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SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

***Standard Operating Procedure for hybrid physical hearing
before Hon'ble Court***

In continuation of directions already notified regarding functioning of the Supreme Court of India, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, more particularly through Circulars dated 14.03.2020, 23.03.2020 and 30.08.2020, and on consideration of the requests received from the Bar Associations, the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India has been pleased to direct as follows;

1. On an experimental basis, and as a pilot scheme, the final hearing/regular matters listed on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays may be heard in the hybrid mode, as may be decided by the Hon'ble Bench, considering the number of parties in a matter as well as the limited capacity of the Court rooms; all other matters, including those listed on Mondays and Fridays shall continue to be heard through video/tele-conferencing mode;
2. Unless otherwise directed by the Hon'ble Bench, final hearing/regular matters where the number of Advocates for the parties are more than the average working capacity of the Court rooms, as per Covid-19 norms, i.e. 20 per Courtroom at any given time, shall invariably be listed for hearing through video/tele-conferencing mode; however, in case the Hon'ble Bench directs hearing of such matters to be held through the hybrid mode, the appearance of the parties, whether by physical presence or through video/tele-conferencing, will be facilitated as per the directions of the Hon'ble Bench;
3. If in a matter listed for hybrid hearing, the number of parties is more, then one AOR and one Arguing Counsel per party will be allowed entry; one registered Clerk per party, as may be chosen by the AOR, shall be allowed entry to carry paper-books/journals etc. of the Counsels upto the Court-rooms;

4. In any such matter as may be listed for hybrid hearing, all the Counsels appearing for one party can appear either through physical presence or through video/tele-conferencing. The Advocate-on-Records may submit their preferences for appearing before the Hon'ble Court either physically or through video/tele-conferencing mode within 24 hours/1:00 PM next day after the publication of the Weekly List of Final Hearing/Regular matters. If the Ld. Advocate-on-Records for a party does not opt for either mode i.e. physical or video/tele-conferencing mode, it shall be presumed that Counsels for the party seek to appear through video/tele conferencing mode and will be facilitated accordingly;
5. In case of a matter directed to be listed for hybrid hearing by the Hon'ble Bench, none of the parties opts for physical hearing, the matter would be taken up for hearing through video/tele-conferencing;
6. Entry into the High Security Zone through proximity cards/long term passes shall be kept suspended, till further orders; entry of counsels/parties or such other stakeholders to appear inside Courtroom for hybrid hearing will be through daily "Special hearing passes" which will be issued by the Registry, on the basis of authorization by the concerned Advocate on Record;
7. Multiple sets of one chair and table are being placed inside the Court Rooms, in the areas demarcated for Ld. Advocates and it shall be incumbent upon the users to maintain minimum prescribed physical distancing norms between each set, which should not be removed from their positions;
8. Special Hearing Pass holders, upon completion of necessary formalities, online or otherwise as may be notified in due time, shall enter the High Security Zone through the designated Gate, after subjecting themselves to the thermal and such other scanning devices as may be installed for detecting body temperature, infection status, etc.

9. On entering the High Security Zone, such pass holders may proceed to the designated waiting areas or Bar Lounges/Libraries areas and wait for their turn to enter respective Court Rooms where hybrid hearing of their respective case(s) may be scheduled, and they would proceed only through the movement corridors created and demarcated for the purpose;
10. At the designated waiting area(s), volunteers may also guide the Advocates-on-Records/Counsels further, as and when their turn comes for entering the designated Court Room for hearing;
11. Subject to the capacity of any Courtroom, the entry of parties in a matter will be permitted not earlier than ten minutes prior to start of hearing of that matter;
12. The entry into and exit from each Court Room shall be by separate channels/doors;
13. It may be noted that wearing of mask, frequent use of hand sanitizer and maintaining physical distancing norms is mandatory for all entrants into the Supreme Court premises, including into the Court-rooms;
14. On completion of hearing of their respective case(s), the Ld. Advocates/ Registered Clerks, etc. shall move out of the High Security Zone through the movement corridor(s) and exit from the designated gates;
15. Ld. Advocates/ Counsels having more than one case for hybrid hearing in the Court Rooms shall be issued separate Special Hearing Pass for each case and after hearing of one case is complete, they may wait in the designated staging/waiting area(s) for the purpose for appearing for the next hearing(s);

16. It is reiterated that in order to facilitate video/tele-conferencing for the Ld. Advocates/ Counsels, a dedicated VC Facilitation Centre is located in Block 'C', Ground Floor, Additional Building Complex, Supreme Court of India, which can be accessed through Gate No.1 of that Complex;
17. It is further reiterated that to facilitate appearance of Ld. Advocates / Litigants through video-conferencing mode, the Supreme Court Video Conferencing Facilitation Rooms (SCI VC ROOM) in the seven District Courts Complexes of Delhi, as notified vide Circular dated 13.06.2020 on Supreme Court website i.e. <https://www.sci.gov.in> under the head Notices and Circular, continue to function.

The hybrid physical hearings are to commence w.e.f 15th March 2021.

Sd/-
[Secretary General]
05.03.2021