Right to Information Act completes 21 years (12 Oct)

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News

The Right to Information Act 2005 completed 21 years of full operation on 12 Oct 2026. A report released for the occasion by Satark Nagrik Sangathan (SNS) found 3.85 lakh appeals/complaints pending across 28 information commissions as of 30 June 2026; nine commissions returned 37,701 cases without orders in July 2025 – June 2026.

Key facts

Act	RTI Act 2005 – Presidential assent 15 June 2005; fully in force 12 Oct 2005
Pendency	3.85 lakh appeals/complaints – 28 commissions (30.06.2026)
Chief Information Commissioner	Raj Kumar Goyal (since 15 Dec 2025)
Time limit	Section 7 – reply within 30 days; 48 hours if life or liberty is involved
Amendments	RTI (Amendment) Act 2019 – tenure and pay set by Central rules; DPDP Act 2023 amended Section 8(1)(j) (from 13 Nov 2025)

Background

- Constitution: the right to information is part of Article 19(1)(a) (freedom of speech and expression) – State of U.P. v. Raj Narain (1975). Rajasthan's 'Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan' (MKSS, Aruna Roy) movement paved the way for RTI.

- Structure: Central Information Commission (Section 12) – a Chief plus up to 10 Commissioners; State Information Commissions (Section 15). Section 4(1)(b) – 17 categories of suo motu disclosure; Section 8 – exemptions; Section 20 – penalties. The first Chief Information Commissioner was Wajahat Habibullah.
- 2019 amendment: the 5-year term and pay equal to Election Commissioners were earlier fixed in the Act; now set by Central rules (currently 3 years).

Tamil Nadu link: before the 2005 central law, Tamil Nadu enacted the 'Right to Information Act 1997' – among the country's first State laws, alongside Goa. The Tamil Nadu State Information Commission was set up in 2005; the State Chief Information Commissioner's post is currently vacant.

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