

Information Bill gets House nod

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The Parliament today unanimously passed the Right to Information Bill, 2006 thus meeting the long-standing demands for a law ensuring that a Nepali citizen seeking any information from government bodies can have it after following a due process of law.

Now anyone seeking any information from the government offices is eligible to get it 15 days after submitting an application.

“This has put an end to the government’s mysterious way of working”, Minister for Information and Communication Krishna Bahadur Mahara told Parliament today. Mahara, who is also the government spokesperson, emphasised that this would ensure transparency in all the government bodies. MP Bal Bahadur Rai today tabled the bill in parliament.

The bill was passed with a view to making the government’s acts transparent in keeping with a democratic system.

Most of the Parliamentarians today termed this as “great achievement”. Now departmental action will be taken against any official, who sits on information even after it is sought; he or she may even be fined up to Rs 25, 000.

The new law, which will go into force once the Speaker Subash Chandra Nemwang authenticates it in due course, however,

does not allow disseminating information that poses threat to the sovereignty and integrity of the country, national security, public security, or any information that might pose a threat to international relations.

It also states that it is not necessary to provide information to anyone if such information might affect the economic condition, business and monetary issue of the nation, and the protection of intellectual property rights and business. It also restricts dissemination of information if that information affects relations between several castes and tribes

An independent National Information Commission will be set up to ensure protection, consolidation and flow of information. This commission will have a chief commissioner and two commissioners.

Also today, Parliament unanimously passed the Human Trafficking Bill 2006. This will ensure 20 years’ jail sentence and a fine of Rs 100,000 to a culprit of human trafficking.

Clause 15 of the bill states that those found forcing anyone into prostitution can be sentenced to 10 to 15 years, and fined Rs 50,000 to Rs 100,000.

Meanwhile, the Speaker announced disqualification of MP Netra Lal Shrestha (currently in the US) of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party. This action was taken against him for his continued absence.