



Centre for Peace and  
Development Initiatives

May 2017

## CPDI Right to Information Watch

### Editorial:

#### Politics of RTI Legislation

It is interesting to note that former President Zardari is pushing the envelope for legislation on right to information by raising demand on the federal government to table in the Parliament draft approved by the Senate Committee on Information and Broadcasting. It is a welcome development as Right to Information Bill approved by Senate committee is far better than Right of Access to Information Bill drafted by federal bureaucracy. However, it should also be noted that his party failed to legislate on this issue despite repeated public pledges to this effect. In fact, President Zardari himself pledged in his joint address to the Parliament on September 20, 2008 when he said: "We will soon be bringing other fundamental laws such as freedom of information bill". Well, many moons after that pledge has turned into a demand. This is a blatant case of political expediency. One can only hope that the current government does not drop the ball and makes good on its promises.

Tenure of the information commissioners of Punjab Information Commission ended last month and Punjab government has not appointed new information commissioners yet. Punjab bureaucracy has adopted the policy of slow-walking with regard to its role in the implementation of the Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013. Especially, Punjab bureaucracy failed to approve the service rules for Punjab Information Commission and throughout their tenure, information commissioner did not have requisite staff to carry out their functions. Three cheers for the out-going information commissioners for their excellent work despite lack of support from the government. In the meanwhile, civil society groups should raise demand on the government for the timely appointment of information commissioners.

### RTI Legislative Landscape

#### Federal RTI Law in the Offing?

CPDI has been raising demand on the government for the enactment of an effective right to information law. We shared with media [CPDI research](#) which shows that Federal and Balochistan RTI laws most ineffective when evaluated on standards of effective right to information legislation. We have witnessed a surge in public pronouncements by the federal Information Minister and it seems that government is going to table right to information bill in the parliament soon. Over all political climate also dictates that government should score some points on transparency.

#### Appointment of Information Commissioners in Punjab Information Commission:

As we shared in the last edition, CPDI has urged Punjab government to appoint well reputed

information commissioners in Punjab Information Commission in line with the criterion set under the Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013 in the story titled [Punjab govt urged to appoint information commissioners](#) tenure of the last Information Commissioner, Mr. Mukhtar Ahmed Ali also came to an end on April 30, 2017. Punjab government has not appointed information commissioners although it was reported in the media that notification to this effect will be issued on Tuesday, May 02, 2017.

## RTI in Action

### Use of RTI by Political Parties:

PTI has set a trend of filing information requests. Some may question the motives but the fact is that these information requests bring into sharp focus greater level of transparency in the functioning of public bodies and promote the cause of public accountability. Yet another request for information has been filed by PTI member under Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002 reported in the media as [PTI demands PTV chairperson's resignation over 'serious violations'](#).

### Judgements of Information Commissions:

Punjab Information Commission, during the tenure of 1st out-going Chief Information Commissioner and 2 Information Commissioners has given some landmark judgements. It would be interesting to see the role that the in-coming Chief Information Commissioner and his colleagues will play in the implementation of the Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013.

One would assume that in a normal world, DG anti-corruption would be forthcoming in sharing information pertaining to corruption. It does not seem to be the case if we go by order of Punjab Information Commission reported in the media on April 24, 2017 [Punjab DG anti-corruption ordered to provide info about corruption](#). What is even worrisome is that The Commission said in its order that the DG anti-corruption, in connivance with the officials of provincial information department and an advertising agency, caused loss of over Rs200 million to national exchequer. It is hoped that in-coming members of Punjab Information Commission would bring this case to logical conclusion and the culprits would be brought to justice.

In April, Punjab Information Commission also imposed [fine worth 2 salaries](#) on Rana Muhammad Afzal, executive engineer of the machinery division of Multan for not providing information on its order.

As we have shared in earlier edition, an interesting [petition](#) has been filed by Advocate Azhar Siddique in Lahore High Court. He has maintained in his petition that fine proposed in pa is insufficient and that this law has become hurdle in the exercise of constitutional right of access to information. LHC has sought more arguments on this petition.

### Transparency and Right to Information Program

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

Tel: +92 (0) 51-8312794, 8312795

URL: [www.cpdi-pakistan.org](http://www.cpdi-pakistan.org)