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# Seeking info under RTI can land you in jail

**Chetan Chauhan**  
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SALIM BEGH, resident of Morabad, had never thought that his simple Right to Information application seeking information regarding recruitment of constables in Uttar Pradesh would land him in jail.

He had only dared to move an appeal with the UP Information Commission when public information officer (PIO) Kushhar Saurabh asked Rs 52,000 from him for providing information. The commission upheld his plea and asked the police to provide information, while imposing a penalty of Rs 25,000 on Kushhar and giving Beg compensation of Rs 6,000.

However, Beg's action was enough to anger the police department, which lodged a case against him for ransacking a police station. He was arrested and remained in jail for about 20 days.

Begh is not alone. There are many RTI applicants in the country who are facing the ire of the authorities for exposing corruption in public service. "The authorities are using their powers to deter citizens from using their right to information because there is nothing in the law to protect information seekers," said Magsasay award winner

Arvind Kejriwal.

Take the case of Anand Mohan, another UPite, against whom a police case was lodged for assaulting a village block officer. Mohan, resident of Khushi Nagar, had dared to ask the block development officer to seek information on Indira Awas Yojna, food distribution to below poverty line families and distribution of scholarships to poor students.

Instead of getting information, Mohan started receiving threats and he was asked to withdraw his RTI application. When the information was not provided within the stipulated timeframe, he moved an appeal with state information commission.

He did not get information but when he went to seek a copy of the family register, it was denied to him and a case was also booked against him.

In Chhattisgarh, RTI activist Muzibar Rehman, who had exposed irregularities in the Prime Minister's Relief Fund through an RTI application, is now running from pillar to post to get security after receiving threats for exposing the corruption.

"There is a need to protect RTI applicants against such threats," Kejriwal said.

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**RIGHT TO  
INFO**