

# Emergence of Lok Adalat as the most efficacious tool of Alternative Dispute Resolution

A total number of 1,27,87,329 cases were disposed off in 2021

Due to technological advancement like E-Lok Adalats, Lok Adalats have reached doorsteps of parties

Posted On: 12 JAN 2022 3:58PM by PIB Delhi

National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) is committed to deliver prompt and inexpensive justice to the citizens. Recently, it has decided to lay more emphasis on contribution of National Lok Adalat in effectively reducing the number of pending cases through Alternative Dispute Mechanisms.

To achieve this goal, the Legal Services Authorities shifted to dynamic preparation strategies for organization of the Lok Adalats. As a preparatory measure, NALSA started organization of prior consultative and review meetings with all the State Legal Services Authorities to guide them towards the maximum disposal during such Lok Adalats. Before the organization of each National Lok Adalat, multiple interactions were organised with the Executive Chairpersons of all the State Legal Services Authorities, wherein one-to-one interactions were made to take a stock of the preparations as well as to boost the morale of the stakeholders tasked to organize the Lok Adalats.

A cumulative effect of all the preparatory and mobilization measures resulted in extraordinary disposal figures during the year 2021. Across the country, a total number of **1,27,87,329** cases were disposed of in four National Lok Adalats, which included a huge number of pending cases i.e., **55,81,117** and a record number of pre-litigation cases i.e., **72,06,212**. Through these activities the Legal Services Authorities disposed off a large number of cases giving relief to the common citizens by ending or preventing long lasting legal battles.

Achieving these unprecedented disposal figures was not an easy task. A major contribution to this success can be attributed to the technological advancements. In June 2020, the Legal Services Authorities integrated technology with the conventional modes of dispute settlement and introduced virtual Lok Adalats also called as '**E-Lok Adalats**'. Since then, all the Lok Adalats including National Lok Adalats are organized through virtual and hybrid modes. To provide an unhindered experience during the proceedings, the Legal Services Authorities across the country are continuously upgrading their digital infrastructure.

Due to these technological advancements, Lok Adalats have reached to the doorsteps of the parties. The parties are now able to join the Lok Adalat proceedings from their homes or workplaces, saving them the hassle of travelling and reserving a full day for an affair, which gets over within minutes. The Authorities have witnessed that a large number of persons joined the virtual proceedings sitting hundreds of kilometers away from the physical location where the Lok Adalat was organized. Technology has also provided effective ways of supervision and monitoring of Lok Adalats.

The other major factor in the success of Lok Adalats was the formulation of decisive strategies at the National level. Under these strategies, the State Legal Services Authorities were instructed to conduct meetings with various stakeholder across every level with an objective to ensure their full cooperation and coordination. The authorities were guided to follow a litigant friendly approach as well as to persuade such litigants to settle the cases involving settled propositions of law.

Moreover, certain areas of law having greater possibilities of settlement such as NI Act cases, Bank recovery cases along other financial matters were highlighted and authorities were instructed to explore all the possibilities of compromise in such cases. The authorities were advised to proactively monitor the issuance and completion of processes in such financial matters as well as to conduct pre-Lok Adalat sittings to take a matter to a settlement.

There is no doubt regarding the fact that the number of pending cases surged during the ongoing pandemic. However, with a large number of disposals through Lok Adalats, a balance was created by the Legal Services Authorities in the judicial administration of the country. There is no gainsaying that the Lok Adalats settled greater number of cases than any other dispute resolution mechanism and emerged as the most efficacious tool of Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism.

During the year, the category wise list of the disposed cases was topped by the Criminal Compoundable Cases, wherein a total number of **17,63,233** such pending cases and **18,67,934** pre-litigation cases were disposed. The second in line were the Revenue cases consisting of **11,59,794** pre-litigation and **14,99,558** pending cases. Apart from these, the other disposed of cases were cheque bounce cases under NI Act, Bank Recovery Cases, Motor Accident Claims, Labour Disputes, matrimonial cases, etc.

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**HRK**

(Release ID: 1789360)