



Indian Banks sitting on unclaimed funds

An application filed under the Right to Information Act 2005 by a citizen has revealed that Indian banks are sitting on unclaimed funds to the tune of Rs.1200 crores over the last ten years. Most rural and regional banks are ignoring the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) order of paying 3.5% savings bank rate interest on inoperative accounts and matured fixed deposit.



The data given by the RBI for the period 1996 to 2006 include Allahabad Bank, Andhra Bank, Bank of Baroda, Bank of India, Bank of Maharashtra, Canara Bank, Central Bank of India, Corporation Bank, Dina Bank, Indian Bank and Indian Overseas Bank. Some of the foreign banks included in the list are ABN Amro, American Express Bank, Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi, Barclays Bank, Bank of Nova Scotia, BNP Paribas, Bank of America and Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd.

The information provided by the RBI indicates that the interest dues of rural and regional banks in case of unclaimed/inoperative accounts are Rs.1.91 crores. The liability owed by banks towards dormant account holders is Rs.13.46 crores. There are around two crore dormant account holders.

The nationalized banks owe Rs.5.57 crores towards their unclaimed account holders. The liability owed by the State Bank of India is Rs.5.14 crores, by private sector banks is Rs.70.46 lakh and that of foreign banks is Rs.13.09 lakh. ■

(Adapted: *The Financial Express*)

Court stays move to bring UTI under RTI

The Bombay High Court has stayed the Central Information Commission (CIC)'s order on the applicability of the Right to Information Act 2005 on UTI Asset Management Company. UTI Mutual Fund and UTI Trustee company had filed a writ petition challenging the CIC order.



Public interest activist Vijay Gokhale had moved the CIC after UTI AMC refused to share information, including balance sheet, the mode of appointment of directors and reasons for retaining the UTI logo. Gokhale had referred to the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority of India's (PFRDA) choice of UTI AMC as one of the fund managers for the new pension scheme (NPS)

CIC had ruled at the time that 'even though there is no specific provision in the RTI Act that a body owned, controlled or substantially funded by another public authority is also a public authority, yet from the purpose and object of the RTI Act, it is crystal clear that there should be transparency in the functioning of any institution, in which public money is deployed. The four sponsors are public authorities and when they, in turn, own another entity, such an entity has to be treated as a public authority. In the present case, none of the grounds taken by UTI AMC to advance the contentions that it is not a public authority is sustainable'

UTI AMC has four state run companies State Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, Bank of Baroda and Life Insurance Corporation of India- as sponsors. The matter came is now before the High Court. ■

(*Business Standard*, 11.9.2008)

Indians getting more corrupt

The Global Corruption Perception Index published by Transparency International has placed India at 85th position in the list of 180 countries. Compared to earlier report India has slipped from its 72nd position thereby sending a message that Indians are getting more corrupt. The report also says that India's integrity score came down to 3.4 from 3.5 in 2007. The country's integrity score in 2006 was 3.3. In India, Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka were found to be most corrupt States.

The global exercise on corruption perception is done based on inputs collected by agencies like Asian Development Bank, World Bank, IMD International, Bertelsmann Foundation and organizations like Freedom House and Global Insight. The integrity score is prepared by a mathematical calculation by a Switzerland based professor on the basis of the findings of the surveys on governance. ■



Pending complaints in KIC cause concern

The large number of complaints pending before the Karnataka Information Commission (KIC) is becoming a cause for concern among the citizens. As per recent reports from the Chief Information Commissioner, more than 4000 complaints are pending before the KIC. Inaugurating a workshop on RTI at Gulbarga, Shri.K.K.Misra, CIC of KIC has said that the purpose of the RTI Act will be defeated if the public authorities go on denying information leading to piling up of complaints both at the national level or at the state level. But who will bell the cat? ■

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BBMP employee alleges harassment

Now it is official. For the past few years there were stories about some individuals and organizations proclaiming themselves as RTI activists were harassing officials. Some unscrupulous elements have even gone to the extent of taking money from officials for withdrawing their applications filed under the RTI Act.



