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Kochi Police Refuse RTI on Custodial Deaths

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– Categories: Human Rights



Kochi: The Kerala State Police has refused to provide details of custodial deaths in response to a Right to Information (RTI) request covering January 1, 2020, to July 31, 2025.

RTI activist Dhanaraj S. had sought district-wise and station-wise records of custodial deaths and asked whether the cases were reported to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

The State Crime Records Bureau (SCRB), through its Public Information Officer, rejected the request, citing Section 24(4) of the RTI Act, which exempts certain law enforcement

agencies from disclosure unless the matter involves corruption or human rights violations. The bureau stated the requested data did not fall under these exceptions.

Dhanaraj argued that custodial deaths inherently involve human rights violations, as they relate to the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution. He confirmed plans to file a first appeal under Section 19(1) of the RTI Act, challenging the denial.

Under the RTI framework, the State Information Commission has 45 days to decide whether information on human rights violations should be disclosed.

The Right to Information Act, 2005, grants citizens access to information from public authorities to promote transparency. Certain security and intelligence organisations are exempt under Section 24, but the Act mandates disclosure for matters involving corruption or human rights.

The appeal outcome will determine if the Kerala Police must release the custodial death records. Observers note the case could set a precedent for how such data is classified under the RTI framework.