

## Orientation of University and degree college students on Right to Information

### (i) Objectives

The objective of this intervention was to develop understanding on Right to Information among the students and prepare them as the messengers of Right to Information in the future interventions. Workshops were organized in the year 2006-2007 in Poorvanchal University – Jaunpur and Mirzapur, Rohilkhand University – Bareilly and Gramodaya Viswavidyalaya, Chitrakoot in Uttar Pradesh. About 455 students from various departments of the university participated in the workshops on Right to Information.

Sl. No.	Venue of workshops	Date	Participants		
			Male	Female	Total
1	Poorvanchal University – Jaunpur & Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh	February 13-14, 2007	117	33	150
2	Degree college, Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh	February 16, 2007	-	-	150
2	Rohilkhand University – Bareilly Uttar Pradesh	March 15, 2007	45	35	80
3	Gramodaya Viswavidyalaya, Chitrakoot Uttar Pradesh	March 14, 2007	100	25	125
4	NSS students , Khillaganpur mandal, Mahbubnagar district , Andhra Pradesh	Dec 2006	-	-	180
5	Government College, Dharamshala, B.Ed. College, Dharamshala BCMT and CATS (College of Computer Applications), NYK Youth	Oct- Dec, 2006	-	-	180
6	Veena Memorial Law College, Karauli Rajasthan	Feb 17, 2007	-	-	40
7	Mahima Law College, Jhunjhunu Rajasthan	Feb 20, 2007	-	-	25
8	LLM, Rajasthan University , Jaipur Rajasthan	March 2, 2007	-	-	20
9	Journalism and Mass Communication Mountain Development Research Centre (MDRC) HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar	Oct, 2006	-	-	40

10	B.Ed and M.Ed department , Mountain Development Research Centre (MDRC) HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar	Nov, 2006	-	-	100
	Total				1090

The programme design varied from university to university but it largely touched the issues mentioned below:

- Film on Right to Information and discussion
- Good Governance and Right to Information – Reflection by faculty
- Right to Information Act 2005 – Detailed discussion
- Open session cum experience sharing
- Understanding RTI through Card Game
- Slogan writing and Quiz programmes

**(ii) Processes of the RTI workshops in the Universities:**

Linking Governance and Right to Information: **Faculty of the university mostly dealt with this theme in the workshops. In this session, it was pointed out that use of RTI Act is required to ensure accountability of public institutions in the country. Linking good governance and RTI, they pointed out that RTI is a potent weapon, which can make government departments do its work efficiently and effectively, as bureaucracy is afraid of the penalty provisions of the Act. Some of them brought to the notice of students that demanding information under Right to Information has brought about transparency and accountability in development programmes in the villages of India.**

Explaining the provisions of Right to Information Act: **Facilitator discussed Right to Information provisions in detail. Important definitions in the Act, application procedure, appeal procedure, exemption list and self-disclosure by public authorities were main points of his provision. His presentation was interspersed with several case studies from Uttar Pradesh, which made it interesting for the students.**

**Participative exercises:** Quiz contest was organized in Bareilly in which a number of questions on Right to Information were asked to the students. The Quiz was played in three rounds – in the first round 10 participants were selected among themselves. They became eligible to play the second round where five participants were selected and in the third round, from the five students two participants with right answers were decided as winner. This made the workshop interactive and also helped in revision of key provisions

of RTI. Students also participated actively in slogan writing competitions. Almost all of them wrote slogans related to RTI. Best three among them were announced as winner and were given prizes. This also enhanced their understanding on RTI.

**Film on Right to Information** was also shown in some workshops. After the film, debriefing was done by the facilitator in which questions on key points of the film, message of the film, has the film inspired them or created anger in them against the government, result of participatory Action, benefits of RTI, need to link RTI to Social Audit etc were discussed. Thus a discussion on RTI, transparency, accountability, Social Audit, need for collective Action and developing habit of questioning the government was generated through the film.

