From Chief Information Commissioner’s Desk.....

Central Information Commission is completing its 11th year in October 2016. In the past eleven years, the Commission has decided nearly two lakh cases. In this period, various Ministries and other Public Authorities have improved their suo-motu disclosure in varying degrees. The improved access of information to citizens and the resultant transparency has nurtured the roots of our democracy. In our own functioning, we have seen improvement in engagement with Public Authorities and more proactive interventions by issuing advisories to them for providing better governance systems. To streamline our functioning we are in the process of launching a new software for registering cases and a new and more user friendly website. The eventual target is paperless functioning in the Commission. For making the experience of visiting the CIC in person better, we have created three air conditioned waiting rooms and a well appointed hall for full Bench hearings. A Facilitation Desk has been established to help applicants in filing appeals/complaints etc and getting status reports on them.

We hope that these measures will help the citizens approaching the Commission. This newsletter gives a glimpse of our activities in the past few months. I hope you will find it useful.

Wish you a good read,

Regards,
RK Mathur
Chief Information Commissioner
E-COURT
The Central Information Commission has decided to implement an e-court system, launching a new software for appeals and complaints management. This will introduce a paperless system for hearing in the Commission, enable quicker disposal of cases and efficient record management.

DIGITIZATION OF OLD RECORDS
The Commission has approximately 1.50 lakhs physical files of cases lying in its record room and in its various offices. All these files have been digitised. They are in the process of being uploaded on NIC cloud server in a searchable PDF format. Thereafter, physical files will be weeded out in accordance with the policy adopted by the Commission.

TRANSPARENCY AUDIT
The Commission proposes to carry out a Transparency Audit of Public Authorities to evaluate their compliance with provisions of Section 4 the RTI Act 2005. For this, a template prepared by Centre for Good Governance, Hyderabad is proposed to be used.

SWACHH BHARAT ABHIYAN
The Commission, has undertaken renovation of old and unhygienic public and staff toilets, cleaning and painting of corridors and verandahs, cleaning of grills, window glasses, doors, etc. The corridors and verandahs have been provided with potted plants. Repairs/ painting of almirahs, racks, tables, chairs and sofas have also been carried out. Old and unserviceable/ obsolete items, books, periodicals, newspapers etc. have been auctioned. This has reduced fire hazard as well as cleared up the office premises.

The full bench court room in August Kranti Bhawan has been refurbished, three clean and comfortable visitors’ rooms have been created for appellants and CPIOs/PIOs in August Kranti Bhawan as well as JNU Campus.

FACILITATION DESK
A Facilitation Desk has been established in room No. 185, August Kranti Bhawan to help applicants in filing their appeals as well as to provide assistance in finding out status of their cases. The desk has become functional with effect from 1 July 2016.

IMPROVEMENTS IN GOVERNANCE
The Commission has started a research project to analyse and assess the types of RTI requests and second appeals received in the Commission as well as advisories /directions given by the Commission in its orders for systemic improvements in governance in various Public Authorities. These inputs are likely to help the Public Authorities in discharging their functions, including addressing of issues confronting citizens in their interface with Government entities.
SOME SIGNIFICANT CIC DECISIONS

LAND ORDINANCE, 2014:
Commission directed CPIO to provide copies of all material on the basis of which the President of India was satisfied that circumstances existed to take immediate action by promulgating the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Amendment) Ordinance 2014 (CIC/YA/C/2015/000246, dated 20 June 2016).

INFORMATION ABOUT KILLING/MUTILATION OF INDIAN SOLDIERS ON LAC/LOC:
Commission directed the CPIO to provide the available details, including injuries of soldiers killed in action on LOC (Indo-Pak border) and LAC (Sino-Indian border) whose bodies were found mutilated during last 5 years (CIC/LS/C/2013/000078/SD, dated 27 July 2016).

FILE NOTINGS ON COURT RULES:
Commission held that the note/notings/deliberations relating to framing of Rules cannot be termed as assistance given in confidence and directed CPIO to provide photocopies of notes and orders in the concerned file leading to framing and notification of Rule 1(c) of order IV of the Supreme Court Rules 2013 (CIC/RK/A/2016/000210, dated 3 August 16).

BIOSAFETY DOSSIER BY CROP DEVELOPER
Commission directed the MoEF to furnish the certified copy of TEC report and joint affidavit filed by MoEF and MoA in response to the TEC report. Commission also directed the public authority to provide the bio-safety dossier as submitted by the crop developer in 2014 and 2015. Commission also directed for all bio-safety data pertaining to all Genetically Modified Organisms in pipeline to be provided as part of voluntary disclosure under Section 4 of the RTI Act (CIC/SA/A/2015/901798, dated 1 April 2016).

INFORMATION ABOUT DEVELOPMENT/ACHIEVEMENTS/ EVENTS IN MINISTRY/DEPARTMENTS
In order to ensure greater transparency and availability of information in public domain, the Commission advised the Cabinet Secretariat to disclose the agenda of Cabinet Secretariat to disclose the agenda of Cabinet meetings, monitoring of compliance of Ministries under rule 10 of Rules of Procedure in regard to proceedings of the Cabinet, and their monthly summaries. The Ministries/Departments should proactively disclose such reports, which are not exempted under section 8 of the RTI Act (CIC/VS/A/2015/002033, dated 09 May 2016).

INFORMATION ABOUT FLYING CLUB
Keeping in view the expertise, the inherent risks in flying exercises and various unfortunate incidents resulting in loss of life during flying training in the past, Commission expressed concern towards the operation, management and monitoring of Flying Schools. It was recognised that these Schools are of vital national importance involving technical competence, security of the airfield, life risk posed to the flyer and public in general. Hence, the Commission directed DGCA, being the licensing authority, to coordinate and provide information to applicant (CIC/YA/A/2014/00190/BJ, dated 03 May 2016).

INVASION OF PRIVACY
Commission recognizes that human beings have a right to a sphere of intimacy and autonomy that should be protected from invasion, as the right to privacy is entrenched in Art 21 of Constitution. Mere levelling of allegations can hardly be said to satisfy the condition of disclosure being made in larger public interest. A bench of the Commission, dismissed the appeal as the appellant had not established a bona fide public interest in seeking information and the disclosure of such information is likely to cause unwarranted invasion of privacy of individual under section 8(i)(j) of the RTI Act. (CIC/SM/A/2012/001062, dated 09 June 2016).
CONSTRUCTION OF COMMISSION’S BUILDING IN OLD JNU CAMPUS

The Commission has been allotted a plot of land measuring about 1.2 acres in Old JNU Campus for construction of its own building. The new building is to be a state of art green building with “griha” rating. The building shall have five storeys with 2 level basement parking. The building is progressing as scheduled and is expected to be ready by September 2017.

PROGRESS UPTO OCTOBER 2016

......THE COMMISSION AT WORK

A few interesting figures

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CENTRAL INFORMATION COMMISSION

August Kranti Bhawan 2nd Floor, B- Wing, Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi - 110066

Please visit www.cic.gov.in for more information about the Commission. For any query/comment/suggestion, please write to jslaw-cic@gov.in

(News letter does not purport to be summary of all activities of the Central Information Commission and figures are subject to finalisaton.) *****************