



## **NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INFORMATION COMMISSIONS IN INDIA**

**Minutes of 29<sup>th</sup> Board of Governors Meeting held on February 3 - 4, 2024**

**At Bhubaneswar/Konark, Odisha**

### **Participants:**

#### **Board of Governors:**

- Shri Heeralal Samariya, President, NFICI & Chief Information Commissioner, CIC New Delhi.
- Shri Anil Chandra Punetha, Vice President & Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Uttarakhand.
- Shri Jalada Kumar Tripathy, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Odisha.
- Shri Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Assam.
- Shri R. Mahaboob Basha, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Andhra Pradesh.
- Shri Koijam Radhashyam Singh, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Manipur.
- Shri Samir Sahai, Information Commissioner (CIC I/c), SIC Maharashtra.

#### **Special Invitee:**

- Dr. Vishwas Mehta, Chief Information Commissioner, SIC Kerala.

#### **NFICI's officers:**

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

At the commencement of the 29th BOG Meeting, Shri Sarvottam Kumar Rana, Executive Secretary welcomed all the Hon'ble members present for the meeting. He conveyed special thanks to Shri Heeralal Samariya, Hon'ble CIC New Delhi, Shri R. Mahaboob Basha, Hon'ble CIC Andhra Pradesh, Shri K. Radheyshyam Singh, Hon'ble CIC Manipur, Shri Samir Sahai, Hon'ble IC, Maharashtra and Brig Vipin Chakrawarti, Honorary Secretary NFICI, as they were attending BOG meeting for the first time.

Executive Secretary expressed sincere thanks to Hon'ble Dr. Vishwas Mehta, CIC Kerala, for accepting the invitation and deliver a presentation before the BOG members sharing best practices and challenges faced in implementation of RTI Act by the State Information Commission, Kerala under his adept leadership.

A special acknowledgment was also depicted to Hon'ble Shri Jalad Kumar Tripathi, CIC Odisha and team of State Information Commission for graciously hosting the meeting at such a delightful venue.

Thereafter, Executive Secretary, NFICI informed the members that Shri Heera Lal Samariya has been appointed and sworn in by the Hon'ble President of India as the Chief Information Commissioner of the Central Information Commission on November 06, 2024. By virtue of his appointment as CIC he also assumes the role of President of NFICI. He expressed that Shri Samariya's illustrious career needs no introduction. Thereafter, Hon'ble Shri Anil Chandra Punetha, CIC Uttarakhand and Vice President NFICI gave a brief overview of Shri Samariya's remarkable achievements as an eminent personality.

Executive Secretary, NFICI thanked Shri Punetha and then called upon all members to ratify the appointment of Shri Heeralal Samariya, President, NFICI. All the members of Board of Governors unanimously ratified the appointment of President, NFICI and Congratulated to Shri Samariya. All the members bestowed faith in Shri Samariya and spoke that his vast experience will undoubtedly benefit NFICI immensely.



Afterward, Executive Secretary, NFICI informed the members that Shri Sidh Kumar, JS (MR) in Central Information Commission and Honorary Secretary, NFICI, has been transferred out of Central Information Commission. Consequently, Brig Vipin Chakrawarti, Registrar Central Information Commission has been appointed as Honorary Secretary. Giving a brief about Brig Chakrawarti, Executive Secretary said that Brigadier Chakrawarti has retired from the Army's Judge Advocate General Branch after serving the nation with distinction for 32 years. He requested all members to ratify the appointment of Brig Vipin Chakrawarti as Honorary Secretary, NFICI.

All the members of Board of Governors ratified the appointment of Honorary Secretary, NFICI and Congratulated Brig Chakrawati. All the members also expressed their hope that NFICI will be benefitted by his legal background.

Subsequently, the Honorary Secretary with the permission of the President and the members proceeded with the following agenda points:-

**1. Confirmation of Minutes of last Meeting:**

28<sup>th</sup> Board of Governors meeting was held on 09.09.2023 at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. Minutes of the meeting were confirmed by the members of the Board of Governors.

**2. Status of NFICI case for Tax Exemption pending at CIT (Exemptions):**

All members were informed that NFICI had filed Form 10A & 10G seeking registration under section 12AA & 80G of the Income Tax Act, 1961 before the Commissioner Income Tax (Exemption), Hyderabad on 30.11.2015. The application to consider NFICI under Section 80G of the IT Act had been rejected by the Commissioner of Income Tax (Exemptions) on 31.05.2016. Subsequently NFICI had filed an appeal before the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal, Hyderabad against the order dated 31.05.2016 of the Commissioner of Income Tax (Exemptions). The Hon'ble ITAT vide order dated 29-03-2021 has remanded the matter to CIT (Exemptions) for fresh consideration.



