



Tele-Law

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Why in News

Tele-Law touched a new milestone on October 30th 2020 by providing legal advice to 4 million beneficiaries through **Common Service Centres**.

Common Services Centre (CSC) programme is an initiative of the **Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY)**, that serves as the access points for delivery of various electronic services to villages in India, thereby contributing to a **digitally and financially inclusive society**.

Key Points

- **About:** Tele-Law programme was launched by the **Ministry of Law and Justice** in collaboration with the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** launched in 2017 to address cases at pre-litigation stage.
- **Connect Lawyers to Litigants:** It is a service that uses video conferencing facilities and telephone services to connect **lawyers to litigants** who need legal advice. This service aims to reach out to the needy especially the marginalized and disadvantaged.
- **Common Service Centres:** Under this programme, smart technology of video conferencing, telephone/instant calling facilities available at the vast network of **Common Service Centres** at the Panchayat level are used to connect the indigent, down-trodden, vulnerable, unreached groups and communities with the Panel Lawyers for seeking timely and valuable legal advice.
- **Benefits:** Tele Law service enables anyone to seek legal advice without wasting precious time and money. The service is free for those who are eligible for free legal Aid as mentioned under **Section 12 of the Legal Services Authority Act, 1987**. For all others a nominal fee is charged.

According to a recent report titled 'Quality of Legal Representation: An Empirical Analysis of Free Legal Aid Services in India', the majority of the people who are entitled to the free legal aid system see the service as an option only when they cannot afford a private lawyer.

- **Supports SDGs:** It can be noted that this initiative is in line with Sustainable Development Goal-16, which seeks to "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels".

Legal Services Authorities (LSA) Act

- In 1987, the Legal Services Authorities (LSA) Act was enacted to give free and competent legal services to the poor and paved the way for the constitution of National Legal Service Authority (NALSA) and other legal service institutions at the State, district and taluka level.
- Free legal services under LSA Act are available to a person belonging to Schedule Tribe and Schedule Caste, woman, child, victim of human trafficking, differently abled person, industrial workman, and person in custody in a protective home and the poor.

Constitutional Provision

- **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 the law and a legal system which promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity to all.

Source:PIB