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Supreme Court Allows Virtual Hearings During AI Impact Summit

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The Supreme Court of India permitted lawyers to appear via video conferencing from 16 to 20 February 2026 due to anticipated traffic congestion around the court's precincts during the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi.

The Supreme Court's decision was made based on a request from the Supreme Court Bar Association and a circular issued by the Registry.

Virtual hearings are optional, and all benches will operate in a hybrid mode (physical + virtual).

Similarly, the Delhi High Court allowed virtual appearances for lawyers and litigants from 16 to 23 February 2026, considering the AI Summit and Bar Council of Delhi elections held close to the court premises.

Why This Is Significant

Access to Justice & Digital Courts

The allowance of virtual hearings reflects the rising acceptance of technology in judicial processes, improving access to justice for lawyers and litigants during extraordinary events.

Virtual and hybrid court proceedings reduce dependency on physical presence, especially during emergencies, high traffic events, or public safety concerns like heavy congestion or poor air quality.

AI Impact Summit Context

The AI Impact Summit (16–20 Feb 2026) at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi is a major global event bringing together policymakers, industry leaders, and innovators in artificial intelligence (AI).

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Security and traffic measures around the summit have been intensified, including deployment of large police contingents, to manage congestion and public safety.

Judicial Reforms & Virtual Hearings

Virtual hearings became common in India after the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to hybrid modes of court functioning nationwide.

Courts have developed standard operating procedures (SOPs) and infrastructure for video conferencing to support smooth digital proceedings.

Important Terms

Virtual Hearing: Court proceedings conducted via video conferencing without physical attendance.

Hybrid Mode: Simultaneous option for both physical and virtual appearance before the court.

Access to Justice: Ensuring all individuals can seek and obtain a remedy through formal or informal institutions.