

SIC censures J&K Waqf Board for not being transparent 'Disclose Assets, Income Under RTI Act'



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Srinagar, July 11: With the functioning of Waqf Board coming under scanner in the wake of Dastgeer Sahab (RA) shrine fire, Jammu and Kashmir State Information Commission (SIC) Wednesday pulled up the body for not fully implementing Right to Information Act 2009, asking it to disclose details about assets, income and expenditure.

In a letter to vice-chairman Waqf Board, M.Y. Qadri, the Commission has reprimanded the body managing shrines and Muslim properties in the Valley for failing to implement RTI Act in letter and spirit.

"The Commission did try to go through your website and find whether you have implemented Section 4 of the Act but to Commission's dismay it is found that there is no RTI link in your website at all and the Board has thus committed a serious default and failed to implement the mandate of the Act," reads the letter.

The Commission has asked the Board to voluntarily disclose information about its assets, income and expenditure within one month.

The Board has been asked to disclose properties owned and maintained by the Board; details of donations, Nazar-o-Nayaz in kind and cash as per balance sheet, rent receipts realized during 2011-12; sale of properties - moveable and immovable; details of premium received against the properties given on lease or on rent up to March 2012; details of free-hold properties; details of bank accounts; details of loans given, date of advancement of such loans with full particulars of the recipients; details of Qarz-i-Hassana with full details and particulars of recipients and the brief reasons for giving such Qarz-i-Hassana and details of write off of such loans and other advances and claims; criteria adopted for recruitment and appointments in Waqf Board and details of any grants, donations given to any University or any public institution like charitable institutions, hospitals, schools, etc.

The move of the Commission comes in the backdrop of frequent complaints that the Waqf Board was "sloppy" in implementing RTI Act. Last week this newspaper reported that the Commission was contemplating to write to the Waqf Board to ensure implementation of RTI Act.

Terming Waqf Board as property of Muslims of the Valley, the letter says, "Waqf Board would itself be interested to be so transparent and accessible to the people whenever they would seek any information regarding the use of these funds and assets, it will be readily available."

The Board has come under the scanner of the civil society for allegedly failing to properly utilize funds and build institutions, as is the case with other such religious boards. The Board has come in the line of criticism especially after the gutting of the 200-year-old Dastgeer Sahab (RA) shrine in Khanyar here. The civil society flayed the Board for its failure to equip the shrines with fire-extinguishers and fire-tenders, even after earning revenue of millions of rupees annually.