NGT Online Portal

An electronic smart court to address environmental protection issues

Edited by **MOHAN DAS VISWAM**

Facilitating an effective, IT based and less-paper Grievance Redressal System to handle environmental disputes involving multi-disciplinary issues, the NGT online solution has enabled digitization of all the court documents that get stored in the repository (Document Management System), thereby maintaining confidentiality of information. 24x7 e-filing facility for litigants has led to a decrease in queues at registry counters. Enhanced and efficient case management has resulted in faster dealing of pleas and pendency reduction.

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The National Green Tribunal (NGT) was established in 2010 to develop national laws on environment and implement expeditious remedies in cases related to environmental protection, conservation of forests and other natural resources, and enforcement of any legal rights related to environment effectively. NGT is a specialized judicial body equipped with expertise solely for adjudicating environmental cases in the country. The Tribunal's orders are binding, and it has the power to grant relief in the form of compensation and damages to affected persons.

In this direction, NGT, with the help of the National Informatics Centre (NIC), has initiated NGT online portal to enrich public awareness on the clean and green environment by publishing various government initiatives/ acts/ notifications. The portal also aims to facilitate an effective, IT based and less-paper Grievance Redressal System through digitization of various processes.

Initially, the NGT online portal was designed and implemented for the Principal Bench of NGT, New Delhi. Later, seeing its importance and utility, the services with additional features were extended to all India basis to its constituent benches, viz. Easter Zone (Kolkata), Western Zone (Pune), Southern Zone (Chennai) and Central Zone (Bhopal) Benches w.e.f. September 2019.

Objectives

The portal (https://ngtonline.nic.in/efiling) has been initiated to accomplish the following goals:

- To ensure the activities of NGT align with the philosophy of Digital India.
- To facilitate effective and time-bound citizen-centric service delivery
- To provide accessibility of information to all the stakeholders with transparency
- To provide affordable, accessible, cost-effective and transparent justice delivery system
- To enable digitization and transformation of NGT
- To encourage green governance-through Paperless Courts at NGT
- To increase productivity with efficiency through automation of front-end/ back-end processes
- To ensure effective and efficient delivery of G2C and G2G services

Features

Facilitate citizen-centric services

Digitally transformed services for improving ease of doing business

Encouragement to cashless transactions through digital payments

Key principles of NGT

Availability of services from online platform

Affordable, accessible and cost-effective services

Encouragement to Green Governance

- Litigant's personalized dashboard to track the progress of a petition
- Capturing of geo coordinates of uploaded videos/ images, geo-location shown at the time of viewing supporting material by pining location on Bharat Maps
- Online accessibility of documents to parties of both the sides
- Digital payments and online fee receipt generation
- SMS/ Email alerts on case proceedings to litigants
- Personalized notes/ observations on smart screens for judges
- Automated MIS reports
- e-Hearing of petitions from zonal benches through video conferencing (VC)
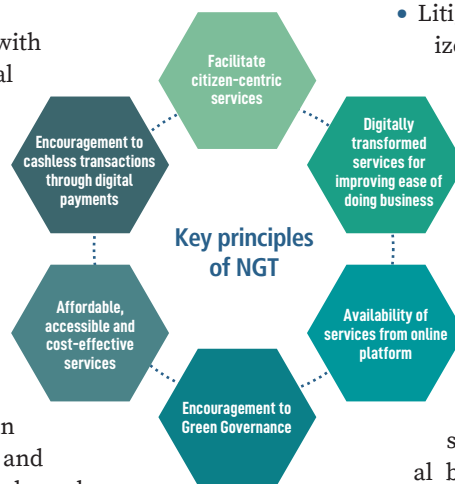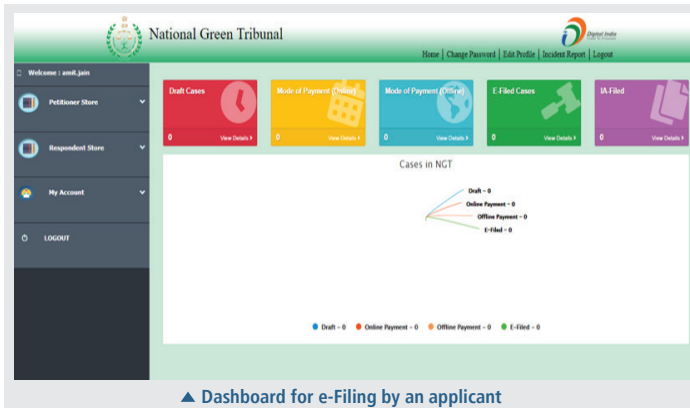
▲ Dashboard for e-Filing by an applicant

▲ Dashboard of CIS scrutiny process

Technologies Used

Module	Technology
e-Filing, CIS and DMS	JAVA (JDK), JS, Spring-Hibernate, Tomcat, Apache, PHP
Database	PostgreSQL
Operating System	RHEL
Client end	PDF Reader/Writer (Adobe Pro), One Note (MS)

Modules

The online digital solution at NGT is an integrated product of three following modules:

e-Filing

It enables litigants/ parties to file petitions 24x7 from anywhere, avail the online court fee payment facility and track the latest status of their petitions on personalized dashboards with secured online documents delivery/ access.

