Case study – 7

**A Case of Colonial Hangover**

On August 12, 2011, the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) filed an information request under section 137 of Punjab Local Government Ordinance 2001 to obtain certified information about the total budget allocated and utilized by the Community Development department of Rawalpindi district for the financial year 2010-2011. However, the Executive District Officer (EDO) Community Development of Rawalpindi district denied access to the requested information, citing reasons such as the applicant's capacity for sharing classified information, the risk of information exploitation, and the availability of consolidated financial information in the office of the Executive District Officer (F&P) Rawalpindi. As a result, CPDI lodged a complaint with the Punjab Ombudsman to obtain the required information.

**Resolution:**

The Punjab Ombudsman adjudicated the complaint on January 19, 2011, and instructed EDO CD to provide the requested information within fifteen days. The Ombudsman observed that the objection raised by the EDO CD conflicted with section 137 of PLGO 2001, which grants every citizen the right to information about any office of the District Government. The Ombudsman emphasized the importance of transparency and public participation in governance and recognized the right to information as a basic right linked with Article 19-A of the Constitution. The Ombudsman also stressed the concept of proactive disclosure of information and directed the EDO CD to provide the requested information within fifteen days under intimation to the Ombudsman's office.

**Conclusion:**

This case highlights the importance of ensuring transparency and public participation in governance and recognizing the right to information as a basic right. It also highlights the importance of proactive disclosure of information by government functionaries and the need to work under public supervision. The case also highlights the need to overcome colonial hangovers and embrace modern concepts of public administration that emphasize public accountability and participation in governance.

This case study also highlights that the Punjab Ombudsman is an important institution that helps to ensure that citizens' rights are protected and that public institutions operate in a fair and transparent manner. Its role in investigating complaints and promoting good governance is critical for building a society based on the principles of justice, fairness, and accountability.