



Centre for Peace and
Development Initiatives

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CPDI Right to Information Watch

Greetings from the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives, (CPDI). Issued every month, CPDI Right to Information Watch takes stock of RTI legislative landscape in the country with focus on development pertaining to RTI legislation and implementation of these laws.

RTI Legislative Landscape

Deafening Silence on RTI Legislation at Federal Level:

No progress on the enactment of federal RTI law despite [grilling](#) of Federal Information Minister on February 03, 2016, by senators for failing to table right to information bill in the parliament, as we reported in the last edition. CPDI has been [highlighting in the press](#) the delaying tactics being employed by the federal government and countering the arguments given by federal government on the need for reviewing the law in the name of security. Just to put things in perspective for our readers, government formed a special committee on January 16, 2016 to review federal RTI law in the light of what it calls [Changing security situation](#).

CPDI believes there is no need for reviewing the draft RTI law as it contains adequate safeguards against disclosure of sensitive information. It seems government is going to provide blanket exemption to some public bodies.

This will surely dilute effectiveness of the draft RTI bill which has been [highly rated by Centre for Law and Democracy](#), a reputed organization based in Canada that ranks RTI laws of the world on the yardstick of standards of right to information legislation. According to CLD, if the draft RTI bill is passed in its present shape, it will be making an 11 points improvement upon Serbian RTI law by scoring 146 points out of 150.

Every state has legitimate security needs and can protect information to ensure national security and RTI community in the country wants state of Pakistan to protect its legitimate security needs. At the same time, blanket exemption should not be provided to any public body in the name of national security. Any security paradigm premised on the total blackout of information to ensure security, shrouding even information pertaining to corruption and violation of human rights behind thick walls of secrecy, is not likely to achieve its stated objective. .

CPDI deplors the fact that Special Committee is stone walling information about its deliberations. The federal government should engage with civil society on the issue of citizens' right to information and national security sector before making any amendments in the draft RTI bill.

Amendments in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013

There is no progress with regard to [key amendments](#) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013 proposed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Commission since February 24, 2016 when Special Assistant to Chief Minister on Information and Higher Education, Mushtaq Ahmed Ghani gave [nod of approval](#) to these amendments. CPDI hopes the amendments proposed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Commission are adopted by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly at the earliest.

RTI in Action

RTI and Right to Education:

The significance of RTI lies in the fact that it brings to light facts hidden from public eyes. We all know education is not exactly on the top of the priority list of the government but raising such issues with facts and figures informs national debate. RTI requests filed by CPDI and Khalid Khattak, the News reporter have established, as reported on March 29, 2016 that around [2000 high schools in Punjab](#) are functioning without principles and some for decades. So much for according priority to education.

Holding District Governments Accountable through RTI:

Citizens have now started holding district governments accountable through RTI and an interesting case was reported in Express Tribune. When [Peshawar district administration was asked](#) to provide details of all bus terminals, bus stops and car parking slots. The RTI application also sought information about the duration of contracts, tax rates and facilities provided by contractors at bus terminals and car parks.

These are exactly the type of questions that citizens should be asking their local governments.

Transparency and Right to Information Program

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