

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-1069
ANSWERED ON-13/02/2025

ACCESSIBILITY OF JUSTICE TO OBCs, SCs AND STs

1069 SHRI MASTHAN RAO YADAV BEEDHA:

Will the Minister of Law and Justice be pleased to state:

- (a) whether any efforts are being made by the Ministry to ensure easy, accessible and affordable judicial system for the people belonging to socially backward classes like OBCs, SCs and STs;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether the court premises and proceedings become more accessible for socially backward classes like OBCs, SCs and STs;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) if not, the manner in which Government proposes to do the same?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE; AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS

(SHRI ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL)

- (a) to (e): The Government has taken several steps to ensure availability of affordable and accessible justice to the citizens including SCs, STs and OBCs. National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) had been setup under the Legal Services Authorities (LSA) Act, 1987 to provide free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of the society as covered under Section 12 of the Act, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities. The activities/programs undertaken by Legal Services Authorities include Legal Aid and advice; Legal Awareness Programmes; Legal Services/Empowerment camps; Legal Services Clinics; Legal Literacy Clubs; Lok Adalats and implementation of Victim Compensation Scheme.

Further, under the aegis of the LSA Act, 1987, Lok Adalats are organised to promote justice on the basis of equal opportunities. For this purpose, the legal services institutions have been setup from the Taluk Court level to the Supreme Court. There are three types of Lok Adalats namely State Lok Adalats, National Lok Adalats and Permanent Lok Adalats. National Lok Adalats are organized simultaneously in all Taluks, Districts and High Courts on a pre-fixed date. State Lok Adalats are organised by State Legal Services Authorities as per local conditions and needs and Permanent Lok Adalats are conducted as per the number of sittings decided per week.

In 2021, a comprehensive, pan - India scheme titled “Designing Innovative Solutions for Holistic Access to Justice in India” (DISHA) was launched for a period of five years (2021-2026) at an outlay of Rs. 250 crores. The DISHA scheme aims to provide easy, accessible, affordable and citizen-centric delivery of legal services through the scheme of Tele-Law, Nyaya Bandhu (Pro Bono Legal Services) and Legal Literacy and Legal awareness programme. Till 31st January 2025, Tele- Law service has been made available across 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats in 785 districts across 36 States and UTs and has rendered pre - litigation advice to 1,06,85,242 beneficiaries which includes 33,70,198 SCs, 14,45,410 STs, 33,66,932 OBCs etc. The Nyaya Bandhu (Pro Bono Legal services) enables seamless connect through the Nyaya Bandhu Application (available on Android/iOS) between the interested Pro Bono Advocates and registered beneficiaries who are entitled for free legal aid under Section 12 of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. As on 31st January, 2025, there are 8783 Pro Bono advocates registered under the Nyaya Bandhu program. Through the Legal Literacy and Legal Awareness programme, approximately 1 crore beneficiaries at the State and district and local levels have been made aware and sensitized on various rights, duties and entitlements.

The Government of India has approved a new Central Sector Scheme namely Legal Aid Defense Counsel System (LADCS) Scheme on 12.03.2024. LADCS Scheme aims to provide legal aid to the beneficiaries w.r.t. criminal cases only and the beneficiaries need to be eligible as per eligibility criteria as stated in Sections 12 of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. The approved financial outlay of LADCS scheme is Rs. 998.43 crore for 3 years (F.Y. 2023-24 to F.Y. 2025-26). As on 30th December 2024, LADC offices are functional in 654 districts across the country and has engaged 5251 staff including 3448 Defense Counsels. During the year 2024-25 (upto December, 2024), LADCS offices dealt more than 3.95 lakh criminal cases.
