



Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

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Date: 24/06/2016

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Smt. Vasundhara Raje

Hon'ble Chief Minister
State Government of Rajasthan
Secretariat
Jaipur
Rajasthan – 302 005

Smt. Vasundhara Raje

I am dismayed to learn of the reported removal of a chapter from a school text book containing references to the fundamental right to information (RTI) and the seminal contribution of grass roots level movements in your State to the enactment of the *Right to Information Act* in 2005. A copy of the news report is enclosed.

Rajasthan arguably is the karmabhoomi of RTI. You are well aware that the people's movements in remote villages of Rajasthan for transparency and accountability in the developmental administration that emerged during the mid-1990s blossomed into a country-wide demand for the enactment of a strong RTI law. In fact it was your Government at the Centre in 2002, in which you were MoS DoPT, which must take the credit for bringing in the first national level law to give effect to the people's right to know. You will recall the encouragement that you had given when I visited Jaipur as Chief Information Commissioner to address your officers on the subject, a meeting that you generously attended and sat quietly among your officers in the audience, to listen.

In 2014, your party promised transparent and accountable administration in the election manifesto released on the eve of the General Elections. The Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has voiced his government's commitment to transparent

administration on the PMO's website and also taken several steps to conduct government business in a transparent manner. The manner in which coal blocks and spectra for mobile telephony and data services were auctioned in full public view are leading examples of delivering on this commitment.

Section 26 of the RTI Act places a statutory duty on state Governments to educate the citizenry, particularly the disadvantaged segments of society, about their rights to seek and receive information from public authorities. It is important to inculcate the values of transparency and accountability amongst children and the youth in order to realise the objective of the RTI Act spelt out in its Preamble, namely, creating an informed citizenry in order to make India a vibrant democracy where the governed can hold the government and its instrumentalities accountable for their actions.

I should therefore have assumed that your government could rightfully take pride in the fact that Rajasthan has become the role model in the world for people's movements demanding open government. This momentum for open government in Rajasthan will be sustained when children and youth are educated about the significance of RTI and the manner in which they can help in strengthening governance, an avowed objective of the present government. I urge you to direct the Department of Education to restore the section relating to RTI and duly recognise the contribution of Rajasthan's impoverished and disadvantaged people to the enactment of path breaking RTI laws in the State and at the Centre.

With respects as always
Yours sincerely,

Wajahat
(Wajahat Habibullah)
Chairperson, CHRI &
Former Chief Information Commissioner
Central Information Commission