Case Information System (CIS)

The petition life cycle in the registry is maintained in CIS by processing it through the defined workflow followed in NGT like general scrutiny, case registration, allocation to specialized group for detailed observations on petitions, listing, order/ judgments generation etc.

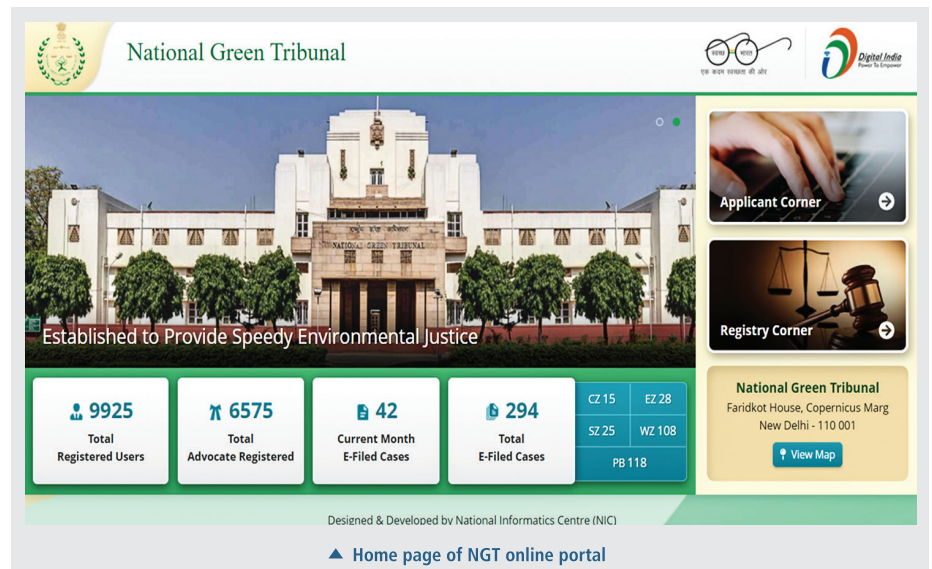### Document Management System (DMS)

