



Centre for Peace and  
Development Initiatives

January 2018

## CPDI Right to Information Watch

### Editorial:

On 14 Dec, Government of Indonesia hosted the [Asia Pacific Leaders Forum on Open Government \(APLF2017\)](#) that brought together over 200 heads of state, ministers, local government leaders, civil society organizations etc. Pakistan being a country in the region was also represented in the forum and stagnation of Pakistan progress against the conditions of OGP was brought under the discussion. APFL 2017 touched upon some of the most pressing challenges in the region, including inclusive development, environmental sustainability, and economic growth. More importantly, the Forum highlighted that how open government can offer innovative solutions to each of these issues and deepen citizen trust in government. Matter of contention is that Pakistan is facing a new wave of restrictions on the [Civil Society organizations and INGOs](#) operations that shows that democratically elected government of Pakistan is absolutely going far afield from democratic values. In this case open government in Pakistan seems nothing but a far cry. International groups make significant contributions to Pakistan in safeguarding and promoting health, nutrition, education, sanitation, food security, and the rule of law and human rights, among many other areas. They employ thousands of Pakistanis, contribute hundreds of millions of US dollars to the national economy, and, working alongside their local partners, reach an estimated [20 million Pakistanis](#) with assistance and services every year and the ban will leave a big vacuum in all matters. Moreover many senators and influential persons have said that suppression of pressure groups in Pakistan is clear [violation of fundamental human rights](#) but the situation seems to deteriorate with the passage of time.

### RTI Legislative Landscape

#### Ship of Punjab Information goes again without the captain

The Government of Punjab had finally appointed Chief Information Commissioner in [Punjab Information Commission](#) in October but the Commissioner resigned within 10 days. Appointment of pro-PMLN commissioner was challenged in Lahore high courts which lead to the [resignation of chief](#), during the proceeding of Model Town inquiry case, the Lahore high court bench had sought the reply from Punjab Government over the [absence of information commissioners](#) but the government paid no attention. Dysfunctional commission has badly affected the complaint

redressal mechanism in Punjab and umpteen numbers of complaints are in office without any development.

Moreover on complaints of applicants, PIC send notifications and warnings to public bodies that are not complying with the law but the format and wording of notifications goes same with little changes and zero bounce and impact.

### **Sindh Transparency and Right to Information Act 2016 may die in the womb without implementation**

The provincial government of Sindh had successfully enacted the Sindh Transparency and Right to Information Act 2016 but [Sindh govt fails to establish information commission within prescribed time](#). The provincial government was supposed to establish commission within 100 days but outstandingly it has been more than 7 months that the government has not taken any measures to implement the law. Chief Minister of Sindh claims its commitment to exercise the law but still not certain that when the law will see light of implementation.

As response of the letter campaign started by CPDI, department of information responded that the department had submitted summary to CM Sindh for establishment of information commission now the further steps are awaited from CM.

### **Implementation of RAI Act 2017 hangs around**

The federal government enacted the Right of Access to Information Bill 2017 which is comparatively better than the FOI 2002 but the extra powers given to Minister in Charge and ambiguous lists of information has put the RAI Act 2017 in question. Currently there is no Appellate body at federal level, in response of few FOI complaints filed in federal ombudsman officer, the ombudsman officer replied that the office is no more dealing with FOI cases and the cases have been closed, applicants must file the new RTI under new RTI law. The Appellate body under new law is also not established yet. The information seekers are waiting for the implementation and establishment of Pakistan Commission on Access to Information, Journalists and common citizens have submitted dozens of RTI under RAI Act 2017 where were not responded which show that the law is just on papers and the implementation hang around.

## **RTI in Action**

The people, media and CSOs are in full swing for the better legislation and implementation of RTI laws in Pakistan, [RTI experts contributed articles in leading newspapers](#) and 'The News' did a [special report on the legislation and implementation of right to information laws](#) in Pakistan. Still, the provincial and federal government's shows lack of commitment toward public access to information and even worsening the situation by putting restrictions on CSOs working for human rights and transparency. Critically, Pakistan has 5 RTI laws out of which three laws (Punjab, Sindh, Federal) are not being implemented in true spirit and one (Balochistan) possess old and ineffective RTI law that needs to be repealed where KP RTI law is implemented to a great extent in fact the provincial government has ordered to include a chapter of RTI in primary and secondary schools. CPDI held a press conference in Quetta to raise [demand for new RTI law in Balochistan](#) that will ultimately repeal weak and ineffective FOI 2005 in Balochistan. Out of all provinces and federal,

only [Balochistan is deprived of effective RTI law](#) in Pakistan. Overall situation seems to be bleak but CPDI will continue its efforts for protecting citizen's right to know. CPDI also held a first ever introductory session on [RTI in Azad Jammu and Kashmir](#) which will further pave way for the enactment of Right to Information legislation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

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

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