Shri Anoop Kumar Mendiratta, Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law & Justice, on behalf of Union Minister for Law & Justice Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad, represented India in the Commonwealth High Level Law Ministers Meeting on the Legal aspects of COVID-19. The meeting, chaired by the Law Minister of Sri Lanka, was organised in virtual mode by Commonwealth Secretariat on 18th February, 2021. The event provided an opportunity to the Law Ministers to share views and experiences on solutions to key legal challenges that have arisen as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The meeting was focused on ensuring equal access to justice for all, Upholding the rule of law in the fight against COVID-19 and legal barriers to equitable access to essential medicines.

Addressing the august meeting of Ministers of Law and Justice, Leaders of delegation and senior officials from Commonwealth countries, Shri Mendirattahighlighted several initiatives and relief measures taken by the Indian Government under the able leadership of Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, inter-alia, to ensure affordable and easy access to justice for all. He highlighted that the giant leap in digitisation and technological innovations have become the mainstay of judicial proceedings during Covid times. Attention was invited to the order passed by the Supreme Court of India on 6th April, 2020 giving legal sanctity and validity to the court hearings done through video conferencing, which came as a big boost for timely disposal of litigations especially in cases which required urgent intervention of Courts and Tribunals. He further informed that the District Courts and High Courts in India heard 76.38 lakh cases and the Supreme Court heard nearly 52,353 cases till 31.01.2021 through video conferencing only.

Law Secretary also informed of India undertaking the world’s largest vaccination program and helping other countries under neighbourhood first policy by distributing indigenous vaccines, namely, Covishield and Covaxin. He pointed out that in the next fiscal, India proposes to increase its spending on healthcare from the current levels.

He emphasized that ideas exchanged in this Commonwealth Forum shall be enriching and result in maximization of benefits for the people across the world and a collaborative approach shall enable us to restore and rejuvenate the legal ecosystem.

The Ministers of Law and Justice and Leaders of delegation representing the Commonwealth countries adopted a statement after deliberations.

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