**Open session:** Students asked questions which were mainly related in application and appeal procedures - State Information Commission and courts, fee structure, practical problems faced by people in accessing information, non-appointment of Public Information Officers etc. Further number of questions were raised about procedure of applying Right to Information Act in solving problems related to health, education, denial of compensation, license and ration cards. Facilitators urged the students to maintain the tradition of social service in the Indian society. They observed that RTI has provided them the opportunity of working in the area of their choice – rural and urban. RTI is required in every part of the country; they felt that the students can take up awareness generation drives in any area as per their convenience.

### **(iii) Achievements**

- (a) In Poorvanchal University, for the first time, any programme on Right to Information was organized. The faculty members as well the students were really eager to gain knowledge on it. PRIA has recognized that students can be important volunteers for working on Right to Information in both urban and rural areas, hence this intervention was designed. Our experience in the two workshops shows that students are willing to move out of universities for social service, it was quite evident in Jaunpur, where core group on Right to Information was formed. Links were built with senior citizens, clubs like Lions Club, Rotary Club and students from different districts of Uttar Pradesh who were interested in knowing about this important provision of law and making the general masses aware of it.**
- (b) In Rajasthan, for the first time, any programme on Right to Information was organized in the law colleges of Rajasthan University by PRIA. It was a good beginning as SRC, Rajasthan was able to convince the faculty of law colleges about the utility of such programmes. The doors of the colleges have been**

### **Right to Information Workshop in Poorvanchal University (Jaunpur)**

The Right to Information Workshop in Poorvanchal University was inaugurated by R N Srivastava, Registrar of the University. Setting the tone of the workshop, he said that our experience of sixty of governance teaches us that government cannot do all the work. He stressed that there is need for sharing of development responsibilities between all the stakeholders. NGOs are one such stakeholder who can fulfill this responsibility. However, he lamented that there is shortage of qualified and development professional in the NGO sector. What is required in all the public institutions, he said, is accountability to the people. Right to Information Act has been designed precisely for this purpose. At the same time, he cautioned that RTI Act is a double-edged weapon, which has both the positive and negative side. He asked the people to use it positively as it would solve several of their problems related to government departments. However, imprudence use of the Act by certain frivolous elements may prove to be its denouement. Mr. Srivastava pointed out that RTI Act may take some time to get crystallized and in the long run, it is going to be extremely useful to the people.

Yogesh Kumar of SSK outlined the objectives of conducting the workshop in the universities. He said PRIA and SSK had been conducting Right to Information awareness generation drives among civil society but youth had not been engaged yet. Through RTI workshops in the universities, PRIA and SSK is trying to engage youth with civic institutions, he added. Overall objective was to prepare youth for political and social participation, which would ensure accountability of public institutions in the country. Coming to the theme of the workshop, he said that use of RTI Act is required to ensure accountability of public institutions in the country. Linking good governance and RTI, he pointed that RTI is a potent weapon which can make government departments do its work efficiently and effectively as bureaucracy is afraid of the penalty provisions of the Act.

Thereafter a twenty-minute film on Right to Information shown to the students. De-briefing the session on film, Yogesh Kumar asked them about key points of the film, message of the film, has the film inspired them or created anger in them against the government, result of participatory action, benefits of RTI, need to link RTI to Social Audit etc. Thus a discussion on RTI, transparency, accountability, Social Audit, need for collection action and developing habit of questioning the government was generated through the film.

Taking over from him, Vikas Jha discussed Right to Information provisions in detail. Important definitions in the Act, application procedure, appeal procedure, exemption list and self-disclosure by public authorities were main points of his provision. His presentation was interspersed with several case studies from Uttar Pradesh, which made it interesting for the students.

In the open session, students asked questions which were mainly related in application and appeal procedures, fee structure, practical problems faced by people in accessing information, non-appointment of Public Information Officers etc. In this session some interesting case studies were shared by Mr. V. D. Sharma, lecturer Business Economics, Poorvanchal University. He had personally filed application for accessing information related to development work in the university, promotion policies for the faculty and vacant costs etc. The information was not provided to him on time, so he appealed to State Information Commission. Thereafter, the Commission instructed Registrar to provide information to him, but he was given incomplete information by the Registrar. Unnerved by the bad experience, Mr. Sharma again filed application to the Registrar, which made Vice- Chancellor to call Mr. Sharma for a personal meeting. VC instructed the Registrar to provide all information to Mr. Sharma.

