



IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED: 13-07-2026

CORAM

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THE HON'BLE MR.JUSTICE HEMANT CHANDANGOUDAR

**W.P No. 12748 of 2026
and WMP.No.13938 of 2026**

The Central Public Information Officer
Punjab National Bank, Circle office, PNB towers,
2nd Floor, No.46-49, Royapettah High Road,
Chennai-6000 14

..Petitioners

Vs

1. Central Information Commission
represented by its Information Commissioner,
Ms.Anandi Ramalingam, Baba
Gangnath Marg, Munirka, New Delhi-110 067.

2. Sunit Kumar Agarwal
Flat No.2610, 26th Floor, Tower B,
Lodha White City, Near to Apex,
Hospital Akurli Road, Damu Nagar,
Lokhandwala, Kandhivali-East
Mumbai, Maharashtra-400 101.

..Respondent(s)

PRAYER

Writ Petition filed under Article 226 of Constitution of India, calling for the records of the 1st respondent in 2nd Appeal No. CIC/ PNBK/ A/ 2024/ 128787 and quash its order dated 18.11.2025

For Petitioner:

Mr.P.Raghunathan
for M/s.T.S.Gopalan and Co.

For Respondent(s):

Mr.R.Sanjay Central Government
standing counsel for R1



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M/s.Sunit Kumar Agarwal
party-in-person for R2

ORDER

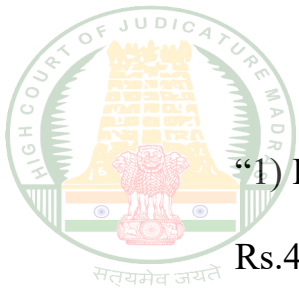
1. The petitioner challenges the order dated **18.11.2025** passed by the first respondent under **Section 19(10) of the Right to Information Act, 2005**.

2. The second respondent had earlier filed **W.P. No.1379 of 2024** seeking a direction to the petitioner, jointly and severally, to pay a sum of **Rs.6,80,412/-**, which is stated to have subsequently increased to **Rs.13,60,824/-**, towards professional fees allegedly due for legal services rendered by him, together with interest at the bank rate.

3. The petitioner disputed the claim for legal fees. Accordingly, by order dated **18.04.2024**, this Court dismissed the writ petition and relegated the second respondent to approach the competent civil court for adjudication of the dispute relating to the settlement of professional fees.

4. Aggrieved by the said order, the second respondent has preferred **W.A. No.1750 of 2024**, which is still pending consideration.

5. Thereafter, the second respondent submitted an application dated **10.05.2024** under **Section 6(1) of the Right to Information Act, 2005** before the Central Public Information Officer seeking the following information:



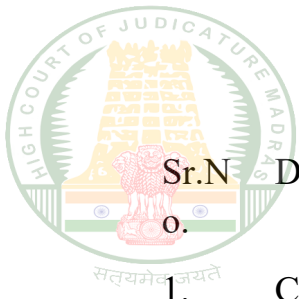
“1) Details of the payment claimed by the bank of having made of bills Rs.48,272/- relating to conducting proceedings in MA.No.48/2018-

DRAT Chennai-Indian Bank Vs PNB & BOB & Others related to then

AR 16 Chennai:-

Sr.No.	Details of the Bill and date	Amount (Rs)	Page No.1.
1.	Bill dated 02.04.2019	25,612.00	As per page 63
2.	Bill dt.02.04.2019	12,560.00	As per page 64
3.	Bill dt. 07.01.2022	10,000.00	As per page 164 of writ
4.	Bharatkosh dt 18.10.2022 receipt	100.0	As per page 183 of writ
5.	Form 12 for Certified Copies	(Rs.100 paid)	As per page 184 of writ
6.	Letter dt. 27.10.2022 with Sr.Mgr-Law endorsement to pay	-----	As per page 185 of writ
		Rs.100.00	

2) Details of the payment claimed by the bank of having made of bills for Rs.49,125/- relating to conducting proceeding in CC No.21/2020 and CC.No.22/2020 before FTC-I, MM Court, Egmore (Allikulam Building), Chennai in 138 NI Act proceedings against Mr.S.Prshanth of M/s.Kriss Associates in dishonour of two cheques each for Rs.40/- Lakhs in total fraud of about Rs.7.5 Crores of PNB BO: Purasawalkkam, Chennai:-

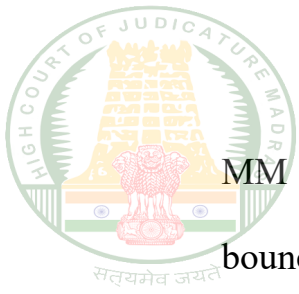


Sr.No.	Details of the Bill and date	Amount (Rs.)	Page No.
1.	Consolidated list of pending bills for CC 21/2020 & 22/2020.	49,125.00	As per page 82 of writ
2.	Bill dt. 16.11.2019.	10,000.00	As per page 83 of writ
3.	Bill dt.16.11.2019.	6,750.00	As per page 84 of writ
4.	Bill dt. 16.11.2019	2,250.00	As per page 85 of writ
5.	Bill dt. 16.11.2019	325.00	As per page 86 of writ
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3) Details of the payment claimed by the bank of having made of bills for Rs.12,800/- relating to conducting proceedings before District Magistrate, Chennai in initiating proceedings u/s.14 SARFAESI Act, 2002 for taking physical possession of the property of Ms.Chelliah Naginthiran in the NPA A/c of M/s.Anmol Ferro Alloys of PNB:BO:Mylapore, Chennai:-

