

RTI-A encourages public access to maximum disclosure of information

What information can I get, under RTI-Act? This is the general question being raised by many people. The RTI-Act encourages maximum disclosure of information. In practice, this means one can get most information that is held by public authorities, or under their control, subject to a few exceptions.

Those exceptions are very limited, which are designed to protect sensitive information from being released, where its release would cause more harm than public good. The Act allows public access to a wide range of information held by public authorities in different forms. For example, one can use the Act to get hold of records, manuscripts, files, file notings, microfilm, facsimiles, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, log-books, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data which is in electronic form, any material produced by computer or any other device, and even information relating to a private

body to which a public authority can get access under an existing law.

Under the RTI-Act one can ask to inspect any work, document or record in person by filing an application. In such inspections, there is no fee for the first one hour; but, every subsequent hour will attract certain accessibility fees. However, one can ask for copies of those one wants, to avoid confusion

of diskettes, floppies, tapes, video cassettes or in any other electronic form or printouts. Following are answers to some of the questions raised by the public:

Can Government employees file RTI applications?

- *Sreedhar Rao, Hyderabad*
Yes, why not, they can file applications and can get information like any other citizen. But they should not ask certain information which they are supposed to get as part of their regular job.

Right Tool

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and huge information cost. Citizens can get certified copies or extracts of documents or records and can even ask to take notes from documents and records. One can also ask for certified samples of materials, in order to check whether proper materials are being used in accordance with the contract.

Applicant has the right to get information in the form

Will RTI-Act help us?

- *Narsimha Rao, Kangiri, Ongole*
First try to know the status of the land by filing RTI-Act application with revenue authorities. Then, ask the Endowments people to prove ownership of the land. If they fail to do so, things will turn in your favour in the court of law.

I applied for passport 17 months back. Police inquiry is also over. Neither information nor reply to my many letters is forthcoming. Can I serve notice to them under RTI-Act?

- *Nageswara Rao, Hyderabad*
You can't serve notice under this Act. You can come to know the status of your application if an RTI application is filed. With that information you can speed up the process.

As of now the tenure of sarpanches is over; can I get information under RTI from village panchayat pertaining to income and expenditure?

- *Narsih, Karimnagar*
Village panchayat secretary is the PIO irrespective of whether sarpanch is there or not; one can file application to PIO and get information.

An applicant is asking for huge information and harassing us. Is there any way out to avoid him?

- *Jawar, Hyderabad*
How to avoid a seeker from providing information should not be an idea in general in PIO's mind. If somebody demands huge information, the PIO can ask to deposit appropriate fee to get the copies; otherwise he can advise the seeker to come and peruse the files and take copies of relevant documents.
If the demand of the applicant is disproportionately diverting the resources of the public authority, it need not be provided in that form (Sec: 7 (9) says).

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- Readers can send in their queries to ic.dileepreddy@gmail.com