

APPEAL TO THE HIGH COURT

“High Court Directs Bangalore Mahanagara Palike to Provide Information”

Public bodies raise funds for development projects meant for the benefit of the public, by levying taxes and cesses on citizens. But citizens' right to know how their money is spent is often denied by officials hiding behind reasons of official secrecy.

The Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BMP) commissioned the construction of a water treatment plant in Bangalore. Mr. Wilson Pais, a social activist, filed an application under KRIA requesting details of the budgetary allocations made for the project. The concerned Deputy Commissioner, the Competent Authority under KRIA, did not respond to his application. After repeated oral requests, Mr. Pais filed an appeal before the Special Commissioner, the Appellate Authority under KRIA. When this appeal also failed, Mr. Pais filed a writ petition in the High Court on grounds that the BMP had twice violated his fundamental right to information.

In the petition, he sought directions for release of information, imposition of penalty and initiation of disciplinary action against the erring officials. Notices were issued to the Special Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner of BMP and the Principal Secretary, Government of Karnataka. The High Court directed the officials to provide the information within 24 hours and waived the award of penalties against them. The officials admitted the lapse on their part and complied with the High Court's order. Subsequently, Mr. Pais was provided with the information requested.

Source: Public Affairs Centre, Bangalore.