
2. National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)

Prelims Syllabus: Judiciary

Mains Syllabus: GS-II Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

Context:

- Recently, The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has reported that around 11,077 under trials have been released from prisons nationwide as part of the mission to decongest jails following the COVID-19 pandemic.

About NALSA:

- It has been constituted under the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987**, to provide free legal services to weaker sections of society.
- It aims to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reasons of economic or other disabilities. The 'Nyaya Deep' is the official newsletter of NALSA.
- It has also been providing assistance to prisoners who were eligible to be released on parole or interim bail under the relaxed norms, through its panel lawyers.

Composition of NALSA:

- The Chief Justice of India shall be the Patron-in-Chief, as per section 3(2) of Legal Service Authorities Act.
- The Second senior-most judge of Supreme Court of India is the Executive-Chairman.
- About the functions performed by NALSA:
 - It organise Lok Adalat for amicable settlement of disputes.
 - It Identify specific categories of the marginalised and excluded groups and formulates various schemes for the implementation of preventive and strategic legal service programmes.
 - It provides free legal aid in civil and criminal matters for the poor and marginalised people who cannot afford the services of a lawyer in any court or tribunal.

About State Legal Services Authorities:

- It has been constituted to give effect to the policies and directions of the NALSA and to give free legal services to the people and conduct Lok Adalat in the State.

- It is headed by Hon'ble the Chief Justice of the respective High Court who is the Patron-in-Chief of the State Legal Services Authority.

About District Legal Services Authority:

- It has been constituted to implement Legal Services Programmes in the District.
- It is situated in the District Courts Complex in every District and chaired by the District Judge of the Respective District.

About Constitutional Basis of Legal System:

- **Article 39A** of the Constitution of India provides that State shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity, and shall in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disability.
- **Articles 14 and 22(1)** also make it obligatory for the State to ensure equality before law and a legal system which promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity to all.
- Legal aid strives to ensure that constitutional pledge is fulfilled in its letter and spirit and equal justice is made available to the poor, downtrodden and weaker sections of the Society.

