



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INFORMATION COMMISSIONS IN INDIA
Minutes of 13th Annual General Body Meeting held on August 2nd, 2024
At CIC Bhawan, New Delhi

Chief Guest: Dr. Jintendra Singh, Hon'ble MoS in PMO

Participants:

Board of Governors:

- Shri Heeralal Samariya, President NFICI & Chief Information Commissioner, CIC New Delhi.
- Shri Tripurari Sharan, Vice President, NFICI & Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Bihar.
- Shri Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Assam.
- Shri R. Mahaboob Basha, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Andhra Pradesh.
- Shri Konjam Radhashyam Singh, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Manipur.
- Shri Vivek Sharma, Information Commissioner (CIC I/c), SIC Uttarakhand.
- Shri Samir Sahai, Information Commissioner (CIC I/c), SIC Maharashtra.

Members Present:

- Dr. Subhashchandra Soni, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Gujarat.
- Shri R.D. Dhiman, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Himachal Pradesh.
- Shri V. Hari Nair, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Kerala.
- Shri H. Nongpluh, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Meghalaya.
- Shri John Neihlaia, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Mizoram.
- Shri Inderpal Singh, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Punjab
- Shri M.L. Lather, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Rajasthan.
- Shri Y.P. Gurung, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Sikkim.
- Md. Shakeel Akhter, Chief Information Commissioner, Tamil Nadu.
- Shri Virendra, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC West Bengal.
- Shri Vijay Taram, Information Commissioner, SIC Arunachal Pradesh
- Shri Narendra Kumar Shukla, Information Commissioner, SIC Chhattisgarh.
- Shri Alok Chandravanshi, Information Commissioner, SIC Chhattisgarh.
- Dr. H.C. Sathyan, Information Commissioner (CIC I/c), SIC Karnataka.

- Dr. S.B. Bommanahalli, Information Commissioner, SIC Karnataka.
- Shri Ravindra Gurunath Dhakappa, Information Commissioner, SIC Karnataka.
- Shri Mangjangam Touthang, Information Commissioner, SIC Mizoram.
- Shri Nosazol Charles, Information Commissioner, SIC Nagaland.
- Shri T. Kekongchim Yimkhiung, Information Commissioner, SIC Nagaland.
- Shri Yogesh Bhatt, Information Commissioner, SIC Uttarakhand.

Also Present:

- Shri Rakhil Chandra Besra, Secretary, SIC Jharkhand.
- Smt. Roshni Rai, Secretary, SIC Sikkim.

NFICI's officers:

- Brig Vipin Chakrawarti, Honorary Secretary, NFICI, New Delhi
- Shri Sarvottam Kumar Rana, Executive Secretary, NFICI, New Delhi.

Shri Heeralal Samariya, Chief Information Commission, Central Information Commission and President of NFICI, commenced the session with a warm welcome and thanked the Chief Guest Hon'ble Dr. Jitendra Singh for taking out time to address the 13th Annual General Body Meeting of National Federation of Information Commissions in India (NFICI). He also welcomed and thanked all the guests present.

In his welcome address, Shri Samariya said, "I welcome you all on the occasion of the 30th Board of Governors and the 13th Annual General Body meeting of NFICI. It is an honour for all of us that Hon'ble Dr. Jitendra Singh, our beloved Minister, is with us today. Sir, we very much appreciate you taking the time to join us. It gives me immense pleasure to inform you that NFICI has become a great platform for sharing best practises, promoting awareness and improving the performance of Central and State Information Commissions. It also facilitates coordination among Central and State Information Commissions and ensures a uniform approach in the implementation of the RTI Act. This landmark law has been enacted to usher in a new era of transparency and accountability aimed at shedding light on the decision-making process, holding officials accountable for their actions and rooting out corruption"



