

i)The particulars of the organization, functions and duties

In order to ensure greater and more effective access to information, the Government resolved that the *Freedom of Information Act, 2002* enacted by the Parliament needs to be made more progressive, participatory and meaningful. The National Advisory Council deliberated on the issue and suggested certain important changes to be incorporated in the existing Act to ensure smoother and greeter access to information. The Government examined the suggestions made by the National Advisory Council and others and decided to make a number of changes in the law.

The important changes inter alia, include establishment of an appellate machinery with investigating powers to review decisions of the Public Information Officers; penal provisions for failure to provide information as per law; provisions to ensure maximum disclosure and minimum exemptions, consistent with the constitutional provisions, and an effective mechanism for access to information and disclosure by authorities, etc. In view of significant changes proposed in the existing Act, the Government also decided to repeal the Freedom of Information Act, 2002. The new legislation provides a powerful framework for giving effect to the right to information recognized under Article 19 of the Constitution of India.

A key objective of the Right to Information Act, 2005 is to promote transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority in the country. The Act mandates a legal-institutional framework for setting out the practical regime of right to information for every citizen to secure access to information held by or under the control

of public authorities. It prescribes mandatory disclosure of certain information to citizens and designation of Public Information Officers in all public authorities to attend to requests from citizens for information within stipulated time limits. It provides for appeal to designated appellate officers against the decisions of Public Information Officers. It also mandates the constitution of a Central Information Commission and State Information Commissions to enquire into complaints hear second appeals and guide the implementation of the Act.

The setting up of Information Commissions at the Central and State levels to ensure the effective implementation of the right to information regime in the country is one of the most important provisions of the Act. The role played by the respective Commissions is likely to have a significant effect on whether or not the Act is implemented in letter and spirit by the public authorities operating at different levels. Apart from exercising the statutory functions entrusted to them the Information Commissions are expected to act as “friend, philosopher and guide” to citizens in exercise of their right to information, and to public authorities in the discharge of their duties to make information accessible to the people.

In order to ensure the effective implementation of Right to Information Act, 2005, the State Government on 31st October 2005 by notification in the Official Gazette, constituted a body known as the State Information Commission, Haryana to exercise the powers conferred on, and to perform the functions assigned to, it under this Act and also appointed Shri G.Madhavan, IAS (Retired) as the first Chief Information Commissioner

of the State Information Commission, Haryana. He was sworn in on 1st November 2005 and the State Information Commission came into existence from this day and by a coincidence the State of Haryana also came into existence on this very day in the year 1966. Later on vide notification dated 5th May 2006, Ms Meenaxi Anand Chaudhry, IAS (Retired) was appointed as State Information Commissioner in the newly constituted State Information Commission in the newly constituted State Information Commission, Haryana. She was sworn in on 9th May 2006.

On the completion of tenure of Sh. G. Madhavan, the Government appointed Smt. Meenaxi Anand Chaudhry, IAS (Retd.) as State Chief Information Commissioner on 29th October, 2010. At present, Shri Naresh Gulati, IAS (Retd.) is the State Chief Information Commissioner who had assumed the office on 20th May 2011 (AN).