

Dear all,

I had the opportunity of assisting an RTI activist in a matter relating to transparency in courts. Commodore (rtd). Lokesh Batra had filed an application with the Supreme Court of India wanting to know the number and types of cases where all pleadings had been completed and the matter was reserved for judgement but the judgement itself had not been delivered. There are instances where courts do not deliver judgements for long periods of time after hearing all parties. One such case was held up in the Supreme Court on the issue of brain mapping (*Smt. Selvi and Others v State of Karnataka*, Criminal Appeal No. 1267 of 2004 decision dated 05 May 2010). That judgement came out after more than two years after completion of hearings. the Supreme Court denied information stating that it did not hold information in the form sought by the applicant. They claimed that they would have to look at each case file to compile the information. But the Central Information Commission thought differently. As the Supreme Court had computerised its processes and records, adding this data to its public databases of cases was not a difficult task. So it ordered disclosure of the information. It also directed the Court to capture this kind of data so that people get to know in which cases decisions have been reserved and for how long.

The same acvtivist sought similar information from the Delhi High Court. The High Court compiled the information from various court masters attached to each bench and gave the information to the activist. We showed this information as a compelling argument that such compilation can be done easily. Even lower courts are required to file monthly returns with the High Courts indicating the number of cases where decisions or judgements were delivered within 30 days of the completion of all pleadings. This latest [decision](#) has the potential to bring in more transparency in the working of the Apex Court in India unless challenged against.

Thanks
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