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Prospects for the Digitalization of Administrative Court Proceedings

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Abstract
This article examines the theoretical foundations and practical prospects for digitalizing administrative court proceedings in the Republic of Uzbekistan within the framework of the "Digital Uzbekistan — 2030" strategy and the "SMART SUD" concept. Drawing on the concept of e-government, the study identifies transparency, accessibility, efficiency and security as the core principles on which a digital judicial system should rest. A comparative legal analysis of the experience of Estonia, Germany, the United States (PACER and CM/ECF) and China's "smart courts" initiative highlights best practices in electronic case management, blockchain-based evidence storage and the use of artificial intelligence in the judiciary. The article reveals the main problems of current practice in Uzbekistan, including the predominance of paper-based case management, the absence of a unified digital platform for inter-agency data exchange and an insufficient level of digital literacy among judges and court staff. The advantages and risks of applying artificial intelligence and the "robot judge" in administrative proceedings are critically analysed, with particular attention to issues of responsibility, cybersecurity and public trust. Based on the analysis, the author proposes to develop a concept of digital justice that enshrines the principle of "digital inclusion" in the judicial reform concept and to create a unified digital platform for administrative courts. It is also recommended to install interactive information terminals in court buildings in order to make judicial protection more accessible to citizens.

Keywords: Digitalization of justice; administrative court proceedings; electronic court; digital court; SMART SUD; e-government; artificial intelligence; robot judge; blockchain technology; videoconferencing; electronic case management; smart courts; digital justice; digital inclusion; judicial reform.

Introduction

For judicial systems of the twenty-first century, digitalization is no longer an optional choice but has become a necessary direction of development. Within the framework of the "Digital Uzbekistan — 2030" strategy, approved by Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-6079 of 5 October 2020, the digitalization of the judicial system has been designated as one of the priority areas of state policy. In this regard, developing the theoretical foundations and

improving the practical mechanisms for introducing digital technologies into administrative justice constitutes an important line of dissertation research.

From a theoretical standpoint, the digitalization of justice is an integral part of the concept of "electronic government" (e-government), under which public services are provided to citizens through digital platforms. In this respect, the studies of E. Adler, J. Gottlieb and other scholars show that a digital judicial system should rest on four basic principles: transparency, accessibility, efficiency and security. It is advisable to adopt these principles as a methodological basis in the context of judicial reforms in Uzbekistan as well.

From the perspective of comparative legal analysis, the judicial systems of Estonia, Singapore and the Netherlands are regarded as global benchmarks in the field of digitalization. In Estonia, 99 per cent of court applications are filed electronically, and more than 40 per cent of court hearings are conducted via videoconference. For the judicial system of Uzbekistan, studying this experience and introducing it in a manner adapted to national legal traditions is of strategic importance.

Strengthening the rule of law in society and reliably protecting human rights and interests form the core of the consistent reforms being carried out in the judicial and legal sphere of our country. From this point of view, introducing modern information and communication technologies into the work of the courts, creating information systems and resources that ensure the efficiency of administrative court proceedings, establishing electronic document exchange, and thoroughly studying and analysing the experience of advanced foreign countries in this area are becoming some of the most important tasks of today.

The introduction of modern information and communication technologies significantly accelerates electronic document exchange in administrative courts and facilitates the collection, processing, systematization and storage of necessary information. At the same time, such a system makes it possible to notify the parties to court proceedings electronically and to deliver the necessary documents and notices to them. As a result, all these processes help to administer justice more quickly, conveniently and efficiently.

However, accelerating work on introducing new modern technologies into the activities of the courts, digitalizing court operations, implementing artificial intelligence, optimizing court proceedings and ensuring their transparency, further improving the electronic exchange of documents and data between courts and other bodies, reducing the human factor in the sector, establishing online courts, and expanding the range of interactive services provided by the courts to citizens and entrepreneurs remains one of the pressing issues today. In particular, the worldwide spread of the coronavirus infection (COVID-19) required the digitalization of court activities and the conduct of court proceedings online under pandemic conditions.

It should be noted that, in today's globalized world, digital technologies are being widely introduced into all spheres throughout the world and are rapidly penetrating the human way of life. It is observed that states that undertake effective work in this direction are developing rapidly. Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-16 of 30 January 2025 "On the State Programme for the Implementation of the 'Uzbekistan — 2030' Strategy in the Year of Environmental Protection and the 'Green Economy'" envisages accelerating the digitalization of court activities in order to make ensuring the supremacy of the Constitution and laws and the reliable protection of human rights and freedoms the main criterion of judicial and legal reforms. Accordingly, it provides for introducing artificial intelligence technologies into the work of the

courts, gradually introducing the practice of conducting cases entirely in electronic form on the basis of the "SMART SUD" concept, and establishing an Information Technology Centre under the Supreme Court (Decree No. PF-16, 2025).

