

Initiate steps to bring PPP Projects under the purview of RTI Act

The PPP Schemes and Projects are now continues as a grey area for invoking Right To Information (RTI) Act. Huge public money and assets are always involved in these projects. Though functioning as Quasi Government Bodies, the PPP entities are unwilling to divulge facts to the public.

Even though the Central Information Commission (CIC) held PPPs as 'public authority' as defined under the RTI Act, Because of lack of clarity of some provisions the courts have to intervene into this area and stayed some of the decisions of Information Commission. The role of Private Sector in the growth of the infrastructural facilities is important. But, in the name of private investment PPP Projects should not be a platform for looting resources through the unholy political - business - bureaucracy nexus. There are around 1000 PPPs in various stages and in diverse segments, including roads, ports, education, health and so on. The Department of Economic Affairs puts the estimated costs at above Rs.383300 crores as on July, 2011. And 50% of PPP funding during the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan is expected to come via the private route. Surely, the idea of transparency and accountability can't be taken lightly.

Private players participating in PPP projects will come under the definition of 'public authority' as per section 2 (h) of the RTI Act. Here, this includes 'Non-Government Organization substantially financed directly or indirectly by funds provided by the appropriate Government. So, necessary unambiguous clauses should be included in the Act and Rules to bring PPP Projects under the ambit of RTI Act.

K.N. BALAGOPAL  
*K.N. Balagopal*  
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