

Q. The Legal Services Authorities (LSA) though optimistic in intentions has been unable to achieve its objectives. Critically analyse.

Ans. Article 39A of the Constitution mandates to promote equal justice and to provide free legal aid to the poor.

In accordance with the above Directive principles the Legal Services Authorities Act was enacted in 1987.

The free legal services under the LSA are for the poor and marginalised sections of the society

The benefits of the act for the vulnerable sections are:-

① The act ensures free legal aid to the poor. The private lawyers charge exorbitant fees which is out of the pocket for the marginalised section.

② The panel lawyers are selected by NALSA which is a reputed body and thus speaks of the quality of empanelled lawyers.

But, this act has not been a major attraction among its beneficiaries because:

① Trust deficit → There is a trust deficit between the beneficiaries and the panel lawyers.

② A majority of the beneficiaries look towards this legal aid system as the

last option when they cannot afford a private lawyer.

- ③ Cases have shown that in around 16% of cases the LAC demand money before or after court hearing.
- ④ LAC can withdraw from an aided case by submitting a reason to member-secretary leaving the beneficiary in lurch.

To plug these loopholes, the LSA can:

- ① Improve the quality and accountability of the legal aid by having a transparent selection process.
- ② A ^{robust} grievance redressal system with IVRS and contact e-mail address.
- ③ Single-window procedures for application, registration and handling of cases.
- ④ Periodic assessment of panel of lawyers very similar to ratings given to products by customers, in this case beneficiaries.