Discussing another case study, he said that road in front of Poorvanchal University was in very bad shape, so he filed an application before Public Information Officer of Public works Department, Jaunpur district for finding out the details of expenditure on road, number of repairs undertaken in last two years and social cost of bad conditions of the road. Within a week of filing the application, contractors started threatening him with dire consequences. Surprisingly, the construction of road started within a week of filing the application and Chief Development Officer instituted an inquiry against erring engineers of the department. Though his RTI application had caught the engineers unawares and made the authorities to take remedial action quickly but the information asked by him through RTI application still eluded him.

Sachin Agarwal, lecturer in MBA department also delineated the problems related of RTI implementation in the state. He specifically mentioned about lack of publicity about Public Information Officers, reluctance of PIOs to take application, reluctance of State Information Commission to fine PIOs and no benefits reaching poor people from RTI Act. He urged the activists to link RTI to issues like NREGA, so that poor sections of the population start benefiting from the Act.

Vote of Thanks:

Prof. Ramjee Lal thanked SSK and PRIA for organizing such workshop in the university. He said that such workshops would generate enthusiasm in the students for undertaking social work in the villages. He also reminded the students that they should not think that by such exercises they would only giving something to the community; in fact they would be taking a lot from such exercises, he added. Interface with community and conducting of training programmes would help them in development of Self. It would build their self-confidence and make them aware of various facets of training programme.

Prof. Ramjee Lal further added that his department encouraged interface with the NGOs, government departments and faculty of other universities as such activities provided exposure to the students, which was different from curriculum of the university. Such initiatives have resulted in making of Poorvanchal University as Nodal Agency for AIDS programme by NACO.

### **Right to Information Workshop in B.ED College, Mirzapur, Poorvanchal University**

The workshop was inaugurated by Dr. Bansi Dhar Agarwal, famous doctor who has worked in the Uttar Pradesh Government.

Yogesh Kumar of SSK outlined the objectives of conducting the workshop in the universities. He said PRIA and SSK had been conducting Right to Information awareness generation drives among civil society but youth had not been engaged yet. Through RTI workshops in the universities, PRIA and SSK is trying to engage youth with civic institutions, he added. Overall objective was to prepare youth for political and social participation, which would ensure accountability of public institutions in the country. Coming to the theme of the workshop, he said that use of RTI Act is required to ensure accountability of public institutions in the country. Linking good governance and RTI, he pointed that RTI is a potent weapon which can make government departments do its work efficiently and effectively as bureaucracy is afraid of the penalty provisions of the Act.

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In the open session, students asked questions which were mainly related in application and appeal procedures- State Information Commission and courts, fee structure, practical problems faced by people in accessing information, non-appointment of Public Information Officers etc. Further number of questions were raised about procedure of applying Right to Information Act in solving problems related to health, education, denial of compensation, license and ration cards. Ravindra Jaiswal urged the students to maintain the tradition of social service in the Indian society. He added that RTI has provided them the opportunity of working in the area of their choice – rural and urban.

RTI is required in every part of the country, he stressed that the students can take up awareness generation drives in any area as per their convenience.

**Role of Coordinator** (What roles played, Assessment, Impact):

Guidance in designing programme, fixing the date of workshop, handling and coordinating training sessions and networking.

**Achievements** (What results, Relationships, Outcomes, Next Steps):

1. For the first time, any programme on Right to Information was organized in Poorvanchal University, so faculty as well the students were really eager to gain knowledge on it. PRIA has recognized that students can be important volunteers for working on Right to Information in both urban and rural areas, hence this intervention was designed. Our experience in the two workshops shows that students are willing to move out of universities for social service, it was quite evident in Jaunpur, where core group on Right to Information was formed.
2. Links were built with senior citizens, clubs like Lions Club, Rotary Club and students from different districts of Uttar Pradesh who were interested in knowing about this important provision of law and making the general masses aware of it.