Now it has come to light that Gowamma, a Revenue Officer in the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) is the target. She has said that the editor of a vernacular tabloid, who claims to be an RTI activist has been blackmailing her for the past one year for sexual favours and money. According to her, she joined BBMP as an attender on compassionate grounds after the death of her husband M.Masti. Later after clearing departmental exam she was made the assistant revenue officer. But according to here the 'RTI activist' has been blackmailing her alleging that she had not cleared the exam and he claims to have proof about this.

(Adapted: Deccan Chronicle, 20.9.2008)

One day summit costs Rs.21 lakh



Mr.Anil Kumar, an RTI activist from Bangalore, who also heads the KRIA KATTE (a forum of NGOs working on RTI) has brought to light that the Bengaluru Development Authority (BDA) has spent a whopping Rs.21 lakh for a one day event organized by the BDA to take stock of the civic projects in the city. The event called Agenda for Bengaluru

Infrastructure Development (ABIDE) was held on 28th June 2008 at the Indian Institute of Science campus.

Internal Vigilance for Government Departments



If everything goes well all the Government Departments in the State of Karnataka will have an internal vigilance mechanism to keep the bureaucrats under check. The Karnataka Lokayuktha has recommended that the vigilance heads in all departments prepare a list of 'suspicious officers' to keep a tab on their work. The proposal also talks about joint operation checks and surprise inspections by department heads and Lokayuktha sleuths. The other

recommendations are (1) Identify points and places of origin of corruption (2) Keep a list of 'suspicious officials' and watch them closely (3) Share an Agreed List of such Officers with the Lokayukta and conduct frequent surprise inspections (4) Do frequent scrutiny of files containing decision making orders (5) Maintain a list of visitors such as contactors to government offices (6) Department heads will be held accountable for dishonest officers.

(Adapted: Deccan Chronicle, 17.9.2008)

CREAT nominated to Karnataka RTI Implementation Committee

The Karnataka Legal Services Authority (KLSA) and the Karnataka High Court Legal Services Committee has constituted a State level Committee on Good Governance and Implementation of RTI Act in Karnataka. The object of this Committee is to suggest a Plan of Action to the KLSA, provide assistance in conducting legal literacy and awareness programs etc. Mr.Y.G.Muralidharan, CREAT-CHRI, has been nominated as a member of this Seven member Committee. The tenure of the membership is for one year.

Judges to declare their assets

Amid mounting pressure on judiciary to reveal judges' assets through scores of RTI queries, Chief Justice of India K.G.Balakrishnan has quietly shot off letters to Chief Justices' of all 21 High



Courts to give practical meaning to an 11 year old judicial resolution judges must declare their properties.

The CJ also sent along with the letter a copy of the 'Restatement of Values of Judicial Life', a 16 point set of guidelines on the dos and don'ts for judges, to the Chief Justices of the HCs requesting its circulation among all 600 odd judges and its diligent observance to make judiciary stronger and respected.

The apex judicial resolution attached with the letter said 'Every judge should make a declaration of all his/her assets in the form of real estate or investments, held by him/her or spouses or dependants, within a reasonable time of assuming office. This is also applicable to sitting judges, the resolution clarified.

After giving information about assets, the judges were to make additional declaration every time they acquire additional property or make further investments, if they were of substantial nature, it said without elaborating on what 'substantial' meant.

However, it clarified that the asset declarations by judges, unlike politicians who file it in the form of affidavits along with their nomination forms, would not be for public consumption. 'The eclarations made by the judges or the CJ shall be confidential' it said.

(Adapted)

Study on Pro-active disclosure by City Municipal Councils

CREAT with the technical support of CHRI is making a study of the pro-active disclosure made under Section 4 (1)(b) of the RTI Act by the City Municipal Councils (CMCs) of Karnataka. There are 44 CMCs and 30 have been selected for the study. The quality of the disclosure will be rated and the report will be released by October 2008.

RTI Campaign Activities & Events - July 2008

Song & Drama Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Govt. of India conducted a 3-day workshop for cultural troupes on "Development Communication" at Nayana Sabhangana, Bangalore from 1.7.08 to 3.7.08. Mr. Y.G. Muralidharan was invited to deliver a lecture on "RTI Act-Relevance to Rural People". The lecture was delivered on 1.7.2008

Loyola Vikas Kendra, Hanagal, Haveri District, organized an awareness program on RTI Act on 5th July, 2008. Mr. Hegde Kadekodi, a network partner of CREAT trained by CREAT-CHRI was the resource person. 50 participants including NGOs, members of stree shakthi associations (self help groups) and Gram Panchayat attended the workshop.

