



Centre for Peace and
Development Initiatives

April 2018

CPDI Right to Information Watch

Editorial:

Despite of five Right to Information laws enacted in Pakistan, at present, cycle of RTI is stagnant. Right to information is a fundamental human right which is protected by the state, and it becomes most important when elections are in coming down the pike. Pakistan is heading towards general elections 2019 and government is putting off RTI implementation by using delaying tactics. The ruling party is violating its own laws and party manifesto. KP, Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and federal RTI laws are still waiting rightful implementation.

With an aim promote openness and transparency through RTI [CPDI frequently files RTI requests](#). This month also marks the data disclosure of money spent from national exchequer on the foreign visits of MPAs in Punjab and KP. RTI requests filed by CPDI disclosed that [KP Assembly spends more on foreign tours than Punjab PA](#). Certified information obtained through the Right to Information Law shows that despite being a third of the size of the Punjab Assembly, the KP Assembly spent three-time more on foreign visits of its members and staff as compared to legislators in the Punjab during the last five years.

RTI Legislative Landscape

KP Government Attempts to Amend RTI Act 2013 once again!

In March, KP government [Proposed to raise RTI commissioner retirement age](#) from 65 to 67 years. With a commissioner reaching 65 and retiring soon, such amendment clearly indicates the gratification of an individual serving as Commissioner in KP RTI Commission. The draft bill had been submitted by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lawmaker Yaseen Khan Khalil as a private member bill. K-P establishment department had rejected the amendment with views that under the Article 179 of the constitution of Pakistan, a judge of the Supreme Court retires at the age of 65; hence the age limit for retirement of the commissioners cannot be extended beyond this limit.

Last February, KP government tried to abduct citizen's fundamental right to know by proposing some [restrictive amendments](#) in the much appreciated KP Right to Information Act 2013. Out of 8 proposed amendments; many of them were restrictive in nature and could have curtailed fundamental right to know by creating hurdle in public access to information. With the timely, [strong and joint opposition of civil society's coalition on right to information](#) KP rejected the

amendment bill 2018.

Implementation of Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013 in limbo

Weak enforcement mechanism of Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013 is getting stronger day by day. Real strength of Punjab Information Commission lies with the appointment of commissioner whereas the seats are lying vacant since April 2017. Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives always been vocal about the appointment and has once again urged the Punjab government through various ways. In this month, [CPDI raised its voice again in media and called for the appointment of information commissioners.](#)

Sindh Transparency and Right to Information Act 2016 awaits implementation

Implementation provincial RTI law awaits implementation and people are least aware about the RTI law whereas awareness and implementation is accredited to the Commission. 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. CPDI also penned several advocacy letters to CM Sindh Murad Ali Shah, Secretary Information and Sindh Information Department, as response of these letters, information department maintained that the summary had been sent to CM office for establishment of Sindh Information Commission since Sep 2017 but the CM office has done little for the establishment of information commission till date.

Public Access to Information, still not ensured in federal

The Appellate body under new law i.e Pakistan Commission on Access to Information is not established yet. According to the Right of Access to Information 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.

RTI in Action

The weak RTI law in Balochistan, dysfunctional Punjab Information Commission, and lacunas in KP right to information act, non implementation of Sindh Transparency and Right to Information act and right of access to information act 2017 has made public access to information a dream in Pakistan. Currently there is only one independent oversight body in place where as all the laws await rightful implementation.

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