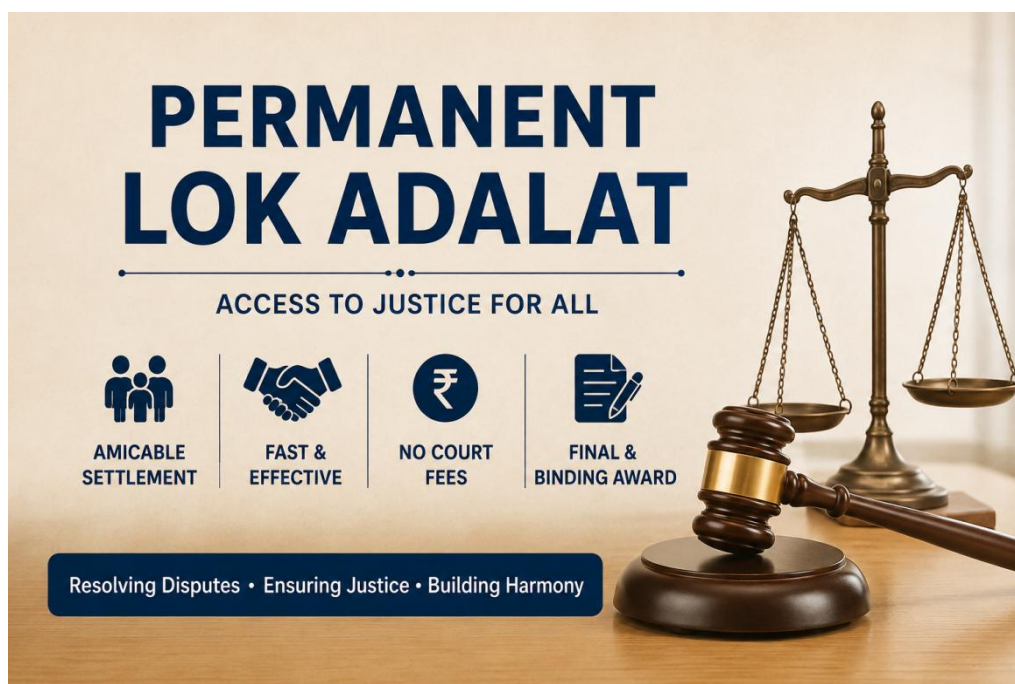




**UTTARAKHAND STATE LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY: STANDARD
OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP) FOR PERMANENT LOK ADALATS**



UTTARAKHAND STATE LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

S. No	Full Form	Abbreviation
1.	The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987	The Act
2.	National Legal Services Authority	NALSA
3.	Uttarakhand State Legal Services Authority	UKSLSA
4.	Permanent Lok Adalat	PLA
5.	District Legal Services Authority	DLSA
6.	Public Utility Services	PUS
7.	Code of Civil Procedure	CPC
8.	Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam	BSA
9.	Para Legal Volunteer	PLV

UTTARAKHAND STATE LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY: STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP) FOR PERMANENT LOK ADALATS

With a view to ensuring uniformity, consistency and efficiency in the functioning of Permanent Lok Adalats across the State of Uttarakhand, the Uttarakhand State Legal Services Authority hereby formulates this Standard Operating Procedure. This Procedure is intended to prescribe a standardized procedural framework for the effective discharge of functions by Permanent Lok Adalats, in conformity with the provisions of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 and the rules, regulations and guidelines issued thereunder.

1. Short Title, Applicability and Commencement

- 1.1. This Procedure shall be called Uttarakhand State Legal Services Authority: Standard Operating Procedure (*hereinafter as 'the SOP'*) for Permanent Lok Adalats (*hereinafter as 'PLAs'*) under the Uttarakhand State Legal Services Authority (*hereinafter as 'UKSLSA'*).
- 1.2. It shall apply to all PLAs established, notified or functionally assigned within the State of Uttarakhand, Public Utility Service Departments and District Legal Services Authorities (*hereinafter as 'DLSAs'*).
- 1.3. It shall come into force from the date of its approval by the Executive Chairman, UKSLSA.*