On 08-07-2008 Abdul Nazir Sab State Institute of Rural Development organized a training workshop on Right to information Act 2005. Mr. Y.G. Muralidharan made a presentation on the role of elected representatives in implementing RTI Act. This was a repeat program.

Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike conducted a training session on RTI Act for their PIOs during 9th & 10th July, 2008. The first day's session was handled by Mr.Y.G.Muralidharan. The second day was handled by Mr.Robin D' Zousa, Principal Secretary, Karnataka Legislative Assembly. Mr. Robin is working on RTI in close association with CREAT-CHRI

On 10th July the NALSAR, Centre for Good Governance and other NGOs had organized a discussion on RTI, Citizens Charter and the proposed Public Grievance Bill drafted by Andhra Pradesh Government. Mr.Y.G.Muralidharan was invited to make a presentation on the linkage between RTI and Citizens Charters.



The program was held at Chamber of Commerce Hall, Hyderabad

Jnanavani is a FM station run by Indira Gandhi National Open University, Karnataka Branch, in collaboration with AIR, Bangalore. Jnanavani is running a weekly program on RTI and Consumer protection issues. On 14th July 2008 Mr.Y.G.Muralidharan participated in a live Phone in Program for answering questions from the audience on RTI Act. There were 14 questions on RTI in a span on one hour. Most of the questions were from rural areas and it proved that rural citizens are aware of RTI Act and are using it for various purposes. It was also revealed that in many instances

PIOs are not available or their names and designation is not made public.

The Consumer Care Society, Bangalore, is running 60 consumer clubs in various high schools. The teachers in charge of these clubs were invited for a lecture on RTI Act on 16.7.2008. The program was held at National High School, Basavanagudi, Bangalore, wherein Y.G.Muralidharan made a presentation on RTI Act with special reference to students.

The Karnataka State Cooperative Apex Bank Ltd., Bangalore organized a seminar on RTI on 19th July, 2008. Mr. Y.G. Muralidharan delivered a lecture on RTI Act. The main issue for discussion was whether cooperative societies, banks and other cooperative institutions are covered under RTI Act.

Karnataka Power Corporation Ltd., had invited CREAT-CHRI to conduct a In-house training program on "Right to information Act 2005 and Transparency in Procurement Act" on 25th & 26th July, 2008 in their HRD Training Centre. Officers in the cadre of Executive Engineers, Assistant Executive Engineers, Assistant General Managers, Accounts Officers of KPCL attended the workshop.

Karnataka Milk Federation had organized a one day training program on RTI for their staff on 29th July 2008 at their training centre. Mr. Y.G. Muralidharan made a presentation on RTI Act and the role of PIOs. 36 participants took part in the training.

August 2008

Providence Convent, Bangalore, is a Christian Missionary institute involved in social and rural development in various parts of South India. As part of the training to social activities a lecture program was arranged on 2nd August 2008 about RTI Act and its role in social empowerment. Over 30 missionary activists from Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh participated in the program

The State Institute of Rural Development, Mysore, had organized training on RTI Act for Jilla Panchyat Members on 8th August 2008. Mr.Muralidharan was the main speaker. 25 members of various jilla panchyats participated.

The above program was repeated on 20th August 2008. Presidents of 18 jilla panchyats participated.

The Nava Jeevana (Rehabilitation Centre for the Disabled), Bellary, had organized a training program on RTI for the benefit of social activists working for the welfare of the disabled and physically challenged on 22 & 23rd August 2008 at Bellary. Mr.Ashok Halagali, from CREAT was the trainer.

The Karnataka Drugs Control Department in collaboration with the Drugs Enforcement Officers had organized a training program on RTI Act at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bangalore on 23rd August 2008. Over 85 officers, Drugs Controller and the President of All India Drugs Enforcement Officers Association were present. Mr.Muralidharan made a presentation on the RTI Act.

It was observed that the Drugs Control Department had not prepared its Manual under Section 4 (1)(b) of the Act. The Drugs Controller (Dr.Jagsetty) agreed to publish it and also requested CREAT-CHRI to assist them in this task.

