Dear Reader,

The Right to Information Act, 2005 is a rights-based law that has deepened our democracy and created a durable stake for citizens in the administration of our nation. We have completed a decade of RTI. The power and usefulness of the RTI Act is being felt more fully today than ever before. It has become a part of the administration. There is no doubt that the RTI Act has led to improvements in governance.

By sharing information, citizens become a part of decision making, which leads to creation of trust between citizens and the Government. The large number of RTI applications reflect the necessity of more transparency in administration, Pro-active disclosures reduce the cost of access to information and also save time for citizens. The role of public authorities in suo-motu disclosure is of paramount importance in generating trust and confidence among citizens. There is still a need for more quality use of this right to bring about more transparency to empower citizens.

I assure you of full support of CIC in endeavors to improve the flow of information through the RTI Act. This would inevitably bring improvements in governance. The vision of creating an informed citizenry for our democracy goes from strength to strength every day with your efforts. To share these developments, we bring you the first edition of CIC News Letter.

Wish you a good read,

Regards,
RK Mathur
Chief Information Commissioner
Shri Radha Krishna Mathur has been sworn in as the eighth Chief Information Commissioner at the Central Information Commission (CIC). He was administered oath by the President Shri Pranab Mukherjee in a ceremony held in Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi on 04.01.2016. Shri Mathur will have tenure of about three years. He is a retired 1977 batch IAS officer of Tripura cadre. He had served Government of India earlier as Defence Secretary, Secretary, Dept of Defence Production and Secretary, Union Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME). He has also served as the Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Tripura.

Shri Bimal Julka, Shri Divya Prakash Sinha and Shri Amitava Bhattacharyya have been sworn in as Information Commissioners in the Commission on 25.02.2016. Before taking up the responsibility of Information Commissioner, Shri Bimal Julka served as Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Shri Divya Prakash Sinha served as Secretary (Security) in the Cabinet Secretariat and Shri Amitava Bhattacharyya served as Chairman, Staff Selection Commission.
IMPORTANT RECENT CIC ORDERS

1. Protection to Whistle Blower: In case No. CIC/SA/A/2015/000802 dated 6 August 2015, the Commission has directed the public authority to ensure that whistle blower is not victimized or harassed.

2. Disclosure of names of applicants for Lokpal: Commission held that disclosing the names of applicants who had applied for the post of Chairperson of the Lokpal and Members of the Lokpal would enhance transparency and accountability in the appointment process. Hence, Commission directed to provide the information in case No. CIC/CC/A/2014/000335/SB dated 10 December 2015.

3. Non-Implementation of First Appellate Authority (FAA) Order: Commission has observed that creating a situation where the RTI applicants have to approach the CIC to implement the orders of FAA of respective public authority, is a very serious disobedience and insubordination on the part of the Central Public Information Officer. Commission has imposed penalty of Rs. 25000/- upon CPIO in CIC/SA/A/2015/000346 dated 17 December 2015.

4. Administrative lapses in appointment in NHAI: Commission concluded in case no. CIC/SS/A/2013/002549-YA dated 28 December 2015 that NHAI did not furnish information on vigilance clearance of an officer during his induction in 2000 and during his absorption in 2005. Commission recommended to Chairman NHAI to take necessary steps to ensure that such lapses in appointments of senior executives do not occur in future.

5. Weeding out of seven year old records: Commission held that the plea taken by CPIO for denial of information due to weeding out of seven year old records; dehors section 8 (3) of the RTI Act 2005 and set aside the order of FAA and CPIO in case no. CIC/RM/A/2014/900451/KY, dated 5 January 2016.

6. Copy of answer sheets from Delhi University: Commission directed Delhi University to make necessary changes in providing copy of answer sheet at cost of Rs. 2 per page instead of charging Rs. 750 per paper and to accept RTI applications from the date of results declaration till the period of retention of record, as mandated by RTI Act and Rules, as soon as possible instead of after 60 days in CIC/SA/C/2015/901116 dated 15 January 2016.

7. CPIO to follow Section 11 of RTI Act: In case no. CIC/SA/A/2015/001951 dated 25 January 2016, the Commission directed the CPIO and Principal of RD Public School, not to disclose personal information of the students to any person, much less to his so called relatives without following the procedure under Section 11 of the RTI Act.

IMPORTANT SUPREME COURT DECISIONS

1. On 16.12.2015 Supreme court upheld the decision of the Commission for disclosure of the information regarding Audit report, Inspection report, Advisory notes, Minutes of meetings of Governing Board, List of Bank defaulters, Fines imposed on banks by RBI, non-performing assets and financial irregularities of Co-operative banks in the case of Reserve Bank of India Vs. Jayantilal Ministry & Ors, transferred case (Civil) no. 91 of 2015, Supreme Court of India.

2. Supreme Court has upheld the decision of Division Bench of Delhi High Court in LPA filed by Registrar, Supreme Court of India by dismissing the SLP no-3978/2016 on 15.02.2016. Hon’ble High Court Delhi held that “right to information under Section 2(j) means only the right to information which is held by any public authority. We do not find any other provision under the Act under which a direction can be issued to the public authority to collate the information in the manner in which it is sought by the applicant.”

FOREIGN DELEGATION VISIT

1. A delegation from Ethiopia headed by H.E. Mrs. Serawit Selesh, Ethiopian Institution of Ombudsman (EIO) visited Central Information Commission on 14.01.2016 for interaction and to learn about RTI in India and functioning of the Commission.

2. Mr. Abdul Azeesh Jamaal Abu-Bakur, Information Commissioner of Maldives visited Central Information Commission on 18 April 2016 and observed the use of IT and live hearing.

3. A delegation from Sri Lanka, visited Central Information Commission on 26 May 2016 and interacted with the Chief Information Commissioner.
INTERNSHIP AND PROBATIONERS TRAINING

1. Twelve students of various law schools have interned during summer and winter holidays at Central Information Commission. They were deputed to the Central Registry and with Information Commissioners for exposure. Students were given a certificate of internship.

2. Twenty Three Probationers of Indian Defence Account Services of 2014 batch attended Central Information Commission on 18 Nov 15 for familiarization with working of Commission and learn about RTI Act.

3. Thirteen Probationers of Indian Postal Service attended the Commission on 8 March, 2016 for familiarization with functioning of the Commission.

PHONE-IN-PROGRAMME ON AKASHWANI

Shri Yogesh Kumar Singhla, Joint Secretary(Law) participated in a panel for a one hour phone-in-programme on 13 June 2016 on Akashvani to answer queries on RTI from all over the country.

The Head Quarter Building for CIC will be located at Old JNU Campus, New Delhi on Baba Gang Nath Marg. The state of art building shall facilitate effective functioning of CIC. The design of the building shall cater to ease and comfort of the visiting public. NBCC has intimated that the work will be completed within the sanctioned amount of Rs. 42.54 crores. The work has commenced on ground on 01.10.2015.

Public Authorities with field formations need to assess the quality, citizen friendliness and the periodicity of dissemination of information so as to institutionalize the disclosure mechanism as mandated in section 4 of the RTI Act. Ultimately, it is the creation of a robust and dynamic citizen - government interface through sharing of information which would benefit the government in its functioning.