

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) - Attending of Court Proceedings through Video Conferencing before the High Court of Kerala

1. An advocate would be entitled to appear without any restriction before the High Court through a video conferencing facility. However, the High Court may regulate the participation of a litigant [or any other person] as per its Rules or Practice Directions.

2. Video Conference Links of the respective Courts appears on the official website on the page showing the Causelist after the column, 'VC Request'. The advocates/party-in person may access the video conferencing link from the same tab.

3. When accessing the virtual platform for Court proceedings, advocates/parties in person who have already registered in the V.C. platform, are required to login and input the item number of the case for which they are appearing. Where an advocate is representing multiple cases, they must provide all the item numbers.

4. Participants are to avoid using multiple devices at the remote location to eliminate the chance of echo/ disturbance.

5. Advocates participating in the Virtual Court proceedings shall wear attire as prescribed by the Bar Council of India under the Advocates' Act 1961 (Act 25 of 1961). Police officers and other uniformed officers shall appear in the uniform as prescribed for them under the relevant statutes or orders. All other persons shall wear sober attire consistent with the dignity of the proceedings.

6. Court proceedings conducted through video conferencing are judicial proceedings, and all protocols applicable to physical courts shall apply to virtual proceedings.

7. Cell phones of all participants shall be switched off or kept in aeroplane mode during the proceedings.

8. The Advocate/party in person may log in from his office, residence, conference room, etc., but not from a vehicle like a car. The remote location should be quiet and have sufficient internet coverage. The Advocate/Party should have the camera switched on during Court proceedings. All participants should endeavour to look into the camera, remain attentive and not engage in any other activity during the proceedings.

9. Only the Advocate/duly authorized person in the matter would be entitled to address the Court. The Court Officer may mute/unmute any other participant(s).

10. Advocates/ participants may regulate their microphones to avoid disturbing the court proceedings. At the time of joining, the microphone should be kept muted. The microphone may be unmuted only when the matter is called out. The Court may direct the court Officer to mute the microphone of an advocate/participant if there is a disturbance in the court proceedings.

11. If any participant indulges in an act which is considered inappropriate, she/he/they may be excluded from the VC proceedings, and action as directed by the Court may be taken in the matter.

12. No recording of the court proceedings is allowed.

13. Advocates/participants can seek assistance through the chat facility wherever available. The chat facility should be used only for seeking help from the Court Officer regarding technical assistance concerning VC hearing and/or inquiring about the item number of the case being heard. The Court Officer shall respond to such queries on a best-effort basis.

14. Advocates can give a Memo of appearance in such a manner as notified by the concerned Court.

15. The High Court has established guidelines for participating in video conferencing, and are available on the E-courts website in the pages 'Video Conferencing' and 'Causelist'.

16. If the number of participants who have joined the virtual proceedings exceeds or is likely to exceed the maximum log-ins permitted by the software, the Court Officer may remove viewers not participating in the court proceedings. Advocates/litigants appearing in later items may also be requested to log out.

17. In cases where in-camera proceedings are required to be held, virtual hearings may be restricted to the parties and/or their advocates.

18. The present Standard Operating Procedure shall be in addition to the existing Electronic Video Linkage Rules for Courts (Kerala), 2021 published by the High Court and not in derogation thereof.