

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INFORMATION COMMISSIONS IN INDIA
Minutes of 11th Annual General Body Meeting held on February 3rd, 2023
at Kevadia Gujarat

Participants:

Board of Governors:

- Shri Y.K. Sinha, President, NFICI & Chief Information Commissioner, CIC New Delhi
- Shri Anil Chandra Punetha, Vice President, NFICI & Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Uttarakhand
- Shri Jalada Kumar Tripathy, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Odisha
- Shri Oinam Sunil Singh, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Manipur
- Dr. Samudra Gupta Kasyhap, Information Commissioner, SIC Assam
- Shri Tripurari Sharan, Information Commissioner, SIC Bihar
- Shri Sunil Porwal, Information Commissioner, SIC Maharashtra
- Shri M. Sreedhar, Information Commissioner, SIC Tamil Nadu
- Shri P. Dhanasekaran, Information Commissioner, SIC Tamil Nadu

Members Present:

- Shri Amrutbhai Patel, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Gujarat.
- Shri R. Mahaboob Basha, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Andhra Pradesh.
- Shri Vishwas R. Satarkar, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Goa.
- Shri N.C. Srinivasa, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Karnataka.
- Dr. Vishwas Mehta, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Kerala.
- Shri Heimonlang Nongpluh, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Meghalaya.
- Shri Lalnunmawia Chuaungo, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Mizoram.
- Shri I. Meyionen Jamir, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Nagaland.
- Shri Nosazol Charles, Information Commissioner, SIC Nagaland.

- Shri Gumjum Haider, Information Commissioner, SIC Arunachal Pradesh.
- Shri Gote Ete, Information Commissioner, SIC Arunachal Pradesh.
- Shri Manoj Kumar Trivedi, Information Commissioner, SIC Chhattisgarh.
- Shri Dhanvendra Jaiswal, Information Commissioner, SIC Chhattisgarh.
- Shri C.P. Dhakal, Information Commissioner, SIC Sikkim.
- Shri Naveen Prakash, Information Commissioner, SIC West Bengal.
- Shri Katta Shekar Reddy, Information Commissioner, SIC Telangana.

Special Invitee:

- Shri Suresh Chandra, Information Commissioner, CIC, New Delhi

Also Present:

- Shri Kirit Adhvarya, Information Commissioner, SIC Gujarat.
- Shri Ramesh Karia, Information Commissioner, SIC Gujarat.
- Shri Virendra Pandya, Information Commissioner, SIC Gujarat.
- Dr. Subhash Soni, Information Commissioner, SIC Gujarat.
- Shri Jaydeep Dwivedi, Secretary, State Information Commission, Gujarat
- Shri R.C. Besra, Secretary, State Information Commission, Jharkhand.

NFICI's officers:

- Shri Sidh Kumar, Honorary Secretary, NFICI, New Delhi
- Shri Sarvottam Kumar Rana, Executive Secretary, NFICI, New Delhi.

Shri Jaydeep Dwivedi, Secretary, SIC Gujarat welcomed and greeted all the members of NFICI. Shri Dwivedi then requested Shri Y.K. Sinha, President NFICI to light the traditional lamp which was followed by an invocation. Thereafter Shri Dwivedi requested Shri Kirit Adhvarya, Information Commissioner, Gujarat to read out the messages received from the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi ji and Hon'ble Chief Minister of Gujarat, Shri Bhupendra Patel ji for the meetings. Shri Adhvarya read out the message as placed below:



सत्यमेव जयते

प्रधान मंत्री
Prime Minister

MESSAGE

It is heartening to learn about the 27th Board of Governors Meeting and 11th Annual General Meeting organized by National Federation of Information Commissions in India (NFICI). The choice of Statue of Unity, Kevadia as the venue of the meetings is befitting and inspiring for an occasion that is bringing together some of the best minds of the domain from across the nation.

NFICI is doing commendable work in further strengthening the Right to Information Act, 2005. The contribution of NFICI in facilitating coordination and mutual consultations amongst the various Central and State Information Commissions to help them enhance their performance is laudable.

For the last more than eight years, our Government is working resolutely to maximise transparency and openness in every sphere of activity. Transparency and accountability build trust and help bring the people closer to the government, making them an integral part of the decision-making process.

