progress.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/fast-track-courts-in-delhi-fail-to-fulfil-promise-of-providing-speedy-justice/article69917647.ece>