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## TODAY'S IMPORTANT CURRENT AFFAIRS

### UPSC MAINS

**Date: 11.04.2025**

### RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT

**Source:** The post is based on the article published in “The Hindu” on 11.04.2025.

**In News:** RTI Act amendment won't cut transparency.

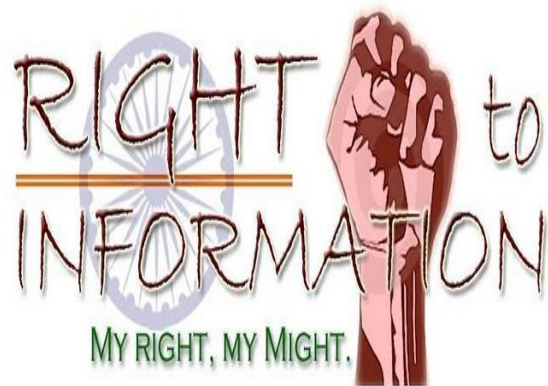
**Syllabus:** Mains – GS II (INDIAN POLITY- RTI ACT)

#### **Right to Information Act, 2005**

The Right to Information Act, 2005 was enacted to promote **transparency and accountability** in governance by empowering citizens with access to information held by public authorities. It is rooted in **Article 19(1)** of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech and expression, including the right to know about government functions and spending. The RTI Act applies to all government bodies, NGOs substantially funded by the government, and public authorities across India.

#### **Key Objectives:**

- ◆ **Empower citizens** to participate in democratic processes.
- ◆ **Promote transparency** and openness in governance.
- ◆ **Combat corruption** by enabling scrutiny of government practices.



## Issues with the RTI Act, 2005:

- ◆ Low Public Awareness: Surveys reveal that **only 15% of respondents are aware** of the RTI Act, limiting its effectiveness.
- ◆ Delays in Information Delivery: Over 50% of applicants report **delays** beyond the mandated 30-day response period.
- ◆ Inadequate Training for Officials: Many Public Information Officers (PIOs) lack proper training, resulting in **inefficiencies**.
- ◆ Poor Record Management: **Outdated systems** hinder timely access to information.

As there are issues in the Right to Information Act 2005, we have made an amendment which was proposed as RTI Amendment Bill 2023.

## RTI Amendment Bill, 2023: Provisions and Issues

The Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP), 2023, amended Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act to **restrict access to personal information**. This change was introduced to **align with** the Supreme Court's judgment recognizing privacy as a fundamental right under **Article 21 (Justice K.S. Puttaswamy case)**.

## Key Provisions:

Personal information disclosure is now limited unless it serves a larger public interest. Authorities can refuse information requests citing privacy concerns.

## Issues with the Amendment Bill:

- ◆ Dilution of Transparency: Critics argue that the amendment **prioritizes privacy over transparency, potentially** enabling corruption under the guise of protecting personal data.
- ◆ Conflict Between Rights: The amendment highlights a tension between the right to privacy and the right to information, both fundamental rights under **Articles 21 and 19(1), respectively**.
- ◆ Reduced Accountability: Citizens may face greater **difficulty accessing information** about public officials or government decisions due to expanded exemptions under Section 8(1).

## RTI Amendment Bill, 2025: Proposed Changes

The RTI Amendment Bill, 2025, aims to address issues arising from the 2023 amendments and strike a balance between privacy and transparency.

### Proposed Provisions:

- ◆ Enhanced Public Interest Clause: Clearer guidelines for determining **when personal information can be disclosed in cases of overriding public interest.**
- ◆ Improved Record Management: **Mandating digital systems** for better record-keeping and faster responses.
- ◆ Training Programs for PIOs: Comprehensive **capacity-building initiatives** for officials handling RTI requests.
- ◆ Accountability Mechanisms: **Strengthened penalties for unjustified denial of information** or delays.

### Anticipated Issues:

- ◆ Balancing privacy with transparency remains challenging.
- ◆ Implementation hurdles may arise, especially in rural areas with limited digital infrastructure.

## Privacy vs Transparency Debate

**The tension between privacy and transparency** is particularly evident when seeking personal information about MPs or ministers:

**Breach of Privacy:** Disclosing personal details (e.g., financial records) could violate their fundamental right to privacy under Article 21.

**Breach of Transparency:** Denying such information could undermine accountability and public trust in governance.