2. Definitions - (1) In this procedure, unless the context otherwise requires, -

- (a) 'Act' means the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 (*hereinafter as 'the Act'*);
- (b) 'Rules' means the Permanent Lok Adalat (Other Terms and Conditions of Appointment of Chairman and Other Persons) Rules, 2003 (*hereinafter as 'the Rules, 2003'*) as amended from time to time.
- (c) 'Lok Adalat' means Lok Adalat to be organized U/s 19 of the Act, 1987;
- (d) 'Virtual Proceedings' means proceedings of the PLAs conducted through video conferencing such as Google Meet, Jitsi Meet or any other online platform, approved or prescribed by UKSLSA, enabling the parties, jointly or individually and the Members of the PLAs to participate in conciliation, settlement and other proceedings permissible under law, in accordance with the applicable rules, SOP and directions issued by the competent authority.

- (2) All other words and expressions used but not defined in this procedure and defined in the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 or its Rules and Regulations framed thereunder, shall have the same meanings assigned to them in the said Act or the Rules or the Regulations.

3. Objectives

- 3.1 To ensure uniform, efficient, transparent and legally compliant functioning of PLAs.
- 3.2 To prescribe a standard procedure for institution, scrutiny, conciliation, settlement, adjudication, hearing, record maintenance, reporting and compliance.
- 3.3 To strengthen coordination among PLAs, DLSAs and Public Utility Service Departments.
- 3.4 To facilitate physical and virtual hearings for speedy and accessible dispute resolution.

4. Relevant Provisions

The following provisions shall govern the functioning of the PLAs:

- 4.1 **Definitions (Section 22-A of the Act)** – This Section defines PLAs and Public Utility Services.
- 4.2. In the State of Uttarakhand, subject to the Act and notifications, the PLAs may entertain disputes relating to the following Public Utility Services:
- i. Transport service for the carriage of passengers or goods by air, road or water.
 - ii. Postal, telegraph, or telephone services.
 - iii. Supply of power, light or water to the public by any establishment.
 - iv. System of public conservancy or sanitation.
 - v. Service in hospital or dispensary.
 - vi. Insurance service.
 - vii. Education or educational institutions.
 - viii. Housing and real estate service.
 - ix. Banking and financial services.
- Any other service specifically brought within the definition of public utility service by valid notification.

Note: No matter outside such defined services shall be entertained by the PLAs.

4.3 Establishment of PLAs (Section 22-B of the Act)

- i. Notwithstanding anything contained in Section 19, the Central Authority or, as the case may be, every State Authority shall, by

notification, establish Permanent Lok Adalats at such places and for exercising such jurisdiction in respect of one or more public utility services and for such areas as may be specified in the notification.

4.4 Every PLA shall established for an area notified under sub-Section 1 of the Section 22-B shall consist of:

- i. A person who is, or has been, a district judge or additional district judge or has held judicial office higher in rank than that of a district judge, shall be the Chairman of the PLA and,
- ii. Two other persons having adequate experience in public utility service to be nominated by the Central Government or, as the case may be, the State Government on the recommendation of the Central Authority or, as the case may be, the State Authority appointed by the Central Authority or, as the case may be, the State Authority, establishing such Permanent Lok Adalat and the other terms and conditions of the appointment of the Chairman and other persons referred to in clause (b) shall be such as may be prescribed by the Central Government.

- 4.5
- i. The PLA is a statutory, continuing forum and is not created merely for a one-time camp or special drive.
 - ii. A PLA shall be established for one or more public utility services and for such area as notified.

4.6 **Cognizance of cases by PLA (Section 22-C of the Act)**

- i. Any party to a dispute may, before the dispute is brought before any court, make an application to the PLA for the settlement of the dispute.
- ii. The PLA shall not have jurisdiction in respect of any matter relating to an offence not compoundable under any law.
- iii. The PLA shall also not have jurisdiction in the matter where the value of the property in dispute exceeds one crore rupees.
- iv. After an application is made to PLA, no party to that application shall invoke jurisdiction of any court in the same dispute.

4.7 **Procedure before PLA- Where an application is made to PLA:-**

- 4.7.1(a) PLA shall direct each party to the application to file before it a written statement, stating therein the facts and nature of dispute under application, points or issues in such dispute and grounds relied in support of, or in opposition to, such points or issues, as the case may be, and such party may supplement such statement with

any documents and other evidence which such party deems appropriate in proof of such facts and grounds and shall send a copy of such statement together with a copy of such document and other evidence, if any, to each of the parties to the application.

