



Lok Adalat

For Prelims: Lok Adalat, NALSA

For Mains: Significance of Lok Adalat and related jurisdiction.

Why in News

Lok Adalat has emerged as the **most efficacious tool of Alternative Dispute Resolution.**

- A total number of 1,27,87,329 cases were disposed of in 2021. Due to technological advancement like **E-Lok Adalats, Lok Adalats have reached the doorsteps of parties.**

Key Points

▪ About:

- The term '**Lok Adalat**' means '**People's Court**' and is based on Gandhian principles.
- As per the **Supreme Court**, it is an old form of adjudicating system prevalent in ancient India and its validity has not been taken away even in the modern days too.
- It is one of the components of the **Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) system** and delivers informal, cheap and expeditious justice to the common people.
- The first **Lok Adalat camp was organized in Gujarat in 1982** as a voluntary and conciliatory agency without any statutory backing for its decisions.
- In view of its growing popularity over time, it **was given statutory status under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987**. The Act makes the provisions relating to the organization and functioning of the Lok Adalats.

▪ Organization:

- The State/District Legal Services Authority or the Supreme Court/High Court/Taluk Legal Services Committee may organize Lok Adalats at such intervals and places and **for exercising such jurisdiction and for such areas as it thinks fit.**
- Every Lok Adalat organized for an area **shall consist of such number of serving or retired judicial officers and other persons of the area** as may be specified by the agency organizing.
 - Generally, a **Lok Adalat consists of a judicial officer as the chairman** and a lawyer (advocate) and a social worker as members.
- **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)** along with other Legal Services Institutions conducts Lok Adalats.
 - NALSA was constituted under the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987** which came into force **on 9th November 1995** to establish a nationwide uniform network for providing free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of the society.
- The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 was **amended in 2002 to provide for the establishment of the Permanent Lok Adalats** to deal with cases pertaining to the public utility services.

▪ Jurisdiction:

- A Lok Adalat shall have **jurisdiction to determine and to arrive at a compromise or settlement** between the parties to a dispute in respect of:
 - Any case pending before any court, or
 - Any matter which falls within the jurisdiction of any court and is not brought before such court.
- Any case pending before the court **can be referred to the Lok Adalat for settlement if:**
 - Parties agree to settle the dispute in the Lok Adalat or one of the parties applies for referral of the case **to the Lok Adalat or court is satisfied that the matter can be solved** by a Lok Adalat.
 - In the case of a pre-litigation dispute, the **matter can be referred to the Lok Adalat on receipt of an application from any one of the parties** to the dispute.
- Matters such as matrimonial/family disputes, criminal (compoundable offenses) cases, land acquisition cases, labor disputes, workmen's compensation cases, bank recovery cases, etc. **are being taken up in Lok Adalats.**
- However, the Lok Adalat shall have no jurisdiction in respect of any case or matter relating to an offense **not compoundable under any law**. In other words, the offenses which are **non-compoundable under any law fall outside the purview** of the Lok Adalat.
- **Powers:**
 - The Lok Adalat shall have the same powers as are **vested in a Civil Court under the Code of Civil Procedure (1908)**.
 - Further, a Lok Adalat shall have the **requisite powers to specify its own procedure for the determination of any dispute** coming before it.
 - All proceedings before a Lok Adalat shall be deemed to be **judicial proceedings within the meaning of the Indian Penal Code (1860)** and every Lok Adalat shall be deemed to be a Civil Court for the purpose of the Code of Criminal Procedure (1973).
 - An award of a Lok Adalat shall be deemed to be a decree of a Civil Court or an order of any other court.
 - Every award made by a Lok Adalat shall be final and binding on all the parties to the dispute. No appeal shall lie to any court against the award of the Lok Adalat.
- **Benefits:**
 - There is **no court fee and if court fee is already paid the amount will be refunded** if the dispute is settled at Lok Adalat.
 - There is **procedural flexibility and speedy trial** of the disputes. There is no strict application of procedural laws while assessing the claim by Lok Adalat.
 - The parties to the dispute **can directly interact with the judge** through their counsel which is not possible in regular courts of law.
 - The award by the Lok Adalat is **binding on the parties and it has the status of a decree of a civil court and it is non-appealable**, which does not cause the delay in the settlement of disputes finally.

[Source: PIB](#)

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