**CIC upholds response to RTI query on Presidential assent**

The Central Information Commission (CIC) has upheld the Rashtrapati Bhavan’s response to a Right to Information (RTI) Act query on the number of times former President Ram Nath Kovind returned any decision taken by the Prime Minister/Union Council of Ministers for reconsideration. The President’s Secretariat had responded that no information was available on record.

The petitioner Yuvan Mitran, a Chennai-based college student, had moved the CIC challenging the response of the Rashtrapati Bhavan. In his first appeal before the First Appellate Authority he wanted to know whether the reply meant that the former President had never returned a decision taken by the Union Council of Ministers and others for reconsideration or whether the information was not available on records.

Appeal made

He said the information provided was “incomplete, misleading or false”. In response, the Officer on Special Duty/FAA referred the appeal to the concerned section, which reiterated its earlier reply that “no information rests with this Secretariat”.

In his second appeal before the CIC, he argued that satisfactory reply was not given to him and said that the President of India, being a constitutional authority, who is elected was accountable to the people.

“Providing information regarding the legislative actions of the President is important in the light of promoting transparency and accountability in the working of the public authority,” he said.

The stand of the Chief Public Information Officer/Deputy Secretary, Rashtrapati Bhavan, was that the appellant was already informed that “no such information is available”.

‘No records’

After hearing both sides, the Chief Information Commissioner Heeralal Samariya said that appropriate response as per the provisions of the RTI Act, 2005, had been provided as only such information that was held and available in the records could be shared, he said.

During his tenure as President, Mr. Kovind gave assent to some important Bills which included the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019; Triple Talaq Bill; amendments to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019; Citizenship Amendment Bill; and three farm Bills among others.