

National Workshop on Freedom of Information: Challenges and Solutions

On 6 April 2013

**Organised by the Centre for Transparency and
Accountability in Governance, National Law University
Delhi**

**In Association with the Central Information Commission,
Government of India and NCPRI, New Delhi**



At

National Law University Delhi

Sector 14 Dwarka New Delhi

THE ORGANISERS:

The National Law University Delhi

National Law University, Delhi established in 2008 by Act No.1 of 2008 of National Capital Territory of Delhi is one of the premier law universities established in India. The vision of the University is to create a Global Legal Institution which will compete with the best in the World and to prepare Lawyers for a legal career that introduces them to wide range of opportunities in legal profession across the globe. The University has very good infrastructure in its campus at Sector 14, Dwarka, New Delhi with all facilities for best of learning and research. The University offers 5-year integrated B.A., LL.B (Hons.), LL.M., Ph D and PG Diploma Programmes.

The Central Information Commission (CIC) New Delhi

The Central Information Commission has been constituted by the central government through a Gazette Notification. The CIC is the apex body under the Right to Information Act, 2005. The CIC is composed of one Chief Information Commissioner and not more than 10 Information Commissioners. The CIC has the power to take cognizance to appeal and complaints from any person under the Right to Information Act, 2005.

The National Campaign for People's Right to Information, New Delhi

The National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI) was founded in 1996. Its founding members included social activists, journalists, lawyers, professionals, retired civil servants and academics. One of its primary objectives was to campaign for a national law facilitating the exercise of the fundamental right to information.

ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

A democratic government must be an accountable and transparent government. Openness promotes accountability which has been considered as another attribute of a democratic government. Well informed and vigilant public is the ultimate check on maladministration and administrative corruption.

In order to strengthen the core constitutional values of Indian democratic republic, the Right to Information Act, 2005 (the Act) has been enacted. The fundamental objective of the Act is to promote transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority. Transparency of information is vital in curbing corruption and making the Government and its instrumentalities accountable. The Act is also meant to harmonize the conflicting interests of Government to preserve the confidentiality of sensitive information with the right of citizens to know the functioning of the governmental process in such a way as to preserve the paramountcy of the democratic ideal.

In-depth examination and analysis of the Act and judicial pronouncements, it is evident that there are lot of difficulties which have been created due to fee structures, lack of empowerment of Central Information Commission/State Information Commissioner (CIC/SIC) in enforcing violations of Section 4, powers to impose penalty on First Appellate Authority for deviation of its duties, and so on so forth, in effective and efficient operationalisation of the freedom of information scheme. Due to the existing hindrances this system of ensuring transparency and accountability in governance, has failed to achieve the desired results.

SUBTHEMES OF THE WORKSHOP:

The workshop shall provide a platform to various stakeholders and address topical matters for freedom of information. This Workshop would deliberate on the following sub-themes:

1. Amplitude of the freedom of information endeavours
2. Role of the Public authority and Public Information officers in promoting the scheme.
3. Analysis of exemptions under the provisions of the Act
4. Empowerment of the Central and State Information Commission
5. Reforms related to functioning of the RTI Scheme.
6. Protections to RTI Applicant.
7. Expansion of RTI scheme to Private institutions.
8. Challenges before the RTI Scheme in India.

Above themes are only illustrative but not exhaustive. Researcher may select any topic related to the main theme

PATRON-IN-CHIEF:

