

(5) Member of the Lok Adalat shall ensure that the parties affix their signatures only after fully understanding the terms of settlement arrived at and recorded. The members of the Lok Adalat shall also satisfy themselves about the following before affixing their signatures:

- (a) that the terms of settlement are not unreasonable or illegal or one-sided; and
- (b) that the parties have entered into the settlement voluntarily and not on account of any threat, coercion or undue influence.

**16. Communication between Lok Adalat and parties.** - (1) A Lok Adalat may invite the parties to meet it or may communicate with it orally or in writing and it may meet or communicate with the parties together or with each of them separately. The factual information concerning the dispute received from a party may be disclosed to the other party in order that the other party may have the opportunity to present any explanation:

Provided that the Lok Adalat shall not disclose any information, if one of the party desires to keep it confidential.

(2) Each party may on his own initiative or at the invitation of the Lok Adalat, submit suggestions for settlement of the dispute.

(3) When it appears to the Lok Adalat that there exists elements of a settlement which may be acceptable to the parties, the terms of a possible settlement may be formulated by the Lok Adalat and given to the parties for their observations and modifications, if any, suggested by the parties can be taken into consideration and terms of a possible settlement may be re-formulated by the Lok Adalat.

(4) If the parties reach a compromise or settlement of the dispute, the Lok Adalat may draw up or assist the parties in drawing up the compromise or settlement.

**13. Procedure in Lok Adalats.-** (1) Members of Lok Adalat have the role of statutory conciliators only and have no judicial role and they, *mutatis mutandis*, may follow the procedure laid down in sections 67 to 76 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 (26 of 1996).

(2) Members of Lok Adalat shall not pressurise or coerce any of the parties, to compromise or settle cases or matters, either directly or indirectly.

(3) In a Lok Adalat the members shall discuss the subject matter with the parties for arriving at a just settlement or compromise and such members of the Lok Adalat shall assist the parties in an independent and impartial manner in their attempt to reach amicable settlement of their dispute:

Provided that if it found necessary the assistance of an independent person or a trained mediator may also be availed of the by Lok Adalat.

(4) Members of Lok Adalat shall be guided by principles of natural justice, equity, fairplay, objectivity, giving consideration to, among other things, the rights and obligations of the parties, custom and usages and the circumstances surrounding the dispute.

**5. Notice to parties concerned:-** The Member Secretary or Secretary of the High Court Legal Services Committee or District Authority or, as the case may be, the Chairman of the Taluk Legal Services Committee convening and organizing the Lok Adalat shall inform every party concerned whose case is referred to the Adalat, well in time so as to afford him an opportunity to prepare himself for the Lok Adalat:

Provided that such notice may be dispensed with, if the Court while referring the case to the Lok Adalat fixes or informs the date and time of the Lok Adalat in the presence of the parties, or their advocates:

Provided further that if a party is not willing to refer their case to Lok Adalat, the case may be considered on its merits by the Court concerned.