Misuse of RTI

Why in news?

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- RTI is a promising feature of Indian democracy, but few officials find it is distressing at times.
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- Generally, PIOs refer to most applicants who file RTI applications regularly as “blackmailers”, “harassers” and those who were misusing the RTI Act.
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Who files RTI?

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- There are two broad divisions those who file a large number of RTI applications in the following categories:
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- Those who file RTI applications with the hope of exposing corruption or arbitrariness in governance.
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- Those who file RTI applications repeatedly to correct a wrong they think has been done to them.
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- Those who use the RTI to blackmail people.
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- This category largely targets illegal buildings, mining or some other activity which runs foul of the law
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- Those who use the Act to harass a public official to get some undue favour.
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How the blackmailers operate?

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- Less than 10% of the applications belong to the last two categories.
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- The RTI blackmailer threatens a person who has committed an illegal action with exposure and extorts money.
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- Empathy for the “victims”, who have committed illegal acts, is touching.
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How people are affected by RTI misuse?

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- RTI can be curbed by imposing reasonable restriction of the constitution.
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- If RTI is curbed, the day is not far when we will have to give reasons to speak and establish our identity.
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- A person can be defamed by speech or writing.
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- The powerful are upset with the RTI and hence, try to discredit it by talking about its misuse
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- Many eminent persons berate the RTI and call for restricting its use.
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- There is widespread acceptance that statements, books and works of literature and art are covered by Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution. Any attempt to curb this is met with stiff resistance.
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- The constant refrain that the RTI provision is misused is nothing but an attempt to muzzle a citizen’s fundamental right.
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What is the way forward?

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- RTI -should not be allowed to be misused or abused, to become a tool to obstruct national development and integration, or to destroy peace, tranquillity and harmony among citizens.
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- India is rated among the top five nations in the world in terms of provisions

of the RTI Act and ranked 66 in terms of implementation.
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- The frivolous attitude towards the Act has built the impression that the RTI needs to be curbed and activists can be targeted. This must stop.
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Source: Indian Express

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