NYAYATECH 2026

LOK ADALAT SIMULATION — OFFICIAL PROBLEM STATEMENT

Case Particulars

Case No.: Lok Adalat Ref. No. LA/NFSA/2026/07

Referring Authority: District Legal Services Authority, Jabalpur, on a reference facilitated by Vidhimitra — The Legal Aid Cell, Dharmashastra National Law University

Requesting Party: Smt. Sukhiya Bai Gond, aged 61, widow, resident of Village Semaria Kalan, Tehsil Panagar, District Jabalpur (M.P.)

Requesting Party Representation: Represented pro bono by a Legal Aid Panel Advocate empanelled through Vidhimitra

Opposite Party: Shri Ramesh Prajapati, Fair Price Shop (FPS) Dealer, Shop No. 14, Semaria Kalan (impleaded for the purpose of this reference, with the District Supply Office, Jabalpur, as the backing authority for any financial terms of settlement)

Subject Matter: Denial of subsidised food-grain entitlement under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (Antyodaya Anna Yojana category), due to repeated ePoS biometric authentication failure

Nature of Proceeding: Voluntary reference for conciliation; either side has filed no criminal complaint or consumer/food-commission proceeding

Detailed Factual Matrix

1. The Requesting Party, Smt. Sukhiya Bai Gond, aged 61, is a widow and agricultural labourer by occupation, having worked as manual field labour for over four decades. She resides in Village Semaria Kalan with her two grandchildren, aged 8 and 11, whose parents have migrated to another state for work and send remittances irregularly.

2. The Requesting Party's household holds an Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) ration card under the National Food Security Act, 2013, entitling the household to 35 kg of subsidised food-grain (a wheat-rice combination) every month at the notified issue price of approximately Rs. 2–3 per kg, distributable through Fair Price Shop No. 14, Semaria Kalan, operated by the Opposite Party.

3. Since the rollout of Aadhaar-linked biometric authentication at the ePoS terminal in the district, ration distribution at Shop No. 14 has required the beneficiary's fingerprint to be matched electronically before any grain is issued.

4. From November 2025 onward, the Requesting Party's fingerprints — worn faint from decades of manual agricultural labour — repeatedly failed to authenticate on the ePoS device. This is a recognised and reported category of authentication failure, particularly among elderly manual labourers.

5. The Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution has, by standing instruction, directed that where biometric authentication fails, Fair Price Shop dealers must issue rations through an alternate mechanism (One-Time-Password authentication via the registered mobile number, iris authentication, or manual override with supervisory authorisation), so that no eligible beneficiary is denied their entitlement on account of a technical failure alone.

6. The Opposite Party did not issue rations to the Requesting Party through any alternate mechanism in November and December 2025, or January and February 2026 — four consecutive months — stating that he had not been trained or authorised to perform a manual override at the shop level, and that doing so without a successful biometric match risked a mismatch between his physical stock and his electronic transaction log during periodic audit, for which he could be held personally accountable.

7. As a result, the Requesting Party's household did not receive its entitlement of 35 kg per month — a cumulative shortfall of approximately 140 kg — for the four-month period. To meet the household's food requirement, the Requesting Party purchased an equivalent quantity of grain from the open market at a prevailing local price of approximately Rs. 28 per kg, amounting to an approximate cost of Rs. 3,900, against a subsidised cost of roughly Rs. 350 had the entitlement been received through the PDS.

8. To fund this additional expense, the Requesting Party borrowed Rs. 6,000 from a local moneylender at an informal monthly interest rate of approximately 3%. As of the date of this reference, the outstanding amount on this loan, including accrued interest, stands at approximately Rs. 9,200.

9. In January 2026, the Requesting Party's 8-year-old grandson was admitted to the Community Health Centre, Panagar, for three days, with symptoms recorded by the treating physician as including a note that nutritional deficiency may have been a contributing factor. The physician's note is descriptive rather than a conclusive causal finding, and the Requesting Party is aware that it does not, by itself, establish a direct medical link to the ration denial.

10. During a legal aid outreach camp conducted by Vidhimitra in Semaria Kalan in February 2026, a paralegal volunteer recorded the Requesting Party's grievance, verified her ration card and ePoS transaction history (which showed a series of “authentication failed” entries with no corresponding issue of grain), and assisted her in filing a written complaint with the District Supply Office, Jabalpur.

11. In March 2026, the District Supply Office issued a written communication (Annexure A to this case file) acknowledging that alternate authentication ought to have been made available to the Requesting Party under the standing ministerial instruction, and undertaking to examine the matter, but without releasing any arrears or compensation at that stage.

12. The Opposite Party, for his part, has stated that he was not clearly informed of the alternate-authentication protocol through any training or communication reaching his shop, and attributes the lapse to a gap in the district's rollout of the instruction rather than to any wilful denial on his part.

13. Given the willingness expressed by both the Requesting Party (through her legal aid counsel) and the Opposite Party (backed by the District Supply Office's acknowledgment) to resolve the matter without prolonged proceedings before the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission or a writ court, the District Legal Services Authority has referred the matter to a Lok Adalat for conciliation.

