

Press Release

13.10.09

The first technical Session of the Second day was chaired by Shri A. N. Tiwari, Central Information Commissioner along with three speakers- Mr. Mohamed Latheef, Male, Maldives, Mr. Rukshana Nanayakkara, Colombo, SriLanka, and Shri Venkatesh Nayak, CHRI. This Session focused on the theme “RTI in Developing World”.

Shri Tiwari while making opening remarks concentrated on the issues how RTI shapes up in other countries, why RTI spread is slow in some countries & RTI movement in some countries needs to be researched. Defining the Developing Countries, he stated that developing world means global south and emerging markets. These countries holds 4/5 of total world population. He further stated that RTI is umbilically linked with Democracy however, it is not a necessary condition for information Laws. A majority of developing countries which have RTI Laws are democracies. He presented data that in 1990 there were 12 developing countries whereas 80 countries have enacted RTI Laws so far. Throwing light on slow adaptation of RTI Laws in developing countries he investigated the reasons those are; slow democratization, low literacy rate, absence of civil society & civil society movements in these countries. Another reason is that the poor countries consider RTI expensive. The developing countries are frequently fearful of free information. However, transparency will promote trust and social capital lowering the barriers between the govt. & governed. He presented a comparative analysis on RTI Laws amongst the developing countries.

Md. Latheef, Maldives expressed his views that however, becoming the republic in 1968, the Maldives is experiencing autocratic culture of control and secrecy. Strong community based organizations are in existence. There is no rule of Law in Maldives. Role of civil societies is very critical in Maldives. The Civil Society Organisation is not vibrant in Maldives. Despite of high literacy rate which is around 95 per cent, the divide is still there. He further expressed his views that Maldives would like to learn from India.

Likewise, Shri Rukshana Nanayakkara of Sri Lanka expressed his views that no Law like RTI is in Sri Lanka so far. However, he stated, that Article 10 & 14(1)(a) of Sri Lankan constitution which deals with freedom of thought includes the Right to Information which has been interpreted by Supreme Court of Sri Lanka on many occasions.

Mr. Venkatesh, CHRI, presented a survey report on the history of Right to Information in which he categorized the Laws of Information adopted by the countries into three generations on the basis of their qualitative approach.

The second technical session of the 2nd day focused on “Propagation of RTI Culture- Role of Media and other Traditional Means” which was chaired by Shri Sanjay Baru. Other speakers of the session were Shri R. Dileep Reddy, SIC, Andhra Pradesh, Shri K. A. Badarinath, Sr. Editor, Financial Chronicle, Shri Sanjay Gupta, Editor & CEO, Dainik Jagran, Shri Vinay Tiwari, Managing Editor, CNN-IBN, and Shri Lokendra Trivedi, Faculty, NSD.

Mr. Badarinath the Editor, Financial Chronical, listed out the plausible role of the media including the monitoring the implementation of RTI and generating a report on ineffectiveness and inefficiency in public

services. He was also of the opinion that the media can bring in the public domain the success stories of the RTI Act. He illustrated some of the success stories which were worth being reported by the print media. He had further indicated that reporting of the social audit is also an important facet of the responsibility of the media which has potential of bringing about the transparency and accountability in the government.

Shri Sanjay Gupta, Editor & the CEO of Dainik Jagaran, reiterated that the RTI is a great tool in the hands of the citizen which may help participate them the decision making process. He had indicated the hygiene factor for RTI. He has further explained it that the RTI is used only to expose the negatives of the establishment and not so much about its strength. He also mentioned that even though such reports are published for the public consumption the citizen seems not much affected by such reporting when it comes making their contribution specially exercising the franchise.

Shri R. Dilip Reddy, State Information Commissioner, Andhra Pradesh, urged the media to investigating journalism so that they come out with the substantial evidence of their claims. He pointed out that the journalists failed in generating confidence in the people regarding the factual position of the establishment. He indicated that the journalists has to create an environment whereby the bureaucracy acts as the paid custodian of the information.

Shri Vinay Tiwari, Managing Editor, CNN-IBN made very candid observations about the TV Journalism. He had listed five things that need to be changed in the TV Journalism.

Strange cycle of laziness over laziness resulting into generating report of having lack of quantifiable impact.

Eliticism

Assumptions that the reporters knows everything about RTI which may not be true.

And the mastering the skills of selective dissemination.

Concluding the session the chairman Shri Sanjay Baru observed that the media had always the Right to be informed independent of the RTI Act. Therefore it has an obligation to remind the government that they have a duty to inform the citizens irrespective of any Law. The responsibility of the media is to keep the public authorities under check. He stated that indeed media is not adequately conscious that each department is duty bound to share the information with the citizen more so because there is an RTI Act in place. Finally he said that the media a supportive of RTI and would remain so.