The sweep of digital technology is changing our lives at an unimaginable pace. We are making every effort through initiatives such as Digital India to promote the use of information technology and the latest digital tools and dashboards to provide information to citizens.

Good governance is the key to nation's progress and is the cornerstone of success for nations the world over. With a 'Citizen First' approach, along with boosting transparency and accountability, we have also simplified processes and procedures to enhance ease of doing business and ease of living for all-round welfare of the people.

Amrit Kaal is an opportunity to enhance fairness, transparency and accountability of our systems and processes and help in attaining our resolve to build a glorious and self-reliant India by 2047.

May the vibrant deliberations at the meetings lead to a healthy exchange of best practices and positive outcomes. Best wishes to everyone associated with NFICI for its endeavour.

(Narendra Modi)

New Delhi
माघ 12, शक संवत् 1944
01st February, 2023



Bhupendra Patel

Chief Minister, Gujarat State

Apro/jm/2023/01/24/rs

Dt: 24-01-2023

MESSAGE

The concept of "Governance" is as old as human civilization. The process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented are the prime factors of good governance. The Government of Gujarat has pioneered in Good Governance since incumbent **Hon'ble Prime Minister Shree Narendrabhai Modi** was the then Chief Minister of Gujarat. The RTI Act enables the establishment of an unprecedented regime of the **Right of Information** for the citizens of the country. The prime motto to implement this Act is to bring transparency in the working of every Public Authority. It has brought a paradigm shift with the "**Minimum Government – Maximum Governance**" mantra.

It is heartening to learn that National Federation of Information Commissions of India (NFICI) is facilitating coordination and mutual consultations amongst the Central and the State Information Commissions and explores ways and means for their better performance. I am much pleased to learn that this organization encourages initiatives in matters related to transparency and accountability and encourage all stakeholders in effective implementation of the Act. I also congratulate all the officers and employees who are working day and night for the citizens of the State.

(Bhupendra Patel)

To,
Shree Amrutbhai P. Patel, Chief Information Commissioner,
Gujarat Information Commission,
Block No. 1, Second Floor, Karmayogi Bhavan,
Sector-10A, Gandhinagar-382010.
E-mail: sec-gic@gujarat.gov.in
Mo: 9978406007

After reading the above messages of Hon'ble Prime Minister and Hon'ble Chief Minister of Gujarat, Shri Adhvarya requested Shri Amrutbhai Patel, Hon'ble Chief Information Commissioner, Gujarat to address the gathering. Shri Patel welcomed all the guests and expressed his gratitude to the President NFICI, Shri Y.K. Sinha, and NFICI members for reposing faith in the Gujarat State Information Commission and giving them an opportunity to organise the meetings in the State. He affirmed that the meetings of NFICI provide a platform to exchange views and adopt best practices being followed by various Information Commissions.

Thereafter, Shri Y.K. Sinha, Hon'ble Chief Information Commissioner, Central Information Commission and the President, NFICI delivered his speech. Shri Sinha expressed his sincere gratitude to the Hon'ble Prime Minister and the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Gujarat for their inspirational messages. Shri Sinha also conveyed his thanks and appreciation to Shri Amrutbhai Patel, Hon'ble Chief Information Commissioner and his team in the Gujarat State Information Commission, for the warm welcome and generous hospitality in organising the meeting at Kevadia, Ekta Nagar, Gujarat. Shri Sinha emphasised the need to deliberate on measures and adopt best practices to ensure that information is disclosed on time and asserted that the meetings on NFICI provide a platform to discuss and inculcate best practices being followed by various Information Commissions. NFICI meetings provide a platform to the members to deliberate on, interact and exchange views and opinions for more effective implementation of the RTI Act.

At the end of the inaugural ceremony, Shri Ramesh Karia, Hon'ble Information Commissioner, Gujarat SIC delivered the vote of thanks.


Thereafter, Shri Y.K. Sinha, Chief Information Commissioner, and President, NFICI, presided over NFICI's 11th Annual General Body meeting. He again welcomed and thanked all the members present for the meeting. The following agenda points came up for discussion:

1. Confirmation of Minutes of last Meeting: The 10th Annual General Body meeting was held on 04.03.2022 through Video Conferencing. All members of NFICI confirmed the minutes of the meeting.

