

## **Most HCs working with depleted number of judges: Government**

Most high courts in India are operating with almost half the sanctioned strength of judges and, in some cases, even one-third of the approved strength, Minister of State for Law and Justice P.P. Chaudhary informed the Rajya Sabha on Friday.

According to government figures given in a written reply to the Upper House, as against Allahabad High Court's approved strength of 160 judges, it has only 78 judges and 82 vacancies.

The High Court of Judicature at Hyderabad has only 24 judges as against approved strength of 61 judges.

The Chhattisgarh High Court has only eight judges against an approved strength of 22, and the Karnataka High Court only 26 judges against an approved 62.

Similarly, the Madras High Court has 38 judges against the approved strength of 75, while the Patna High Court is functioning with 27 judges as against approved strength of 53 judges.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has 44 judges against an approved strength of 85.

"There are vacancies of judges in the Supreme Court and in various high courts. These vacancies mainly occurred due to increase in judge strength from 906 on June 30, 2014 to 1,079, retirement, resignation, death, elevation of judges etc," Chaudhary submitted in the written reply.

Besides, no appointment was made to the Supreme Court or the high courts between April and December 2015 due to the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act case being considered by the apex court, the minister said.

"Further in view of the National Judicial Appointments Commission (Act) case from April 2015 till the date of pronouncement of judgment, that is, December 16, 2015, only those additional judges whose terms were expiring were given extensions of three months as per the Supreme Court orders dated May 12, 2015, and July 15, 2015. No other appointments were made," he said.

Chaudhary said that at the government's initiative, the matter was taken up with the Supreme Court and the process of appointment of judges resumed.

"During 2016, 110 additional judges of high courts have been made permanent. Also, four and 52 judges have been appointed in the Supreme Court and the high courts respectively," he said.