On 26.8.2008, the Administrative Training Institute, Mysore, had organized a training on RTI for the officials (PIOs) of Cooperative Department. 35 officers participated in the program. Mr. Y.G. Muralidharan made a presentation on "**Citizens perspectives on RTI**" and also answered several queries from the participants.

The Department of Personnel and Training, Government

RTI Campaign Activities & Events September 2008

of India, had organized a one day workshop to ascertain the perceptions of the civil society organizations on implementation of RTI Act. The program was held at YASHADA, Pune. Mr.Ashok Halagali, Coordinator RTI of CREAT, attended the program held on 9th September 2008.

The Karnataka Organisation for Social Service (KROSS), the Chickmagalur Multipurpose Social Service Society in collaboration with CREAT-CHRI had organized a two day workshop on RTI at Hassan on 13th and 14th September 2008. Mr.Ashok Halagali, Mr.Vergheese and Mr.Y.G.Muralidharan were the resource persons. Over 50 NGOs participated in the workshop

The Jnanavani channel of All India Radio Bangalore has started a weekly 'phone in' program wherein issues related to RTI Act is being discussed and citizens' queries answered. Mr.Y.G.Muralidharan participated in this one hour program on 18th September 2008.

The Jana Jagruthi Vedike, is a civil society organization founded by Mr.Manjunath Reddy, an RTI activist trained by CREAT-CHRI. Mr.Reddy

has started a bimonthly newsletter called ARIVU which is intended to disseminate information about the various schemes of the government and budget allocated to them. The first issue of the newsletter was released by Mr.Ashwath Reddy, MLA, Chintamani, on 20th September 2008 at R.N.Kalyana Mantapa, Chintamani. Mr.Y.G.Muralidharan made a presentation on RTI Act and how to use



it for improving governance.

The Centre for Good Governance, Hyderabad, had organized a national level group discussion on RTI Call Centres, on 25th September 2008. Mr.Y.G.Muralidharan was invited to make a presentation about the 'Process, Issues and Challenges' of RTI Call Centre.

The National Academy for Agriculture and Research Management (NAARM),

Hyderabad, had invited CREAT for a training workshop on RTI for the Directors of agriculture related institutes of India. Mr.Muralidharan made a presentation on RTI at the NAARM premises on 26th September 2008. Mr.Ravindranath Guru of the Consumer Care Society, Bangalore, was also present.

The Public Affairs Centre, Bangalore, had organized a program to present the findings of the perceptions of the officials on RTI in Bangalore. The findings emerging out of the study done by college students were presented on 27th September 2008. Ms.Ghanavani, Assistant (RTI), CREAT, attended the meeting.

The Karnataka Legal Services Authority and the Karnataka High Court Legal Services Committee had called for a meeting to discuss implementation of RTI Act in Karnataka. Mr. Muralidharan of CREAT-CHRI attended the meeting held on 30th September 2008. Hon'ble Mr.Justice Shylendra Kumar, chaired the meeting.

Crop information in Post Offices

The Postal Department in Karnataka has taken a novel step to provide information about crops to the farmers.



The department will introduce Price Information System, through which rural folks can have access to agriculture-related information, including crop prices and even place orders. According to a press report the department will provide instant information on fluctuations in the prices of agriculture products. This will help farmers to place

orders for seeds, fertilizers and other needs for cultivation and maintenance of genetically-modified crops. Information on crops like oil seeds, pulses, maize and sugarcane will be disseminated as per the Government's interest. However farmers who want to access information from post offices will have to shell down Rs.10 as registration fee. Initially the facility will be available in Chitradurga, Tumkur and parts of North Karnataka.

(Source: The New Indian Express, 29th July, 2008)

Upcoming event

Three years of RTI in Karnataka a Colloquium on 11.10.2008

CREAT with the support of CHRI is organizing a colloquium on 'Three years of RTI in Karnataka Where do we stand? The event to be held on 11th October 2008 at the National Law School of India University, Nagarbhavi, Bangalore, will focus on the achievements, successes, failures and the future of the RTI movement in Karnataka. Shri. Thippeswamy, Information Commissioner, KIC, will inaugurate the event. A set of four RTI guides published by CREAT will be released on this occasion. For more details contact CREAT.



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