The use of modern information and communication technologies in the work of the courts creates a number of advantages. In particular, it accelerates electronic document flow and ensures the collection, processing, systematization and storage of relevant information. It also makes it convenient to notify participants in court proceedings electronically through the information system. To date, a number of modern information and communication technology programmes have been introduced into the work of the courts. In particular, remote filing with the courts, participation in court hearings via videoconferencing, and automatic distribution of cases among judges have been established.

In addition, court decisions are published on the Internet and can be easily obtained by citizens, writs of execution are sent electronically for compulsory enforcement, and any legal entity or individual may submit statements of claim and complaints electronically through the my.sud.uz website.

At present, practical measures to introduce electronic case management in the work of the courts, making extensive use of modern information and communication technologies, have already begun.

In particular, opportunities such as remote participation in court hearings, automatic distribution of cases among judges and electronic notification of participants in court proceedings through the information system have created a number of conveniences in the work of the courts.

Although certain work has been carried out to digitalize the judicial system in the Republic of Uzbekistan, the current situation still lags considerably behind the level of developed countries. Today, through the my.sud.uz electronic portal, citizens can familiarize themselves with court decisions and submit some applications electronically. However, a number of problems are observed in practice.

First, most proceedings in administrative courts are still conducted on paper. Sending court documents and notices by traditional post significantly slows down the judicial process. Second, owing to the lack of a unified digital platform, data exchange between the tax authorities, the courts and the enforcement system is carried out inefficiently. Third, the insufficient level of digital literacy among judges and court staff, and the fact that some judges and court personnel are unable to make adequate use of the "Adolat" Information Complex, negatively affect the quality of case consideration.

The results of legal research show that the average time for considering cases in the administrative courts of Uzbekistan is 30–60 days. By comparison, in Estonia's electronic court system this indicator is 7–10 days. This gap is mainly related to the state of digitalization and non-automated processes, and it demonstrates in practical terms the need for digitalization.

Today, the rapid development of information and communication technologies is giving rise to positive changes in many areas, including the judicial system. In particular, the "Digital Court" concept is expected to become a continuous and essential part of this process (UzA, n.d.).

The "Digital Court" concept is an innovative approach aimed at ensuring that court proceedings are efficient, prompt and transparent. By optimizing case management in the courts with the help

of modern technologies, it further increases trust in the courts, ensures justice and creates convenience for citizens.

The "Digital Court" is a new approach aimed at accelerating court proceedings, increasing their efficiency and ensuring their transparency through the introduction of modern technologies and artificial intelligence into the judicial system.

In this respect, court proceedings in many foreign countries have been organized on the basis of the "Digital Court" concept, and it is very important that its goal is to conduct cases entirely in electronic form and to automate court processes. The "Digital Court" concept is based on a number of important tools.

• The first tool is electronic court systems. This refers to conducting cases electronically, filing documents online, issuing court documents in digital format and using electronic signatures.

• The second tool is artificial intelligence (AI). It is expected that AI will assist in decision-making when analysing cases under consideration by the courts. For example, AI is used to analyse defendants or legal issues and to make preliminary forecasts.

• The third tool is blockchain technology. Blockchain technology should be applied to ensure the transparency and legality of court documents. This technology makes it possible to prevent alterations to court documents and to store them securely.

• The fourth tool is videoconferencing and online court hearings. Conducting court proceedings remotely, as well as hearing witnesses or parties via video, is one of the important requirements of the new era.

• The fifth tool is databases and analytics. Analysing court cases and data plays an important role in increasing the efficiency of the judicial system, reducing delays and determining outcomes.

In this sense, the "Digital Court" system helps to ensure greater openness and speed of court proceedings. Through this system, court proceedings are accelerated several times over.

This, in turn, makes it possible to save the resources and time whose shortage causes delays in court proceedings. At the same time, it also helps to save time in electronic document flow.

Second, the unaltered and secure storage of court documents by means of blockchain technologies ensures the transparency of the judicial system. The public is able to monitor the status of cases concerning them and gains greater trust in court documents.

Third, through this system citizens can participate in court proceedings remotely, file documents online and promptly obtain court documents. This creates great convenience, especially for citizens living in remote areas.

