

Efforts by Mahiti Adhikar Gujarat Pahal (RTI Gujarat) in Gujarat Since June 2005.

Mahiti Adhikar Gujarat Pahal (Gujarat Initiatives for Right to Information) is a forum of organisations and activists working on promoting RTI in Gujarat. The forum is currently hosted by Janpath at its office in Ahmedabad. We hereby give brief report of the work done by RTI Gujarat in past three months.

1. Publications of the RTI act in Gujarati and English

The act published in the gazette and its Gujarati version (Translated by practicing advocate of Gujarat high Court, Mr. R. P. Mankad) has been printed in the form of booklet and is widely circulated among the members of the Mahiti Adhikar Gujarat Pahal. The same has been also widely circulated via email to over 400 organisations and activists associated with Janpath.

Meanwhile various dept of the government had approached Pahal for the Gujarati version of the Act. We handed over the soft copy of the Gujarati translation, which after completing authenticating it from the concern dept. has put up on the website of the Gujarat Government.

In the mean time Janpath and Gujarat State Police Academy had jointly organised three-day training programme on the Act with senior police officials of the dept. In this workshop the RTI act publication was given as resource material thereby reaching it to Police stations of all the districts of Gujarat.

2. Meeting with Opposition Leader

Core group of Mahiti Adhikar Gujarat Pahal had met Mr. Arjun Modhvadia, to discuss about the RTI status in Gujarat. Till then government had not conducted meeting of the recommendations committee for IOS. We in our discussion focussed upon the role of

opposition leader in such situation. He immediately write to the CM expressing his concern on the delay in carrying out preparations before Oct 13.

This issue was then highlighted in the media and government for the first time expressed its commitment towards RTI.

3. Meeting with Administrative dept o the State.

Mahiti Adhikar Gujarat Pahel held series of meeting with secretary Administrative dept of Govt of Gujarat (Mr. Parekh) which has been appointed as nodal officer of RTI in Gujarat, to disucss with him on the issues of preparations do manuals, awareness and training about RTI. The draft manuals, which were circulated by CHRI, were shared with the administrative dept.

Pahel helped the government in designing its first state level seminar cum training programme on RTI where in all the senior officials were supposed to be the participants. Adminstrative dept has asked Mahiti Adhikar Gujarat Pahel to joined in the Awareness generation campaign with the govt.

4. Meeting with Mr. Mayaben Kodnani, MLA of the ruling party.

Ms. Myaben Kodanai had plaed a private bill in the parliament in the year 2000. In the monsoon session conducted for three day in September, she was asked to deliver her speech on RTI bill for 30 minutes.

Mahiti Adhikar Guajrat Pahel conducted meeting with Ms. Mayaben Kodanani and held detaield discussion about our issues fo concern. We shared with her the reports of NCPRI convention where in people from 19 states has talked about RTI as their right to live and also about the process in other states, efforts by CHRI at national level etc.

It was pre-decided that the bill put up by her with be withdrawn at the end of the discussion, we were interested in highlighting RTI as powerful act for strengthening democracy.

Her speech in the parliament highlighted these issues very well. She said, “ Even after 58 years of independence, our people have not achieved real freedom. They are still depended on the bureaucrat babus for every little documents or information. I would like to give message from the floor of the parliament to the system that we all are servant of the people. We should take RTI in positive spirit and try our level best to provide all the information required by people. Such approach will enhance our credibility.”

Opposition leader and other MLS from ruling party appreciated her approach and Minister Mr. Suarabh Patel on behalf of the government made a statement that Gujarat Government is committed towards RTI and will prepare its system before October 13 to deliver all the information required and asked by the people.

All the speakers also expressed their great concern about the need and importance of Awareness generation efforts about this law to enable people to use it effectively.

Media Briefing:

Mahiti Adhikara Gujarat Pahel with the help of Janpath have organised many briefing sessions with media people and column writers. Pahel has provided them with the necessary information and documents. These efforts have been successful, with three to four times exclusive report has been published on the RTI in connection with various issues.

Mahiti Adhikar Gujrat Pahel

In addition to above RTI Gujarat with the help of Janpath, has tried to disseminate information about various state processes to more than 400 organisations in Gujarat. CHRI, NCPRI, MKSS, Parivartan and many other organisations in Maharastra, Karnataka, Zarkhand, UP, South India which keeps us updated about their state level process through HUM JANENGE has played vital role in strengthening our work in Gujarat.

Future plan of Action:

1. Follow-up about the appointments of Information officers and Awareness Generation strategy of the government.
 2. Consultation for RTI Rules
 3. Conduct training of trainer once the rules are in place.
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