He further asserted, “Our collective efforts have resulted in significant achievements in the effective implementation of the RTI Act across the country. Since the Indian Constitution provides for a democratic republic and democracy requires an informed citizenry, NFICI has been organising public awareness campaigns not only in urban areas but also in remote areas. It has promoted knowledge and encouraged transparency and accountability initiatives. In addition, NFICI has disbursed grants to State Information Commissions to enable them to undertake initiatives to promote awareness and educate citizens about the RTI Act by organising seminars, campaigns and other outreach programmes. As part of our ongoing initiatives, we are pleased to inform you that we have introduced an annual journal summarising landmark decisions and orders of the Hon’ble Supreme Court, various High Courts and various Information Commissions. This publication is intended to be a comprehensive and authoritative resource for commissioners, legal practitioners and the public at large.

I am pleased to highlight the pivotal role of NFICI in facilitating the hybrid mode of hearing in the Central Information Commission as well as various State Information Commissions during the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. This innovative initiative has ensured that citizens have uninterrupted access to information and justice and has improved disposal rate of second appeals and complaints despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. This approach, adopted in all State Information Commissions (SICs) in India, has enabled speedy disposal of cases while allowing complainants to attend hearings from a location of their choice. This initiative demonstrates the commitment to effective implementation of the RTI Act. The NFICI, in consultation with the Central Information Commission, has made available the source code of the AppComs application so that the State Information Commissions can adopt uniform processes and ensure smooth hybrid operations, thereby improving overall efficiency and consistency.

Sir, We assure you that we are all committed to the implementation of the RTI Act in its entirety and to the expeditious disposal of 2nd Appeals / Complaints so that the appellants and complainants can get the information as soon as possible. The Central Commission is pleased to report that the pendency status till July 31, 2024 has remained almost constant, which amounts to disposal of all cases received during the year. This shows that cases are being settled at close to 100% in the current year.”



While concluding, Shri Samariya ji once again expressed his pleasure and warmly welcomed all the distinguished guests and especially the Hon'ble Minister and said that their presence was a great honour for all of us.

Dr. Jitendra Singh, Hon'ble Minister, while addressing the audience said, "It gives me great pleasure to inaugurate the 30th meeting of the Board of Governors and the 13th Annual General Body Meetings of the NFICI. The NFICI has been instrumental in advancing the cause of the Right to Information Act, 2005. Since the Modi government took office in 2014, transparency and citizen-centric governance have been key components of India's governance model. The RTI Act is one of the most significant laws passed by the Indian Parliament, creating an unprecedented regime for citizens' right to information. The Act embodies the principle of ensuring maximum disclosure and minimum exemptions in accordance with the constitutional provisions and an effective mechanism for access to information and disclosure by public authorities.

It is encouraging to see how the NFICI is promoting coordination and mutual consultation among central and state information commissions, thereby increasing their efficiency. NFICI plays a crucial role in sharing information on laws, judgments and best practices related to transparency. The organization promotes accountability initiatives and involves stakeholders such as the central and state governments, citizens and civil society in the effective implementation of the law. The NFICI also encourages law students to undergo internship at the Commissions, familiarizing the aspiring advocates with the workings of the transparency mechanisms.

I am happy to learn that the NFICI will be publishing an annual journal of significant judgments from across India on the Right to Information, which will serve as a valuable academic resource and reference book for commissioners, lawyers and the public.

In order to promote transparency, accountability and good governance, Public Authorities should take necessary steps to disclose maximum information suo motu on their website in accordance with the statutory provisions of the RTI Act. This would facilitate public access to the information, which in turn would lead to a decrease in RTI applications.

Another commendable effort is the introduction of e-initiatives first by the Central Information Commission and then by the various state information commissions guided by the government's e-governance policy. Technologies such as mobile applications, e-filing, e-hearing and e-notifications have greatly facilitated access to statutory information. The hybrid mode of hearing introduced by the Central Information Commission and adopted by the State Information Commissions, supported by the NFICI, deserves applause as it increases accessibility and efficiency.




