



In The Pakistan Information Commission, Islamabad

Appeal No 796-12/20

Syed Kausar Abbas

(Appellant)

Vs.

Ministry of Law and Justice

Through its Public Information Officer

(Respondent)

ORDER

Date: March 01, 2021

Zahid Abdullah: Information Commissioner

A. The Appeal

1. The Appellant filed an appeal, dated 17-12-2020, to the Commission, stating that he submitted an information request to Deputy Secretary / Public Information Officer, Ministry of Law and Justice on November 23, 2020 under the Right of Access to Information Act 2017 but did not received any response from the public body.

2. The information sought by the Appellant is as follows:

“You are requested to provide information about steps taken by the public body about proactively publishing each category of information mentioned in Section 5 of the Act on its web site as requested in the following table.

Proactive Disclosure Provisions of Section 5 of the Act	Information to be Proactively Disclosed	Questions	Information (please provide requested information in this column)
Section 5 (1) (a)	Description of the public body’s organization and functions, duties, powers and any services it provides to the public, including a directory and any services it provides to the public, including a directory of its officers and employees, indicating their duties	Which of this information has been made available on the web site and which is missing? Has the public body published on its web site the directory of officers and the employees	

		along with names, designations, Basic Pay Scales, Salaries, benefits, perks and privileges of the officers and employees?	
Section 5 (1) (b)	Statutes, statutory rules, regulations, bye-laws, orders and notifications, etc. applicable to the public body disclosing the date of their respective commencement or effect	Which of this information has been made available on the web site and which is missing?	
Section 5 (1) (c)	Substantive or procedural rules of the general application evolved or adopted by the public body, including any manual or policies by its employees	Which of this information has been made available on the web site and which is missing?	
Section 5 (1) (d)	Relevant facts and background information relating to important policies and decisions which have been adopted, along with a statement of policies adopted by the public body and the criteria, standards or guidelines upon which discretionary powers are exercised by it	Which of this information has been made available on the web site and which is missing?	
Section 5 (1) (e)	The condition upon which members of the public body can acquire any license, permit, consent, approval, grant, allotment or other benefits of whatsoever nature from any public body or upon which transactions, agreements and contracts, including, contracts of employment which can be entered into with the public body, along with particulars about the recipients of any concession, permit, license or authorization granted by the public body	Has the public body published on its web site criteria and terms and conditions for all kinds of licenses, permits, consents, approval, grants, allotments or other benefits? Has the public body published on its web site list with names and addresses of those received concession,	

		permit, license or authorization?	
Section 5 (1) (f)	A description of its decision-making processes as defined in the Federal government's secretariat instructions, 2004 and any instructions for the time being in force for the public to provide any input into or be consulted about decision	Which of this information has been made available on the web site and which is missing?	
Section 5 (1) (g)	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	Which of this information has been made available on the web site and which is missing?	
Section 5 (1) (h)	The methods whereby information in the possession or control of the public body may be obtained and the prescribed fee required along with the name, title and contact details of the designated officials	Has the public body put on its web site Application Form for seeking information under the Act and 'Schedule of Costs'? (Both the form for filing information request and 'Schedule of Costs' are available on the web site of the commission). Has the public body put the name, designation, official E-mail and contact number of the Public Information Officer on the web site?	
Section 5 (1) (i)	Reports including performance reports, audit reports, evaluation reports, inquiry or investigative reports and other reports that have been finalized	Has the public body published on its web site all such finalised reports? Which	

		of these reports have been made available and which are missing?	
Section 5 (1) (j)	Such other matters which the principal officer of the public body deems fit to be published in the public interest	Is the public body in the custody of classified records that are more than 20 years old? Have steps been taken to declassify such records under Section 16 (1) (k) of the Act and publish under this provision of the Act?	
Section 5 (1) (l)	Camera footages at public places, wherever available, which have a bearing on a crime	Which of this information has been made available on the web site and which is missing?	

