

MCD Receives Highest Information Requests

It has been more than three years that the Delhi government implemented the Right to Information Act, 2002. The Delhi government's information technology department has statistics about the use of this law.

Until September 2005, the Delhi government received 9,060 requests for information. Of this, 8,581 cases were attended to. The government provided information in 7,692 cases and rejected 889 requests.

Apart from local bodies like the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), which received 1,782 requests for information and the New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC), which came a close second with 645 applications, the largest number of applications has been received by the Registrar of Co-operatives.

While the MCD and the NDMC received applications regarding road quality, unauthorised construction and school admission, the RoC received 1,363 requests to determine ownership of property. "People buying flats want to verify titles and ownership, and find it handy to do it through the RTI," said an official.

Also, most people ask for information of a personal nature rather than for common good. There were 368 requests for information from the directorate of health services. Most pertained to availability of posts in various hospitals rather than the state of health services. "It is an adjunct to the transfer-posting conundrum, since information on vacant posts help in getting transfers," said an official.

A big case in point, 610 applications received by the Delhi Subordinate Services Board, all about the status of posts in the government.

According to MCD officials, many requests that they receive pertain to the engineering department. "People ask for maps of their neighbours' houses to help them in cases of unauthorised development, to support the argument that they are not the only ones indulging in unauthorised construction," said an MCD official.

The data also reveal that most people use the RTI to know the status of their applications for licences, car registrations, property papers and ration card applications.

The transport department received 371 applications and the food and supplies department that handles issuance of ration cards received, 555 applications. All this may not cheer those advocating the right to information, but it certainly is an empowerment of sorts.

DELHI DATA

The Delhi government data show most requests for information are for 'personal work' People are using the RTI Act to find out the status of licence and ration card applications. A large number of people uses the law to find out the correct ownership of flats through the Registrar of Co-operatives, a must for any real estate transaction.

The RTI law has become an adjunct of sorts to the transfer-posting conundrum with hundreds of applications being received about vacancies in various departments.

Source: Nistula Hebbar, 31 October 2005, New Delhi.