Now, the NFICI case for Tax Exemptions under Section 12AA & 80G r.w.s. 254 of Income Tax Act, 1961 is approved by Commissioner Income Tax (Exemptions), Hyderabad vide DIN & Order No. ITBA/EXM/F/EXM41/2023-24/1059786192(1) dated 16.01.2024.

Commissioner Income Tax (Exemptions), Hyderabad has granted Registration under section 12AA and 80G of the Income Tax Act w.e.f. A.Y. 2016-17 upto 31.03.2021.

The order directed that for further continuation of registration under the Income Tax Act and for grant of Unique Registration Number (URN) subsequent to 31.03.2021, the assessee is informed to apply through the E-filing Portal as per section 12A(1)(ac) U/s 80G(5) of the I.T. Act, 1961 and obtain the new registration as per section 12AB & 80G of the I.T. Act.

The process of E-filing the application for obtaining the new registration as per section 12AB & 80G of the I.T. Act. (if required) is under process.

### **3. Appointment of Chartered Accountant for the FY 2023-24.**

It was proposed to consider appointing a CA firm, M/s Ankit Malik & Associates for audit and accounting services for the financial year 2023-24. The said firm had submitted its quotation for Rs. 25,000/- (excluding GST) for auditing & accounting services i.e. Audit of Accounts, filing of Income Tax return and e-filing of TDS Return & Book keeping to be maintained in Tally software.

The BOG members approved the appointment of CA firm, M/s Ankit Malik & Associates for the financial year 2023-24 as per their quoted rates.

### **4. Status of NFICI's Current Accounts and FDs:**

The Executive Secretary apprised the BOG members status of NFICI's current account and fixed deposits being maintained in State Bank of India, Bhikaji Cama



Place, New Delhi. As on 31.01.2024 a sum of Rs. 8,66,840/- was held as balance in the current account and there were 14 Fixed Deposits amounting to Rs. 1,90,93,817/- (principal amount). The members expressed their happiness on maintenance of accounts in a systematic manner.

**5. Proposal for change of Bankers :**

BOG members were informed that consequent upon shifting of NFICI's office from Hyderabad to Delhi in May 2017, Bank account was also shifted from Hyderabad to SBI, Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi as office of Central Information Commission was also there in the adjacent building. Since the Central Information Commission has moved to its own newly constructed building at present location i.e. at Baba Gangnath Marg, Munirka, New Delhi. It becomes inconvenient to continue maintaining the account in present branch of SBI due to distance. Another branch of SBI is existing near to Central Information Commission in the complex of N.I.H.F.W., Munirka. It was proposed to the members that we should transfer our account including fixed deposit to SBI, N.I.H.F.W., Munirka branch. The members BOG agreed and approved the proposal.

**6. Status of annual membership fee for the FY 2023-24.**

The BOG members were apprised about the status of NFICI's Annual Membership upto financial years 2023-24 showing position as on 31.01.2024. Matter was discussed and it was decided that a letter and subsequent reminders be sent to requesting them to deposit outstanding annual membership fee(s) upto the financial year 2023-24 at the earliest.

**7. Status of release of NFICI's 3<sup>rd</sup> Grant of Rs. 4.00 Lakhs to member Information Commissions:**

It was apprised to members of BOG that upto now NFICI's 3<sup>rd</sup> grant of Rs. 4.00 lakhs has been released to following member Information Commissions:-





S.No.	State Information Commission	Favoring	Amt. Released (in Lakhs)	Cheque No. & Date
1.	Andhra Pradesh	A.P. Information Commission, Mangalagiri	4.00	038095 18.01.2024
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	Secretary, Arunachal Pradesh State Information Commission	4.00	507220 08.09.2022
3.	Assam	Secretary, Assam State Information Commission	4.00	507221 08.09.2022
4.	Chhattisgarh	Secretary, Chhattisgarh State Information Commission	4.00	507222 08.09.2022
5.	Gujarat	Secretary, Gujarat State Information Commission	4.00	038056 20.02.2023
6.	Goa	Goa State Information Commission	4.00	038075 24.07.2023
7.	Himachal Pradesh	Secretary, State Information Commission, Himachal Pradesh	4.00	038074 24.07.2023
8.	Kerala	Secretary, Kerala State Information Commission	4.00	038055 20.02.2023
9.	Karnataka	Secretary, Karnataka State Information Commission	4.00	507240 09.12.2022
10.	Meghalaya	Secretary, Meghalaya State Information Commission	4.00	507224 08.09.2022
11.	Manipur	Secretary, Manipur State Information Commission	4.00	507223 08.09.2022
12.	Mizoram	Secretary, Mizoram State Information Commission	4.00	507225 08.09.2022
13.	Nagaland	Secretary, Nagaland State Information Commission	4.00	507226 08.09.2022
14.	Odisha	Secretary, Odisha State Information Commission	4.00	038059 14.03.2023

