# RIGHT TO INFORMATION DAY COMMEMORATED, PROVIDE INFORMATION AS SOUGHT: ADV PANGAM

**Panaji, October 11, 2024**

The Department of Information and Publicity, Government of Goa in association with Goa State Information Commission commemorated RTI Day today at Institute Menezes Braganza Hall, Panaji. Right to Information Act (RTI) is celebrated each year commemorating the day on which the Right to Information Act, 2005 came into force. First Appellate Authorities of Departments/Corporations and Autonomous Bodies were among those who attended the event.

The function was inaugurated by Ld. Advocate General, Devidas Pangam along with Goa State Chief Information Commissioner (SCIC), Shri Aravind Kumar H. Nair and State Information Commissioner (SIC) Adv Atmaram R Barve.

Ld. Advocate General, Devidas Pangam delivering the special lecture on the topic 'Role of First Appellate Authority (FAA) in upholding the spirit of RTI Act 'said that RTI Act is implicit in the Constitution of India and the right to information is also a natural right of every person in a free and civilized society. He said it was important to understand the history and reasons why the Act was established and maintained that the Act only prescribes procedure, forum and consequences if information is not provided. The RTI Act helps avoid misunderstanding among the people with regard to policies of the Government and has to be seen as a positive, he said.

Adv Pangam went on to say that apart from one or two provisions, the Act is silent on the role of the FAA. He said as such we should understand that the FAA has the same powers and duties which original authority has, besides also having incidental powers too. However, they don't have the substantive powers which the State Information Commission has, he said.

He urged the FAA gathered to always provide information as sought by the applicant and only reject in the rarest of rare cases or if it comes in the exemption clauses. Any information you can give to the Legislative Assembly, has to be provided to the public, he added if information is in public domain, like on Government websites etc, then applications seeking information will reduce drastically, thus reducing the burden on the system and on officers as well reducing the liabilities of the officers, he remarked.

Goa State Chief Information Commissioner (SCIC), Shri Aravind Kumar H. Nair, reiterating the preamble of the RTI Act, said that, 'democracy requires an informed citizenry and transparency of information which are vital to its functioning and also to contain corruption and to hold Governments and their instrumentalities accountable to the governed.'

He further spoke of the challenges in implementing the RTI Act. Shri Nair said that accountability which has 3 dimensions, namely responsibility, answerability and enforceability, governs the relationship between the right holders and duty bearers.

He said that Public Information Officers (PIOs) play a paramount role in receiving and processing applications. Further he added that RTI Act underscores the need to follow good record management practices.

Highlighting three aspects of information- completeness, correctness and timeliness, he urged the concerned under the Act to proactively disseminate information meant for the general public, conduct periodic audits to see which are the

repeated information asked, set up RTI cells and evolve a mechanism to see that PIOs comply to directives of FAA.

Earlier, delivering the welcome address, State Information Commissioner (SIC) Adv Atmaram R Barve, said that the Right to Information (RTI) Act has provisions which mandate that information should be disseminated in the State language and as such henceforth the Act will be available in Konkani which will make it easy for the public to understand. Further speaking, Adv Barve said that the spirit of Act promotes transparency and accountability which is the backbone of democracy. This Act gives power to the people, he said, adding how various authorities have interpreted this legislation in different ways which has led to the strengthening of the Act.

Director of the Department of Information and Publicity, Shri Dipak Bandekar while proposing the vote of thanks, thanked Adv Devidas Pangam for his in-depth and insightful talk. He further thanked the SIC and SCIC for initiating and coordinating the program. Shri Bandekar also informed of the launch of the RTI online portal as per Hon'ble Supreme Court directions and asked the concerned authorities to register as per the mandate.

Present on the occasion were Secretary, Goa State Information Commission, Shri Sudhir Kerkar. Assistant Information Officer, Shri Shyam Gaonkar compered the function.

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