



Sunlight and shadow: on amendments to the RTI Act

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The government must roll back amendments that weaken the RTI Act

Highlights

- The move by the NDA government to amend the far-sighted law aims at eroding the independence of the Information Commissions at the national level and in the States.
- Such a change would eliminate the parity they currently have with the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners and, therefore, equivalence with a judge of the Supreme Court in matters of pay, allowances and conditions of service.
- The Supreme Court has held the right to information as being integral to the right to free expression under Article 19(1) (a); weakening the transparency law would negate that guarantee.

Other challenges to the working of the law are also increasing,

- With many State departments ignoring the requirement under Section 4 of the Act to publish information suo motu. The law envisaged that voluntary disclosure would reduce the need to file an application.
- Since fines are rarely imposed, officers give incomplete, vague or unconnected information to applicants with impunity.
- Proposals to make it easier to pay the application fee, and develop a reliable online system to apply for information, are missing.
- These are the serious lacunae. Attempts were made by the UPA government also to weaken the law, including removing political parties from its purview.
- Any move to enfeeble the RTI Act will deal a blow to transparency.

Source: [The Hindu](#)