Info commission flays CMO officials for ‘negligence’

‘PIOs At CMO, MWD & Wakf Board Unaware Of RTI Act’

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Hyderabad: The chief minister’s office (CMO), it appears, is not interested in upholding the spirit of the Right to Information (RTI) Act. The information commission recently came down heavily on public information officers of the CMO, the minorities welfare department (MWD) and the AP State Wakf Board (APSWWB) for not having furnished information under the RTI Act concerning the action taken with respect to mismanagement of wakf properties.

The applicant, Khaja Aijazuddin, a lawyer, citing a 2008 SC order which directed the government of undivided Andhra Pradesh to probe the mismanagement of the APSWB in the last two decades, its issuing of no objection certificates and leasing of properties in its custody, sought a status report.

According to Aijazuddin, the CMO forwarded the query to the MWD citing that no information was available. The MWD subsequently forwarded the application to the APSWB. When information was not forthcoming, the applicant filed the first appeal with the CMO, only to find out that it was transferred to the MWD. The applicant approached the commission with his second appeal.

In his order (a copy of which is available with TOI) given on Monday, information commissioner S Intiyaz Ahmed noted that the PIO of the CMO, “negligently” and “blindly forwarded” the application to another PIO with “malafide intention”. This, he reasoned, was akin to denying information. He also noted the information should be available with the CMO as the SC had ordered the state government to take necessary action.

Ahmed described the attitude of the PIO and first appellant authority (FAA) of the CMO as “negative” with respect to the implementation of the RTI act. “This case is a classic example that even officials of the CM’s office are unaware of provisions of the Act and the procedure to be followed,” he lashed out in the order. “The PIO is seriously warned for not warning the procedure. Similarly the FAA (is) also warned for not adhering to the procedure contemplated under the act.

He observed that it was “high time” the government conduct awareness programmes “particularly in the CMO periodically, in order to implement effectively the provisions of the RTI Act.” Issuing a show cause notice to the CMO, Ahmed directed the PIO and the FAA to provide the information to the applicant within 15 days of the order and submit to the commission a compliance report.

“I was aggrieved with the functioning of the CMO with respect to the furnishing of information. How can they deny simple but crucial information? Hence I appealed before the commission, Aijazuddin told TOI on Thursday.