**Constraints** (Faced by you, By organizers, Possible causes, How to overcome):

**Follow-Up** (By you, your Centre, PRIA):

**Jaunpur :**

- On the initiative of V. D. Sharma and Sachin Agarwal, lecturer of Poorvanchal University, it was decided that **a core group** would be formed on Right to Information with all the interested students.
- The core group would prepare an action plan on RTI awareness in the nearby villages of the university.
- The core group would also act as discussion forum on issues related to Good Governance and RTI.
- A review of the activities of core group would be undertaken by SSK after six months and some active students of the core group would be sent **for intensive training on RTI** to SSK, Lucknow.
- Sachin Agrawal has invited resource persons of RTI from PRIA and SSK for orienting members of Lions Club and Rotary Club on the theme. Logistics for the orientation programme would be provided by the clubs.

**Mirzapur :**

- As the students on B.ED. college in Mirzapur were not clear of action plan on RTI, so it that decided that Deennath, DRC Coordinator, Mirzapur (SSK) would take the initiative in forming **a core group** of the students on RTI.

- A review of the activities of core group would be undertaken by SSK after six months and some active students of the core group would be sent for intensive training on RTI to SSK, Lucknow.
- Dr. Banshi Dhar Agrawal (Retired) has invited resource persons of RTI from PRIA and SSK for orienting *members of Rotary Club* on the theme. He suggested that such orientations would rope in retired civil servants / senior citizens into mobilization drives on RTI. If enough volunteers are found, then a *RTI Watch Forum* can be formed at the district level. Logistics for the orientation programme would be provided by the clubs.
- Students from Lakhimpur Kheri wanted to start activities related to RTI in the district; they wanted to file applications for accessing information in different departments.

**Follow Up : Yogesh Kumar and Deennath, SSK**

**Lessons Learnt** (By you, Implications for your programme, Centre, PRIA, Sector...):

1. As the workshop on RTI in the universities is only of 2.5- 3.0 hours duration, students of three-four departments should be invited for the workshop. It would ensure minimum attendance of 150 students in the workshop. Invitation to just one department restricts the participation in the workshop.
2. We should provide moderate snacks to the students; it is just not possible to provide good snacks to 150-200 students.

**Centre Director/ Supervisor:**

----- Original Message -----

**From:** [Info](#)

**To:** [KAUSTUV](#)

**Sent:** Monday, March 05, 2007 11:40 AM

**Subject:** Fw: Highlights of the Convention for promoting Right to Information

----- Original Message -----

**From:** [Sachin Agarwal](#)

**To:** [prakash kardaley](#) ; [Prakash Kardaley](#)

**Sent:** Saturday, March 03, 2007 5:45 PM

**Subject:** Highlights of the Convention for promoting Right to Information

## Highlights of the Convention for promoting Right to Information

Organizer: The district administration of Jaunpur – Uttar Pradesh

Place: Auditorium of Veer Bahadur Singh Purvanchal University, Shahganj Road, Jaunpur – Uttar Pradesh

Date: February 17, 2007

The programme was scheduled for 10 AM but due to some reasons the programme started at 12 Noon something, after the District Magistrate Shri. Anurag Yadav arrived with the guests.

BEFORE THE EVENT FORMALLY STARTED, the administrative machinery, including the Chief Development Officer (CDO) Shri. AV Raja Mouli and Additional District Magistrate (ADM) Shri. Devendra Pandey along-with the District Panchayati Raj Officer and DRDA officers used the dais to elaborate before the audience their various development schemes and what they have possibly done for the people of the district.

It was done as a TIME PASS exercise to keep the audience engaged while the DM arrived with the guests. It actually turned out to be a public relations exercise and ironically that too done before an audience who was either the machinery itself or people who were to deal frequently with this machinery.

THE AUDIENCE included the Village Pradhans (elected representatives of the first-tier of the Panchayati Raj system), Block Pramukhs (elected head of the second-tier of the Panchayati Raj system), former head of the Zila Parishad (elected head of the third-tier of the Panchayati Raj system), the Chairman of Nagar Palika (elected head of the civic body in city), officers and staff of the district administration, members of the press, some school students (below class 12<sup>th</sup> level), and few uninvited RTI activists like me.

Special invitees from other districts included Shri. Amod Kumar, the DM Faizabad, Shri. Deepak Agarwal, the DM Ballia and Shri. Sanjay Kumar, the DM Sultanpur. It is significant that Amod Kumar is known to be the originator of the concept of Lokvani.

