

## Information Sought:

I am writing to seek information under the provisions of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, concerning the misuse of government staff cars, specifically with regard to the rules outlined in the Department of Expenditure OM No. 18(23)/E.Coord-2021 dated 01.09.2022.

According to OM No. 18(23)/E.Coord-2021, only Joint Secretaries and Heads of Departments and above officers are permitted to use staff cars for commuting between their residences and offices, only if they have not claimed the transport allowance. It has been observed that officers below the rank of Joint Secretary or Head of Department are also utilizing staff cars for commuting between their residences and offices, which constitutes a clear and deliberate violation of the established government guidelines.

Additionally, it appears that the prescribed procedure for the scrutiny of the staff car log books, as stated in Para 7.2 of the OM, is not being adhered to, with no certificates being recorded confirming the proper scrutiny by the senior officer (preferably the Joint Secretary). It appears that there is collusion between Joint Secretaries or Head of the departments and officers at lower levels regarding the misuse of staff cars, indicating a systemic problem rather than isolated instances of misconduct.

It also appears that more cars are being hired than are actually required, primarily to facilitate their misuse for personal purposes. Such unnecessary expenditure results in a direct wastage of public funds which, could have been saved and redirected towards genuine public welfare like roads, hospitals, and schools.

If government officials were running a private company, they would never permit such misuse of staff cars. Yet government officials permit it freely simply because these vehicles are not their property. They don't feel accountability for public property. This reflects a careless disregard for taxpayer money. Officials must be reminded that their salaries and privileges come from the public exchequer, and they are duty-bound to use such resources responsibly and remain fully accountable to the citizens they serve.

In a democracy, *public servants are trustees of public resources*—they are supposed to serve the people, not misuse power or privileges. When they misuse public money, staff cars, or other resources, it is indeed a breach of trust because:

- Those resources are funded by taxpayers.
- They are meant strictly for official duties, not personal use.
- It undermines public faith in governance when misuse goes unchecked.

When ordinary citizens break rules, the law acts swiftly with fines, penalties, or even imprisonment. Yet when some public officials misuse their position, action is often rare, delayed, or absent—shielded by an 'officers' bias' that can be even more damaging than divisions of caste or religion. This unequal application of the law amounts to discrimination.

Government officials must first adhere to the rules themselves before expecting the public to comply. For laws to be respected, those entrusted with their enforcement must lead by example. It is wholly unreasonable to demand discipline from citizens while government officers openly and blatantly disregard the very rules they are duty-bound to uphold.

Citizens feel empowered when their taxes are treated as an investment in common goods such as roads, schools, hospitals, safety, and justice, seeing themselves as co-owners of the nation with a rightful say in how resources are used. However, when taxes are merely extracted and then wasted or misused by those in power, people are left feeling not like citizens but like subjects—ruled over rather than represented.

Therefore, I request the following information under RTI Act for the month of July-2025 from all the offices, which have staff cars:

1. The total number of staff cars available in the office.
2. Copies of the staff car log books.
3. The names and designations of officers availing staff car facilities for travel between their residences and offices.
4. The names and designations of officers at the level of Joint Secretary/Head of Department or above who have not received transport allowance.
5. Copies of the certificates regarding scrutiny of staff car log books by Joint Secretaries or Heads of Departments, as required under para 7.2 of OM No. 18(23)/E.Coord-2021.
6. Information regarding instances where officers below the level of Joint Secretary/Head of Department have used staff cars for home-to-office travel, along with justifications provided for such usage (if any).
7. Details of any disciplinary action taken against officers found misusing staff cars in violation of the prescribed guidelines.
8. Please provide information on whether security personnel or any other staff are instructed to verify and/or record the names of officers arriving in staff cars while entering the office premises.
9. CCTV camera footage from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. showing the location where officers usually alight from staff cars, on any working day—preferably 4th July 2025, or, if unavailable, on any other working day, in any month.

I would appreciate it if you could provide the requested information within the time limit stipulated under the RTI Act, 2005.

### **Information Provided:**

1. No staff car is hired by this Commissionerate. Therefore, this report may be treated as NIL of this commissionerate.
- 2 to 9. Not applicable.