

Seminar on Right to Information

State Information Commission (SIC) today the 26th April, 2017 organized a one day seminar on J&K Right to Information Act 2009. The seminar was inaugurated by Chief Secretary, B R Sharma and attended by Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) J&K, Khurshid A Ganai, Ex-Chief Information Commissioner J&K, G R Sufi, Director Information, Dr Shahid Iqbal Chowdhary, heads of various departments, First Appellate Authorities (FAAs), Public Information Officers (PIOs) from the districts of Jammu division, prominent RTI activists and other officers from the J&K State Information Commission.

Chief Secretary in his inaugural address said that free access to information and participation of people in policy making is essential for transparent and accountable governance. "RTI is the bedrock of good governance as it promotes transparency and enforces accountability thereby strengthening corruption free governance", he said.

CIC Khurshid A Ganai said the aim of the seminar was to review the implementation of J&K RTI Act 2009 with reference to the achievements registered so far and problems being faced in its implementation, to sensitize the PIOs and FAAs about their critical role and responsibility in the implementation of RTI Act, to provide more clarity to the PIOs and FAAs on important sections of the RTI Act and to get the feedback on course correction from the PIOs/ FAAs and RTI activists in the seminar.

The seminar included interactive sessions on vital aspects of J&K RTI Act. Sh. G R Sufi, former CIC spoke on "Exemption under Section 8 and important rulings of Supreme Court, High Court and CIC on RTI Act", Prof Sunita Zalpuri on "Responsibilities of PIOs and FAAs", Dr Jahanara Jabeen on "Compliance under Section 4 of RTI Act" besides session on e-governance and digitization was presented by MS. Shikha Jamwal, a digitization professional from Gurgaon.

At the end of four sessions conducted by the experts, the concluding remarks were made by the CIC Sh. Khurshid Ahmed Ganai. He stated that for the successful implementation of the RTI Act, the PIOs and FAAs have not only to become aware about their role and responsibilities, they have also to develop the right attitude towards the objectives of the RTI Law and the demands of the RTI applicants. He emphasized on the role of the SIC and the State Government in creating awareness about RTI and in training of the PIOs, FAAs and other Government officials. He invited the attention of the State Government to Section 23 of the RTI Act which enjoins upon the State Government to prepare programmes for awareness generation and training. The CIC impressed upon the J&K IMPA to bring out a Handbook for the PIOs and also appealed to all the Public Authorities in the state to take appropriate action for achieving compliance under Section 4 i.e suo-moto disclosure of information through websites etc.

The CIC thanked the Chief Secretary Sh. B. R. Sharma , IAS and the former CIC Sh. G. R. Sufi, IRS (Retd) and hoped that Chief Secretary will help to sort out the many bottlenecks for smooth and effective implementation of the J&K RTI Act 2009.