

PUNJAB STATE INFORMATION COMMISSION
RED CROSS BUILDING, NEAR ROSE GARDEN,
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Shri Hakam Singh, S/o Shri Darshan Singh,
R/o Madhir, Tehsil Gidderbaha, Distt: Sri Mukatsar Sahib.

.....Complainant

Versus

Public Information Officer
O/o Soil Conservative Officer,
Sri Mukatsar Sahib.

Remanded back to First Appellate Authority
Shri Mahinder Singh, Chief Conservator of Soils, pb
SC no.50-51, Sector 17-E, Chandigarh.

....Respondents

CC No.91 of 2023

Present: i) Shri Hakam Singh - Complainant – in person
ii) Ms.Paramjit Kaur, Senior Assistant O/o Soil &Water Conservation, Pb Sri Mukarsar Sahib for the PIO – in person

ORDER:

1. The RTI application is dated 22.10.2022 vide which the appellant has sought information as enumerated in his RTI application. The complaint was filed in the Commission on 31.01.2023 under Section 18 of the Right to Information Act, 2005 (hereinafter RTI Act). The notice of hearing was issued for 25.04.2023.

2. The case has been heard today. As per respondent, the information as available in the official records has been provided to the complainant vide letters dated 21.10.2022, 05.01.2023 & 17.02.2023 through registered post and no further information is available. The Commission has also received reply of the PIO on 21.04.2023 which is taken on record.

3. The complainant is however not satisfied with the information provided.

4. Having gone through the record, the Bench observes that the complainant has directly approached the Commission by preferring complaint in the Commission. The Bench further observes that the complainant has not availed the provision of Section 19(1) of the RTI Act by filing an appeal with the First Appellate Authority (FAA). As such, the FAA has not been able to address the grievances of the complainant. The attention of the Complainant is drawn to the decision of the judgment of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India rendered on 12.12.2011 in Information Commissioner and another Versus State of Manipur and another in para 31 whereof, it has been held that while entertaining a complaint case under Section 18 of the RTI Act, 2005, the Commissioners have no jurisdiction to pass an order providing for an access to the information which is as under:-

31. We uphold the said contention and do not find any error in the impugned judgment of the Hon'ble High Court whereby it has been held that the Commissioner while entertaining a complaint under Section 18 of the said Act has no jurisdiction to pass an order providing for access to the information."

As such, since the complainant has approached the Commission under the provisions of Section 18 of the RTI, 2005, no directions for providing further information can be given by the Commission.

4. Since there is an alternative and efficacious remedy of First Appeal available to the Complainant under Section 19(1) of the RTI Act, 2005 which has not been availed in the instant complaint case and the First Appellate Authority has not had the occasion to review the decision of PIO, as envisaged under the RTI Act by passing a detailed well reasoned speaking order.

5. The instant matter is remanded back to Shri Mahinder Singh, **First Appellate Authority–cum-Chief Conservator of Soil, Punjab, SCO No.50-51, Sector 17-E, Chandigarh**. The Commission hereby directs the FAA to treat the copy of the Complaint (enclosed herewith) as the First Appeal and decide the matter in accordance with the provisions of the RTI Act after giving all concerned parties an opportunity to be heard. He is directed to hear the complainant within ten days and decide the matter.

6. In case, the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the First Appellate Authority (FAA), he is at liberty to file second appeal before Punjab State Information Commission Section 19(3) of the RTI Act, 2005.

7. In view of the above, **the case is disposed off and closed**. Copy of the order be sent to the parties.

Chandigarh
25.04.2023

Sd/-
(Lt Gen Ajae Kumar Sharma (Retd))
State Information Commissioner, Punjab