I commend the efforts of Shri Heeralal Samariya, Chief Information Commissioner and President, NFICI, and all the Chief Information Commissioners of the States for their untiring efforts to reduce pendency of cases and ensure expeditious disposal of cases. I am confident that you will all remain committed to the objectives of the RTI Act, which is to promote transparency, accountability and anti-corruption while safeguarding public interest and efficient administration.

I would like to reiterate that the RTI Act was introduced to ensure social justice and transparency and to hold governments accountable for their actions. Since the Indian Constitution has created a democratic republic and democracy presupposes an informed citizenry, transparency of information is crucial as it plays an important role in curbing corruption and holding governments and their organs accountable to the citizens.

Moreover, I would like to emphasise that steps need to be taken at all levels to ensure that the RTI Act is strengthened as it plays an important role in empowering citizens by holding Public Authorities accountable, thus ensuring good and citizen-centric governance.”

Before concluding his speech, Dr. Jitender Singh, Hon’ble Minister said, “I would like to commend the NFICI Board of Governors for its relentless efforts to promote coordination and synergy amongst the CIC and all State Information Commissions. I am confident that your deliberations will be fruitful and wish you all the best for your future endeavours. Thank you... Jai Hind.”

At the end of the inaugural ceremony, Shri B.J. Mahanta, Hon’ble Chief Information Commissioner, Assam, delivered the vote of thanks.

After the tea break, the members reassembled for the next session.

Shri Heeralal Samariya, President of NFICI, asked Shri Sarvottam Rana, Executive Secretary, to present the agenda items of the 13th Annual General Meeting.

Shri Sarvottam Rana, Executive Secretary, welcomed all the Hon’ble members present to the meeting. He specially thanked Shri Tripurari Sharan, CIC Bihar, Dr. Subhash Chandra Soni, CIC Gujarat, Shri V. Hari Nair, CIC Kerala, Shri John Neihlaia, CIC Mizoram, Shri Inderpal Singh, CIC Punjab and Shri M. L. Lather, CIC Rajasthan as they were attending the NFICI meeting for the first time.



Thereafter, the Executive Secretary of NFICI informed the members that Shri Sidh Kumar, Honorary Secretary of NFICI, has been transferred from the Central Information Commission. Therefore, Brig Vipin Chakrawarti, Registrar of Central Information Commission was appointed as Honorary Secretary. All the members of Federation Congratulated Brig Chakrawati and expressed their hope that NFICI will benefit from his vast experience in the legal field.

The Executive Secretary then proceeded with the following agenda items with the permission of the President and members:

1. Confirmation of Minutes of last Meeting.

The 12th Annual General Body meeting was held on 09.09.2023 at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The members were asked to confirm the minutes. The members of the Federation unanimously confirmed the minutes unanimously.

2. Election of members for Board of Governors.



The Executive Secretary informed that the two year term of State Information Commission, Assam and Bihar as members of the Board of Governors has been completed on 10.06.2024 and requested to elect another member for BOG in their place from Zone 3 and 5 respectively.

The members of the Federation unanimously elected Shri Y.P. Gurung, Chief Information Commissioner, Sikkim as a member of the Board of Governors for two years from 03.08.2024 from Zone 3.

There are only two members in Zone 5, namely the State Information Commissions of Bihar and Jharkhand. Since there is no CIC/IC in position in the State Information Commission Jharkhand, the members unanimously re-elected Shri Tripurari Saran, Chief Information Commissioner, Bihar, to the Board of Governors from Zone 5.

3. Status of the Audited Annual Accounts for the FY 2023-24.

The Executive Secretary presented the financial statements of NFICI for the year 2023-24, audited and prepared by M/s Ankit Malik & Associates, Chartered Accountant. The audited accounts include the Statement of Receipts and Payments, Statement of Revenue and Expenditure and Balance Sheet.

The members of the Federation approved the audited financial statements for the financial year 2023-24.

