

Charan Das Arha to be the first State Chief Information Commissioner

HYDERABAD: Retired bureaucrat Charan Das Arha will be the first State Chief Information Commissioner. His name was cleared by a high-level committee comprising Chief Minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy, Opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu and Finance Minister K Rosaiah here, on Sunday.

The names of three others from different walks of life were also cleared for the posts of State Information Officers. The state government has not confirmed the names officially saying that an official announcement will be made only after obtaining clearance from the Governor.

The State Information Commission is being constituted in accordance with the guidelines of Right to Information Act that came into force recently.

Arha, a 1968 batch IAS officer worked in several capacities in the state and also at Delhi. He worked as Civil Supplies Commissioner in the state before going to Delhi as resident commissioner of Andhra Pradesh Bhavan. Arha retired from service about a year ago. According to official sources, Dileep Reddy, a senior journalist with a vernacular daily and senior Congress leaders Ambati Subba Rao and M Sudhakar Manohar Rao have been appointed State Information Officers.

As per the Act, the commission can have 10 State Information Officers. However, the state government preferred to have only three members. It is possible that more will be appointed in future.

On its part, TDP is understood to have recommended several names for the State Information Officer posts. They include social activist Shanta Sinha, educationists Kanche Ilaiah, IV Subba Rao and Rama Rao.

Chandrababu Naidu had no objection to the choice of Arha as the State Chief Information Commissioner, though he expressed reservations over the appointment of the three information officers. Speaking to mediapersons after the meeting, the Opposition leader said that the government lacked transparency.

"I have submitted a list of 19 names for the state information officers instead of a detailed discussion. The government finalised the names and then convened the meeting," he said.

Naidu was of the view that there was no point in calling him to such important meetings when the government has completed the selection process.

Rosaiah, however, said that the committee discussed some names and that they would be forwarded to the Governor for consent.

Source: New India Press, 1 November 2005,

<http://www.newindpress.com/NewsItems.asp?ID=IEU20051031105751&Page=U&Title=Hyderabad&Topic=0&>