

**RIGHT TO INFORMATION AS A TOOL TO EMPOWER CITIZENS
TO COMBAT BRIBERY
A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN**

From Shailesh Gandhi, RTI campaigner and convenor of the National Campaign for the Promotion of the Right to Information (NCPRI).

Most of us complain about the all-pervading corruption and the fact that the average Citizen feels helpless and harassed most times when faced with Government departments. They are harassed with delays arising out of inefficiency or corruption-often a combination of both. Right To Information has been used effectively in a significant number of cases by ordinary Citizens to combat this. If we can spread the usage of this simple tool and empower average Citizens, it would go a long way in reducing bribes and corruption. With this simple, but ambitious objective a National Campaign is being held in over 40 Cities where trained volunteers will help Citizens with problems of the following nature:

1. Inordinate delays in getting PF, Passports, Ration Cards, Factory licences, Income-tax refunds, Salary arrears, pensions and so on from the Government.
2. Non-attendance to complaints by Citizens on unauthorized constructions, bad roads, faulty meters and so on.
3. Non-receipt of rations, subsidies, scholarships and so on.

Citizens who come to these camps, with some documentary evidence of having communicated earlier with the Government Department, will be helped to fill a Right To Information Application to the concerned department. The questions are so designed that if there is any real harassment, the answers would expose this. Experience has shown that in a fairly significant number of cases, the work itself gets done. It is organized in each City locally with the help of local organizations. This is truly a National Campaign of Citizens. Various Media,-visual and print,- has actively come forward to back this campaign. Other media are all coming forward to cover this campaign,-which is truly a National campaign. The CVC has given a recorded interview lending his active support to this campaign. This is the first time we have a National geographical spread- Bhillai, Chhindwara, Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Lumding, Shahdol, Satna, Lucknow, Hyderabad, Vishakhapatnam, Vijaywada, Faizanad, Sangli, Satara, Indore, Guwahati, Patna, Ranchi, Gumla, Jamshedpur, Deogarh, Dhanbad, Gorakhpur, Jaipur, Ajmer, Karauli, Chittorgarh, Bhim, Abu Road, Bhadesar, Bikaner, Nokha, Udaipur, Kota, Bhilwara, Akola, Nagpur, Shillong, Bangalore, Bhubaneswar, Chitrakoot. The issue concerns everyone- reduction of bribery for the common man and a Citizen empowerment tool to bring Good Governance-Right To Information. In Mumbai 15 organisations have come together and the campaign will be run at the Government Law College, Opposite Churchgate Station, from 1st July to 15th July. The timings are from 11.00am to 7.00pm everyday. We are approaching senior Government Officials, Elected leaders, Business leaders, and other well known Citizens of Mumbai to lend their vocal support to this. The Anti-Corruption Bureau has also stationed a senior officer to lend official support and information at the venue. We request all Citizens to participate in this Campaign by spreading the word, coming to the campaign and voicing their support to this. Do talk to everyone-it is everyone's campaign. The one issue which can bring all honest Citizens of India who desire good governance- Right To Information. Industry leaders, business houses and associations could extend their support by publicizing the event in their Companies, issuing statements supporting it and also coming to the campaign site, during the period.

Please do come and support this Campaign and spread the word. Shailesh Gandhi 022 32903776; 26001003 All my mails are in Public domain, and do share them if you wish.
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