

Baijayant 'Jay' Panda

*Member of Parliament
(Lok Sabha)
Kendrapara, Odisha*



Member :

- Consultative Committee for Ministry of Human Resource Development
- Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce

**August 17, 2013
Bhubaneswar**

To
**Smt. Meira Kumar
Hon'ble Speaker
Lok Sabha
New Delhi- 110001**

Sub: The Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2013.

Respected Madam Speaker,

I am writing to point out that this very important proposed legislation requires thorough consideration and discussion, and should not be passed in the din as has become the unfortunate practice for several important bills recently. In fact, I intend to seek your permission to speak on the matter when it is listed for discussion.

With respect to the merit of including political parties under the ambit of RTI, I am personally of the opinion that the correct constitutional body for this should be the Election Commission, whose powers need to be enhanced to enforce political transparency, particularly with regard to funding and expenditure. This ought to be further augmented by mandatory auditing of the accounts furnished to the EC by political parties. However, until and unless these are legislated and enacted, it would be wrong to pass the proposed amendment to RTI, particularly in the face of widespread public criticism.

Several commentators have claimed certain infirmities with political parties being covered by RTI, while others have pointed to similar provisions already passed by our House in the Lok Pal bill. However, the best way to deal with this is to refer the matter to the appropriate standing committee for detailed deliberations, followed by a thorough discussion in the House.

With warm regards,

Sincerely,

Baijayant 'Jay' Panda