

Awareness of the right to know and ask questions should be instilled amongst students from an early age.



Cases were presented by the speakers to stress on the strength of the role of the common people and what difference they are able to make.

local businesses can also be made stronger." Rahman also spoke about establishing good economic governance in the rural areas by accessing the RTI Law. "Local radio programmes must be made, especially in the indigenous areas to spread messages," says Rahman. "Through these programmes, the local languages and cultures will also be highlighted." Rahman also mentioned that Microcredit, despite it being "one of the greatest evils in the world," is a "necessary evil" in Bangladesh. He explains that Microcredit can be utilised in different forms for the development of the poor, rather than simply depending upon the present form which is followed- the ever increasing interest rates to be paid by the poor.

Venkatesh Nayak, the Project Coordinator of CHRI, India, related a story in Gujarat, where people in a certain rural area were being tricked by the village shopkeeper by not giving them the right amount of grains and essentials as per their ration cards. The shop would also not be open at the correct hours. That's when Aslam Bhai, a local, applied to the information officer, as per the RTI Law, and asked for all the details and information regarding the ration card system and the rights of the ration card holders. As soon as Aslam Bhai received the information, he along with other men and women blew up the leaflets with the help of a local photocopier and posted them all over the city where the public could easily have access to the information. There on the posters, the hours the local shops were to be kept open were clearly mentioned by the government official, along with the essentials to be sold to ration cardholders, at specific prices and amounts. Once the public got hold of all the information, they began to ask questions, which lead to the government officials to legally take action against the local shop keeper. "This is how the rural people can draw a connection between the RTI Law and their efforts to survive with basic necessities," says Nayak. Nayak also mentions that the Upazilla is not above the law and is bound to abide by the RTI Law and provide all kinds of information to the people.

Manjurul Ahasan Bulbul, the Head of News and Current Affairs, NCA, ATN Bangla, ended the discussion by pointing out that if the rural people are not sensitised, the RTI Law will be of no use whatsoever. "The Grass-root people have to be educated," he says. "And in turn, they will have to educate their people so that more questions are asked by more and more people." ■