

News Letter

Work shop on RTI - 2017

The Tamil Nadu State Information Commission conducted a Workshop on RTI with the participation of representative Public Information Officers and representative First Appellate Authorities at the Police Training College, Chennai on 28.10.2017. About 140 participants, from about 38 departments participated.

The event commenced with a welcome address by the Registrar, Tamil Nadu State Information Commission, Thiru K.V. Ramamoorthy.

The State Chief Information Commissioner Thiru K. Ramanujam delivered the inaugural address, suggesting interalia:-

- Uploading of as much information as possible in departmental websites.
- Use of the Reply format published in the commission's website while sending replies to RTI petition.

Special Address

Thiru.V. Sampath, I.A.S., Director of Social Security Schemes, Revenue Administration Department highlighted the salient provisions of the Act and suggested that the Commission should conduct such workshops regularly.

Experiences shared by the State Information Commissioners

Tmt.B.Neelambikai, SIC (Retd), Thiru.R.Dakshinamurthy SIC and Thiru.G.Murugan, SIC shared their experiences on cases which came up before them for orders and advised as follows:-

- Public Information Officers should provide available information unless it is exempted under the Act.
- First Appellate Authorities should dispose the appeals under the provisions of Section 19(1) of the Act, within the prescribed time limit, by passing speaking orders.

Presentation - by Public Information Officers

Thiru C.K. Kumaran, HQDT, Mambalam Taluk requested the following :

- All Public Information Officers should be trained before they take up this assignment .
- Provision should be made to reject applications filed in letter heads.
- Specific contingency fund should be provided to Public Information Officers.
- Accommodation may be provided for the stay of Public Information Officers who have to visit Chennai from far off places to attend enquiries.

Thiru.Nelson, Public Information Officer, Metro Water highlighted the shortage of manpower to deal with the RTI applications.

Thiru N.S.Mohamed Aslam, Public Information Officer, Corporation of Chennai advised the Public Information Officers to send the reply by registered post and keep the acknowledgement on file.

Presentation - by First Appellate Authorities.

Tmt.K.R. Tamil Selvi, Deputy Secretary, TNPSC said :-

- There are 102 sections in TNPSC. It takes time to gather the required information. 30 days time limit could not be adhered to in many cases. There must be a provision to send interim replies if final reply cannot be sent within 30 days.
- Based on the directions of the State Information Commission, copies of answer sheets are being given to the applicants.

Thiru.C. Baskarathondaman, Assistant Director, Town and Country Planning.

- Voluminous information is often sought.

Tmt.K.Latha, Director, Commercial Taxes Training Institute.

- Regular training to Public Information Officers and Appellate Authorities should be given.
- Initiative should be taken to train master trainers who can train Public Information Officers and Appellate Authorities.

Thiru.R.Rohith Nathan, DCP, Adyar

- Online filing of RTI should be introduced so as to reduce paper work.
- All Government orders should be published in the website.

Question and Answer Session

At the commencement of the workshop, a questionnaire with 20 questions, relating to the provision of RTI Act, with objective type answers was distributed among the Public Information Officers and Appellate Authorities present and they were asked to test their RTI Knowledge by answering them. At the time of his valedictory address the State Chief Information Commissioner discussed the responses to these questions.

Valediction

In his valedictory address Thiru.K.Ramanujam, SCIC, highlighted the following :-

- Building a guest house for the officials who come for hearing is a good idea. Government may consider taking up this project.
- The Public Information Officer is the deciding authority on RTI and delay on the score that approval of superiors had to be obtained cannot be accepted.
- Replies should be sent by Registered post to avoid any dispute about dispatch.
- Name of Public Information Officer and details of Appellate Authority should be mentioned by the Public Information Officer.
- Information under RTI means available and existing information. There is no requirement that the Public Information Officer should conduct an enquiry and carry out an inspection in order to reply to a query under RTI.
- Appellate Authorities should refrain from simply forwarding the appeal with a brand endorsement to provide information under RTI Act. They should go through the petition, Public Information Officer's reply and the contents of the appeal and then pass a speaking order.

Vote of Thanks

Thiru S. Ashok Kumar, Secretary, TNIC delivered the vote of thanks.

SECRETARY