15.	Punjab	Secretary, Punjab State Information Commission	4.00	507227 08.09.2022
16.	Rajasthan	Secretary, Rajasthan State Information Commission	4.00	038063 20.02.2023
17.	Tamil Nadu	Secretary, Tamil Nadu State Information Commission	4.00	507228 08.09.2022
18.	Uttarakhand	Secretary, Uttarakhand State Information Commission	4.00	507239 09.12.2022

It was also apprised that the following member Information Commissions are eligible to get NFICI's grants of Rs. 4.00 lakhs each as mentioned against their names:-

- (1) Telangana - 1st
- (2) Jharkhand - 2nd
- (3) Sikkim - 3rd
- (4) West Bengal - 3rd

Office of NFICI has taken up the matter with the concerned State Information Commission asking for their willingness to utilize the funds. The same can be released to them once their willingness is received. Members agreed to the proposal.

#### **8. Status of UC and vouchers from members Information Commissions.**

The status of outstanding utilization certificates and supporting vouchers against the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> grants were apprised to all the members of the Federation.

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

**9. Discussion on fund/grant to be released for BOG meeting being held outside Delhi.**

The members of BOG were apprised that during 14th Special General Body meeting which was held on 10.06.2022 the expenditure for hosting of NFICI's Special/Annual General body meeting was fixed to be Rs. 8.00 lakhs or the actual expenses, whichever is less. However, no specific guidelines are existing for release of NFICI's fund to organize BOG meetings outside Delhi.

The above issue was discussed in detail by the BOG members and it was decided unanimously by the members that the limit of expenditure for hosting of NFICI's BOG meeting outside Delhi is to be fixed to Rs. 4.00 lakh or the actual expenditure, whichever is less.

**10. Pursuing the matter for NFICI recognition to DoPT, Govt of India.**

The President, NFICI apprised all the members that The National Federation of Information Commissions in India (NFICI) was registered on 01-09-2009 at Hyderabad with Registration No. 479 of 2009 as Society under A.P. Societies Act 2001. Now Central Information Commission is intending to take up a proposal with DoPT for NFICI's recognition by the Govt. of India. BOG Members appreciated the initiative taken by the Hon'ble Chief Information Commissioner, Central Information Commission and the President, NFICI.

**11. Remuneration of Executive Secretary, NFICI.**

The BOG members were apprised that the Executive Secretary is responsible for maintaining of various account and other office correspondences. His remuneration was fixed at Rs. 12000/- w.e.f. 01 July 2018. BOG Members discussed the revision of the remuneration and it was unanimously decided that the remuneration of the Executive Secretary be revised to 20,000/- per month with effect from 01 Feb-2024.

**12. Agenda points received from SICs, if any.**





The State Information Commission Uttarakhand and Manipur had forwarded following agenda points for discussion.

(A) **Uttarakhand:-**

- (I) *Provision of funds to SICs for establishment of hardware/software and infrastructure for carrying out hearings in hybrid mode.*

Matter was discussed in detail and the members decided that the grants being released periodically by the NFICI can be utilised for the above purposes.

- (II) *Intervention of Central Information Commission/DoPT/NIC in strengthening of SICs.*

Matter was deliberated and apprised that a Committee under the chairmanship of Shri Suresh Chand, Former Information Commissioner, Central Information Commission was constituted for this purpose. The Committee has submitted its report which has already been submitted to DoPT. It was also decided that such studies should be conducted periodically.

- (III) *Setting apart of one hour session for discussion on best practices in future NFICI General Body meetings.*

Members agreed to the proposal and it was agreed that such a meeting should be held at Central Information Commission, New Delhi.

**Manipur:-**


- (I) *Manipur Information Commission suggested to make a request from NFICI to DoPT, Government of India for providing one-time financial grant for construction of buildings of State Information Commissions, especially for those Information Commissions who do not have their own building.*



Matter was discussed in detail by the BOG Members and it was decided that the State Information Commission, Manipur should take up the proposal with their State Govt of Manipur for further necessary action.

**13. Any other item with the permission of the Chair.**

There being no other point, Hon'ble Chief Information Commissioner, Assam, Shri B.J. Mahanta delivered a vote of thanks and the meeting was concluded.

  
(Heeralal Samariya)  
President, NFICI  
