

Report of a Seminar on “Implementation of the True Vision of Right to Information Laws”

To maintain continuity of its efforts in raising its voice and concern about people’s constitutional and fundamental right to know, the Press Council of Pakistan in collaboration with Islamabad Bar Association held on 19th November 2013, a seminar on “Implementing the True Vision of Right to Information Laws” throughout Pakistan, at Islamabad Bar Association.

Dr. Muhammad Syed Anwer presided over the seminar. Federal Minister for Information Broadcasting and National Heritage Senator Pervaiz Rasheed was the Chief Guest while Chairman PCP, Raja Shafqat Abbasi and Senator Zafar Ali Shah were the guests of honor.



Mr. Tahir Khalil, Bureau Chief Daily Jang, Mr. Raza Rumi, Anchor person Capital TV, President Supreme Court Bar Association, Mr. Kamran Murtaza, Vice Chairman Pakistan Bar Council Syed Qalb-e-Hasan were the

اسلام آباد، وزیر اطلاعات پرویز رشید سیمینار سے خطاب کر رہے ہیں، شفقت عباسی و دیگر سٹیج پر بیٹھے ہیں

event main Speakers.

A large number of members from legal fraternity and media persons participated in the seminar. Speaking at the occasion PCP Chairman, Raja Shafqat Abbasi highlighting the various aspects of Right to Information Laws and stressed that effective implementation of the RTI Law is the only way to build peoples' trust in the democratic system and to ensure empowerment of people at all levels. The Chairman appreciated all those who worked for the realization of people’s right to know at the state level and to raise sense of public participation in strengthening democracy.

PCP Chairman argued that freedom of information Laws in KPK and Punjab are comprehensive and meet established international standers. He said after revitalization of PCP in 2011, the Council took it upon itself to approach KPK and Punjab governments for the legislation on the subject in its 1st ever meeting held on 1st Nov 2011 . He suggested that instead of ombudsmen an independent forum be constituted to oversee implementation of RTI Laws in respective provinces. He was also of the view that the draft of Federal Law passed by Senate Standing Committee of Information and Broadcasting should be made compatible to Punjab and KPK Laws. He added that to promote ethical journalism in the country it is imperative to implement true vision of RTI laws.

Speaking at the event as the Chief Guest Federal Minister for Information Broadcasting and National Heritage, Senator Pervaiz Rasheed endorsed the views of the speakers and assured them that the government would accommodate their suggestions and consultations will be made with all media stake holders including APNS, CPNE, PFUJ, PBA and PCP in the federal legislation of RTI laws. He

emphasized that concealment of information by the government is tantamount to hide its inefficiency and wrong doings. He said at the state level there can be no people's representation without free flow of information.

Earlier Vice Chairman Pakistan Bar Council, Syed Qalb-e-Hasan stressed for the need to legislate on RTI laws while keeping in view environment prevailing in the country. He said we should draw a line between constructive and descriptive disclosure of information.

Speaking at the event Senator Zafar Ali Shah said the mistrust between the ruler and the ruled is due to a vacuum which is filled by disinformation and we must garner all efforts to neutralize any spell of disinformation with free flow of information. He said public documents are the property of the people and there should be no bar on citizens to have their access to information.

President Supreme Court Bar Association Mr. Kamran Murtaza said people's access to information is key to success of any democratic setup because information empowers people. He referred to different portions of RTI laws which can be improved for better results. He said effective implementation of RTI laws in provinces can change the destiny of masses by making them masters of democratic setup.



Mr. Tahir Khalil, Bureau Chief Daily Jang Islamabad said that Rawalpindi tragedy has once again brought to fore the importance of effective implementation of RTI laws. He said government is bound to release exact information with regard to any issue of public importance as holding any information is not in the interest of those who control affairs of the state.

Mr. Raza Rumi, Anchorperson Capital TV said implementation of RTI laws will actually bring an end to all colonial legacies. He said to ensure people's access to information relevant portions of RTI laws should be incorporated in the local bodies Ordinance.