- 4.7.1(b) PLA may require any party to the application to file additional statement before it at any stage of the conciliation proceedings.
- 4.7.1(c) PLA shall communicate any document or statement received by it from any party to the application to the other party, to enable such other party to present reply thereto.
- 4.7.2 When statement, additional statement and reply, if any have been filed to the satisfaction of the PLA, it shall conduct conciliation proceedings between the parties to the application in such manner as it thinks appropriate taking into account the circumstances of the dispute.
- 4.7.3 The PLA shall, during conduct of the conciliation proceedings, assist the parties in their attempt to reach an amicable settlement of the dispute in an independent and impartial manner.
- 4.7.4 It shall be the duty of every party to the application to cooperate in good faith with the PLA in conciliation of the dispute relating to the application and to comply with the direction of the PLA to produce evidence and other related documents before it.
- 4.7.5 When a PLA, in conciliation proceedings, is of opinion that there exists elements of settlement in such proceedings which may be acceptable to the parties, it may formulate the terms of a possible settlement of the dispute and give to the parties concerned for their observations and in case the parties reach at an agreement on the settlement of the dispute, they shall sign the settlement agreement and the PLA shall pass an award in terms thereof and furnish a copy of the same to each of the parties concerned.
- 4.7.6 Where the parties fail to reach at an agreement, the PLA shall, if the dispute does not relate to any offence, decide the dispute.

Note: Procedure for Pre-Litigation Applications before the PLAs:-

- i. Any party may file an application before the PLA prior to instituting proceedings before any court, provided that the dispute pertains to a public utility service and falls within the notified territorial and pecuniary jurisdiction of the PLA.
- ii. The application shall contain the following particulars:
 - a. Name and address of the parties;

- b. Nature of the dispute;
 - c. Relief sought;
 - d. Relevant facts and supporting documents; and
 - e. Details of any prior representation or complaint made to the concerned service provider, wherever applicable.
- iii. Upon receipt of the application, the PLA shall examine its maintainability and jurisdiction. Where the matter is maintainable, the PLA shall register the case, assign a case number and issue notice to the opposite party along with a copy of the application and supporting documents.
- iv. The opposite party shall be required to submit its response, along with supporting documents, within the time specified by the PLA. The PLA may call for additional statements, documents or further material from either party, as may be necessary for proper adjudication of the matter.
- v. Copies of statements, documents and other material submitted by one party shall, as far as practicable, be furnished to the other party to ensure fairness and compliance with the principles of natural justice.
- vi. The PLA shall first endeavour to facilitate an amicable settlement between the parties through conciliation. The Chairman of PLA shall guide and assist the parties in arriving at a fair, lawful and mutually acceptable settlement.
- vii. The proceedings may be conducted in such manner as the PLA considers appropriate, having regard to the provisions of the Act, the circumstances of the case and the principles of natural justice.
- viii. Where the parties arrive at a settlement, the terms of settlement shall be clearly recorded and signed by the parties and the PLA shall pass the award in accordance with such settlement.
- ix. Where no settlement is possible, the PLA may, subject to its lawful jurisdiction and the provisions of Section 22-C, proceed to decide the dispute on merits in accordance with law.
- x. Once an application is filed and taken up by the PLA, the matter shall proceed under the pre-litigation mechanism prescribed under Section 22-C of the Act.
- xi. The PLA shall exercise jurisdiction only where the matter is a pre-litigation dispute relating to a public utility service and falls within its notified territorial and pecuniary jurisdiction.

- xii. The PLA shall not take cognizance of any matter involving an offence.

4.8 Procedure of PLA (Section 22-D of the Act)

- i. The PLA shall, while conducting conciliation proceedings or deciding a dispute on merit under this Act, be guided by principles of natural justice, objectivity, fair play, equity and other principles of justice and shall not be bound by Code of Civil Procedure (CPC) and Indian Evidence Act (now BSA).

Note:

- i. The PLA may adopt such procedure as it considers appropriate for the decision of the dispute.
- ii. The process shall remain simple, effective and expeditious.

