

RTI in textbooks from next yr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five million students at secondary and higher secondary levels will know about the Right to Information (RTI) Act by next year, said Chief Information Commissioner Muhammad Zamir.

The Information Commission will be able to incorporate a brief chapter on the RTI in the textbooks with the help of the education ministry by next year to create awareness among the students, said Zamir.

He said this at a launching programme of the training modules on the RTI Act.

Intercooperation-Swiss Foundation for Development and International Cooperation organised the programme in the city yesterday.

The commission will launch its own web portal within next ten days to disseminate various aspects of RTI, its public usefulness

and how to make use of it, he said.

It has also talked to the two leading private mobile telephone operators seeking a free short message service (SMS) and voice mails regarding RTI to aware people at grassroots level.

Shoini Paul from the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative in India, said RTI in India is being taught from the fifth grade at schools.

Dr. Urs Harren, ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh, said right and access to information is the key to accountability and transparency keeping the corruption at bay.

Any country should conduct the public affairs publicly for democracy and transparency, said Harren adding that the government officials are not normally interested in releasing information freely and put them under the public scrutiny.

Janet Durno, Country Director and

Head of Development Co-operation of Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in Bangladesh, said free flow of information enhances accountability of the government institutions and helps ensure entitlements of the people.

The commission has got names of 5,000 designated information officers so far. It has brought out three small publications on raising public awareness on the RTI that will be available on the commission's website.

ATM Azmul Huda, deputy delegate of the Inter-Cooperation, made a presentation on the training modules on how to build the capacity of both the common citizens and government officials at the community level and union and upazila Parishads in obtaining and providing information.

Felix Bachmann, Delegate, Delegation of Inter-Cooperation, chaired the programme.

RTI 'to be included in textbooks'

Daily New Age 10/08/2010

Bdnews24.com · Dhaka

THE Information Commission is trying to persuade the government to include a chapter on the Right to Information Act in the textbooks.

We have talked to the education ministry to add a couple of pages on the act in the secondary and higher secondary textbooks, said the chief information commissioner, Mohammad Zamir, whilst speaking at a meeting

on the RTI training module. The inclusion of a chapter on RTI in the textbooks might have to wait till next year.

Zamir told bdnews24.com that the web portal of the commission will be launched soon, which would include information on the RTI Act in Bangla and English as well as necessary information on important contacts and forms that citizens will need.

The information commissioner stressed the need for a

coordinated effort among the organisations working on RTI to ensure mass awareness of the issue.

We do not need monetary assistance in terms of sharing experiences, practice and development. International agencies and NGOs need to come coordinate with the commission so that we can develop a better training module on RTI.

Urs Harren, the Swiss ambassador to Bangladesh gave emphasis on role of

local media to accelerate the speed of mass awareness of the RTI.

The training module is designed to create awareness among citizens, public representatives and public servants at the union and upazila level and has been developed with assistance of the World Bank Institute, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Canadian International Development Corporation.

Include RTI in school syllabus: CIC

STAFF REPORTER

Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) Mohammad Zamir on Monday called for inclusion of the basic part of Right to Information (RTI) in syllabuses of primary and secondary education to help students become aware of their rights.

"I discussed the matter with Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid. I will also urge Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to consider the issue for inclusion of RTI in syllabuses of primary and secondary education," he said while addressing a national event on "Right to Information Training Module."

The event was organised by Inter Cooperation Bangladesh at Spectra

Convention Centre in the city.

"Massive awareness on RTI is required for implementation of the law," he said. "RTI is a matter of right of the people and they should be aware of it."

The information commission, he said, is working towards ensuring its activities help reach the benefits of RTI to marginalised people and empower them. "We have prepared an easy version of the RTI handbook, explaining how to maintain records and provide information to the people seeking it," the CIC said.

"We are also trying to create a demand for information among the general people."

Zamir said he had already urged

“ I will urge Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to consider the issue for inclusion of RTI in syllabuses of primary and secondary education.

— MOHAMMAD ZAMIR,
CHIEF INFORMATION
COMMISSIONER

mobile phone companies Grameenphone and Robi to spread RTI awareness posts through text messages

to their subscribers in an effort to empower people by utilising the RTI.

According to Zamir, training programmes need to be organised for designated officers of different government offices, NGOs and autonomous bodies to actively provide information under the RTI. He said the training module will help build capacity among information providers and seekers.

The training module will also help explain ways to improve disclosure of information by union parishads and how citizens can demand and access information, Zamir said.

Swiss Ambassador to Bangladesh Urs Herren, who also spoke on the occasion, said free flow of information is a vital part of development and

Bangladesh had introduced RTI in the last one year. Underlining the role of RTI in empowering marginalised people at grassroots level, he said the RTI would also ensure transparency and accountability in local government bodies.

Presided over by the delegate of Inter Cooperation Bangladesh Felix Bahmann, the programme was addressed by country director and head of Aid, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Jennet Durmo, senior project officer of Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative of India Shohini Paul, assistant professor of Jagannath University Masum Billah and chief executive of Nagorik Uddyog Kendra Zakir Hossain.