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States fined for not setting up village courts

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The Supreme Court instructed states and Union Territories to notify it on establishing Gram Nyayalayas within a month

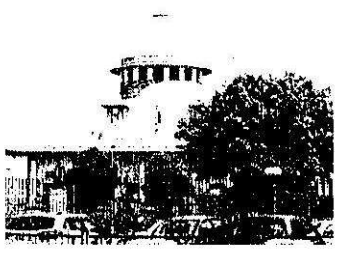
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Wednesday pulled up several states and Union Territories for failing to set up Gram Nyayalayas in view of an Act passed by Parliament in 2008 to ensure access to justice for the poor population in rural areas.

A bench headed by Justice N V Ramana imposed a fine of ₹1 lakh on the state governments of Assam, Chandigarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Odisha, Punjab, Telangana, and West Bengal for

not filing their responses in the court. The court also further instructed these states and union territories to notify the court about setting up Gram Nyayalay within a month.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, representing the petitioner National Federation of Societies for Fast Justice, urged the Court to ask the reason for the delay in filing counters by the states. This led Justice Ramana to observe that some states and UTs have not taken any initiative and no notification has been issued in the matter. The



court has further granted the states and UTs four weeks to do the same.

Last year, the court had issued a notice to the Centre, States and UTs on PIL filed by NGOs National Federation of Societies for Fast Justice and Society for Fast Justice.

PIL also stated that only 208

Gram Nyayalayas are functioning in India against the 2,500 estimated to be required by the 12th five-year plan. Adding further, the PIL also stated that only 11 states have so far taken steps to notify Gram Nyayalayas.

An Act passed by Parliament in 2008 provided for the establishment of village courts to provide access to justice to citizens at their doorsteps and to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not refused because of social, economic or other disabilities.

WHAT IS GRAM NYAYALAYAS ACT, 2008?

Gram Nyayalayas were established for speedy and easy access to justice system in the rural areas across the country. They are aimed at providing inexpensive justice to people in rural areas at their doorsteps. The Act came into force on October 2, 2009.