

**IN THE PAKISTAN INFORMATION COMMISSION ISLAMABAD**

APPEAL NO. 860-01-2021

Amir Shehzad

Vs

Utility Stores Corporation of Pakistan

Date: 3.3.2021

Fawad Malik: Information Commissioner

**A. APPEAL**

1. Mr. Amir Shehzad, General Secretary, Amnesty Watch Pakistan filed his appeal under the Right of Access to Information Act 2017, before the Pakistan Information Commission stating therein that his request dated 4.1.2021 addressed to the General Manager (M&B, D&I) Utility Stores Corporation of Pakistan, Islamabad has been responded vide letter dated 11.1.2021 but alleged that till the filing of the appeal i.e. 22.1.2021 the respondent has failed to fulfil his request, within the frame of time stipulated in the Act.
2. The appellant has requested the following information from the office of the General Manager, Utility Stores Corporation of Pakistan, Islamabad related to the Financial Year 2019-20.
  1. *Budget Register.*
  2. *Transit Register.*
  3. *Contingent Register.*
  4. *Cash Book.*
  5. *Stock Register/Inventory Book.*
  6. *Certified copies of the Counter folios of Cheque Books, used for the payments during the Financial Year.*

**B. PROCEEDINGS.**

3. The Manager, Coordination, Utility Stores Corporation of Pakistan vide letter dated 27.01.2021 was directed to provide reasons in writing within seven working days as to why the requested information has not been provided to the applicant as under section 14 of the Right of Access to Information Act 2017, each public body are bound to respond to a request as early as possible and in any case not later than ten working days of the receipt of the request.
4. The reply submitted by the public body was shared with the appellant but he through the rejoinder, addressed to the Commission conveyed his dissatisfaction with the reply. He states that he has specifically mentioned the record pertaining to the head office, utility stores corporation of Pakistan, Islamabad in his application. He never demanded the record pertaining to any region of the public body. The text of the reply by the public body is reproduced hereunder:-

1. *“It is therefore informed that according to requisition record of USC Cash books, Cheque counter folio’s & inventory register have been demanded by the General Secretary (AWP) Mr. Amir Shahzad, which is impossible to produce a lot of attested photo copies within 10 days as desired, because as per demand he wants the attested copies of whole record. Copies of the cash books of 62 regions as well as USC HO for one year and counter folios of relevant cheque books which contain on thousands pages including inventory register of 62 regional ware houses are not possible to produce as soon as required.*
2. *So therefore, it is requested that kindly provide the query which specify the period / relevant record to minimize the load of work in order to attained, the realistic information as desired”.*

#### C. COMMISSION’S VIEW.

5. The appellant has requested the information pertaining to the head office of the utility stores corporation of Pakistan. In his application the appellant has requested the budget register, transit register, contingent register, cash book, Stock register/Inventory book and the certified copies of the counter folios of Cheque books, used for the payments during the Financial Year 2019.
6. The detailed budget of the public body, including proposed and actual expenditures, original or revised revenue targets, actual revenue receipts, revision in the approved budget and the supplementary budget are the category of the record that ought to have been published including uploading over the internet by each public body within six months of the commencement, as mandated under section 5(g) of the Act.
7. The period of ten working days provided in the Act can be extended by maximum of further ten working days where the request requires a search through a large number of records or records located in different offices or regions. Here in the case in hand the appellant has asked for the information concerned with the head office of the public body for the financial year 2019-20. The Commission is of considered view that the desired information must have been provided within the binding period provided in the Act.
8. Instead of confusing the requests with the beurocratic technicalities the public bodies are under obligation to treat and process the information requests on a faster track. Right of access to the record and information in the matters of public importance is constitutional and statuary right of the citizens provided under the Constitution of Pakistan and the Right of Access to Information Act, respectively which cannot be denied or delayed at the whims of the government hierarchy.
9. Transparency in the working of the government departments is the essence for the enactment of the Act 2017. Its spirit is to ensure that the people of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have access to the records held by the federal public bodies for making the government accountable to the people. This practice would improve the participation of the people in the public affairs aimed at reducing corruption and inefficiency in the governance

#### D. ORDER.

10. The appeal is allowed. The General Manager (fin), utility stores corporation of Pakistan is directed to provide the appellant all the requested information forthwith, but not later than seven days of the receipt of this order.  
The MD is directed to make arrangement for the proactive disclosure of the information as required under section 5 of the Act.

Fawad Malik  
Information Commissioner

Zahid Abdullah

Information Commissioner

Announced on 15.3.2021

Certified that this order consists of two (2) pages, each page has been read and signed.