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## PRESS RELEASE

The Central Information Commission has been organizing the Annual Convention every year since 2006. On completion of the first year of implementation of RTI Act, Central Information Commission organised a three-day National Convention on '**ONE YEAR OF RTI**' at Vigyan Bhawan during 12th-15<sup>th</sup> October, 2006 the same was attended by nearly 700 delegates representing a cross section of academia, civil society, media, professionals and others. Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, Honourable President inaugurated the convention whereas Dr PC Alexander delivered the keynote address. The convention had three panel presentations on "One Year of RTI - Taking Stock - Its Success & Shortcomings", "Approaches to maximum Disclosure and promotion of open Government especially with emphasis on Improving Information Storage, maintenance and thereby faster Retrieval" and "Implementation of RTI in the States". Report of the convention had been presented to Dr Manmohan Singh, Honourable Prime Minister in the valedictory session.

The Second **Conference of Central Information Commission with State Chief Information Commissioners and Information Commissioners** was more of a professional exercise in house stock taking and exchange of ideas on best practices, challenges, etc. and was organized at India International Centre, New Delhi on 17th October, 2007. The Conference was attended by over 175 delegates from across the country.

The Third Annual Convention of the Central Information Commission was held on 3rd & 4th November 2008 at DRDO Bhawan, New Delhi. Dr. Manmohan Singh, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, inaugurated the Convention on 3rd November 2008 at 10:00 hrs. The convention deliberated upon "**RTI and its Ramifications for Good Governance**" in its two day congregation. Importantly, the Convention was also attended by delegates from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal. In all about 250 delegates attended the convention. The third convention had seven technical sessions naming "RTI and Transparent Governance", "RTI – Need for a Different Strategy Specific to Rural Area", "RTI and Poverty Alleviation", "RTI and Protection of Individual Privacy", "Media, Civil Society and RTI", "RTI in South Asia – An Overview" and "RTI in South Asia – An Overview". The significant recommendation of the convention was appropriate Governments should make adequate budgetary provisions for developing and implementation of public awareness programmes on RTI Act and the appropriate Governments must integrate RTI with all flagship programmes, as has been initiated with NREGA so that the monitoring mechanism of the programmes becomes more efficient and also that the public has minimum resort to use of the RTI Act to obtain information in respect of a particular flagship programme of the Government inter alia.

The present Annual Convention is the fourth in the row. The President of India has kindly consented to inaugurate the Convention and the Vice President of India has agreed to address the valedictory session. The theme of the present convention is "**Strengthening Right to Information**". The key note address is being delivered by Lord Meghnad Desai. The two day convention will have six technical sessions covering major aspects of Right to Information. Various sessions of two day convention are to be held as two sessions on first day and rest four on the second day. The sessions are as under:

Current assessment of implementation of RTI, Proactive disclosure under RTI – Problems and Perspectives, RTI in developing world, Propagation of RTI Culture – Role of Media and other Traditional Means, RTI - Role of Political Leadership and RTI and other Laws in India.

The present convention is being attended by representatives of Civil Society and media both from within the country and from SAARC countries. The two day deliberations are expected to produce documents of contemporary as well as long term relevance to South Asia. Technical Sessions are being chaired by Justice Sri Madan B. Lokur, High Court of Delhi, Ms Medha Patkar, Sri Sanjay Baru, Sri Wajahat Habibullah, Chief Information Commissioner and Sri A N Tiwari, Sri M M Ansari both Information Commissioner, Central Information Commission.

The deliberations of each of the technical sessions are aimed at bringing about the insight on the current issues of the Act and its mapping to the theory and practices of the Right to information.

First Session on "**Current assessment of implementation of RTI**" is expected to discuss the analysis of the outcomes of the study reports conducted mainly by three agencies naming Sub Committee of the Central Information Commission, the DoPT and the Civil Society Organisation. The outcome of the session is expected to bring about the consolidated summary of the implementation of RTI Act in four years. The session is also likely to discuss some of the recommendations of these agencies.

The Second Session on "**Proactive disclosure under RTI – Problems and Perspectives**" will discuss the status of section 4 compliance by the Public Authorities. The session is also likely to present some of the successful implementation of section 4 by the Public Authorities. The second session is likely to produce the grading of the PA s on account of Transparency and Accountability and Least Corruption (TALC) index of some of the Public Authorities.

The Second day opens with the Session on "**RTI in developing world**". As is quite evident the session will present a stock of the RTI/freedom of Information laws in the developing countries. The session has speakers from the SAARC countries as well. This

Session is expected to generate a freedom of Information map in the developing world not only of SAARC countries but also of some of South American countries.

The Session on **“Propagation of RTI Culture – Role of Media and other Traditional Means”** is the second session of the second day which has four speakers from various media houses and one from the National School of Drama make it five in all. The session is certainly likely to generate very sharp debate on the role of the media in the propagation of RTI culture. This session is also discussing the role of various other traditional means.

The third session of the second day is **“RTI - Role of Political Leadership”**. The session is first of its kind where the role of political leadership is being discussed. It is likely to bring about very interesting debate on political leadership as policy makers and the citizens as its user.

The last session of the second day is **“RTI and other Laws in India”**. This session is likely to discuss the RTI and other laws in India. The session is also to discuss adversarial aspect of the RTI law with the other procedural laws in India. The outcome of the last session is certainly to become an important guideline for the fraternity who are engaged in the interpretation of the statute.

An informed citizenry and transparency in governance are vital to the functioning of a vibrant democracy in which corruption is minimal and the government and its instrumentalities are transparent and accountable to the people. The Right to Information Act, 2005, is one of the most important laws passed since independence. It creates many obligations on the State and the Central Government authorities for its implementation and sound monitoring. This Convention and its outcome have to be seen in this larger perspective.