



Centre for Peace and
Development Initiatives

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CPDI Right to Information Watch

Editorial:

The month of April has shown a little pace on the path of RTI in Pakistan. There were minor or major developments regarding RTI in Punjab, KP, Sindh, Balochistan and federal. CPDI believes that RTI not only strengthens the democracy but also helps to lessen the corruption and maladjustments in the use of Public Money. Unfortunately Pakistan has commendable right to information laws which are not rightfully implemented. Countries like Indonesia and Costa Rica have strengthened RTI with time and have reaped fruits of open government. Government of Pakistan should realize the importance of strengthening RTI for increased trust between citizens and state.

RTI Legislative Landscape

Right to Information under Attack in KP

In last two months KP government made attempts to amend KP RTI Act i.e the assembly [proposed to raise RTI commissioner retirement age](#) from 65 to 67 years. Last Before that, KP government tried to abduct citizen's fundamental right to know by proposing some [restrictive amendments](#). Out of 8 proposed amendments; many of them were restrictive in nature and could have curtailed fundamental right to know by creating hurdle for public in access to information. With the timely, [strong and joint opposition of civil society's coalition on right to information](#) KP assembly rejected the amendment bill 2018. Though both amendments were rejected but the threat of weakening KP RTI Act is still looming on our heads.

Chief Justice of Pakistan Takes Notice of Vacant Positions in PIC

CPDI has been steadily vocal about the appointment of Information Commissioners in Punjab Information Commission for one year. First batch of commissioners completed their tenure in May/April 2017, till then the posts have been lying vacant except for a brief period when Chief was appointed but resigned soon after. CPDI raised voice through various platforms [for the appointment of information commissioners](#).

On a brighter side, Hon'ble Chief Justice of Supreme court of Pakistan took notice of vacant posts and ordered Information Secretary in Punjab to submit a response and ensure appointment of Commissioners in Punjab Information Commission. CPDI had also written letters to chief justice and sitting judges of Lahore High Court to take notice on the subject. It is hopeful that the

commissioners will now be appointment. Strength of Commission lies with commissioners only because the punishment and penalty clause is functional in presence of commissioners only.

On the other hand, the administrative staff of [Punjab Information Commission is holding public events for raising awareness.](#)

Implementation of Sindh Transparency and Right to Information Act 2016 Become Dubious

People are least aware about RTI in Sindh. The provincial government brought the law but neither implemented nor spread awareness about it. The provincial government was bound to establish appellate forum within 100 days but one year has passed and nothing has been done to meet the object. CPDI raised voice on various platforms. CPDI conducted trainings of media in five districts of Sindh on the use of RTI for investigative reporting. In this month not only Sindh but federal government also completed one year without putting implementation in place, oversight bodies are also not established yet. CPDI once again raised the voice in mainstream media i.e. [Federal, Sindh govts miss deadline for information commission formation.](#)

[A local investigative journalist published a story based on the correspondence between CPDI, Sindh Information Dept and CM Sindh Secretariat.](#)

Islamabad High Court Orders to Establish Information Commission Immediately

The Appellate body under RAI Act 2017 i.e Pakistan Commission on Access to Information is not established yet. According to the said act, PM of Pakistan is bound to establish information commission within 6 months. 5 months have elapsed but little has been done for the rightful implementation of the said Act, most of the RTI requests are not responded and information seekers have nowhere to lodge complaints. Judge of Islamabad High Court Athar Minallah issued notices to PM Secretariat and Attorney General Office for the immediate establishment of Information Commission. The progress in this regard is yet to be seen.

Balochistan Right to Information Act 2018 Suddenly Emerges!

Provincial law of RTI in Balochistan is the weakest in Pakistan. We have five right to information laws but the Balochistan Freedom of Information Act 2005 is the most ineffective and weakest. Despite of several advocacy efforts from civil society, nothing has been achieved. This month showed a sudden progress when CM Balochistan Mr. Abdul Qudus Buzinjo passed a new Balochistan Right to Information Act 2018 on 18th April. The BRTI Act 2018 awaits approval of the provincial cabinet till date.

RTI in Action

Renowned right to information expert [Toby Mendel remarked in an interview](#) that it is essential that the media, NGOs, lawyers, citizens and other sectors in Pakistan (such as academics) become active in the area of RTI. The mere use of the law helps improve implementation, because it is through processing requests, and seeing the benefits, that officials both learn how to do open up.

On the other hand, Balochistan Right to Information Act 2018 should be shared with civil society

and RTI experts before enactment. The new law should be better than the FOI 2005 and must in line with effective RTI laws.

Transparency and Right to Information Program

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