Prof. (Dr.) Ranbir Singh, *Vice-Chancellor, National Law University Delhi*

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1. Justice J S Verma, Former Chief Justice of India
2. Shri Wajahat Habbullah, Chairperson Minority Commission of India, New Delhi
3. Prof (Dr) PS Jaswal Vice Chancellor, RGNUL Patiala Punjab
4. Shri Satyananda Mishra, Chief Information Commissioner, Government Of India
5. Shri M.L. Sharma, Information Commissioner, CIC, Government Of India
6. Shri Shailesh Gandhi, former member of the Central Information Commission
7. Mrs. Maja Daruwala, Chairperson, Commonwealth Human Right Initiatives, India
8. Ms.Aruna Roy, National Campaign For Peoples' Right To Information, New Delhi
9. Shri Subhash Chandra Aggrawal, RTI Activist. New Delhi
10. Nikhil Dey, National Campaign For Peoples' Right To Information, New Delhi
11. Mrs. Smita Vats Sharma Additional Registrar/ CPIO, Supreme Court Of India.
12. Shri R Gopalan Joint Registrar (Establishment) Delhi High Court, New Delhi

PATRON:

Prof. (Dr.) Srikrishna Deva Rao, Professor of Law and Registrar, National Law University Delhi

CONVENER:

Dr. Jeet Singh Mann, Assistant Professor of Law, National Law University Delhi

Co-Conveners:

Dr Vishal Mahalwar, Asstt Prof of Law, National Law University Delhi

Mr, Pratyush Kumar, Research Associate, National Law University Delhi

CALL FOR PAPERS

Empirical research papers or field Studies on the specified topics pertaining to freedom of information endeavours are invited from scholars, researchers, bar & bench, teachers and students, PIO, NGO, civil societies. No co-author is allowed. Selected research papers will be allowed to make presentation.

Guidelines for Conference Paper

Research paper should apply research skills and use of appropriate research methodology. Research paper should be thematic and identification of sub-themes is highly appreciated. It should have proper research questions and should also reflect the findings. Paper should not be of more than 8000 words. It must be typed in Times New Roman Font Size 12 on A4 size paper with 1" margin on all sides with 1.5 line spacing using MS Word application. At the end of the paper, there should be a brief profile of the author with his e-mail ID, contact number and address.

Complete research papers with abstract shall be submitted on or before 24 March 2013

REGISTRATION CHARGES:

Registration Charges: Rs. 500 for legal professionals and Rs 100 for students.

No registration charges for paper presenters, members of Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, India, The Transparency International India, New Delhi and NCPRI, New Delhi. No registration charges from Public Information Officers and FAAs under the RTI Act, 2005. Registration for witnessing the proceedings can be submitted at any time on or before 30 March 2013.

Certificate for actual participation shall be issued or will be mailed after completion of the event. No certificate shall be issue in absentia and no refund of registration charges at any stage.

For further info visit our web site at www.nludelhi.ac.in.

TECHNICAL SESSIONS (tentative)

1. *Expanding the Horizons of the freedom of information endeavors in India:* 0945am-1145 am 6 April 2013:

1. Shri Wajahat Habibullah, Chairman, Minority Commission of India
2. Shri Satyanand Mishra, Chief Information Commissioner of India
3. Ms. Aruna Roy, member NCPRI
4. Mr R Gopalan Joint Registrar/ CPIO, High Court of Delhi.
5. Shri Jay Chanda, Deputy Registrar/CPIO University of Delhi

2. *Impediment in transparency and accountability under RTI Scheme:* 1215 pm-2pm 6 April 2013

1. Shri P S Bawa, Chairman, Transparency International India, New Delhi
2. Prof (Dr) PS Jaswal Vice Chancellor, RGNUL Patiala Punjab
3. Shri Shailesh Gandhi former member of CIC
4. Shri Subhash Chandra Aggrawal, RTI Activist.
5. Mrs. Smita Vats Sharma SC CPIO

3. *Reforms in Freedom of Information Enforcement Mechanism:* 3-5.30 pm 6 April 2013

1. Justice J S Verma, Former Chief Justice of India
2. Shri ML Sharma, Information Commissioner, CIC, India.
3. Mr, Nikhil Dey, Member NCPRI
4. Shri Venketesh Commonwealth Human Right Initiatives, India
5. Dr (Mrs.) Urmila Devi Joint Secretary/ CPIO UGC, New Delhi