

Rahul Pande

Brief bio-data

Rahul Pande is one of the youngest State Chief Information Commissioner (Maharashtra) and was also one of the youngest State Information Commissioner who has completed his tenure successfully. During this stint he handled work of Nagpur bench covering Nagpur revenue division comprising six districts of East Vidarbha region. Additionally also had additional charge of Amravati bench (covering five districts of West Vidarbha) since November 1, 2022. After appointment as the State Information Commissioner (Maharashtra) in September 2021, brought vibrancy in the functioning of Information Commission at Nagpur to bring down the pendency. Within two weeks, he was asked to handle Amravati bench as well and discharged the duty for around a month.

From January 12, 2022 was given additional responsibility of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar bench whose jurisdiction is over all districts of Marathwada region and disposed of record number of cases and tried to bring down pendency to manageable limits by tackling district-wise and applicant wise cases pertaining to one authority. The charge remained with him till May 2023 or about 16 months.

As a result from November 2022 till May 2023, Shri Pandel was handling charge of Nagpur, Amravati and Aurangabad benches simultaneously covering entire Vidarbha and Marathwada region. During this period, his disposal rate has been extremely fast and pendency in all the three benches was reduced substantially. Several landmark rulings were delivered during this period. Conducted hearings at district places in Vidarbha and also addressed the workshops and seminars on RTI during this period including one at Chandrapur, Wardha, Bhandara and Amravati where a large number of stakeholders including senior government officers participated. Adopted hybrid and online hearings well before the Hon'ble Supreme Court made it mandatory for Information Commissions' across country. Took active interest in digitization of SIC records and also to improve co-ordination between benches.

During three years disposed of more than 26,000 cases at Nagpur, Amravati and Sambhaji Nagar with reasoned orders which most of the time withstood judicial scrutiny during this eventful tenure. This includes conducting on-line/physical hearing at Nagpur, Amravati and Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar benches besides handling administrative works of all the three benches for a considerable period.

During this tenure improved physical infrastructure of all three benches, on-line conference and hearing facility was installed at all the benches, due to pro-active and pro-people initiatives, all the stakeholders including citizens and public authorities have reported satisfaction with the performance of benches headed by him. The Hon'ble judges (past and present) of Supreme Court of India and High Court have openly and wholeheartedly acknowledged the good work done from public platforms and on administrative and judicial side have specifically mentioned their appreciation.

Till completion of tenure as SIC held additional charge of Amravati bench which covers five districts of Western Vidarbha and regular charge of Nagpur bench which include six districts of East Vidarbha where RTI appeal pendency has drastically come down and direct action against certain undesirable elements who are misusing RTI provisions to extort or blackmail has put in place much needed mechanism to deal with menace of blackmailers.

During his previous stint as the CITY EDITOR of THE HITAVADA at its flagship Nagpur edition and my long stint as a successful journalist working in Central India's largest and oldest English Newspaper, handled very critical responsibilities expected from a senior journalist heading the reporting team with great distinction and to the great satisfaction of the management.

Due to his legal education and vast experience of legal reporting, was fortunate to have direct rapport and personal ties with legal luminaries which gave him an added advantage to learn the law directly from those interpreting it and understand the thought process behind justice delivery system.

As State Information Commissioner, he could handle thousands of cases during last three years and deliver several path-breaking and landmark decisions to make RTI regime more people-oriented and less cumbersome at the same time I took a serious cognisance of menace of blackmailing carried out by certain unscrupulous elements and made a public appeal to openly complain and register offences against such undesirable people bringing bad name to this sunshine act.

Rahul Pande.

Brief Bio Data:

Name:- RAHUL BHALCHANDRA PANDE

Present Designation: State Chief Information Commissioner

Date of Birth:- 7-11-1973

Place of Birth:- Nagpur

Mother Tongue:- Marathi

Languages Known:- Marathi, Hindi and English

Family Background:-

Father:- Late Shri Bhalchandra Pande, retired Additional District Health Officer

Mother:- Sau Asha Pande, well known poetess and president of Sahitya Vihar

Brother:- Shri Mohan Pande, Senior Management Professional

Wife:- Sau Suwarna Pande, Director Accounts and Treasuries, Finance Department, Government of Maharashtra

Son: Hrishikesh Pande (Legal professional)

Educational Qualification:

Master of Arts (Political Science)- Nagpur University

LL.B. (Three Years Course)- Nagpur University (Topper in Criminal Law)

Cleared National Eligibility Test (NET) in Political Science.

Career Graph:

- One of the youngest Chief Reporters with specialisation in Court, Political and Developmental Reporting.

Promoted as the City Editor of The Hitavada in February 2009 and leading the City Line team successfully.

-Instrumental in exposing the Nagpur University bogus degree cum-revaluation scam in 1999 and followed it up till date with zeal and vigour. When the cases were languishing in trial courts, filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) before Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court demanding speedy trial of the NU scam cases. At last a special court has been constituted to expeditiously try NU scam cases and several scamsters have been sentenced to jail.

-Countless stories were treated as Public Interest Litigation (PIL) by the High Court. Known for hard-hitting style, exposed several scams including irregularities in Nagpur Improvement Trust (NIT), Wardha Road Land scam, Gunthewari land scam. Delivered several important stories in every sector which dominated the front pages. Extensive writing on constant injustice meted to Vidarbha region and especially about raw deal in irrigation sector.

- Played an important role in ensuring welfare of media personnel and was closely associated with working class movement. Was selected as Executive Committee member of the Nagpur Union of Working Journalists (NUWJ). Became its Vice-President for two terms and elected as General Secretary of the NUWJ during the year 2007-08. Introduced free health check-up camps, free computer education, skill enhancement, scholarships and fellowships for journalists. Made an aggressive presentation before the Wage Board for Journalists.

-Recipient of Several State Level awards including

First Dalit Mitra late Chintamanrao Marpakwar memorial journalism award for excellent reporting. Award presented at the hands of Union Energy Minister Sushilkumar Shinde on June 22, 2008 at a grand function organised at University Convocation hall.

N Rajam memorial award for excellence in English Journalism instituted in memory of eminent journalist late N Rajam.

Recipient of National Human Rights Award.

Late Nashikrao Tirpude award for excellence in journalism.

Received another award at the hands of Uttaranchal Governor for excellence in journalism.

Maharshi Narad Patrakarita Samman instituted by Vishwa Samvad Kendra for excellence in journalism.

Toured Germany as part of media team accompanying Hon'ble Prime Minister during his Germany trip in 2013.

-Was Member of Journalist Accreditation Committee.

-Member of the selection panel for most of the journalism award including State Government's committee.

-Expert Member of Media Certification and Monitoring Committee of Election Commission of India during 2019 Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.

-Member of late Shankarrao Chavan Trust to oversee distribution of financial aid to needy journalists for their medical ailments, supervised distribution of Balashastri Jambhekar Sanman Yojana to provide financial help to senior journalists

-Key resource person on Right to Information for various Government Institutions, Law Colleges, Journalism Colleges and Academic Institutions. Has delivered several key note addresses on RTI, cyber security, Media freedom, Contempt of Court and Media Laws.