

Press Release

8th January 2015

Political Parties continue brazen defiance of CIC order

ADR seeks maximum penalty and compensation

For the second consecutive hearing, National Parties fail to appear for the CIC hearing

New Delhi: The Central Information Commission (CIC) in its hearing on 7th January 2015, reserved its verdict on non-compliance by political parties with its earlier order (June 3rd, 2013) declaring the six National Parties as Public Authorities and bringing them under the purview of the Right to Information Act 2005. This was the second hearing of the Commission since the June 3rd order and yet again no party representative was present.

The Commission had, in its order dated June 3rd, 2013, declared the six national political parties – BJP, INC, BSP, NCP, CPI and CPM - as public authorities and directed them to appoint Public Information Officers to attend to RTI queries. Political parties have been brazenly defying the CIC by not implementing the order. The Commission had issued a show cause notice (dated 21st November 2014) and an interim order (dated 28th November 2014) to the political parties, directing them to appear before the Commission. None of the political parties has appeared for any of the CIC hearings.

Such open defiance in unison by all the national political parties, which are institutions of democracy, sends an ironic message to the public about transparency and Rule of Law. Refusing to comply with the RTI Act is also a violation of Fundamental Right to “Freedom of speech and expression” under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India. ADR’s Founder member and Trustee, Professor Jagdeep Chhokar, during the hearing, asserted that *“such repeated flouting of the order passed by a statutory authority and a legislation passed by the Parliament, shows nothing short of disdain for democracy and for the Parliament itself. Such arrogant non-compliance of law shown by the national political parties deepens cynicism among citizens and is potentially catastrophic for the state of democracy”*.

The co-petitioners in the case Mr. Subhash Aggarwal and Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) requested the Commission to take serious action against the six political parties by imposing penalties on them (under Section 18, Section 19 and Section 20 of the RTI Act) and enforce implementation of the June 3rd order of the CIC. ADR also sought exemplary compensation (under Section 19 of the RTI Act).

A timeline of events, proceedings and **ADR’s submission to the CIC for the hearing dated 7th January, 2014**, can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/qhydk6j>

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