

## GOA STATE INFORMATION COMMISSION

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**Shri. Sanjay N. Dhavalikar**, State Information Commissioner

**Penalty No. 03/2021  
In Appeal No. 71/2020**

Shri. Nixon L. Furtado,  
H. No. 51, Copelwado,  
Sernabatim, Salcete Goa.  
403708.

..... Appellant

v/s

Public Information Officer,  
Office of the Village Panchayat  
of Colva, Salcete, Goa 403708.

..... Respondent

### **Relevant dates emerging from appeal:**

Order passed in Appeal 09/2020	: 27/07/2021
Show Cause notice issued to PIO	: 06/08/2021
Beginning of penalty proceeding	: 30/08/2021
Decided on	: 29/11/2021

### **ORDER**

- 1) The penalty proceeding has been initiated against the Respondent Public Information Officer (PIO) under section 20 (1) and /or 20 (2) of the Right to Information Act, 2005 ( for short, the Act) for contravention of section 7 (1) of the Act and non compliance of the order of First Appellate Authority (FAA) and for non furnishing the complete information.
- 2) The complete details of this case are discussed in the order of this Commission dated 27/07/2021. However the facts are reiterated in brief in order to steer through in its proper perspective.

3) The Appellant had sought under section 6 (1) of the Act information on 5 points vide application dated 12/11/2019. The PIO failed to furnish the information and Appellant filed first appeal dated 06/01/2020 before the First Appellate Authority (FAA). The FAA disposed the appeal vide order dated 04/02/2020 directing the PIO to furnish the information to the Appellant free of cost within 10 days. The PIO failed to comply with the directions of FAA and being aggrieved by the inaction of the PIO, the Appellant filed second appeal dated 02/03/2020 praying for information, penalty to be imposed on PIO under section 20(1) and 20(2) of the Act, etc.

4) The Commission, after hearing both the Appellant and Respondents, disposed the appeal vide order dated 27/07/2021. It was concluded that the PIO is guilty of not replying to the Appellant within 30 days from the date of application, as mandated under section 7(1) of the Act, for not complying the FAA's order which amounts to dereliction of duty and for disrespecting the proceeding of this Commission. The Commission found that the PIO did not furnish complete information and the entire conduct of the PIO is not in consonance with the Act and such a lapse on the part of PIO is punishable under section 20 (1) and 20(2) of the Act. Thereafter, the PIO was issued show cause notice seeking his reply as to why penalty should not be imposed on him as provided in the Act.

- 5) Penalty proceeding was initiated against Shri. Amol Tilve, PIO and Secretary of Village Panchayat Colva. The Appellant appeared before the Commission regularly. PIO did not appear initially and later sought time vide applications dated 03/09/2021 and 27/09/2021 to file reply. Finally he filed reply on 14/10/2021. Appellant made submission dated 24/11/2021.
  
- 6) The PIO stated in his reply that part information is furnished to Appellant on 21/11/2019 in respect of similar kind of matter sought by Appellant under RTI application dated 27/09/2019 and again on 28/01/2021 pertaining to Appeal 344/2019. Remaining information could not be furnished as clarification sought in some matter was not answered by the Appellant and information was not available in some matters as no such documents were issued by the PIO's Office. PIO further contended that the Appellant is seeking penalty on PIO without any cause of action, only with a view to harass the PIO. That, it is not the case of Appellant that documents are available and that PIO is not providing it. The PIO also contended that he has not denied the information and the Appellant has failed to make a case for imposing penalty on the PIO.
  
- 7) The Appellant, on the other hand vide his submission and during arguments stated that the PIO furnished information which was not sought and he is misguiding the authority by stating that the information is not available in his office. Resolutions deliberated by the Village Panchayat are recorded in the register of minutes and these documents are required to be available in the office of PIO and the PIO is

required to furnish the same to the Appellant. However he did not furnish the minutes of some meetings sought by the Appellant. The Appellant further stated that PIO never sought any clarification regarding his application, therefore question of answering PIO's queries does not arise. The PIO did not furnish the information, neither attended the hearing before the FAA, nor complied with FAA's order. Later he evaded hearing of second appeal before this Commission and failed to comply with the order of the Commission passed on 27/07/2021. This conduct of PIO shows his malafide intention of not furnishing the information, therefore appellant presses for penalty on the PIO under section 20 of the Act.

8) The Commission has perused the records of the appeal as well as present proceeding of this penalty matter. It is noted that the appellant filed application on 12/11/2019 to which PIO did not bother to reply. The appellant filed first appeal dated 06/01/2020, and the FAA vide order dated 04/02/2020 directed PIO to furnish the information within 10 days. PIO neither remained present before the FAA, nor complied with the order of FAA, who is his superior officer. Later appellant filed second appeal before this Commission, the proceeding continued for more than 18 months, repeated opportunities were granted to PIO to appear and file his say. However, except for once, he preferred to remain absent throughout. At least on two occasions vide application sent by post/email he sought more time to file reply and on one occasion sought a particular date for appearance, and even though Commission considered his request he did not turn up, nor filed reply during the entire proceeding of second appeal.

