

Activists protest on RTI anniversary

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On the first anniversary of the Right to Information Act protests were held in the capital. The protests held ironically to sack the Central Information Commissioner for going soft on officials denying vital information to citizens. After President APJ Abdul Kalam finished his speech on the first anniversary of the Act, over a dozen RTI activists suddenly stood up, silently unfurling banners, asking for a hearing. Not a word was uttered by the activists from different NGOs. All they did was hold aloft banners, asking for the Central Information Commissioner to be sacked.

Severe criticism

The protest comes in the wake of severe criticism of the Commissioner for going soft on officials denying information to citizens despite the RTI Act coming into effect a year back. "We protested because we think that CIC has completely ruined the act. No work is being done," said Manish Sisodia, activist. "The president has said that the protestors should send him an email and he will talk to them," Sisodia said. The president agreed to grant them an audience, instructing them to Email him requesting an appointment.

Voice of dissent

But voices against officials responsible for implementing the RTI Act have been growing shriller. Many activists involved with the RTI movement since its inception have in fact chosen to completely avoid the first anniversary celebrations. "We didn't go because what to do there. It's a cultural programme and not a discussion on how we can improve the RTI after its one year performance," said Prashant Bhushan, activist. Perhaps reflecting the voices of dissent in his address, Kalam appealed to the CIC to make the RTI Act more meaningful by increasing transparency as well as public awareness about the Act itself. Meanwhile, some RTI activists from Parivarthan have been arrested and they are at Tuglak Road Police Station. They have been arrested because they had some banners for saving RTI at the President's function at the Vigyan Bhawan.