Although some people from the civil society and few NGOs working in the field of RTI had given a boycott call to the convention, I personally attended it to use it as an opportunity to find out how the administration pats its own back for something it has hardly and half-heartedly done. As I realize that the fight for the rightful and complete implementation of RTI is a long and tedious task these types of self-proclamations by the unconcerned administrative machinery are also learning in themselves. May be someday, we hear about a RTI convention of this sort being organized by the State Government of UP. And we all know how UP is doing in this area.

The District Magistrate arrived with the guest and wasted no time in taking up the task of the anchor of the event. Before him the ADM was doing it. For the sake brevity the whole event is now REPORTED IN FOUR SECTIONS.

### A. DURING THE EVENT:

Seated on the dais were the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) Shri. Wajahat Habibullah, the former Lok Ayukt of Uttar Pradesh Retired Justice SC Verma, the Editor (Lucknow Markets) of Times of India Shri Atul Chandra, the DM, the CDO and ADM. Although his name was written on the banner of the event, Dr. Sandeep Pandey did not arrive and no explanation was given by the district administration for this.

The DM started the event and in his opening speech itself, he expressed his concerns about the misuse of the act. He even asked the dignitaries that how the act and its users can be regulated. His special concerns were for the NGOs and the activists working in this area. He even asked the dais to suggest that whether these should be regulated by introducing some provisions in the act itself or the route of self-regulation is to be suggested for preventing misuse.

Justice SC Verma spoke first. Some key ideas touched upon by him are highlighted below.

1. It is an important tool to ensure transparency in democracy. Now the budgets and administrative orders have to be made public.
2. Private companies are also covered.
3. Section (4) regarding proactive disclosures should be invoked and made to avoid around 80% of the work now being done.
4. Only those officers who want to hide their inabilities and faults will deny / delay information.
5. He told about his experience during another RTI Convention which he attended, where he found that the PIO and APIOs had not even seen the act nor got any copy of it.
6. Any delay /denial of information beyond a certain point of time is punishable with financial penalty on concerned officer.
7. Section 18 of the act prescribes only very few DONTs else all things fall in the category of DOs under the act.
8. It is an act which is enacted with the intent of empowering people in a democracy.

Shri. Atul Chandra, Editor (Lucknow Markets), Times of India, Lucknow spoke next and highlighted the following points:

1. This workshop / event can be termed as an example of administrative activism, in the filed of RTI.
2. RTI can be used to remove the disparities of income distribution prevalent in our society.
3. Quality / quantity of public work like sewage, water, roads, electric etc. is under public scrutiny.
4. Cases of harassment of public officers are also heard. He narrated a case of a former Railway employee of North Central Railway (Jaipur) who was filing many RTI applications to seek information from railways because he was harassed when he was in service.

5. People should be careful of persons who may want to declare themselves as their leaders by raising their five questions.
6. There is still a need to fix procedures for officer who deny / delay information under the act. The act needs to prescribe how they should be dealt with? (Possibly it meant that how the lowest level of the machinery should be dealt with.)
7. And these guidelines should be similar to the ones prescribed for the people who misuse the act.

Shri. Wajahat Habibullah, the Chief Information Commissioner spoke next and highlighted the following aspects.

He inaugurated the new NIC webpage of Jaunpur. The domain of which is [www.jaunpur.nic.in](http://www.jaunpur.nic.in). This project was named as JAANKARI (information). The district administration distributed a leaflet about the webpage. Ironically, this leaflet was in English. This is questionable as the webpage which is supposed to be meant for the people of the core Hindi heartland of the country. What made them do this in English, needs to be explored.

