

Cops 'bully' citizen for demanding info

By Tushar Tere/TNN

Vadodara: Seeking information under the Right to Information (RTI) Act can prove to be unnerving as Vipul Patel found out to his dismay. His innocuous query to the police department elicited a 'threatening' response.

Patel had asked the traffic department for details of the money it collects as penalty. He had also asked the name of the bank in which the money is deposited.

The traffic department did tell Patel the amount collected in the past two years, but refused to divulge the name of bank. Instead, SV Sagar, assistant information officer in the police department and personal assistant to Vadodara police commissioner, in his reply, questioned Patel's motives for asking such



'It is not clear why you want to know about the bank in which the penalty money is deposited... If some unusual incident happens while depositing the penalty money in the bank in the future, the applicant might be considered as one of the suspects'

information.

"It is not clear why you want to know about the bank in which the penalty money is deposited," stated the reply. Not stopping at that, the police also threatened Patel. "If some unusual incident happens while depositing the penalty

money in the bank in the future, the applicant might be considered as one of the suspects," said the letter.

"In the first place, they cannot question my motives as it is not allowed under the RTI Act. All they can do is refuse to give the details," said Patel, who

runs Aastha Charitable Trust that specialises in creating awareness on people's rights. "The police have threatened me by saying that I would be interrogated if some unusual incident happens while depositing the money. It clearly shows that they don't want to divulge information and hence are discouraging me."

Sagar told TOI, "The applicant has to tell the reason before asking such questions. He cannot demand such information directly. If the money is stolen some day, we have all the reasons to consider the applicant as one of the suspects."

Patel has shot off a copy of the reply to the Central information commissioner, state information commissioner and the chief minister.