

SSKOP postpones today's hunger strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sangbadik Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SSKOP) yesterday deferred its six-hour hunger strike and work abstention programmes, scheduled to be held simultaneously today, as it coincided with BNP's dawn to dusk hartal.

The programmes will now be held at Jatiya Press Club from 10:00am to 4:00pm on April 25.

Leaders of SSKOP, an organisation of journalists, employees and workers of newspaper and news agencies, called the programmes earlier demanding formation of the 8th Wage Board.

The postponement decision came at SSKOP's meeting at Jatiya Press Club, chaired by SSKOP Co-convenor and Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) President Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, says a press release.

SSKOP requested all stakeholders to attend a meeting at Jatiya Press Club at 11:00am on April 24 to make the programmes a success.

39 NGOs announce info disclosure policy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty nine non-government organisations (NGO) yesterday announced to have voluntarily formulated their respective information disclosure policy in line with the Right to Information (RTI) Act to make more information available to the public.

Of these NGOs, which monitor service delivery of the government agencies at local level across the country, 30 have already given approval to their policies.

The announcement came at a workshop in the capital's Brac Centre Inn, moderated by Farid Hossain, bureau chief of Associated Press.

Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI), supported by USAID Bangladesh's Promoting Governance, Accountability, Transparency and Integrity (Progati) Program, was the organiser.

Thanking the Information Commission, MRDI, Transparency International Bangladesh and other organisations, USAID Progati Chief of Party Dennis Gallagher said, "If it (the act) can not get outside of Dhaka, it is not going to be very effective."

He said the focus on proactive disclosure is really important for both the government and non-governmental agencies because it creates openness. "In the long term what this is all about is it is trying to



Information Commissioner Prof Dr Sadeka Halim speaks at a workshop in the capital yesterday on RTI and proactive disclosure organised by Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI). On her right are AP Bureau Chief Farid Hossain and Chief of Party of USAID PROGATI Dennis Gallagher and on her left are MRDI Executive Director Hasibur Rahman and Manusher Jonno Foundation Programme Coordinator Sanjida Sobhan.

PHOTO: MRDI

create a more open society."

Gallagher said organisations can accomplish their objectives better if they are more open in their communication and the civil society organisations have a vital role to play in this process.

"You (NGOs) have adopted your own policies on proactive disclosure. Unless you demonstrate the potential of proactive disclosures then you can not really play an effective role in encouraging the government and other institutions to play this role," he said.

Information Commissioner Prof Sadeka Halim said the country is yet

to reach the stage where people can easily get information.

She said there should be a standardised information disclosure policy, irrespective of the nature of the NGO. "It will not do if one NGO says it will provide all of its information while another puts a bar on selective information."

The social scientist also said there should be a strong political commitment to make the RTI Act a success. "The NGOs and the government agencies will have to work together to make it effective."

Sadeka said they have transpired that NGOs also work with a bureau-

cratic mindset. "They will have to come out of this."

The Dhaka University professor also said the NGOs should look into ways on how they can disclose information on their assets and liabilities.

While presenting the keynote, Sanjida Sobhan, a programme coordinator of Manusher Jonno Foundation, said the designated information officer of an organisation should be trained to provide information willingly.

MRDI Executive Director Hasibur Rahman said they pro-

vided the technical assistance in the formulation of the policies to ensure transparency to the widest possible audience.

He said a maximum disclosure of information by the NGOs can build informed citizens and ensure their participation in the development process.

The policies placed the organisations in a very comfortable position to respond to demands for information, he added.

Chief executives, executive board members and designated officers of the 39 NGOs shared their experiences at the workshop.

Valuables of spinning mill gutted

UNB, Gazipur

A huge quantity of cotton and valuables of a spinning mill were destroyed in a fire at Muradpur in Kaliakoir upazilayesterday.

Police said the fire had originated from a machine of Haji Nurul Islam Spinning Mill at around 8:00am and soon engulfed several units of the mill.

On information, fire fighters rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control after about five hours.

Prof Eaysmin made Uttara varsity pro-VC

METRO DESK

Prof Eaysmin Ara Lekha, dean of the School of Education and Physical at Uttara University, took over charge as Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the university on April 19, says a press release.

She completed her BA (Hons) in 1992 and MA in 1995 in Bangla Literature from Dhaka University. She did her PhD in Linguistics from Jadavpur University, India, in 2010.



PHOTO: STAR

Many commuters suffer as the number of buses decreases after the pro-hartal activists go on the rampage in the capital yesterday ahead of today's hartal called by the opposition BNP. The photo was taken from Farmgate area last night.

SHITALAKHHYA ENCROACHMENT

DoE summons Premier Cement MD

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Directorate of Environment (DoE) has summoned the managing director of Premier Cement Ltd on charges of grabbing a portion of the Shitalakkhya River in the bordering area between Narayanganj and Munshiganj.

A press release signed by Assistant Director (Enforcement) of the DoE Abdullah Al Mamun said yesterday.

In a notice issued by the DoE, the managing director has been directed to appear before the DoE head office on April 23 and to explain why a case would not be filed against the company, the grabbed part of

the river would not be recovered, compensation would not be realised for causing damage to the environment and the goods of the company, kept on the grabbed part, would not be seized.

The DoE notice said the company had grabbed the river beyond the border pillars of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

It said damaging environment and ecology by filling any water body is a cognisable offence as per Bangladesh Environment Protection Act, 1995 (Amended 2010).

Copies of the notice have been sent to the chairman of BIWTA and the deputy commissioners of Narayanganj and Munshiganj.

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