

Ten Years of implementation of Right to Information Act in our State on 20th March 2019.

To celebrate ten years of implementation of the Right to Information Act in our State an impressive event was organized by J&K RTI Movement in collaboration with the Department of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir on 20th of March 2019. The event was attended by Sh. Mohammad Ashraf Mir, Hon'ble State Information Commissioner J&K State. While addressing the gathering he stated that it was on this day in 2009 that the J&K RTI Act came into being, the law which gave ordinary people the extraordinary power to question the government on a daily basis; the law which in one stroke did away the protected layers of secrecy and opaqueness in government decision-making, the law which changed the power dynamic between the citizen and the State by placing people at the centre of the democratic process and the law that made the State more responsive to the needs and aspirations of its citizens.

The HSIC said that two most important factors that fail the implementation of RTI law are, the lack of awareness amongst common masses about this law and the old mindset of secrecy amongst officers and officials who treat dissemination of information as a challenge to their power and authority. The success of any law depends on efficient implementation, which in turn depends on the awareness levels in citizens. One of the primary reason for the lack of awareness is the lack of publicity by the Government. Though, section 23 of the Act makes it mandatory for the Government to bring about awareness by conducting awareness camps, workshops and seminars, to develop and organize educational programmes for advancing understanding of the public, to promote dissemination of information by public authorities and to train Public Information Officers, but not much has been done in this regard so far. The awareness and training programs conducted by the Government need to be multiplied and made a regular feature. The HSIC also highlighted the different provisions of RTI Act for its better implementation.

The HSIC appreciated and thanked the management of J&K RTI Movement and the Department of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir for organizing this wonderful programme today to commemorate ten years of implementation of RTI law. Such programmes do help us to understand and evaluate what we have achieved, where we have faulted and what more is required to be done to achieve perfection.