4.9 Award of PLA to be Final (Section 22-E of the Act)

- i. Every award of the PLA under this Act made either on merit or in terms of settlement agreement shall be final and binding on all the parties thereto and on persons claiming under them.
- ii. Every award of PLAs shall be deemed to be a decree of a civil court.
- iii. The award made by the PLA shall be by a majority of the persons constituting the PLAs.
- iv. Every award made by the PLA shall be final and shall not be called in question in any original suit, application or execution proceeding.
- v. The PLA may transmit any award made by it to a civil court having local jurisdiction and such civil court shall execute the order as if it were a decree made by that court.

Note: No further appeal lies from the award in the ordinary sense, subject only to such remedies as may be available under any law.

5. Illustrative categories of matters suitable for resolution before the PLAs:

- i. Wrongful disconnection of electricity supply.
- ii. Excess or disputed electricity bill from a distribution utility.
- iii. Water supply delay, defective supply or wrongful disconnection.
- iv. Sewerage or sanitation service complaints.
- v. Telephone or telecom billing disputes or service deficiency.
- vi. Postal service delay, non-delivery or deficiency claims.
- vii. Public transport service deficiency.
- viii. Hospital or dispensary service-related grievance.
- ix. Insurance service disputes connected with a notified public utility service.

- x. Housing or real estate service disputes, if notified by the competent authority.
- xi. Banking or financial service disputes, where specifically notified.

6. Matters not maintainable before the PLAs.

The PLA shall not entertain:

- i. Any criminal offence or matter involving penal prosecution, particularly non-compoundable offences.
- ii. Matrimonial disputes, divorce, custody or maintenance matters.
- iii. Land title disputes, partition suits, ownership claims or pure possession disputes.
- iv. General private contractual disputes not connected with public utility services.
- v. Service matters of government or private employees.
- vi. Constitutional or administrative writ-type controversies.
- vii. Matters requiring full civil trial with elaborate evidence, unless otherwise permissible within the statutory PLA framework.
- viii. Any matter outside the notified service, area or pecuniary jurisdiction.

7. Virtual Proceedings

- i. Virtual proceedings may be conducted by PLA, wherever considered practicable, appropriate and beneficial for the expeditious and effective disposal of the matter.
- ii. At the request of the PLA, the concerned DLSA shall provide the necessary technical assistance, including coordination of virtual proceedings, scheduling, sharing of the virtual hearing link and such other support as may be required or directed by UKSLSA.
- iii. The identity of the parties, their authorised representatives and other participants shall be duly verified in accordance with the applicable procedure.
- iv. Parties participating through virtual mode shall be afforded a fair and effective opportunity to present their case and participate in the proceedings. The principles of natural justice, fairness, confidentiality and proper maintenance of records shall be duly observed.
- v. Virtual proceedings may, wherever appropriate, be utilised for appearance of parties, interaction and conciliation, clarification of facts or documents not requiring formal recording of evidence, submission or exchange of documents, recording of settlement, and

pronouncement or communication of the award/order, in accordance with law and the applicable SOPs and directions.

8. Minimum Sitzings

- i. Every PLA shall function as a continuing and regularly available forum.
- ii. The sitting of the PLA, as and when necessary, shall be convened by the Chairman and a PLA having a pendency of upto one hundred cases shall sit **at least once a week and list at least five matters per sitting and a PLA having pendency of more than one hundred cases shall sit at least twice a week and list five matters per sittings.**

Provided further that the sittings prescribed herein shall be the minimum number of sittings to be held and the Chairman may, if he deems it appropriate, having regard to the pendency of cases or the exigencies of work, direct the holding of additional sittings as may be necessary for the expeditious disposal of cases.

- iii. The cause list shall be prepared for each sitting day and shall be displayed on the notice board of the PLA at least one working day before the date of sitting.