4. Status of NFICI's Current Accounts and FDs.

The Executive Secretary informed the members of the Federation that the current account and fixed deposits of NFICI are maintained with State Bank of India, NIHFV Munrika Branch New Delhi. The current account has a balance of Rs. 8,53,221/- as on 31.07.2024.

In addition, the Federation has 14 Fixed Deposits (FDs) amounting to Rs. 1,96,68,945/- (principal amount) as on 31.07.2024 in the same branch.

5. Raising of demand for Annual Membership Fee for the FY 2024-25.

The Executive Secretary informed that all member Commissions have paid the annual membership fee up to the financial year 2023-24. He further informed that the Information Commissions of Mizoram and West Bengal have also deposited the annual membership fee for the financial year 2024-25.

It was resolved to write to all the Information Commissions except Mizoram and West Bengal to deposit the annual membership fees for the financial year 2024-25.

6. Status of release of 3rd Grant of Rs. 4.00 Lakhs to member information Commissions:

The members of the Federation were informed that the Third grant of NFICI amounting to Rs. 4.00 lakhs been disbursed to the following member Information Commissions:

S.No.	State Information Commission	Favoring	Amt. Released (in Lakhs)	Cheque No. & Date	Status of UC & Vouchers
1.	Andhra Pradesh	A.P. Information Commission, Mangalagiri	4.00	038095 18.01.2024	Received
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	Secretary, Arunachal Pradesh State Information Commission	4.00	507220 08.09.2022	Received
3.	Assam	Secretary, Assam State Information Commission	4.00	507221 08.09.2022	Received
4.	Chhattisgarh	Secretary, Chhattisgarh State Information Commission	4.00	507222 08.09.2022	Pending

5.	Gujarat	Secretary, Gujarat State Information Commission	4.00	038056 20.02.2023	Received
6.	Goa	Goa State Information Commission	4.00	038075 24.07.2023	Pending
7.	Himachal Pradesh	Secretary, State Information Commission, Himachal Pradesh	4.00	038074 24.07.2023	Pending
8.	Kerala	Secretary, Kerala State Information Commission	4.00	038055 20.02.2023	Pending
9.	Karnataka	Secretary, Karnataka State Information Commission	4.00	507240 09.12.2022	Received
10.	Meghalaya	Secretary, Meghalaya State Information Commission	4.00	507224 08.09.2022	Pending
11.	Manipur	Secretary, Manipur State Information Commission	4.00	507223 08.09.2022	Received
12.	Mizoram	Secretary, Mizoram State Information Commission	4.00	507225 08.09.2022	Pending
13.	Nagaland	Secretary, Nagaland State Information Commission	4.00	507226 08.09.2022	Received
14.	Odisha	Secretary, Odisha State Information Commission	4.00	038059 14.03.2023	Received
15.	Punjab	Secretary, Punjab State Information Commission	4.00	507227 08.09.2022	Pending
16.	Rajasthan	Secretary, Rajasthan State Information Commission	4.00	038063 20.02.2023	Received
17.	Sikkim	Secretary, Sikkim Information Commission	4.00	094441 26.02.2024	Pending
18.	Tamil Nadu	Secretary, Tamil Nadu State Information Commission	4.00	507228 08.09.2022	Pending
19.	Uttarakhand	Secretary, Uttarakhand State Information Commission	4.00	507239 09.12.2022	Received
20.	West Bengal	Secretary, West Bengal Information Commission	4.00	094439 08.02.2024	Pending

The members of the Federation expressed happiness that the Third Grant of 4.00 lakhs has been released to most of the member State Information Commissions and maximum of them have utilised the same for the purpose it was released.



7. Status of outstanding UC and Vouchers from member Information Commissions.

The status of outstanding utilization certificates and supporting vouchers against the 1st, 2nd & 3rd Grants was also apprised to the members of the Federation.