1. The CIC was happy that to see the interest of the people in the act.
2. Gandhi's dream of Swaraj can be made possible by the use of this act, when people can prevent the misuse of their government – This will be real Swaraj as now people have that right.
3. The Article 19 of the Constitution already said it, but its implementation was not in the hands of the people.
4. Before the RTI act the people were slaves of the administrative machinery.
5. In a democracy the people run the government.
6. Any INFORMATION IS NOT THE PRIVATE PROPERTY OF THE GOVERNMENT. BUT IS PEOPLE'S PROPERTY HELD IN TRUST BY THE GOVERNMENT.
7. Government will disclose all information when demanded by the people and finds that its disclosure will not lead to any threat to the government. (Section 8).
8. Even in cases where the information is protected under the act, the PUBLIC INTEREST OVERRIDE is in place. This may be used by the government to reveal information in public interest.
9. Even private companies are covered through their regulating agency. It includes any information that lies with the government or any of its agencies. This includes property rights.
10. Speaking on the MISUSE OF THE ACT:
  - a. Can a PIO / APIO decide about the admissibility of an application on the merit of the application?
  - b. In his view it would not be proper.
  - c. When the Central Government tried to amend the act the people at large, media and the people within the government opposed the changes.
  - d. It signifies that the people have adopted and owned this act.
  - e. But its rightful use can be done by the responsible use by the people, media and government.
  - f. The PIO/APIO cannot ask the question of propriety.

- g. NGOs should educate the people for the rightful use of the act.
  - h. We don't have the monarchical rule now. Its democracy.
  - i. People (Civil Society) should come forward to prevent the misuse of the RTI act.
  - j. GOVERNMENT OFFICERS WILL ALWAYS TAKE IT AS A WAR AGAINST PEOPLE TO CONCEAL INFORMATION.
  - k. Its execution should be such that it is not problematic to the people and the government machinery alike.
  - l. Democracy is not only about casting votes. (Suggested by the writer: Its possibly about asking difficult questions to your elected government.)
11. People should feel belonging to the government system.
  12. Computerization / networking of all government documents and records is necessary so that people can access information from their homes and at their convenience.
  13. Section 4(1)C and section 4(1)D talk about DISCLOSURE OF PUBLIC POLICY ON PUBLIC FORUM. Basis of policy formulation to be made known to the people for strengthening of the policy.
  14. Section 4(1)D talks about revealing the basis of administrative decisions. This shall prevent the dichotomy between the intent and facts for a particular decision.
  15. In this reference example of DDA removing slums for colonization was given. Where DDA had to create rehabilitation programme for the displaced. Previously, it was only advocated upon on paper and not in reality. When someone asked about its implementation using RTI, the DDA was forced to do it.
  16. E-governance empowers both the government and the citizens. It facilitates the people also as they save time and effort in gathering information.
  17. Panchayats are also part of the government.
  18. We all need to work together for effective use of this most powerful tool of democracy.
  19. Some European country gave five years to its government, after enactment and before such act was actually enforced. So they prepared for it. But in India we have implemented it quickly after it was enacted.
  20. RTI is a tool (not a weapon) to bring the government and people together.
  21. If worked upon together THE COUNTY SHALL SHINE.

#### **QUESTION ANSWER ROUND:**

After this the house was opened for question to be asked to the dais. The initial announcement made in this regard was that questions can be directly addressed to the dais. But, sensing that this can lead the administration in some difficult situation as people may raise issues which the government machinery who were also the organizers may not want them to raise. The DM asked people to write questions and hand over the slips to him.

This according to him facilitated him to organize them in certain order and made it easy for the dignitaries to answer them in categories. But, as he skipped though many slips, it seemed clear that this was an exercise to censor the uncomfortable questions.

A large number of questions were local level problems of the district people. Important one was the question of one Indra Mani Dubey the District President of Congress (I) –

RTI Task Force. He raised a question of propriety that how proper it was, if the SIC pats the back of the very officer accused in a RTI violation.

This was an obvious reference to the now infamous DM BEATING BAJRANGI ISSUE. The DM was fully prepared and anticipated this issue. Immediately, wads and wads of files and newspapers appeared on the podium from where he was addressing the house. He even said that he did not want this issue to come up during the convention. But, now that it was being referred to he was left with no other option to answer it. Sensing his discomfiture, Justice SC Verma stepped in and said that it was not proper on the part of the SIC to have done this. The issue was skirted apart by further questions.

In another question raised by the writer was that can a First Appeal Officer impose financial penalty on an APIO/PIO, to which the CIC answered that this is not mentioned in the act but for administrative purposes it may be done. He quoted the example of Delhi High Court which has made such a provision in its internal rules.

