

Press Release ::: 02-Sep-2013

The two days Annual Convention of Central Information Commission was inaugurated by President of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee on 2nd September, 2013 in DRDO Bhawan, New Delhi. Shri Satyananda Mishra, Chief Information Commissioner, Central Information Commission, welcomed the President and distinguished guests. Shri Mishra in his welcome remarks stated that he had enriched experiences handling RTI matters in his capacity as Chief Information Commissioner of the CIC. He called for the need for using RTI with great sense of responsibility so that it does not weaken itself in the years to come.

The President in his inaugural address highlighted the purpose of the enactment of RTI Act and invited all the stakeholders, participating in this convention to deliberate on issues of abiding interest in the area of Transparency, Accountability and Good Governance. He analyzed the implementation of the Act in respect to decreasing trend in rejection of requests by public authorities and decreasing trend in the growth of appeal and complaints with the Commission by presenting data in this regard. He also commented upon the role of Central Information Commission for laying down principles regarding disclosure of various classes of information. He also commended the efforts of CIC in respect to making awareness in public by getting the messages on RTI printed on the cover pages of NCERT books.

He further highlighted the efforts of the government regarding implementation of proactive disclosure obligations of the Act by issuing guidelines for the public authorities. He emphasized on the need to do everything possible to create an informed citizenry and effectively use information communication technologies (ICTs) to strengthen the implementation of the RTI Act.

Shri V. Narayanasamy, Hon'ble Minister of State while addressing the convention assessed the eight years of the journey of RTI Act justifying the purpose of its implementation together with the steps taken by the government for effective implementation of the Act. He also emphasized the constructive role of media in empowering citizens by keeping them informed and by playing a catalytic role in providing a voice to the 'voiceless'.

Smt. Sushma Singh, Central Information Commissioner presented the vote of thanks to all the dignitaries presented on the dais.

Dr. Ramchandra Guha, noted historian, author and columnist delivered the keynote address on “Democracy in India: mid-life crisis.” Prof. Guha started his address on a rather pessimistic note that India will always be in a crisis. However, this raised an important question if the instability of India’s foundation can be managed rather than tamed. He talked about the years of India’s infancy, its independence and the challenges she faced at its very foundation. These challenges included lack of national unity: nurturing democracy in a largely illiterate population: safeguarding religious pluralism leading to a total ethnic cleansing; safeguarding linguistic pluralism: and undermining of ancient hierarchies with respect to caste and culture.

Prof. Guha goes on to say that there can be no magic-bullet solutions to the challenges he talked about, but one should identify the fault lines our society suffers from and even a careful focused analysis of the same by experts.