9. Records and Registers

Each PLA shall maintain:

- i. Budget Register
- ii. Register of Contingency and Other similar charges.
- iii. Cash Book and Day Book
- iv. BM-8 Register
- v. Bill Register (11-C)
- vi. Dak Ticket Register
- vii. Dak Inward (Receipt) Register
- viii. Dak outward (Dispatch) Register
- ix. Local outward (Dispatch) Register (For by hand Dak)
- x. Stock Register (For perishable items and Stationery distribution)
- xi. Stock Register (For non-perishable items)
- xii. Attendance Register of Staff
- xiii. Sitting Register of Members.
- xiv. Master Register for files and Registers
- xv. Permanent Lok Adalat Institution Register
- xvi. Permanent Lok Adalat Disposal Register
- xvii. Execution Register

- xviii. Legal Aid Register
- xix. Right to Information Act Register
- xx. Guard Files
- xxi. Notice Service Register.
- xxii. Virtual Hearing Register.

These records may be maintained in physical and electronic form as directed by UKSLSA.

10. Reporting and Monitoring

- 10.1 The PLA shall submit monthly reports to UKSLSA as per the prescribed proforma shared with the PLAs vide letter no. 1396/UKSLSA/2026 dated 02nd June, 2026.
- 10.2 The report shall include:
 - i. Cases filed.
 - ii. Cases settled.
 - iii. Cases decided on merits.
 - iv. Cases pending.
 - v. Name of Public Utility Service.
- 10.3 PLA shall also furnish a report regarding the virtual proceedings conducted during the month.
- 10.4 UKSLSA may periodically review the functioning thereof and issue further directions, as deemed appropriate.

11. Role and Responsibility of DLSAs

- i. Any application received by the DLSAs in relation to Public Utility Services shall be forwarded to the concerned PLAs for necessary action.
- ii. DLSA shall coordinate the listing and scheduling of PLA matters.
- iii. DLSA shall provide venue, logistics and administrative support where directed by UKSLSA.
- iv. DLSA shall facilitate virtual hearings, wherever required.
- v. DLSA shall maintain statistics, follow-up data and compliance records.
- vi. DLSA shall liaise with public utility departments for timely appearance and implementation.
- vii. DLSAs shall ensure joint initiative with PLAs for enhancing publicity and awareness for promoting the objectives and benefits of PLAs at regular intervals through legal awareness camps.
- viii. The DLSAs shall also utilized local medial channels including newspapers, radio and Television to spread information about availability and benefits of PLAs.

- ix. DLSAs shall invite the Chairman or Members of the respective PLAs as Special Invitee in the monthly meeting of PLVs and Panel Lawyers and to make them aware regarding the role and objectives of the PLAs.

12. Role and Responsibility of Public Utility Service Departments

Each Public Utility Department shall:

- i. Nominate a Nodal Officer for PLA matters.
- ii. Ensure attendance of an authorised representative with adequate settlement authority.
- iii. Produce records, bills, account details, service history, notices and complaint correspondence.
- iv. Make genuine efforts for settlement at the earliest stage.
- v. Avoid unnecessary adjournments and cooperate with the PLA process.
- vi. Implement settlement terms and awards within the stipulated time and report compliance.

