

Right to information, Act brings accountability in the system

Shri Anil Ghoda, a volunteer of Sneha Samudaay in Kutch, once visited a family in Rapar block where in male member of the family has turned blind after earthquake, living with his three children and aged mother. His wife had died in earthquake of 2001. His elder son of just 10 yrs age would go for a work to get of Rs.10. The old mother use to beg in the village to feed her grandchildren. Anil was volunteering for an organization called *Sneha Samudaay*, which was committed for rights of marginalized. He knew that poorest family should get benefit of Antyodaya scheme of the government. Thus, he demanded for information about the *Antodaya Anna Yojana* in Rapar town and how much ration has been provided to Antodaya families in the last six months at PIO, Mamlatdar office.

After a month he again applied asking why he being not given information. He was advice by the mamaletdar to go to fair price shop and get the list. Finally anil went to committssioner with a complaint. It was struggle of 9 months from the day he applied. Finally Anil got the letter form commissioner about the hearing. Anil was pressurized by fare price shop keepers and mamaletdar for not attending the hearing. His parents were given lure of Rs. 20,000 for not sending Anil for hearing. Anil ran away from the house 6 days before the date of the hearing. He stayed at several places in these six days to reach finally to Gandhinagar in the date of hearing.

Appearing state chief commissioner RN Das the Mamlatdar tried to shift the blame to the PDS owners. He also blamed inadequate staff strength in the clerk and deputy Mamlatdar cadre for the failure to reply.

State information commissioner demanded why this information was not proactively disclosed under section 4(1) of the act. And show cause as to penalty should not be imposed. Also, why the applicant should not be financially compensate for the harassment suffered by him in making frequent trips to his office as well as in coming all the way from Kutch to Gandhi Nagar for the hearing.

SCIC ordered to principal secretary food and civil supply and chief secretary Gujarat and consumer affair to ensure that the list of Antodaya and BPL families be displayed and widely publicized in each fair price shop, Panchayat office, District supply office in the collectorate, along with their web side.

Because of which Government has passed an order to District collector to Mamlatdars of all Taluka of Kutch district ordered to verify the list of *Antyodaya families* and submit the report within a month. Mamlatdars personally visited each family and verified the Antyodaya families he also ordered that eligible poor people should be included in the Antyodaya and BPL list and rich people should be deleted from the list. Because of this, fake names were found in the list. Mamlatdar sealed the five fair price shops in Rapar taluka and the verification process is going on.