4. Indicative Legal Framework

- National Food Security Act, 2013
- Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
- Right to food jurisprudence under Article 21 of the Constitution of India
- Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987
- Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016
- General principles of restitution and administrative accountability for delayed implementation of a beneficiary-protective instruction

5. Confidential Brief — Requesting Party

CONFIDENTIAL — REQUESTING PARTY (Smt. Sukhiya Bai Gond) ONLY

Your absolute priority is that this does not happen again — you would rather have a guaranteed, working fallback authentication method than any amount of one-time compensation, because a repeat of this situation would be worse than the money at stake now.

Your outstanding debt to the moneylender is Rs. 9,200 and growing at roughly 3% per month; you are under real pressure to close it soon, and this is your single most urgent practical need after the authentication fix.

You are aware that the physician's note on your grandson's hospitalisation is suggestive, not conclusive — you do not intend to overstate this as “proof” of a direct medical link, since your legal aid counsel has advised you that doing so could weaken your credibility if pressed, and it is not necessary for your claim, which rests on the clear entitlement denial regardless of the medical question.

Your order of priority is: (1) a permanent, working fallback authentication mechanism enabled on your family's ration card without delay; (2) recovery of enough value to substantially clear your moneylender debt; (3) the value of your foregone entitlement, in cash or in kind, whichever is issued faster; (4) a commitment that other elderly or manual-labour beneficiaries in the same shop's area are not left in the same position.

You are open to accepting the cash-equivalent value of your foregone entitlement rather than grain-in-kind, since your immediate need is closing the debt, not the grain itself at this point.

You trust your legal aid counsel's judgment on what is realistic to ask for from the Department, but you want the authentication fix stated in the settlement in specific, checkable terms (a date, a named mechanism) — not a vague assurance.

6. Confidential Brief — Opposite Party

CONFIDENTIAL — OPPOSITE PARTY (Shri Ramesh Prajapati, FPS Dealer, backed by the District Supply Office) ONLY

You genuinely did not receive clear, hands-on training on the manual/OTP override process — the instruction reached the district through a circular, but implementation training for dealers in your cluster has not yet been conducted; this is a real systemic gap, not something you are inventing as an excuse, and the District Supply Office privately concedes this internally.

The District Supply Office has authorised you, for the purpose of this Lok Adalat reference, to agree to: (a) enabling OTP-based alternate authentication on the Requesting Party's family ID within 15 days of settlement; (b) releasing the cash-equivalent value of the four months' foregone entitlement (calculated at the notified issue price differential, approximately Rs. 2,000–2,500) within 30 days; and (c) conducting a dealer-training camp for the Semaria Kalan cluster within 60 days.

You have limited discretionary room — up to Rs. 3,000 — from a small district-level beneficiary-welfare/goodwill fund, which may be offered toward the Requesting Party's incurred hardship, but the District Supply Office has instructed that this must not be labelled “compensation” in the written settlement, to avoid inviting a wave of similar monetary claims from other affected beneficiaries district-wide; a term such as “goodwill assistance” is preferred.

You are personally anxious to avoid being named individually liable or facing licence action, and are motivated to cooperate, apologise, and support the Requesting Party's case for a systemic fix, since the underlying fault is substantially the District's training and rollout gap rather than your individual wilful denial.

If the Requesting Party's side presses hard for the full Rs. 9,200 debt to be covered, you are authorised to explain the funding limits above, but you may propose a creative alternative — for instance, requesting Vidhimitra's assistance in negotiating a reduced or waived interest amount with the moneylender, or linking the Requesting Party to an existing livelihood/micro-credit scheme — rather than simply refusing to close the gap.

7. Model Conciliation Plan — As Would Be Submitted by Requesting Party's Legal Aid Counsel

The following is a filled, realistic example of the written conciliation plan required under the main competition guidelines, shown here as a model so participants can see the expected standard and structure before drafting their own.

CONCILIATION PLAN

Case No.: Lok Adalat Ref. No. LA/NFSA/2026/07

Prepared by: Legal Aid Panel Advocate, on behalf of the Requesting Party, Smt. Sukhiya Bai Gond

Referring Authority: District Legal Services Authority, Jabalpur (on reference from Vidhimitra Legal Aid Cell)

A. Brief Statement of Facts

B. Issues for Conciliation

C. Parties' Positions

- **Requesting Party's Position**
- **Opposite Party's Position**

D. Interests Underlying the Parties' Positions

- **Requesting Party's Interests**
- **Opposite Party's Interests**
- **Shared Interests**

E. Goals of the Conciliation

- **Essential Goals**
- **Important Goals**
- **Preferred / Negotiable Goals**

F. BATNA

G. Requesting Party's Opening Proposal

H. Fallback / Minimum Acceptable Terms

I. Anticipated Impediments and Proposed Responses

J. Plan for Offers and Counters

K. Possible Settlement Framework