

Bid for easier access to information

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JOHANNESBURG – The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) has launched a cross-sectoral information officers' forum as a platform at which all matters arising from the Promotion of Access to Information Act will be discussed.

The launch of the Forum, according to Sello Mahatang of the SAHRC, was brought about by municipalities which have a problem in disseminating government information.

"The commission felt it was ineffective in ensuring that the public manage to access information easily," Mahatang said.

"It has come to our attention that some municipalities are non-compliant with the Act," he said.

"Obviously the constitution caters for some information not to be given to the public, but relevant information that has a bearing on people's lives, and where nobody's life is at risk, has to be made available to the people," he said.

All those who attended the launch agreed that there was a need for training sessions geared to educate the public and authorities. They also resolved to make available on the PAIA website a portal detailing what information the public should be entitled to.

"The public do not know what they are entitled to and even some officials don't," Hatang said.

The launch of the forum is part of a series of events celebrating September as the Right to Know month.

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