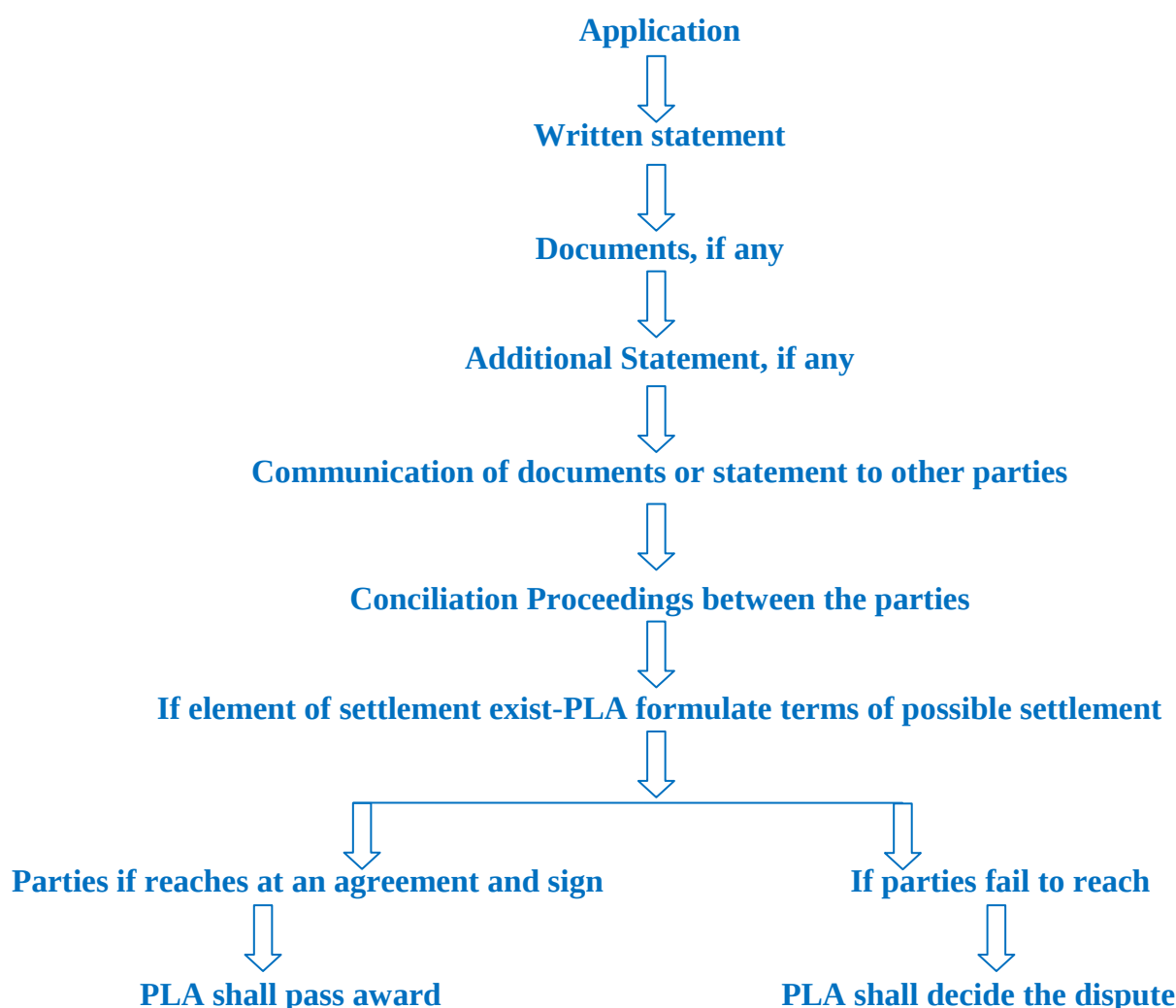
13. Role and Responsibility of PLAs

- i. PLAs shall prominently display their official email IDs, contact details and office address at a conspicuous place and shall also provide the same to the concerned DLSAs for wider dissemination among the general public.
- ii. Any application received online through the designated email ID of the concerned PLA shall be treated at par with an application submitted physically in the office. Where the application contains all requisite particulars and is complete in all respects, the same shall be duly processed and proceeded with in accordance with law.
- iii. PLAs shall keep their Facebook pages active and utilize the same for dissemination of success stories about the remarkable judgments passed by the PLAs and propagation of the complete information about services offered by the PLAs and contact details.
- iv. PLAs shall ensure adequate and wide publicity amongst the public regarding role and benefits of the PLAs through seminars, webinars, print and electronic media and digital platforms.
- v. The Chairman of PLA shall convene at least a meeting/consultation or interaction with the Public Utility Service Department/Agencies/Bodies on fortnightly basis regarding functioning of PLAs.

14. Miscellaneous

- i. In the event of any inconsistency or conflict, the provisions of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, the Permanent Lok Adalat (Other Terms and Conditions of Appointment of Chairman and Other Persons) Rules, 2003, applicable notifications and the directions issued by NALSA and UKSLSA, shall prevail.
- ii. UKSLSA may amend or supplement this SOP from time to time.
- iii. Any procedural issue not specifically covered shall be decided by the PLA in accordance with the Act, justice, equity and good conscience.
- iv. In cases where proceedings before the PLA are conducted virtually, the provisions of “The High Court of Uttarakhand Electronic Communication and Audio-Video Electronic Means (*Nyay Shruti*) Rules, 2025”, shall *mutatis mutandis* apply to such proceedings.

Flow Chart for Procedure before PLA is as follows:-



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