



WAJAHAT HABIBULLAH

A former civil servant of the Indian Administrative Service, has spent much of his career in Jammu & Kashmir, to the cadre of which he stood seconded in 1968. He has also served on the staff of India's Prime Ministers Indira and Rajiv Gandhi, as minister in the Embassy of India, Washington DC, as secretary in the ministries of Panchayati Raj and Textiles, the department of Consumer Affairs, and Administrator of the union territory of Lakshadweep.

After retiring from service Habibullah served as India's first Chief Information Commissioner (2005-2010), heading the final court of appeal under India's Right to Information Act, 2005. During the period Habibullah established benchmarks in the function and access of India's RTI, establishing its authority over all sections of governance; the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. Expenses to petitioners were significantly controlled through the practice of videoconferencing of outstation hearings, banking on India's impressive spread of computer access across every district. This helped in the unlettered becoming the largest section of RTI users.

A former Randolph Jennings Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, Washington DC, (2003-2004) Habibullah has been awarded the Rajiv Gandhi Award for Excellence in Secularism. He is today Chairperson of the National Commission for Minorities, and of the National Institute of Technology, Srinagar