



Centre for Peace and
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CPDI Right to Information Watch

Editorial:

People's fundamental right to know is on stake currently in Pakistan. The country is in election process and change of government through a democratic transitional phase where right to information becomes most crucial. Media houses in Pakistan have grave concerns regarding freedom of expression these days. Not only local media houses but the international bodies like [European Union have also expressed concerns over restrictions on media in Pakistan](#). Anyhow the country has gone through the alleged polluted election process and [Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf appeared as a leading political party in Pakistan](#). The political party leading at this time, have set the stone of an effective Right to Information law in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa back in 2013. Civil society activists and responsible citizens who are aware of their fundamental right to know are looking forward to the succeeding milestones on the path of RTI by the government at federal level.

RTI Legislative Landscape

Punjab Information Commission Becomes Functional

Three information Commissioners have joined the Punjab Information Commission which puts the commission back in action. The Commission has started to work again. Many information request filers have started to receive responses of complaints lodged in Punjab Information Commission. International organization Centre for law and democracy is producing [a methodology to assess implementation of right to information laws in Pakistan](#). On the brighter side, information commissions are also taken on board which will in a roundabout way push commissions to effectively put robust implementation mechanism in their areas.

Sindh Information Commission

Despite of the fact that provincial assembly passed and enacted the Sindh Transparency and Right to Information Act 2016, there is minimal awareness about the RTI law in the province. Currently the appointment is just on paper and nothing has been practically carried out in the province. The provincial government was bound to establish appellate forum within 100 days from the enactment of Sindh RTI law, but did the undone task after a year. This is yet to be seen

that what the next government will do regarding right to information legislation and implementation.

Establishment of Pakistan Commission on Access to Information

It is going to be a test phase for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on the path of RTI. The party has raised sky high slogans against corruption in the past. Like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, now the party is expected to promote transparency and openness through RTI at federal level. Finally Pakistan Commission on Access to Information was approved on the last day of the government's tenure. The federal budget for fiscal year 2018-2019 did not entail budget for the development of RTI commission at federal level. Upcoming government should pay heed to the establishment of oversight body to deal with the complaints lodged under Right of Access to Information Act 2017.

Balochistan Lagging Far Behind In the Race of RTI

The Balochistan Right to Information Act 2018 awaits approval of the provincial cabinet till date. The government has completed its tenure but the Act is yet not approved by the Cabinet. People of Balochistan have yet to see the light of effective RTI law. After the elections 2018, it is hoped that the provincial government will pay attention to the effective legislation on RTI in the province. Freedom of information Ordinance 2005 is a weak RTI law which does not ensure the free flow of information.

RTI in Action

The oversight bodies in Punjab and KP are functional whereas the oversight bodies in Sindh and Federal are not operationalized yet. CPDI and other civil society organizations are spreading awareness in public and to some extent the RTI has come in the public domain. Now the responsibility lies on the upcoming government to bring implementation of RTI in action. To meet the claims of transparency and openness in government affairs, upcoming government should be dedicated to the uphill task of enacting and implementing RTI in Pakistan.

Transparency and Right to Information Program

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