

RTI E-Newsletter Issue-5

T o o l s

তথ্যকণিকা

Volume 1, Issue 5

Editorial

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September 28 was the Right To Know Day (RTK). As every year, the Right to Information Forum observed the day with due importance. The theme of this RTK Day was "Peoples' Participation in Achieving Right To Information."

Mere enactment of an Act is does not ensure that people will benefit or their rights will be protected. Rather, the benefit depends on the degree of its use. Last year, the Right To Information Forum conducted a survey in a certain geographical area. 44.2% respondents reported to be unaware about RTI Act. Even those who were informed were less likely to seek information using this Act. The enactment of this Act will be successful only when the citizens will use this Act to seek information that

is important for their livelihood or to ensure transparency and accountability of public funds. For most people, it is difficult to fill-up a form and thus seek information from the authority. Therefore, it is necessary for both government and non-government organizations to provide information efficiently so that the requesters do not have to come repeatedly for getting information.

The role of RTI Forum was significant prior to the enactment of RTI Act. Initiatives such as arranging international conferences, seminars, consultations, or undertaking awareness programs are some examples. In the coming months, the Forum will arrange meetings in divisional towns with an objective to explore peoples' perception regarding the Act and to

know whether they use it or not. The Forum is going to undertake initiatives so that the citizens will use RTI Act on different macro issues which serves the interest of the country as a whole.

The Forum demands initiatives from Government to adopt a comprehensive plan for the assurance of citizens' participation in achieving Right to Information which require increasing awareness at individual and institutional level. Another demand from the Forum is to include Right to Information issues in the existing training programs. This is needed for creating conducive environment for the Designated Officers so that they can provide information smoothly.

I am grateful to all members for their involvement and commitments for making this program such a success.

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Meeting on RTI in Prime Minister's Office

A dialogue meeting was held at Prime Minister's Office on August 29. Information Commission and A2I Project jointly arranged the meeting. The title of the meeting was "The Use of Information and Communication Technology in the Implementation of RTI Act." Officials from different govt. offices and non-government

organizations joined the meeting. The chief guest of the meeting was M. Zamir, The Chief Information Commissioner Information Commission.

Dr. Ananya Raihan gave a presentation on internet-based proactive disclosure by the NGOs. Another presentation

was on the use of mobile phone for getting information under RTI Act. Mr. Rezwanul Haque Zami presented this. The last presentation was on the use of community radio for getting information under RTI Act. There had been a session on open discussion. Different opinions came from audience poll.

Right To Know Day Observed

RTI Forum observed Right to Know Day on September 27. The daylong program included seminar and mela. Mohammad Abu Taher, Acting Chief Information Commissioner, attended the program as chief guest. The seminar started with the speech of Shaheen Anam, convener of RTI Forum. The convener in her speech emphasized on citizens' participation in terms of the use of RTI Act. Syeed Ahamed presented his key note. For the successful implementation of RTI Act it needs to create demand (for information) at community level and the concerned authorities should supply information in response to the request. For this there has to be legal structure. All this has been pointed out as the preconditions of Right to Information in Syeed's paper. The Acting Chief Information Commissioner urged the collaboration of government and non-government organization in implementation of RTI Act. Dr. Iftekhairuzzaman chaired the session.

Later the the Acting Chief Information Commissioner inaugurated the daylong mela inside Shishu Academy Premises. Along with non-government organizations different government departments such as Information Commission, Department of Family Planning, Department of Women Affairs etc joined the mela. Visitors became aware about government services. Non government organizations also displayed their items in stalls. Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), BRAC and Nijera Kori participated in the cultural programs.



RACINE Arranged Orientation

An RTI related orientation meeting was arranged in Faridpur on September 12, 2012. RACINE, in collaboration with government officers representing different offices participated in the meeting. The District Commissioner of Faridpur Mr Mohammad Helaluddin Ahmed inaugurated the meeting and the Additional District Commissioner Mr Md Zahangir Hossain, ADC education facilitated the sessions. The objective of the meeting was to introduce the participants (government officers) with RTI as a tool of ensuring good governance. It was expected that

the respective offices would realize the need to provide information as per RTI Act and appoint Designated Officer for that. However, the DC in his speech reminded the obligation to provide information. Asma Akter Mukta, ED RACINE welcomed all. Sanjida Sobhan, MJF, briefed the audiences on RTI. The meeting ended with an interactive session where the participants shared their comments. Apart from govt. officials journalists, UP Chairman, NGO beneficiaries and others joined the meeting.

New Chief Information Commissioner

Former ambassador Mohammed Farooq joined as new chief information commissioner (CIC) in the Information Commission on Monday. He got the appointment on October 10 and submitted his appointment letter to the President Mohammad Zillur Rahman on October 11 as per the rule of the Right to Information Act (RTI) Act 2009. His predecessor retired ambassador Mohammed Zamir had gone on retirement after completion of 67 years in line with the RTI Act- 2009.

The new CIC had joined in the public services as a foreign cadre and worked in different countries as an official of the foreign ministry.

Faruk hoped to establish the RTI, Act 2009 in full-fledged to ensure the people's access to the information.

International Right To Know Day

International Right To Know Day was observed in Manikganj. Ten NGOs jointly arranged a human chain. STEP coordinated the program. The human chain was organized in front of Manikganj Press Club. Dipok Kumar Ghosh, Executive Head, SAK delivered his speech as key speaker. Others, in their speeches, put emphasis on the implementation of RTI Act for the betterment of the citizens. The hour long human chain was arranged to draw attention of the mass regarding RTI Act. Sanjoy Kumar Das, Executive Director, STEP delivered his concluding speech at the end of human chain.

Observation of Right to Know Day 2012

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