2. Status of the Audited Annual Accounts for the FY 2021-22: The NFICI's audited Annual Accounts for the financial year 2021-22 have been prepared by M/s Batra Deepak & Associates, Chartered Accountant. The audited Annual Accounts comprising the Income & Expenditure Statement, Receipts & Payments Statement, and the Balance Sheet were presented and approved in the 26th BOG meeting held on 16.11.2022 at Goa. The same are presented in the current meeting for the information to approval of the members of the Federation. The members perused the statement and approved the same unanimously.

3. Approval for continuation of services of M/s Batra Deepak & Associates, CA for Audit and accounting work of NFICI for the FY 2023-24: The Members of the Federation were informed that M/s Batra Deepak & Associates was appointed to carry out the Audit and Accounts work pertaining to NFICI. The members may consider approving the continuation of services of M/s Batra Deepak & Associates, Chartered Accountant for Audit and Accounting work of NFICI for the financial year 2023-24. The said firm has quoted Rs. 25,000/- + GST per annum. The rates are the same as for the previous financial years 2021-22 & 2022-23. The members unanimously approved the services of M/s Batra Deepak & Associates, Chartered Accountant for the Audit and Accounting work for financial year 2023-24.

4. Status of Annual Membership Fee from member Information Commissions: The members of the Federation were apprised about the status of the Annual Membership as on 27.01.2023.

 Shri R.C. Besra, Secretary, State Information Commission, Jharkhand represented SIC Jharkhand as there are no Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners appointed in SIC Jharkhand. Shri Besra informed the members that he had already taken up the issue of outstanding annual membership fee with the State Government. He stated that the outstanding fee would be cleared shortly.

Shri C.P. Dhakal, Information Commissioner, SIC Sikkim also apprised the members that outstanding membership fee for Sikkim Information Commission will also be cleared soon.

The President advised all the member Information Commissions to clear the outstanding annual membership fee till financial year 2022-23 as soon as possible.

5. Status of released Grants and outstanding UC and vouchers: The status of the released 1st, 2nd and 3rd Grants and outstanding utilization certificates and supporting vouchers against the 1st, 2nd & 3rd Grants were apprised to all the members of the Federation.

It was decided that the respective State Information Commissions once again be requested to submit their outstanding UCs and supporting vouchers against the released grants by the Federation.

6. Status of released of 3rd Grant of Rs. 4.00 lakhs: During Special General body meeting held on 10.06.2022 at New Delhi, it was decided to release 3rd Grant of NFICI to the eligible members of the Federation who had submitted utilization certificates and vouchers of the 1st and 2nd grants. The members were apprised about the status of release of 3rd Grant of Rs. 4.00 lakhs:

S.No.	State Information Commission	Favoring	Amt. Released (in Lakhs)	Cheque No. & Date
1.	Arunachal Pradesh	Secretary, Arunachal Pradesh State Information Commission	4.00	507220 08.09.2022
2.	Assam	Secretary, Assam State Information Commission	4.00	507221 08.09.2022
3.	Chhattisgarh	Secretary, Chhattisgarh State Information Commission	4.00	507222 08.09.2022
4.	Manipur	Secretary, Manipur State Information Commission	4.00	507223 08.09.2022

5.	Meghalaya	Secretary, Meghalaya State Information Commission	4.00	507224 08.09.2022
6.	Mizoram	Secretary, Mizoram State Information Commission	4.00	507225 08.09.2022
7.	Nagaland	Secretary, Nagaland State Information Commission	4.00	507226 08.09.2022
8.	Punjab	Secretary, Punjab State Information Commission	4.00	507227 08.09.2022
9.	Tamil Nadu	Secretary, Tamil Nadu State Information Commission	4.00	507228 08.09.2022
10.	Karnataka	Secretary, Karnataka State Information Commission	4.00	507240 09.12.2022
11.	Uttarakhand	Secretary, Uttarakhand State Information Commission	4.00	507239 09.12.2022

Members were informed that Maharashtra and Kerala State Information Commissions have become eligible for 2nd and 3rd grants respectively of Rs 4.00 lakhs each. Both the Commissions have also requested release of grants to them. Members were requested to approve release of 2nd grant to Maharashtra and 3rd grant to Kerala of Rs 4.00 lakhs each. Members unanimously approved the same.

Dr. Vishwas Mehta, Chief Information Commissioner, Kerala raised a point stating that President, NFICI is competent to release grants to various Information Commissions as and when it is requested for by the eligible members after completing all formalities. Other members also agreed to do so and status of release of funds to be put up before the Annual/Special General Body Meetings thereafter.

