

A step towards participatory democracy – RTI Act

Posted by [egovindia](#) on June 3, 2006

National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI) was in the forefront to get the Right to Information Act passed. NCPRI promotes people's right to information and uses the right extensively to fight corruption and social apathy.

*In an interview with **Kavitha Alexis** of CIOL, **Shekhar Singh**, convenor of NCPRI spoke about the Act, its power and the role of governments in awareness creation.*

After many years of ardent effort, the RTI Act was enacted on October 2005. Did you (NCPRI) achieve what you had aimed for?

Certainly one part of our effort was to have a national RTI act passed. This was achieved. But many other things need to be done, especially spreading awareness about the act, ensuring its proper implementation, and ensuring that it leads to better governance.

What are the benefits brought by RTI Act to our democratic system?

Essentially it empowers the citizen vis-a-vis the government and other institutions, it makes the government and other such institutions answerable to the people and it helps move from representative democracy to participatory democracy.

What is the role of ICT in increasing the effectiveness of governments in providing information sought by the citizens?

Many of the rights for information would have been impractical without ICT. This has not only made it possible to retrieve and collate information quickly but also to transfer it immediately to all parts of the country.

What has to be done to create enough awareness among people about their Right?

Apart from informing them of the law, explaining its relevance to their lives, helping them with the procedures, we also have to fight against cynicism by sharing success stories, especially from among the poor and the oppressed.

Would the Act be able to streamline the departmental processes across the country? Would it cut down the corruption levels?

One advantage of the RTI act is that it would force offices to maintain records better – otherwise they would not be able to respond to RTI requests in the prescribed time frame and would be penalised. Corruption has come down where RTI has become effective, and this trend will continue.

What should be the Central and State government's role in enabling RTI as per the Act?

Essentially they should strive at streamlining the process of providing information and should also put more and more information in the public domain, suo moto. They should ensure that timely action is taken on the wrongdoings exposed by using the RTI and protect those seeking information from adverse consequences at the hands of vested interests.

CIOL Bureau