

## **Roundtable with the Officers of School Education Department on J&K Right to Information Act.**

A roundtable on the J&K Right to Information Act, 2009 was held in the meeting hall of the State Information Commission at Srinagar today on 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2017 with the officers of the School Education Department in which the Director, School Education, Kashmir, Chief Education Officers and Principals of DIETs participated. The roundtable was presided over by Shri Khurshid Ahmed Ganai, Chief Information Commissioner, J&K. The Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) made a presentation on the salient features of the J&K RTI Act and the Rules. He apprised the participants about the common mistakes committed by the Public Information Officers (PIOs), First Appellate Authorities (FAAs) and Public Authorities in general. The Chief Information Commissioner emphasized on the importance of Sections 5, 6 & 7 for the PIOs and Section 16 for the FAAs. The CIC also stated that Section 17 of the J&K RTI Act has given adequate powers to the SIC to impose penalty and recommend disciplinary action against the erring PIOs. The CIC also stressed the importance of the proceedings to be conducted by the FAAs under Section 16 and observed that the work of the FAAs across all Government Departments and Public Authorities needs much to be desired. He stated FAA has to act in a quasi-judicial manner and give an opportunity and proper hearing to the aggrieved Appellant in terms of the provisions of the RTI Act and the Rules.

Among other provisions of the J&K RTI Act, Sections 4, 8 and 11 came under thorough discussion. The CIC highlighted the importance of Section 4 pertaining to

mandatory and suo-moto disclosure of information by the Public Authorities and stated that the SIC has extended the last date for compliance under Section 4 to 30<sup>th</sup> September,2017. He also stated that repeat RTIs are not to be entertained and in this regard the Central Information Commission has also ruled against repeat RTIs as they result in diverting the limited manpower and financial resources of the Public Authorities. In this regard, CIC Shri Ganai also invited the attention of the participants to the Supreme Court judgment in CBSE V/S Aditya Bandopadya & Ors.

The Director, School Education, Kashmir thanked the CIC for conducting a roundtable for School Education Department which is recipient of large number of RTI applications and expressed hope that the guidelines given by the CIC will go a long way in improving the working of RTI Cells in the School Education Department. He assured the CIC that School Education Department will also conduct roundtable/seminars at district level and invite officers of the SIC as resource persons for training of the officers of the Education Department on RTI. The CIC complimented and thanked the Director, School Education, Kashmir for showing keen interest and ensuring impressive participation in the roundtable.