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B. Proceedings

3. Through a notice dated December 21, 2020, sent to Deputy Secretary / Public Information Officer, Ministry of Law and Justice, the Commission called upon the Respondent to submit reasons for not providing the requested information.
4. Through a notice dated January 18, 2021, the Public body was directed to provide written reply and arguments to Pakistan Information commission within 15 days.
5. The Respondent did not submit the response.
6. The Appeal was fixed for hearing on February 18, 2021 and both parties were informed accordingly through a notice sent on February 09, 2021.
7. The Respondent did not attend the hearing.

C. Discussion and Commission’s View on Relevant Issues

8. It is unfortunate that the Respondent, Ministry of Law and Justice, which should have served as an example for all other federal public bodies with regard to the implementation of the Right of Access to Information Act 2017, has maintained deafening silence with regard to the request for information and the notices of the commission. It is reasonable to expect that of all the federal public bodies, the Respondent, Ministry of Law and Justice, should have been more aware of the fact that the Right of Access to Information Act 2017 has empowered citizens to seek information from civil servants and they are

legally bound to acknowledge their information requests and respond to them within specific time-frame.

9. It is ironical that the Respondent has neither provided requested information about the steps taken to ensure proactive disclosure of information through its web site, nor, as the cursory analysis of its web site suggests, published specific information on its web site as required under Section 5 of the Act.
10. The Right of Access to Information Act 2017 was enacted on October 16, 2017. The Act provided ample time of six months to each Principal Officer of a federal public bodies to ensure the publication of categories of information mentioned in Section 5 on its web site.
11. In the instant Appeal, the citizen has sought specific information about steps taken by the Respondent to ensure publication of information/records on its web site. This commission is of the view that trust of citizens in public institutions is irrevocably linked with timely and accurate flow of information between citizens and public institutions. However, this would only be possible when Principal Officers of federal public bodies would ensure implementation of the Right of Access to Information Act 2017 in letter and spirit.
12. The commission is of the view that all federal public bodies are required to determine which categories of information are available on their web site and which are missing by juxtaposing each category of information mentioned in Section 5 of the Right of Access to Information Act 2017 with the information made available on their web sites.

D. Order

13. Public Information Officer, Ministry of Law and Justice is directed to share with the Appellant the requested information about the current status of the availability of the following information on its web site within 7 working days of the receipt of this Order. Secretary, Ministry of Law and Justice is directed to submit compliance report to the commission describing current availability status of the following information on the web site as well as time-frame for publication of each missing information/record on web site within 7 working days of the receipt of this Order:
 - a. directory of the officers of the public body, containing information about total sanctioned posts, filled/vacant posts, responsibilities of officers and information about its functions and services provided by the public body;
 - b. Act and the Rules of the public body, its regulations, bye-laws, orders and notifications;
 - c. manuals and policies of the public body;
 - d. relevant facts and background information relating to important policies and decisions undertaken by a public body;
 - e. statement of policies adopted by the public body;
 - f. criteria, standards or guidelines under which officers of the public body exercise their discretionary powers;
 - g. terms and conditions for acquiring any license, permit, consent, approval, grant, allotment or other benefits;
 - h. terms and conditions for all kinds of agreements and contracts;
 - i. particulars about the recipients of any concession, permit, license or authorization granted by the public body;
 - j. information about decision making processes of the public body and information about how citizens can provide their input to the public body;

- k. 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;
 - l. The methods for seeking information from the public body;
 - m. Schedule of costs, developed by Pakistan Information Commission, (available on the commission's web site) for seeking information from federal public bodies;
 - n. name, title, E-mail and telephone number of the Public Information Officer notified under the Right of Access to Information Act 2017;
 - o. performance reports, audit reports, evaluation reports, inquiry or investigative reports and other reports that have been finalized.
14. Copies of this order be sent to Secretary, Ministry of Law and Justice, Public Information Officer, Ministry of Law and Justice and the Appellant for information and necessary action.

Fawad Malik
Information Commissioner

Zahid Abdullah
Information Commissioner

Announced on:
March 02, 2021

This order consists of 6 (six) pages, each page has been read and signed