



Centre for Peace and  
Development Initiatives

July 2016

## 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

#### When will it be 'soon'?

Federal Minister for Information and broadcasting again said on June 26 “the draft of the Right to Information Bill has been prepared and will be [tabled soon](#).”

Those keeping an eye on developments pertaining to RTI legislation in the country know that both PPP led coalition government from 2008 to 2013 and the present one ever since coming to power have been making public pledges to table the right to information bill in the Parliament 'soon'. So, this is yet another promise in the long list of promises made by information ministers of both PPP and PMLN. It is unfortunate that transparency is not on the priority list of the present government as well.

### RTI in Action

#### Use of RTI legislation for investigative reporting

CPDI sowed the seed of RTI for investigative reporting in Pakistan and has been endeavoring to popularize the use of RTI laws of the land for investigative reporting in the country since 2006. In the last two years, around 30 investigative stories have been published based on certified information received through the use of RTI laws. All these stories could only be possible because of the active involvement of CPDI with investigative journalists.

It is heartening to note that this trend is now capturing the imagination of journalists. On June 24, 2016, Dawn published an excellent investigative story based on the information received through the use of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013 titled [Police cover up escape of militants, criminals from Mardan Police Lines](#).

CPDI has been and will continue providing support to journalists in filing requests for information

under RTI laws for investigative reporting.

### **Punjab Information Commission: its woes and its wonderful work**

Despite numerous challenges, Punjab Information Commission continues doing excellent work. Against the sanctioned strength of 43, PIC has only one administrative staffer to help members of the commission perform their responsibilities under the Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013. It has been more than two years since the establishment of the commission; the service rules for the commission have not been finalized yet. Apart from this, Punjab Information Commission has been facing other hurdles as well like budgetary cuts which have been well documented by Shahzada Irfan Ahmed in TNS in the story titled [Commission calls](#).

Despite these challenges, Punjab Information Commission has already passed landmark judgments which will continue to serve as counter point to the secrecy narrative that the bureaucracy has been building since the country came into being. PIC is trying to make the functioning of public universities more transparent as evident by stories like [PIC summons university registrar on 27th](#) and [Public information: UET told to provide meeting record by July 5](#).

### **Transparency and Mega Projects**

It is also heartening to note that citizens have started taking interest in ensuring the transparency in the execution of mega projects. On a complaint lodged by a citizen under the Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013, the Punjab Information Commission directed Punjab government to provide the requested information as reported in the story titled [Commission directs Punjab govt. to share info on orange line project](#).

This is an interesting development with regard to the efforts of citizens to make mega projects more transparent and we will keep you posted about the developments pertaining to this case.

### **Transparency and Right to Information Program**

Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives, Pakistan (CPDI-Pakistan)

Tel: +92 (0) 51-2375158-9; 4319430

URL: [www.cpdipakistan.org](http://www.cpdipakistan.org)