

MINUTES OF AWARENESS PROGRAM IN RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT AND INNAUGURATION OF FIFTH PILLAR KAKINADA CHAPTER

DATE: 18/04/2014

PLACE: CONFERENCE HALL, SARVASIKSHA ABHIYAN OFFICE, KAKINADA.

TIME: 2.00PM

PARTICIPANTS:

1. Students from different colleges.
2. Guests.

The programme began at 2pm with a welcome speech and introduction by Sri Surya Prasad, chairman Padala Charitable Trust, who explained the purpose and aim of the programme. Followed by the introductory session by the participants mainly students from JNTU Kakinada, Rangarya Medical College, Kakinada and some other colleges from Amalapuram and other places from the vicinity.

Sri U Machi raju introduced Sri Valluri Suresh the RTI activist and requested him to focus on RTI act and initiate it through an interactive session.

Sri Suresh briefly explained the story behind the inception of RTI act and how the right to information campaign in India began with the MKSS movement to bring in transparency and accountability in village accounts and demand for minimum wages in rural India.

He recollected the contribution of Srimathi Aruna Rai and Kejriwal in bringing up the Right To Information act 2005. He also explained the aims of RTI and how RTI can be used as a weapon to end corruption and bring out transparency and accountability in government and non-government agencies and to end the bureaucratic exploitation.

He also explained that right to information act is a part of fundamental rights under the article 19(1) of the constitution of India and became a constitutional right applicable to all the citizens of India.

Under this act any citizen can seek information about anything i.e. in public body or any private body which can be accessed by public authority under any law for the time being in the course. He also explained about the few exemptions under this act.

Further he explained RTI is useful for getting information in particular to students i.e. about valuation of examination papers, fees reimbursements, pension issues of their parents, list of seniority and merit in various selections for jobs as well as Pg seats in colleges and universities. He said that they can even seek the information regarding the qualification of the members of the interview boards.

Further he explained about procedures to seek information under RTI act and explained with a few examples how this act promotes transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority and facilitates informed citizenry, which is vital for the functioning of a democracy.

This followed an interactive session with participants on RTI act. The interactive session went on for an hour, which was mainly a question answer session which covered almost every aspect of RTI act ranging from the basic questions about the procedures of getting information(i.e. application fees, time span for getting reply and appeals) to policy matters and getting information on reservation observed in recent elections. Totally fourteen participants asked questions and clarified their doubts on the following aspects:

1. About getting permissions and rules their of for indiscriminately projecting hoardings in a city.
2. Time limit to submit the information, subsequent appeals.
3. The controlling authorities on private educational institutions
4. Reservations observed in MPTC and APTC elections.
5. Renewal of contract for outsourcing posts in an institution.
6. About who can seek the information?
7. About T.V channels and their broadcasting subjects
8. About the seized money that is unaccounted in the wake of elections.
9. About the electricity bills paid by the students of JNTUK.
10. About the student- welfare and development fund.
11. About the black money in Swiss bank accounts.
12. About the huge election expenditures incurred by contesting candidates.
13. About the college lecturers undertaking private tuitions
14. Panchayat elections and utilisation of funds in panchayat.
15. Personal land encouachment issues and court proceedings.
16. About giving incomplete and irrelevant information by the authorities.
17. About building funds collected by private teacher training institutes.
18. About fair prices of dealer ships.
19. About the disparities in the salaries of Mtech and MBA faculties in JNTUK.

After answering the above questions of participants Mr Suresh accordingly given the following suggestions and explained about suitable approaches in getting information thought RTI act.

1. Invariably getting receipt after filing an application for any information.
2. Filing of photos and visuals when asking for information on some special issues.
3. Registering multiple applications to pressurise the authorities and getting timely information.
4. Team approach and associational approach.
5. Inspection of records where the information given was not appropriate as the RTI act includes inspection of records, works and taking certified samples of materials.

INAGUARATION OF FIFTH PILLAR KAKINADA CHAPTER

Sri P Surya Prasad of Padala Charitable Trust (PCT) inaugurated the fifth pillar Kakinada chapter and Sri Prasad explained the concept of fifth pillar as a new and innovative anti corruption approach.

He explained besides the four pillars of democracy (i.e. Legislature, Executive, Judiciary and Press) there is power of the people” THE FIFTH PILLAR”, which can strengthen and keep the other four pillars in effective functioning and thus fortifying the democracy as a whole.

He explained how to become a member of this institution and how common people can effectively participate in finding solutions to many problems by seeing, hearing and discussing the problems and shifting their stance from mere passive spectators to socially conscious and active change agents.

He stated lack of awareness and passive acceptance of corruption became the nature of the people. A recklessly unconcerned nature of the people about their rights and duties is prevalent. People are unknown of questioning injustice. They became careless in following rules and feeling social responsibility.

He questioned the audience “can’t we change the situation, can’t we end the corruption “if we can “How to start ? and where to start?

When will India become a developed nation?”

Posing these questions to the participants he showed a short film “The Tree” by lead India.

After the film the response of participants was clear as they realised that they are just one step apart from the solution i.e. taking the first step and breaking the passive inaction and becoming active and responsible.

This followed a question answer-session on THE FIFTH PILLAR. (Clarification was given about membership and approaches to end corruption)

Mr Raviteja from S.M.S Seva Mithra sangham an N.G.O formed by students of RMC and JNTUK have explained their activities and how they are working to fill the gap between able fund giving organisation and their volunteer requirement.

MESSAGES FROM THE GUESTS: (in bullet points)

Sri Sreenivas

1. Fifth Pillar is the need of the hour.
2. The role of the parents, teachers and intelligentsia in building up of a healthy society.
3. Empowered people (The Fifth Pillar) would regulate the functioning of the other four pillars.

Smt Rajya Lakshmi

- Emphasised on individual reformation.

Sri Surya Narayana from Rama Krishna Seva Samithi:

- Elect good people.
- Character building.
- Awareness campaigns.

Satish RTI activist:

- ❖ Talked about the success stories of RTI act :
Corporate hospitals. (Treating 5% of the poor).

Sri Jangannadha Rao from Kriya:

- ✓ Individual –family-society and indispensable responsibility of an individual.
- ✓ RTI act is a tool for getting justice and to redress the grievances.
- ✓ Small groups with genuine intentions can bring a desirable change in the society.
- ✓ Corruption and its different forms i.e. individual and institutional.
- ✓ Smaller goals-collective and team work-individual responsibility-social consciousness.
- ✓ Do not hesitate to become leaders.
- ✓ Technology and corruption are indirectly proportional.
- ✓ Even a small imitative, resistance, minimum reaction to injustice can check a large portion of corruption.
- ✓ Importance of basic knowledge and awareness of the society around you.

Sri Ramachandra Murthy from Jr lecturer from Pullati Kurru, Amalapuram

- Importance of the Fifth Pillar.
- Education(constrictive and destructive aspects) – wisdom
- Self respect.

VOTE OF THANKS BY Sri Machi Raju garu