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Judgments Should Be Signed Using Digital Signature; Avoid Uploading Scanned Versions Of Printed Copies: Supreme Court

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The Supreme Court observed that judgments should be accessible to persons from all sections of society including persons with disability.

The court added that the judgments should be signed using digital signatures.

"They should not be scanned versions of printed copies. The practice of printing and scanning documents is a futile and time-consuming process which does not serve any purpose. The practice should be eradicated from the litigation process as it tends to make documents as well as the process inaccessible for an entire gamut of citizens.", the bench comprising Justices DY Chandrachud and AS Bopanna observed.

The bench observed thus while disposing an appeal against a judgment of Himachal Pradesh High Court that had upheld an order of Central Government Industrial Tribunal. The court issued broad guidelines (<https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/dont-confuse-or-confound-readers-supreme-court-issues-guidelines-on-writing-simple-lucid-judgmentsstate-bank-of-india-vs-ajay-kumar-sood-2022-livelaw-sc-706-207421>) on writing judgments after it found that the impugned judgment of the High Court is incomprehensible.

The court also shared its suggestions for improving the readability and accessibility of the judgments.

It is also useful for all judgments to carry paragraph numbers as it allows for ease of reference and enhances the structure, improving the readability and accessibility of the judgments. A Table of Contents in a longer version assists access to the reader.

The court also emphasized the importance of making judgments accessible to persons from all sections of society, especially persons with disability. It made the following observations:

All judicial institutions must ensure that the judgments and orders being published by them **do not carry improperly placed watermarks** as they end up making the documents inaccessible for persons with visual disability who use screen readers to access them.

Courts and tribunals must also ensure that the version of the judgments and orders uploaded is accessible and signed using digital signatures. They should not be scanned versions of printed copies.

The practice of printing and scanning documents is a futile and time-consuming process which does not serve any purpose. The practice should be eradicated from the litigation process as it tends to make documents as well as the process inaccessible for an entire gamut of citizens

Case details

State Bank of India vs Ajay Kumar Sood | 2022 LiveLaw (SC) 710 | CA 5305 of 2022 | 16 August 2022

(https://main.sci.gov.in/supremecourt/2021/5546/5546_2021_3_27_37306_JudgmerAug-2022.pdf) | **Justices DY Chandrachud and AS Bopanna**

Headnotes

Judgments - Broad guidelines on judgment writing - While judges may have their own style of judgment writing, they must ensure lucidity in writing across these styles - Incoherent judgments have a serious impact upon the dignity of our institutions - "IRAC" method of judgment writing - The judge must write to provide an easy-to-understand analysis of the issues of law and fact which arise for decision. (Para 10-28)

Judgments - Accessibility - Judgments to carry paragraph numbers and a table of contents in a longer version - Judgments should be accessible to persons from all sections of society including persons with disability - They should not have improperly placed watermarks and should be signed using digital signatures - They should not be scanned versions of printed copies. The practice of printing and scanning documents is a futile and time-consuming process which does not serve any purpose. The practice should be eradicated from the litigation process as it tends to make documents as well as the process inaccessible for an entire gamut of citizens. (Para 20-21)

Click here to Read/Download Judgment (https://www.livelaw.in/pdf_upload/710-state-bank-of-india-v-ajay-kumar-sood-16-aug-2022-432255.pdf)

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
CIVIL APPELLATE JURISDICTION
DR. DHANANJAYA Y. CHANDRACHUD; J., A.S. BOPANNA; J.

August 16, 2022

Civil Appeal No 5305 of 2022 (Arising out of SLP (C) No 4038 of 2021)
State Bank of India and Another versus Ajay Kumar Sood

Judgments - Broad guidelines on judgment writing - While judges may have their own style of judgment writing, they must ensure lucidity in writing across these styles - Incoherent judgments have a serious impact upon the dignity of our institutions - "IRAC" method of judgment writing - The judge must write to provide an easy-to-understand analysis of the issues of law and fact which arise for decision. (Para 10-28)

Judgments - Accessibility - Judgments to carry paragraph numbers and a table of contents in a longer version - Judgments should be accessible to persons from all sections of society including persons with disability - They should not have improperly placed watermarks and should be signed using digital signatures - They should not be scanned versions of printed copies. The practice of printing and scanning documents is a futile and time-consuming process which does not serve any purpose. The practice should be eradicated from the litigation process as it tends to make documents as well as the process inaccessible for an entire gamut of citizens. (Para 20-21)

(Arising out of impugned final judgment and order dated 27-11-2020 in CWP No.3597/2020 passed by the High Court of Himachal Pradesh at Shimla)

For Petitioner(s) Mr. Sanjay Kapur, AOR Ms. Subhra Kapur, Adv. Ms. Megha Karnwal, Adv. Mr. Arjun Bhatia, Adv. Mr. Aashish Kumar, Adv. Ms. Akshata Joshi, Adv.

For Respondent(s) Mr. Colin Gonsalves, Sr. Adv. Ms. Radhika Gautam, AOR Ms. Anjali Dubey, Adv. Ms. Hetvi, Adv.

J U D G M E N T

Dr Justice Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud, J

1. Leave granted.
2. This appeal arises from a judgment dated 27 November 2020 of a Division Bench of the High Court of Himachal Pradesh. The High Court affirmed the order of the Central Government Industrial Tribunal¹ dated 09 July 2019.
3. In 2013, the appellant issued a charge sheet to the respondent in a disciplinary enquiry on a charge of gross misconduct. The respondent was charged with (i) gross misconduct including disrupting the functioning of the branch of the bank and misbehavior with the branch manager; (ii) gross misconduct including gross negligence and threatening the branch manager; (iii) gross misconduct including gross negligence and threatening the branch manager; (iv) disrupting smooth functioning by preventing other employees from carrying out their functions; (v)

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Tags

State Bank of India vs Ajay Kumar Sood | 2022 LiveLaw (SC) 706
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Justice DY Chandrachud (<https://www.livelaw.in/tags/justice-dy-chandrachud>)

Justice AS Bopanna (<https://www.livelaw.in/tags/justice-as-bopanna>)
