

Lok Adalat

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Lok Adalats Latest News

The Rajasthan High Court has taken suo motu cognizance of the non-functioning of 16 permanent Lok Adalats across the state, following a news report highlighting this grave issue.

About Lok Adalats

- Lok Adalats ("People's Courts") are statutory alternative dispute resolution (ADR) forums established under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.
- They provide an accessible, informal, and expeditious mechanism to settle disputes either pending in courts or at the pre-litigation stage, through mutual compromise and conciliation.
- **Statutory Status:** Constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, they have legal backing and their awards are enforceable as civil court decrees.
- **Lok Adalats can be organized at the district, state, and national levels.**
 - The State/District Legal Services Authority or the Supreme Court/High Court/Taluk Legal Services Committee may organise Lok Adalat at such intervals and places and for exercising such jurisdiction

and in such areas as it thinks fit.

- **Nature of Cases:** Civil, compoundable criminal, family, property, and pre-litigation disputes. Non-compoundable criminal cases are excluded.
- **No Court Fees:** There is no fee for cases referred to Lok Adalats. If a case pending in court is settled, the court fee paid is refunded.
- **Voluntary and Non-Coercive:** Settlements are based on mutual agreement; no party is compelled to accept a decision.
- **Binding Awards:** Decisions are final, binding, and equivalent to civil court decrees, with very limited scope for challenge (mainly on grounds of fraud or coercion).
- If the parties are not satisfied with the award of the Lok Adalat though there is no provision for an appeal against such an award, but they are free to initiate litigation by approaching the court of appropriate jurisdiction by filing a case by following the required procedure, in exercise of their right to litigate.

Permanent Lok Adalats

- **Establishment and Purpose:** Permanent Lok Adalats were introduced under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 (amended in 2002), to resolve disputes related to public utility services such as transport, postal, and telegraph.
- **Composition and Jurisdiction:** These are permanent bodies comprising a Chairman and two members, with jurisdiction to resolve disputes involving amounts up to ₹1 crore. However, they cannot adjudicate cases involving non-compoundable offences.

Lok Adalats FAQs

Q1. What is meant by Lok Adalats?

Ans. Lok Adalats are “people’s courts” in India that settle disputes quickly and amicably outside regular courts.

Q2. How many Lok Adalats are there in India?

Ans. Lok Adalats are organized at multiple levels across all states and districts, but the exact current number varies; sessions are held regularly nationwide.

Q3. Who started Lok Adalat in India?

Ans. The first Lok Adalat was held in 1982 in Junagarh, Gujarat.

Q4. What are the powers of Lok Adalat?

Ans. Lok Adalats have powers similar to civil courts, such as summoning witnesses, requiring documents, and making binding decisions.

Source: TH

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