7. Important decisions & initiatives by State Commissions: Members of the Federation were informed that a reminder dated 29.11.2022 had been sent to members of the Federation requesting them to submit their important decisions and initiatives to the NFICI Secretariat by 10th Jan, 2023. Only the Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand Information Commissions have submitted their important decisions till date.

The President advised all the members to forward copies of their important decisions and initiatives latest by March 31, 2023. These decisions and initiatives would be placed before the Editorial Board of NFICI constituted at the 24th BOG meeting held on 04.03.2022, for selection and uploading on the NFICI's website to enable members of the Federation to adopt best practices and ensure more effective implementation of the RTI Act.

Members agreed to forward their important decisions by March 31, 2023.

8. Constitution of a Committee for recommendations to Central Government: In the 15th Special General Body meeting held on 16-17 Nov, 2022 at Goa, the members had raised the issue regarding a committee that was constituted to consider making recommendations to the Central Government on matters pertaining to the RTI Act. Members had requested that Shri Suresh Chandra, Information Commissioner, CIC New Delhi should be nominated as Convener of the Committee so that his expertise will be utilized for finalization of the report. Shri Suresh Chandra, Information Commissioner, Central Information Commission, who was present in the meeting, has accepted the proposal. He stated that he would commence meetings with the members of Committee and would submit a report at the earliest.

In the Committee constituted to suggest amendments in RTI Act for further improvements, the following members were added in place of CIC Assam (as he is retiring):

- a) Shri Vishwas R. Satarkar, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Goa
- b) Shri Naveen Prakash, Information Commissioner, SIC West Bengal

9. Status of NFICI's Current Account and FDs: The members of the Federation were apprised of the status of NFICI's account being maintained in State Bank of India, Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi. A detailed statement was read out showing a balance of Rs. 12,55,044/-, in the current account showing position as on 27.01.2023.

Details regarding the 14 Fixed Deposits amounting to Rs. 1, 74,66,250/- as on 27.01.2023 were shared with the members.

Members were also informed that one Fixed Deposit for Rs. 13,98,830/- had been withdrawn permanently to release Rs. 8.00 lakhs as an advance to Gujarat State Information Commission for organizing the 27th BOG and 11th AGB Meetings in Gujarat.

10. Participation of State Information Commissioners in addition to CICs in NFICI's meeting: In the BOG meeting held on 16-17th November 2022 at Goa and on 03 February 2023 at Kevadia, members of the BOG deliberated on the participation of Information Commissioners in additions to Chief Information Commissioners in NFICI's meetings. This matter was brought forward for discussion at the 11th Annual General Body meeting.

After considerable deliberation, it was felt that the Chief Information Commissioners should represent their respective Commissions at meetings of NFICI. If the Chief Information Commissioner is unable to attend the meeting, he/she can nominate one Information Commissioner from his/her Commission to attend the meeting on behalf of the concerned Commission. In case the post of Chief Information Commissioner in any State Information Commission is vacant, then the Information Commissioners can themselves decide on one of the Information Commissioners to represent that State Information Commission in the NFICI meeting.

11. Agenda received from State Information Commission Uttarakhand: State Information Commission Uttarakhand had forwarded the following agenda points for discussion by the members of the Federation:-

- 1) RTI application fee should be increased to Rs. 100, with the provision that the information amounting to 20 pages will be provided free of cost to the applicant.
- 2) There should be some fee for filing of second appeals and complaints.
- 3) Time limit for filing complaint u/s 18 of the RTI Act, 2005 should be introduced.

- 4) A uniform policy should be made to recover the amounts imposed as penalty on the PIOs by the SICs.

The above points were discussed among the members and it was decided that these points should be considered by the Committee whose Shri Suresh Chandra is the Convener.

12. Any other item with the permission of the Chair:

There was a discussion about the venue for holding the next Special/Annual General Body meeting. Shri R. Mehaboob Basha, Hon'ble Chief Information Commissioner, Andhra Pradesh volunteered to host the next meeting to be held tentatively in August/September, 2023 in Andhra Pradesh. This was unanimously agreed to by all the members of the Federation.

There being no other point to discuss, the meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to all participants.



(Y.K. Sinha)

President, NFICI