- 9) During the present penalty proceeding too same modus operandi is applied by the PIO. He sought time on two occasions vide applications sent by post/email to file reply and evaded personal appearance. Finally on 14/10/2021 he appeared and filed reply.
- 10) The Commission has observed that Shri. Amol Tilve, PIO, Secretary Village Panchayat Colva has a particular modus operandi while dealing with RTI applications. Like in this matter, he did not furnish information within the stipulated period, nor sent any reply to Appellant, remained absent and did not file any reply before the FAA, and later evaded hearing and avoided submission before this Commission. The PIO did not attend the penalty proceeding and filed the reply at the fag end of the proceeding, putting the entire blame on appellant by giving various excuses to hide his failure to furnish information, which is in public domain. The PIO, by his conduct has shown that he does not wish to respect the provisions of the Act and also he does not have any respect for the higher authorities so much so that he does not mind disobeying not only orders of his senior authority, i.e. FAA but also the notices issued by the Commission.
- 11) This conduct of PIO is deplorable, disgraceful, not at all in consonance with the aim of the Act and thus the Commission in no way can subscribe to such a shameful conduct. The modus operandi of the same PIO described above is seen by this Commission earlier in other matters as well as in some ongoing matters. Therefore the Commission

is of the view that such officers should not be shown any leniency and must be punished under section 20 of the Act.

12) In the context of this matter, the Commission finds it appropriate to cite some relevant judgements by Honourable High Courts.

13) The Honourable High Court of Punjab and Haryana, in Civil Writ Petition No. 14161 of 2009, Shaheed Kanshi Ram memorial V/s State Information Commission has held:-

*"As per provisions of the Act, Public Information Officer is supposed to supply correct information that too, in a time bound manner. Once a finding has come that he has not acted in the manner prescribed under the Act, imposition of penalty is perfectly justified. No case is made out for interference".*

14) The Honourable High Court of Delhi in Writ Petition ( c ) 3845/2007; Mujibur Rehman V/s Central Information Commission, while mentioning the order of Commission of imposing penalty on PIO has held:-

*" Information seekers are to be furnished what they ask for, unless the Act prohibits disclosure; they are not to be driven away through sheer inaction or filibustering tactics of the public authorities or their officers. It is to ensure these ends that time limit have been prescribed, in absolute terms, as well as penalty provisions. These are meant to ensure a culture of information disclosure so necessary for a robust and functioning democracy."*

15) The Honorable High Court of Himachal Pradesh in LPA No.4009 of 2013, Sanjay Bhagwati V/s Ved Prakash and ors decided on 05/11/2009 has held in para 16:-

*" Bearing in mind the laudable object of the Act mere inaction or laid back attitude on behalf of the appellant cannot exonerate him of his culpability because higher is the post, not only more but greater are the responsibilities. Even after being put to notice by the petitioner that the information supplied to him is incorrect, yet the appellant took no steps whatsoever to ensure that the true, correct and not incorrect, incomplete or misleading information is supplied to Respondent no.1. (Information seeker). If a person refuses to act, then his intention is absolutely clear and is a sufficient indicator of his lack of bonafides. After all malafide is nothing sort of lack of bonafides or good faith."*

16) In another matter, the Honorable High Court of Gujarat in Special Civil application no. 8376 of 2010 in the case of Umesh M. Patel V/s State of Gujarat has held that penalty can be imposed on PIO if First Appellate Authority's order is not complied. In yet another matter the Honorable High Court of Bombay at Goa Bench in Writ Petition no. 304/2011, Johnson V. Fernandes V/s Goa State Information Commission has dismissed the appeal of the PIO by upholding the order of the Commission, imposing penalty for his failure to supply information within the stipulated period.

17) Hence it is seen that Honorable High Courts in number of matters have held PIO guilty of different acts like not acting in the manner prescribed under the Act, for his filibustering tactics, for furnishing the information after the stipulated period of 30 days, for not complying directions of FAA and have held that malafide is nothing but lack of bonafides or

good faith. Subscribing to the ratio laid down in the above mentioned judgments, the PIO in the present matter is guilty of furnishing information after much delay, during the hearing of second appeal, and that too incomplete information; guilty of not complying FAA's directions, also guilty of disrespecting the FAA and this Commission by way of continuous absence for most of the part of the proceeding.

18) From the conduct of the PIO, it is clearly inferred that the PIO has no concern to his obligations under the Act and has no respect towards the higher authorities, such a conduct is totally unacceptable vis-a-vis the intent of the Act and thus the Commission is completely convinced and is of the firm opinion that this is a fit case for imposing penalty under section 20 (1) of the Act on the PIO. Hence the Commission passes the following order.

- a) The Respondent PIO, Secretary Village Panchayat Colva, Shri. Amol Tilve shall pay Rs. 12,000/- (Rupees Twelve Thousand only) as penalty for contravention of section 7 (1) of the Act, for not complying the Order of First Appellate Authority, for delay in furnishing the information and for not honouring the directions of this Commission.
- b) Aforesaid amount of penalty shall be deducted from the salary of PIO in four instalments of equal amount of Rs. 3000/- each beginning from the salary of the month of December 2021 to March 2022 and the amount shall be credited to the Government treasury.
- c) The Registry is directed to send copy of this order to the Block Development Officer, Salcete, Margao Goa and Director, Directorate of Panchayats,



Government of Goa for information and appropriate action.

19) With the above directions the present penalty proceeding stand closed.

Pronounced in the open court.

Notify the parties.

Authenticated copies of the Order should be given to the parties free of cost.

Aggrieved party if any, may move against this order by way of a Writ Petition, as no further Appeal is provided against this order under the Right to Information Act, 2005.

Sd/-

**Sanjay N. Dhavalikar**  
State Information Commissioner  
Goa State Information Commission  
Panaji - Goa

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