



Centre for Peace and
Development Initiatives

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CPDI Right to Information Watch

Editorial:

Greetings from the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives, (CPDI).

This year, international Right to Know day has been quite effective in terms of taking right to information movement forward. This year also, CPDI took a number of initiatives to mark this day i.e. held [conference in Karachi on provincial right to information laws](#), honored one journalist and one citizen for using right to information laws in an effective manner and contributed an Op-Ed in a national daily. Titled [“Right to Information and Freedom of Speech”](#).

It is encouraging to note that the Sindh government is moving in the right direction with regard to enacting an effective right to information law for the province. CPDI held conference on provincial right to information laws in Karachi on 28th September to celebrate the 14th international Right to know day. Not only that Mr. Mola Baksh Chandio, Advisor to Chief Minister, Sindh for Information Department, Mr. Murtaza Wahab, Advisor to Chief Minister Sindh for Law Department and Ms. Sharmeela Farooqi, member of special committee to finalize Sindh RTI bill not only participated in the conference but also, made substantive comments during the proceedings. Especially, Ms. Farooqi and Mr. Wahab were well prepared and were conversant even with the finer details of the proposed right to information bill for the province.

At federal level, right to information bill has yet not been approved by federal cabinet. Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Mr. Pervez Rasheed again said that right to information bill will soon be presented before federal cabinet for its approval. . In this connection, there has been some development as Standing Committee of Federal Cabinet for Disposal of Legislative Business approved the bill on September 30, 2016. Hopefully, the bill will soon be presented in the parliament.

RTI Legislative Landscape

Movement in Sindh on RTI: Sindh government to incorporate feedback of civil society in the Sindh Transparency and Right to Information Bill 2016:

As we reported in the last edition, Umar Cheema highlighted shortcomings in the Sindh Transparency and Right to Information Bill 2016 through his story in the News on September 02, 2016 titled [Corrupt to be protected, info seekers to be punished](#). It seems Sindh government has listened to the feedback and Ms. Farooqi shared with the participants in the conference organized by CPDI on international Right to Know day that the [feedback](#) provided by CPDI has been incorporated the Sindh Transparency and Right to Information Bill 2016. It would be interesting to see to what extent civil society concerns have been addressed in the final draft of the Sindh Transparency and Right to Information Bill 2016. **Federal RTI bill inches towards parliament:**

Yes, it is true. Standing Committee of Federal Cabinet for Disposal of Legislative Business has [approved](#) the draft of federal right to information bill. This development has occurred in the wake of sustained demand by civil society groups and media for the enactment of federal right to information law, repealing ineffective Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002. The most recent example is the CRTI RTI Awards ceremony held on September 26 in which Senator Farhat Ullah Babar and participants demanded Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Mr. Pervez Rasheed to expedite the process of legislation on right to information. One can reasonably hope that this draft will soon be presented before the federal cabinet for its consideration. We will keep you posted.

RTI in Action

Official Secrets Act Vs. Disclosure of Information in Public Interest

The use of right to information laws for investigative reporting is getting popular with journalists and yet another story based on the information received through the use of Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002 titled [FIA ordered to provide details of enquiries to petitioner was published last month](#).

The journalist filed request with FIA and sought year-wise details of total number of enquiries and cases with FIA in last five years.

Honoring RTI Activists:

One way of popularizing the use of RTI laws for investigative reporting by journalists and for the attainment of basic rights by citizens is to honor those who use these laws. For this purpose, CPDI, a partner organization of Coalition on Right to Information, (CRTI) established CRTI RTI Champions Awards in 2014. These awards are given each year in two categories i.e. journalists, and citizens. In journalists' category, the award is given to a journalist who uses right to information laws for investigative reporting. IN the citizens' category, the award is given to a citizen who uses right to information laws for the attainment of her/his rights.

2016 edition of CRTI Champions Awards ceremony was held at National Press Club on Monday, September 26, 2016 from 01:00 pm to 02:00 pm. The award committee comprising of Mr. Sayed

Liaquat Banori, Executive Director, Society for Human Rights and Prisoners Aid, (SHARP), Mr. Nadeem Iqbal, Executive Director, the Network, Mr. Tauqeer Mustafa, Executive Director, Punjab Lok Sujag, (PLS), Mr. Muhammad Anwar, Executive Director, Centre for Governance and Public Accountability, (CGPA) and Ms. Natalia Tariq, Program Officer, Open Society Foundation Pakistan, (OSFP) unanimously decided to give award to Mr. Azaz Sayed in journalists category and Mr. Sarmad Ali, in citizens category.

Mr. Azaz Syed has used RTI Laws and contributed some excellent stories in 'The News International' and 'Geo News'. Most of his stories were based on the data received under Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002. He contributed stories pertaining to Prison Department, Foreign Ministry and Presidency. Mr. Syed has filed more than 200 Information requests to different Public bodies under existing 5 RTI Laws in country.

Mr. Sarmad Ali has submitted a number of RTI requests to different educational institutions. His RTI to Punjab University regarding the hiring of faculty member went on to settle the issue of providing copy of CNIC when requesting information. When Punjab Information Commission gave judgment in his favor, the university challenged the decision in LHC but the LHC upheld the decision of Punjab Information Commission. This award ceremony was widely covered and stories like Journalist, lawyer get RTI Champion Award 2016 Geo's Azaz Syed honored were published in different newspapers.

[Journalist, lawyer get RTI Champion Award 2016 Geo's Azaz Syed honoured](#)

[Right to Information and freedom of speech](#)

The Express Tribune

The significance of correlation between the right to information and freedom of expression in protecting and promoting basic human rights can hardly.

Transparency and Right to Information Program

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