Each new e-filed petition/ pending digitized petition is maintained in six digital folders. Documents in each folder are bookmarked and arranged in a specific order for making them easily accessible during hearing in the court room.
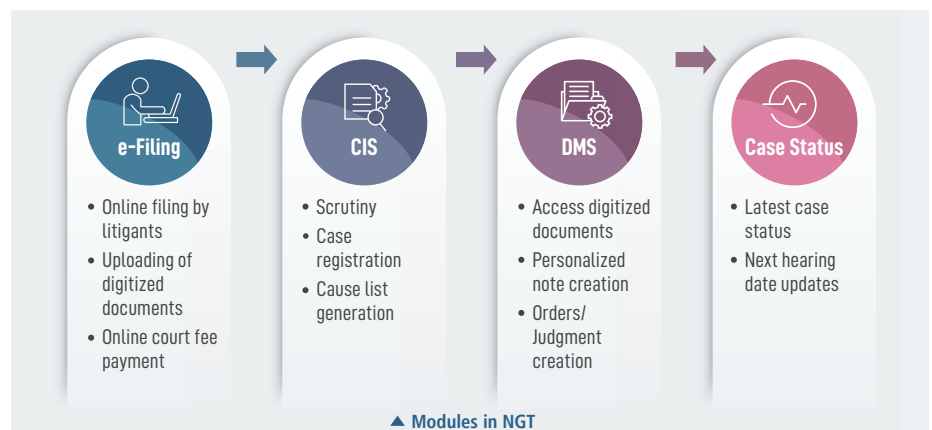
An effective provision of hearing through VC in the court has also been established.
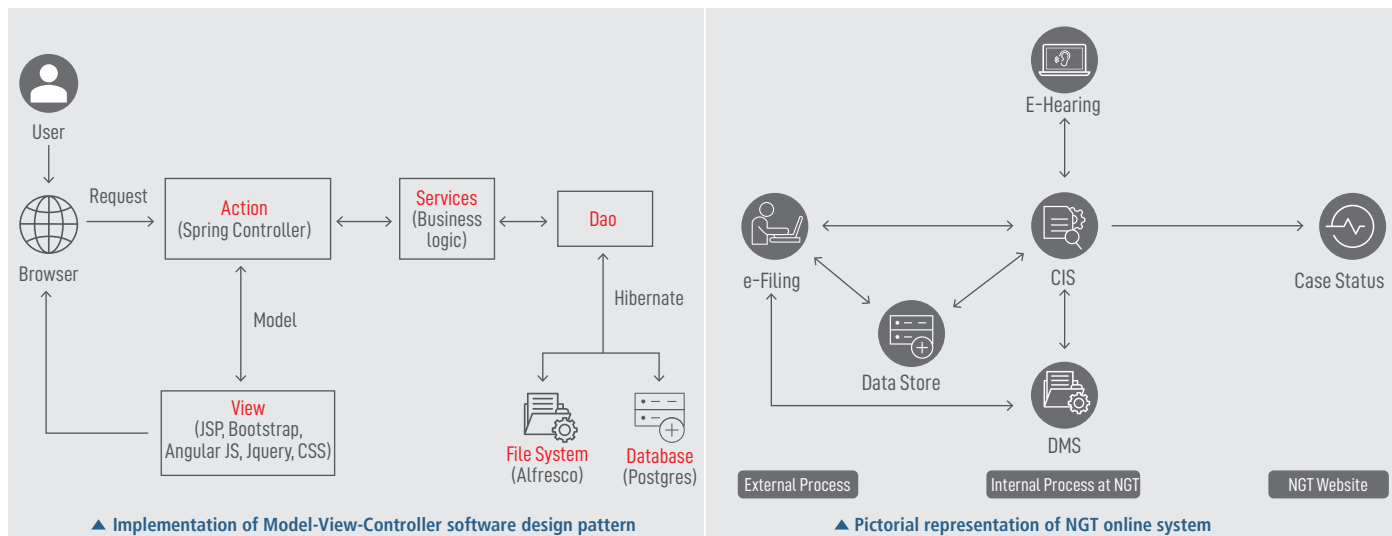
Key Stakeholders

- NGT
- Applicants/ Parties
- Representatives (Advocates)
- Central and state pollution boards
- Concerned ministries and departments

▲ Home page of NGT online portal

▲ Modules in NGT

▲ Implementation of Model-View-Controller software design pattern

▲ Pictorial representation of NGT online system

Deployment Architecture

The deployment architecture for NGT is based on Centralized and Networked Data Processing principles. The data processing is carried out at a single location with a set of servers to support the processing needs of NGT. The architecture was designed so as to avoid single point failure to the maximum possible extent.

Benefits of Project Implementation

• Digital India's key guidelines implementation for effective and efficient G2C and G2G services

• Real-time tracking of cases by parties

• Electronic monitoring of pendency in NGT courts

• Better case management resulting into faster disposal and pendency reduction

• Reduction in time and efforts dedicated by registry officials

• Easy and credible online services to citizens

Social and Economic Impact

• NGT online solution has brought about transparency by automating all the front-end and back-end judicial functions.

• Unique user accounts have introduced more accountability and helped track registry activities.

• All court documents are digitized and stored in the repository (DMS), enabling confidentiality and zero tampering.

• Integration of digital payments in NGT online solution has led to instant processing of filed cases.

• 24x7 e-filing of cases by litigants is hassle-free, and users can access the application from anywhere, anytime.

• Queues of litigants at registry counters have reduced, and functioning of registry & day-to-day dealing of litigants have become easier.

• Automatic registration of cases will eliminate any biases in listing of cases for hearing.

• Digitization of different documents (petitions, orders, notices etc.) has significantly reduced the use of paper.

Way Forward

• Make NGT courts people less: appearance of litigants only in case of Court Summons and Notices

• Introduce artificial intelligence in registry activities for adjudication pattern analysis and impact analysis of any variation in governing factors relating to law, amendments and jurisdiction

• Access of digitized original record of petitions of NGT to Appellate Court for faster processing and elimination of duplication of work ■

" In line with the Digital India Programme of the Government of India, the NGT Online Portal, a joint initiative of NGT and NIC, enriches public awareness on the clean and green environment by publishing various Government Initiatives, Acts and Notifications on the portal and also facilitates IT based simple, accountable, cost-effective, time-bound and transparent citizen-centric system of justice delivery through paperless electronic court of NGT.

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