Govt plans Rs 300-cr
IMPLEMENTING RTI

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plans to train officials to improve their
handling of applications under RTI

• A major part of Rs 300 cr will go towards
creating a decent and modern office for the
state information commissions

• One out of every ten rupees allocated
under this plan would be spent on creat-
ing awareness about the law through ads

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commissions are having to face major
problems due to lack of infrastructure, a
DoPT official said

Aloke Tikku
New Delhi, April 27

THE GOVERNMENT is finally put-
ting its money where the mouth is. More than three years after the right to information law came into force, there is finally an attempt to make the transparency law work and spend money to ensure the law gets more than just lip-service.
On the government's table for the
next five years is a plan to train gov-ernment officials to improve their
handling of applications under RTI
and incorporating lessons on the transparency law in textbooks for chil-dren so that they grow up with the confidence that the right to demand access is theirs.

A major part of the Rs 300-
crore plan drawn up by the
Department of Personnel
and Training will, however,
go towards creating a decent
and modern office for the
state information commis-
sions who are the last word
on requests for information
in the states.
"Given how tightly-placed
states are vis-a-vis resources and how high it figures on their list of priori-
ties, the state information commis-sions are having to face major prob-lems due to lack of infrastructure," said a DoPT official.

By the time the plan scheme is
wrapped up, the government intends to ensure that 1,500 officials in each of

push for RTI

DEMANDING

ACCESS

the nearly 400 districts across
the country don't turn away
people, rejecting information
on frivolous grounds.
"In every district that is
covered, the idea is to train
all the designated public in-
formation officers, their
deputies who assist them
and superiors who will hear
appeals as well as the heads
of public authorities besides officials of non-governmental organisations who receive grant from the govern-ment and can be covered by the law," said a department official.
As of now, the training plan would
not cover the central information com-missioners. RTI activist, Manish Siso-dia, said it should, especially given the

numerous instances when the infor-mation commissioners in Delhi had revealed their ignorance about the let-ter or the spirit of the law.
The DoPT official said one out of
every ten rupees allocated under this plan would be spent on creating awareness about the law through ad-vertisements over television and radio and messages printed on post-cards. "So they are finally doing some-
thing," remarked Dev Ashish Bhat-tacharya, who pushed a red-faced gov-ernment into revealing last year that it had spent just Rs 18.7 lakh in 20 months on the law that Prime Minis-ter Manmohan Singh often uses to showcase the government's commit-ment to raising the governance bar.
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