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Activists seek plan to reduce RTI delays

Viju B I TNN

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Mumbai: The state's information commissioners on Friday agreed to reduce the pendency of RTI appeals after a group of activists met them and expressed concern over the survival of the act.

The information commissioners also suggested measures like the presence of RTI activists and volunteers for the hearings and came up with strategies to reduce the delay.

TOI on Friday reported how the huge pendency of appeals was slowly rendering the RTI Act ineffective in the long run. The six information commissions across Maharashtra had a whopping 16,866 appeals pending till June this year. The information commissions had received a total 26,870 appeals but had disposed of only 9,914 in that period.

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The activists not only



More than a dozen activists, led by Shailesh Gandhi, met information commissioner Suresh Joshi on Friday. Joshi said they were experimenting with various measures to expedite the disposal of cases

voiced concern over the growing backlog but also demanded a concrete action plan to bring the situation under control within a few months.

Joshi said the commission was experimenting with various measures to expedite the disposal of cases at various levels, especially at the first-appeal state. "This will yield visible results within two months," Joshi assured.

One of the issues highlighted during the discussion was the need to impose stringent penalties on public information officers (PIOs) who did not provide the details sought or gave misleading information. "The State Information Commission's reluctance to levy penalties lets PIOs flout rules with abandon. This will

defeat the purpose of the sunshine act, which gives citizens access to timely and useful information," Gandhi said.

A comparison with the disposal of cases by the Bombay high court and information commissioners shows up things in true light.

Each high court judge disposed of, on an average, 2,530 cases annually. On the other hand, every information commissioner disposed of only 899 appeals last year.

RTI activists now plan to keep regular tabs on the appeals. "We plan to go to the SIC's office on a weekly basis to ensure that the waiting period for appeals before the commission does not exceed 90 days," Gandhi said.

viju.balanarayanan@timesgroup.com