The open house was followed by lunch hosted by the district administration.

**IN LIGHTER VEIN:**

Someone quipped during the lunch that after having the food today, tomorrow an RTI application regarding the funding of the event shall be filed.

## **B. THE MEDIA NEXT DAY**

All newspapers covered the event and gave appropriate space to it. Photographs etc were also published. One civil society group Lok Tantra Bachao Abhiyan, had served a memorandum before the CIC. The memorandum was about the problems of RTI implementation in the district.

Memorandum contained five points regarding non acceptance of cash towards application fees, non disclosure of the names, posts, and timing etc of PIO/APIOs and the first appeal officers, regular review of RTI efforts in the district etc.

This news was also carried prominently by the press. In many cases (excluding Hindustan – which carried it the next day) this was done alongside the main coverage of the event itself. Amar Ujala highlighted that the issue of DM beating Bajrangji hogged the event.

People from congress party have also questioned about the choice of the venue for the event. This venue was 13 Km away from the district head quarter in a remote area. This made the even inaccessible to the common man.

## **C. POSSIBLE IMPACTS:**

The possible outcomes of this event may be summed up as under:

1. Sensitizing the government machinery at the district, the elected representatives of Panchayati Raj system, the civic bodies and the press towards the RTI act and its utilities.
2. Send a message to the audience and the people at large that the district administration is serious about the RTI and its implementation.
3. Strengthen the position of the DM in state bureaucracy and he is considered for better positions in future. Specially, after the infamous Bajrangji case.

## D. MY OBSERVATIONS

The following are my observations on the whole event:

1. Things are not as bright as they are projected to be.
2. The choice of venue as asked by the Congress party people is questionable and it is a real question. As the DM has a very big and well equipped auditorium in his official campus. Possibly it was to keep common people (like Bajrangi) away from the event. Had he been present it could have turned out to be a dream turned nightmare for the district administration.
3. Where did the funds for organizing such a grand gala event come from? This question is especially significant as when we talk about *Suo-moto declarations* under section 4, the official machinery cribs about non availability of funds.
4. The administration seems to be patting its own back. The basic points regarding the implementation of the RTI act as raised by the memorandum of the Lok Tantra Bachao Abhiyan, still remain.
5. The webpage of the district [www.jaunpur.nic.in](http://www.jaunpur.nic.in) was not updated to be the same as launched by the CIC during the convention. Days after the convention it was the same old one. So actually it means that a good amount of PUBLIC MONEY SPENT ON ORGANIZING THE WHOLE EVENT GOES DOWN THE DRAIN.
6. The presence of so many DMs from other districts may be interpreted in different light also. I give my version on the issue:
7. We are all aware that the administrative machinery is trying hard to silence the RTI act. This and such events may be used by the administration as platforms to project that changes to silence the RTI acts are coming from popular public opinion.
8. If the DM now (after the event) sends a report to the Ministry of Law saying that regulation of the applications and applicants is must and this was discussed at large at this convention. Thereafter, he may suggest ways and means he thinks fit to regulate the RTI. It may even be projected by the machinery as the suggestions emanating as an outcome of the convention.
9. The bureaucracy is known to be self-perpetuating itself and its thoughts. The people in the Law Ministry are no different and are of the same genre. Consider, if such conventions become common place and reports of such type reach the ministry.
10. Next time they want to change the act it would be very easy and then they will say that it is being asked by the people. As they will have reports of many DM saying that they found this conclusion from similar conventions.
11. I may sound hypothetical but let us not forget that all big events need to first develop in concept. This may be the standpoint for a larger picture in the days to come.

12. .One final observation: The event may be used by the DM to present his brighter picture before his bosses in the state government. Who may be asking him about the infamous beating of RTI applicant issue. And also to send a message in the district that he and his team is serious about RTI.
13. The actual scene continues to be grim. One clerk at Jalalpur Block of the district threatens a RTI activist that if he pursues his application asking money from world bank then he would have to face many cases against him. The original application was filed in September 2006. I am getting the details and soon shall post the entire case for all.
14. Some people may not agree to my observations and they are free to debate.

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TV dinner still cooling?