Sr.No	Details of the Bill and date	Amount (Rs.)	Page No.
1.	Bill dt. 03.09.2020	6,000.00	As per page 82 of writ
2.	Bill dt. 03.09.2020	6,800.00	As per page 83 of writ

4) Details of the payment claimed by the bank of having made of bills for Rs.2,35,460/- relating to conducting proceedings before FTC-III,



MM Court, Saidapet, Chennai in initiating proceedings n 22 cheque
bouncing cases u/s.138 NI Act relating to different borrowers/NPA
accounts of PNB:BO:Mylapore, Chennai:-

Sr.No.	Details of the Bill and date	Amount (Rs.)	Page No.
1.	Bill dt. 12.07.2021	2,35,460.00	As per page 136 to 159 of writ

5) Details of the payment claimed by the bank of having made of bills for Rs.11,000/- relating to expenses incurred in getting the warrants served through Police Station, Mylapore, Chennai in proceedings before FTC-III, MM Court, Saidapet, Chennai u/s.138 NI Act relating to M/s.VOX Hospitality, an NPA accounts of PNB: BO: Mylapore, Chennai, consequent tot which the account was got compromised and closed. The details of bill dated 17.07.2020 are as under:-

Sr.No.	Details of the Bill and date	Amount (Rs.)	Page No.
1.	Bill dt. 17.07.2020	11,000.00	As per page 110 of writ.

6. By reply dated **14.06.2024**, the Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) rejected the application under **Section 7(1)** of the Right to Information



Act, assigning various reasons. Aggrieved by the said rejection, the second respondent preferred a first appeal before the First Appellate Authority under **Section 19(1)** of the Act. The First Appellate Authority also rejected the appeal by reiterating the reasons assigned by the CPIO.

7. Thereafter, the second respondent preferred a second appeal before the Central Information Commission under **Section 19(3)** of the Act. By the impugned order, the Central Information Commissioner allowed the appeal and directed the Central Public Information Officer to revisit the RTI application and furnish a detailed, point-wise revised reply, based on the availability of the information sought, within **20 days**.

8. Learned counsel for the petitioner submitted that the impugned order is a non-speaking order. It was contended that the Information Commissioner has not assigned any reasons for concluding that the reply furnished by the Central Public Information Officer was evasive and misleading. It is therefore submitted that, in the absence of reasons, the impugned order cannot be sustained and is liable to be set aside.

9. Per contra, the second respondent, appearing as **Party-in-Person**, submitted that the Information Commissioner has rightly held that the information sought under the RTI Act had not been properly furnished by the Central Public Information Officer and was justified in directing the CPIO to reconsider the application and furnish a detailed point-wise reply. It was



therefore contended that the impugned order does not suffer from any illegality warranting interference under Article 226 of the Constitution.

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The second respondent further submitted that he is entitled to receive the balance amount towards professional fees and expenses, and that the petitioner, being the custodian of the relevant records, is under a legal obligation to settle the said dues.

10. I have considered the submissions made on either side and perused the materials available on record.

11. The claim of the second respondent for payment of professional fees and expenses is already the subject matter of **W.A. No.1750 of 2024**, which is pending before the Division Bench of this Court. Therefore, the issue relating to the liability of the petitioner to pay the alleged outstanding legal fees cannot be examined in the present writ petition. Consequently, the contention of the second respondent that the petitioner is liable to pay the balance legal fees does not arise for consideration in these proceedings and is accordingly rejected.

12. Insofar as the impugned order is concerned, the Information Commissioner has merely observed that the reply furnished by the Central Public Information Officer was evasive and misleading, without assigning any reasons in support of such conclusion. Since the Information Commissioner was exercising a **quasi-judicial function**, it was incumbent upon him to record



reasons for interfering with the order passed by the Central Public Information Officer. The absence of reasons renders the impugned order a non-speaking order and is in violation of the principles of natural justice.

Accordingly, the following order is passed:

- (i) The writ petition is **allowed**.
- (ii) The impugned order dated **18.11.2025** passed by the first respondent is **set aside**.
- (iii) The first respondent is directed to reconsider the second appeal preferred by the second respondent on its own merits and pass a **reasoned and speaking order** in accordance with law, after affording an opportunity of hearing to both the petitioner and the second respondent.
- (iv) The above exercise shall be completed within **four (4) weeks** from the date of receipt of a copy of this order.

There shall be no order as to costs. Consequently, the connected Writ Miscellaneous Petition is closed.

13-07-2026

Index: Yes/No
Speaking/Non-speaking order
Internet: Yes
Neutral Citation: Yes/No

nvsri



To

1. Central Information Commission
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Ms. Anandi Ramalingam, Baba
Gangnath Marg, Munirka, New Delhi-110 067.

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HEMANT CHANDANGOUDAR, J.

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