The members of BOG directed Executive Secretary to approach the concerned members for submission of their outstanding Utilization Certificates and Supporting Vouchers for the grants released to them by NFICI.

8. Releasing of 4th grant to eligible members of Federation.

Members of the Federation were informed that it was decided by members of the Federation in the NFICI's 14th Special General Body meeting held on 10.06.2022, that future grants of Rs. 4.00 lakh will be released only to those State Information Commissions who have submitted utilization certificates and vouchers of the funds/grants released to them earlier. Some State Information Commissions have requested office of the NFICI to release the 4th grant to them. They have utilized their 3rd Grant and have submitted the utilization certificates and vouchers for the same. Matter for releasing 4th grant of Rs. 4.00 lakh was discussed in detail, and it was decided that the 4th Grant of NFICI should be released to the eligible members.

9. Constitution of Editorial Board for selecting Important & Landmark decisions.

It was apprised that in the NFICI's 24th Board of Governors meeting held on 04.03.2022 wherein the Editorial Board was reconstituted to review important decisions and initiatives received from all member Information Commissions.

The Executive Secretary apprised all the members that the Editorial Board had worked tirelessly to select important and landmark decisions. The Board selected 35 important decisions out of 122 decisions received from the members. It was proposed to publish annual Journal wherein important and landmark decisions by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, various High Courts and various Information Commissions to be compiled and published annually which may become a valuable educational and reference resource for the Commissioners, legal practitioners and the public at large. After deliberation it was decided that a fresh Editorial Board is to be constituted with new members. Subsequently, the following members were elected for the Editorial Board for reviewing of the important and landmark decisions for the year 2023:



- 1) Shri Virendra, Chief Information Commissioner, West Bengal;
- 2) Shri M.L. Lather, Chief Information Commissioner, Rajasthan;
- 3) Shri V Hari Nair, Chief Information Commissioner, Kerala;
- 4) Shri Samir Sahai, Chief Information Commissioner, Maharashtra;
- 5) Shri K. Radhashyam Singh, Chief Information Commissioner, Manipur and
- 6) Dr. Subhashchandra Soni, Chief Information Commissioner, Gujarat

All the member Information Commission were also requested to forward the decisions for selection by the Editorial Board of NFICI for the year 2023.

10. Agenda points received from following State Information Commission:

(1) Assam State Information Commission:

- (I). Make Rule/amendment to
 - (a) Deal with non-compliance of the orders passed by the Commission and the complaints received thereof.
 - (b) Receive complaints from Public Authorities against unscrupulous activities and
 - (c) Curb the growth of “professional” information seekers.
- (II). Amendment to increase the RTI fees from Rs. 10/-
- (III). Make rule to fix charges for 1st and 2nd appeal also.

A detailed deliberation was made on the above points.

(2) Odisha State Information Commission:

- (I) Sanction of 4th Grant in favour of Odisha Information Commission for ongoing process of Digitalization of Case Records and archiving of old records since the year 2005 in this Commission.

Point was discussed in the agenda point No. 08.




(3) Manipur Information Commission: -

- (I) Proposal for amending Section 20 of the RTI Act pertaining to Penalties to bring the FAA within the ambit of the Section.
- (II) [The role of FAA under Section 19(6) of the RTI Act 2005 is crucial as it provides an internal review mechanism to provide information to the citizen when they are not satisfied with the response received from PIO. The non-activation / inactivity of the FAA undermines the very purpose of the Act, which is to empower citizen with information and to ensure responsiveness of Public Authority to citizen's request. Failure of FAA in its due discharge of the mandated role as FAA is one of the main reasons for piling up of second appeal / complaint cases before the Information Commissions.]

A detailed deliberation was made on the above issue.

11. Any other item with the permission of the Chair.

There being no other point, Dr. Subhashchandra Soni, Chief Information Commissioner delivered a vote of thanks, and the meeting was concluded.


(Heeralal Samariaya)
President, NFICI