

THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2019

[Act No. 24 of 2019]

[01st August, 2019]

PREAMBLE

An Act to amend the Right to Information Act, 2005.

Be it enacted by Parliament in the Seventieth Year of the Republic of India as follows:--

Section 1 - Short title and commencement

- (1) This Act may be called the Right to Information (Amendment) Act, 2019.
- (2) It shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint.

Section 2 - Amendment of section 13

In the Right to Information Act, 2005 (22 of 2005) (hereinafter referred to as the principal Act), in section 13,--

- (a) in sub-section (1), for the words "for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office", the words "for such term as may be prescribed by the Central Government" shall be substituted;
- (b) in sub-section (2), for the words "for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office", the words "for such term as may be prescribed by the Central Government" shall be substituted;
- (c) for sub-section (5), the following sub-section shall be substituted, namely:--

"(5) The salaries and allowances payable to and other terms and conditions of service of the Chief Information Commissioner and the Information Commissioners shall be such as may be prescribed by the Central Government:

Provided that the salaries, allowances and other conditions of service of the Chief Information Commissioner or the Information Commissioners shall not be varied to their disadvantage after their appointment:

Provided further that the Chief Information Commissioner and the Information Commissioners appointed before the commencement of the Right to Information (Amendment) Act, 2019 shall continue to be governed by the provisions of this Act and the rules made thereunder as if the Right to Information (Amendment) Act, 2019 had not come into force."

Section 3 - Amendment of section 16

In section 16 of the principal Act,--

(a) in sub-section (1), for the words "for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office", the words "for such term as may be prescribed by the Central Government" shall be substituted;

(b) in sub-section (2), for the words "for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office", the words "for such term as may be prescribed by the Central Government" shall be substituted;

(c) for sub-section (5), the following sub-section shall be substituted, namely:--

"(5) The salaries and allowances payable to and other terms and conditions of service of the State Chief Information Commissioner and the State Information Commissioners shall be such as may be prescribed by the Central Government:

Provided that the salaries, allowances and other conditions of service of the State Chief Information Commissioner and the State Information Commissioners shall not be varied to their disadvantage after their appointment:

Provided further that the State Chief Information Commissioner and the State Information Commissioners appointed before the commencement of the Right to Information (Amendment) Act, 2019 shall continue to be governed by the provisions of this Act and the rules made there under as if the Right to Information (Amendment) Act, 2019 had not come into force."

Section 4 - Amendment of section 27

In section 27 of the principal Act, in sub-section (2), after clause (c), the following clauses shall be inserted, namely:--

"(ca) the term of office of the Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners under sub-sections (1) and (2) of section 13 and the State Chief Information Commissioner and State Information Commissioners under sub-sections (1) and (2) of section 16;

(cb) the salaries, allowances and other terms and conditions of service of the Chief Information Commissioner and the Information Commissioners under sub-section (5) of section 13 and the State Chief Information Commissioner and the State Information Commissioners under sub-section (5) of section 16;"

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

The Right to Information Act, 2005 (the Act) was enacted to provide for setting out the practical regime of right to information for citizens to secure access to information under the control of public authorities, in order to promote transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority, the constitution of a Central Information Commission and State Information Commissions and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

2. Section 13 of the Act provides for the term of office and conditions of service of the Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners. It provides, inter alia, that the Chief Information Commissioner and every Information Commissioner shall hold office for a term of five years or till they attain the age of sixty-five years, whichever is earlier, and shall not be eligible for reappointment. It further provides that the salaries and allowances and other terms and conditions of service of the Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners shall be the same as that of the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioner, respectively. Similarly, section 16 of the Act provides for the term of office and conditions of service of the State Chief Information Commissioner and State Information Commissioners. It provides, inter alia, that the State Chief Information Commissioner and every State Information Commissioner shall hold office for a term of five years or till they attain the age of sixty-five years, whichever is earlier, and shall not be eligible for reappointment. It provides that the salaries and allowances and other terms and conditions of service of the State Chief Information Commissioner and State Information Commissioners shall be the same as that of the Election Commissioner and the Chief Secretary to the State Government, respectively.

3. The salaries and allowances and other terms and conditions of service of the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioner are equal to a Judge of the Supreme Court, therefore, the Chief

Information Commissioner, Information Commissioner and the State Chief Information Commissioner becomes equivalent to a Judge of the Supreme Court in terms of their salaries and allowances and other terms and conditions of service.

4. The functions being carried out by the Election Commission of India and the Central and State Information Commissions are totally different. The Election Commission is a constitutional body established by clause (1) of article 324 of the Constitution and is responsible for the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to Parliament and to the Legislature of every State and of elections to the offices of President and Vice-President held under the Constitution. On the other hand, the Central Information Commission and State Information Commissions are statutory bodies established under the provisions of the Right to Information Act, 2005. Therefore, the mandate of Election Commission of India and Central and State Information Commissions are different. Hence, their status and service conditions need to be rationalised accordingly.

5. In view of the above, it is proposed to amend the Right to Information Act, 2005 so as to provide that the term of office of, and the salaries, allowances and other terms and conditions of service of, the Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners and the State Chief Information Commissioner and the State Information Commissioners, shall be such as may be prescribed by the Central Government.

6. The Bill seeks to achieve the above objectives.