This modern technological system will ensure that the judicial system operates even more efficiently in the future. Consequently, the main goal of introducing the "Digital Court" concept into the work of the courts is to strengthen justice and the rule of law, to effectively protect the rights of individuals and legal entities by forming a people-oriented, compact and modern system, to shorten the time for considering disputes and to reduce the workload of judges (Abdurazakov, 2025).

The digitalization of court activities and the introduction of the "SMART SUD" concept are intended to further improve the quality of justice and to increase citizens' trust in the courts. This will undoubtedly lay the groundwork for the effective protection of the interests of the people and of human dignity.

Furthermore, the use of artificial intelligence in judicial proceedings can optimize the analytical work of the judge and ensure the implementation of the principle of procedural economy, which, in turn, shortens the time needed to consider disputes. Moreover, artificial intelligence technology can help raise the level of reasoning of judgments to a new stage by reducing errors that may occur in the preparation of court documents, and can also help reduce the workload of the courts.

In many developed countries, court proceedings are fully equipped with modern information and communication technologies, and the work of the courts has been completely transferred to digital form. For example, in Germany everything — from filing a statement of claim to transferring an electronic court file to the state archive for storage — is carried out electronically. Each person has his or her own electronic digital signature, through which every person can be identified. After a claimant sends an application from his or her electronic address, the court sends a notification confirming that the application has been received. It should be noted that documents sent to and from the court are encrypted, which precludes third parties from reading them (Zivilprozessordnung [ZPO], n.d.).

In the United States, court information is obtained electronically through the Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) system, and applications are filed with the court electronically through a nationwide system known as Case Management/Electronic Case Files (CM/ECF). Use of this system is subject to a fee. These fees are used to maintain the system and support the information system.

In the Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) system, one can view the register of received applications and information on the process of case consideration and decision-making, as well as on when a court hearing will be held. Case Management/Electronic Case Files (CM/ECF) is the comprehensive case management system of the federal judiciary, which enables online access to court documents and electronic filing of applications (Suleimenov, n.d.).

According to the legal scholar O. Sh. Pirmatov, the Electronic Court Case Management System is a system designed for conducting court cases electronically, managing them through automation, and electronically transmitting, processing and storing documents, including court documents. In general, the Electronic Court Case Management System makes it possible to register court documents, edit them, have them supplemented by the parties, delete unnecessary documents, easily locate court documents relating to an administrative case, and prepare the consolidated case file electronically (Pirmatov, 2023, p. 106).

China has also decided to apply artificial intelligence in its judicial system, and for this purpose a programme for introducing artificial intelligence into the courts has been developed in China.

The authorities intend to use this technology to review court documents. According to the work report of the Supreme People's Court (SPC), presented on 8 March during the annual sessions of the Chinese parliament, it was emphasized that artificial intelligence can help supervise judges, simplify court proceedings and increase trust in them. The 14th Five-Year Plan sets out a roadmap for modernizing China's legal system by 2025. According to legal experts, these changes are part of China's "smart court" initiative. The term "smart court" is a broad concept encompassing processes ranging from simple technological changes, such as publishing court documents on the Internet, to complex capabilities, such as AI-assisted decision-making in the courtroom. Since 2014, Chinese courts across the country have uploaded more than 120 million court documents to online databases, and more than 11 million court proceedings have been broadcast online. In

addition to increasing transparency, courts in various regions of the country are testing pilot projects within the "smart court" initiative, including the acceptance of evidence in electronic form. During China's 13th Five-Year Plan, from 2016 to 2020, Chinese courts collected 220 million court documents on their big data management and service platform. The courts also prepared 870 special reports using big data analytics. During the same period, more than 640 million pieces of data were uploaded to a national platform using a judicial blockchain for storing court evidence, of which almost 2.5 million were certified. Experts note that blockchain technology has played an important role in locking or documenting digital evidence, especially in intellectual property cases. Previously, notarial services were used for this purpose. According to experts, in conditions of an ever-increasing volume of information and data, people cannot be very effective in routine decisions. "Smart courts" are increasingly involved in assisting with the issuance of court documents and may, perhaps, in the future even make decisions without human involvement.

