

## **LAUNCHING OF LEGAL AID CLINIC – NALSA**

My greetings to all present in this momentous gathering. It gives me utmost pleasure in launching 2558 legal aid clinics across our country in addition to the existing 9445 village level legal aid clinics. My esteemed brother judges have already categorically briefed on the structure and significance of the National Legal Services Authority (Legal Aid Clinics) Regulations, 2011. Thus my endeavor in this address will be confined to requesting the Para-legal volunteers and the lawyers on whose services this scheme drives life from, to be candid while they render the legal services to the needy.

I am sure all of us agree and notice the shift in the mode of rendering legal services over the span of years. The National Legal Services Authority from its initiation has been dynamically introducing new concepts for furthering the mandate of the NLSA Act, 1987. One such candid effort is establishing the legal aid clinics in all villages of our country with the aim of making the legal services more flexible and responsive so that it results in achievable legal solutions to the people.

The Para legal volunteers and lawyers are the backbone of the scheme. Only on your vibrant service, this scheme will derive the

momentum to thrive. Apart from the basic legal advice, your sincerity and earnestness is also required in helping the villagers to comprehend and solve many day-to-day transactions like applying for ration card or the job card under MGNREGA or to avail such other schemes which are introduced for their benefit. In fact, Rule 10(2) goes further and states that Para-legal volunteers shall, if necessary, must accompany the persons seeking legal services to attend the government offices for interacting with the officials and for solving the problems. As a result, it is prerequisite that you develop and nurture the skill of amicable settlement in all your dealings, as this will only be instrumental for the success of this scheme.

Further, as a Para legal volunteer you will be encountering with diversified people who may hold very strong customary beliefs and notions, which is ingrained in their lives. It is despite these inhibitions, you must succeed in imparting legal awareness. I am aware it is not an easy task. Mere legal knowledge will not suffice the cause, it is your passion that you portray in your volunteer work, which transmits to the persons as the assertion of justice.

You stand as the face of judiciary to these commoners for whom the Court and its procedure is an alien figure. As a consequence, you have the onus of taking forward the principles of justice engraved in the Constitutional scheme. It is popularly said that knowledge is power and knowledge of laws is empowerment, you are the vibrant channel in this empowerment mission. You should endeavor to be the voice of the voiceless to be heard and to get their grievances redressed.

The Legal aid clinics in all villages across the States must seek the help of local body institutions such as the village Panchayats not only for the purpose of accommodation, as stipulated under Rule 12 of the Regulation, but also for creating awareness amongst the people of the villages. We cannot overrule the vast impact these local institutions have on our people in the Indian villages. Therefore, their assistance will be very handy and viable mode for reaching to a larger number of people. Besides, the legal services authorities may also approach the local TV channels for propaganda of legal aid clinics in respective districts.

The National Legal Services Authority (Legal Aid Clinics) Regulations, 2011 is certainly momentous for more than one reason. The idea of roping in law students through their respective

universities in rendering the legal service via legal aid clinics is a splendid idea, since it directly encourages the young legal minds to be part of the mission of legal empowerment and also gives them the platform to interact with common masses on their legal dispute.

As I conclude I once again wish to reiterate the NALSA mandate, which is to develop and promote a culture of conciliation instead of litigation so that citizens of this country prefer to resolve their disputes and differences across the table in a spirit of goodwill and brotherhood. It is also mandated to ensure that even weakest amongst the weak in the country does not suffer injustice arising out of any action on the part of State or private person.

This mission would be successful only if there is cooperation among all its stakeholders. I seize this occasion to implore on every stakeholder to be cooperative.

Thank You.

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