



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).

In 2013, Senate Committee on Information and Broadcasting unanimously approved Right to Information Bill and it was hoped that the federal government will enact this bill. What later transpired only suggests that federal bureaucracy must have thrown monkey wrench in the works as it prevailed upon the government by raising the specter of threat to national security to adopt Right of Access to Information Bill, only marginally better than Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002 that needs to be repealed. No wonder, federal government constituted a committee in 2016 to review RTI bill in what was reported in the media in the name of 'changing security situation'.

Fast forward to 2017, Senate select committee constituted to reconcile federal government Right of Access to Information Bill 2016 and Right to Information Bill 2016, approved by Senate Committee on Information and Broadcasting finalised its recommendations on January 31, 2017. Since then there is deafening silence on right to information legislation.

These days federal bureaucracy is incorporating recommendations of Senate select committee into Right of Access to Information Bill which is tantamount to putting tooth paste back into the tube. Hopefully, saner elements in the government will prevail as it is next to impossible to improve structurally flawed RAI Bill which is modeled on Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002.

RTI Legislative Landscape

All quiet on RTI legislation front:

Since January 31, 2017 when it was reported in the media that Senate select committee has finalised its recommendations for right to information legislation during its deliberations to reconcile Right to Information Bill 2016 and Right of Access to Information Bill 2016, there is no new development on this count. CPDI has again demanded federal government to seek input from stakeholders through press release

headlined [CPDI](#) calls to include stakeholders in legislation on RTI.

RTI in Action

RTI for investigative reporting:

Journalists have continued using RTI laws for investigative reporting during the month of February. An interesting story was filed by Nation reporter Mr. Imran Mukhtar headlined [NADRA reluctant to share details of rented offices](#). Not only in this case, NADRA also refused to provide requested information to 'The News' reporter Mr. Shahid Aslam according to the story filed [Ombudsman directs NADRA to respond to RTI request](#). Federal Ombudsman has taken strong position on the refusal of NADRA in this case and threatened to initiate contempt proceedings if the requested information is not provided to the reporter.

Azaz Syed collected data about the number of meetings of National Public Safety Commission and filed a story titled [National Public Safety Commission to be reactivated](#).

Shahzada Irfan of 'The News' also contributed an excellent analytical story highlighting challenges in the implementation of the Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013 titled [Limiting information](#).

RTI activist debunks claims of a political party on social media:

RTI is a great tool to keep politicians honest. This was demonstrated by an Islamabad based RTI activist, Muhammad Saleem, who debunked tall claims of PTI on social media about the development projects carried out by the party in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. For details visit [Busted: KP education dept demolishes PTI claims on social media!](#)

RTI exposes abysmal state of affairs in hospitals:

Citizens, civil society groups and journalists have been exposing sorry state of affairs in hospitals through the use of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013 and the Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013. A Social Audit Committee formed by CGPA also came up with similar findings in DHQ of Charsadda as reported in the story titled [Charsadda DHQ 'refuses' to provide required information to RTI Commission](#).

Transparency and Right to Information Program

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