Neural networks have penetrated many areas of everyday life. China is currently leading in this field and plans to invest 150 billion US dollars in artificial intelligence by 2030. Major companies such as Alibaba, Baidu, Tencent and iFlytek have already joined these projects. The combined annual revenue of these companies is almost equal to the total amount of the investment. The populations of China (70%), Saudi Arabia (64%) and Mexico (56%) trust artificial intelligence the most. In Japan (only 13% are AI supporters), South Korea (17%) and Germany (21%), people express distrust of it. In Russia, according to this study, 40% of the population trusts artificial intelligence, which is higher than the Ipsos average. In China, artificial intelligence has already become part of everyday life. It is used not only in daily life but also in areas that seem exotic. In February 2019, China's state news agency Xinhua launched the world's first AI news anchor. Over this period, the virtual presenters delivered 3,400 news reports to viewers with a total running time of 10,000 minutes. Several companies around the world are currently actively developing similar projects. With the help of algorithms, it is even possible to predict court decisions. Precisely such an AI-based system was jointly developed at the universities of Pennsylvania and Sheffield. The system can predict all decisions of the European Court of Human Rights with 79 per cent accuracy (IT-Jurist, n.d.).

Concurring with the above views, it should be emphasized that this process includes the digitalization not only of court proceedings but also of the enforcement of court decisions.

At present, the introduction of artificial intelligence into court proceedings is of particular importance in the digitalization of judicial case management.

According to M. D. Zhuravleva, development does not stand still, and this has led to the development of the "Judge's Assistant" intelligent system. For example, in China it has become possible to use artificial intelligence that develops templates of legal documents for judges, which are subsequently applied in individual cases. As a result, the decision-making process is accelerated.

Thus, the introduction of artificial intelligence into the judicial system leads to the automation of many practical universal tasks: when a statement of claim is filed and a case is accepted for proceedings, the machine can organize the documents, form the case file and send correspondence or summonses. At the stage of considering the case in court, the robot can find the required case among many others and quickly add new documents to it (Zhuravleva, 2021, p. 25).

Artificial intelligence, acting as a robot judge or an electronic judge's assistant in administrative court proceedings, would make it possible to reduce the workload of judges and to resolve certain types of administrative cases more quickly and easily.

According to A. V. Starkov, the transfer of justice into the "hands" of artificial intelligence is debatable. He notes that "the positive aspects of using artificial intelligence as a judge are the absence of the human factor, such as emotionality, subjectivity, and political, gender and social injustice. Unlike a human, a robot is not subject to stress, does not get tired and has no health problems. Another advantage of artificial intelligence is its large memory capacity, high data processing speed and search for the optimal solution.

However, the negative aspect is the possibility of cyberattacks aimed at manipulating artificial intelligence, unauthorized interference with its functionality, or 'viral infection'" (Starkov, 2022).

Concurring with the above views, it can be noted that the application of artificial intelligence to administrative court proceedings may bring about both a number of achievements and a number of problems. Various opinions are being put forward in this regard. Yu. Yu. Kargina notes that most scholars have concluded that this process may not have a positive effect on the administrative process. In her view, when using information technologies in the judicial system, the problem of the authenticity of all data relating to the resolution of cases must be eliminated. It is also necessary to improve the qualifications of persons participating in court proceedings (Kargina, n.d.).

Indeed, while the positive aspect of applying artificial intelligence to administrative court proceedings lies in increasing the efficiency of the judicial process and putting an end to excessive red tape, its negative aspects may include problems relating to the adversarial debate of the parties, the evaluation of evidence, and the application of disciplinary measures when court decisions issued by a robot judge are overturned. Furthermore, problems arise as to whether a robot judge is considered a participant in administrative court proceedings and on whom responsibility and liability are to be placed. In addition, the fact that a robot judge decides human destinies, has no emotions and works only according to a program may subsequently cause discontent among citizens. In our opinion, it is advisable to apply artificial intelligence initially to disputes falling within the category of complex cases.

At the same time, a concept of digital justice should be developed. Digitalization must ensure not only speed but also the equal right of all citizens to judicial protection, including those with low digital literacy or limited access to the Internet. To this end, it is proposed to enshrine the principle of "digital inclusion" in the concept of judicial reform at the normative level.

Creation of a unified administrative court platform. An independent digital platform should be developed for administrative courts. This platform should have the following functionality: electronic filing and acceptance of claims; automatic verification and registration of applications for court orders; sending notifications to the parties via SMS and email; conducting court hearings via videoconference; preparing and sending court orders certified by electronic signature; and automatically transferring writs of execution to the enforcement officer.

Furthermore, as a prospect for the digitalization of administrative court proceedings, and in order to make judicial protection more convenient for our citizens, one of the pressing issues — drawing on the experience of foreign countries — is to install special terminals in administrative court buildings that provide a range of interactive services, such as information on when and in which

courtroom a case will be heard, which judge will hear it, the reception days of the court chairman and judges, payment of state fees, and sample applications (complaints).

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