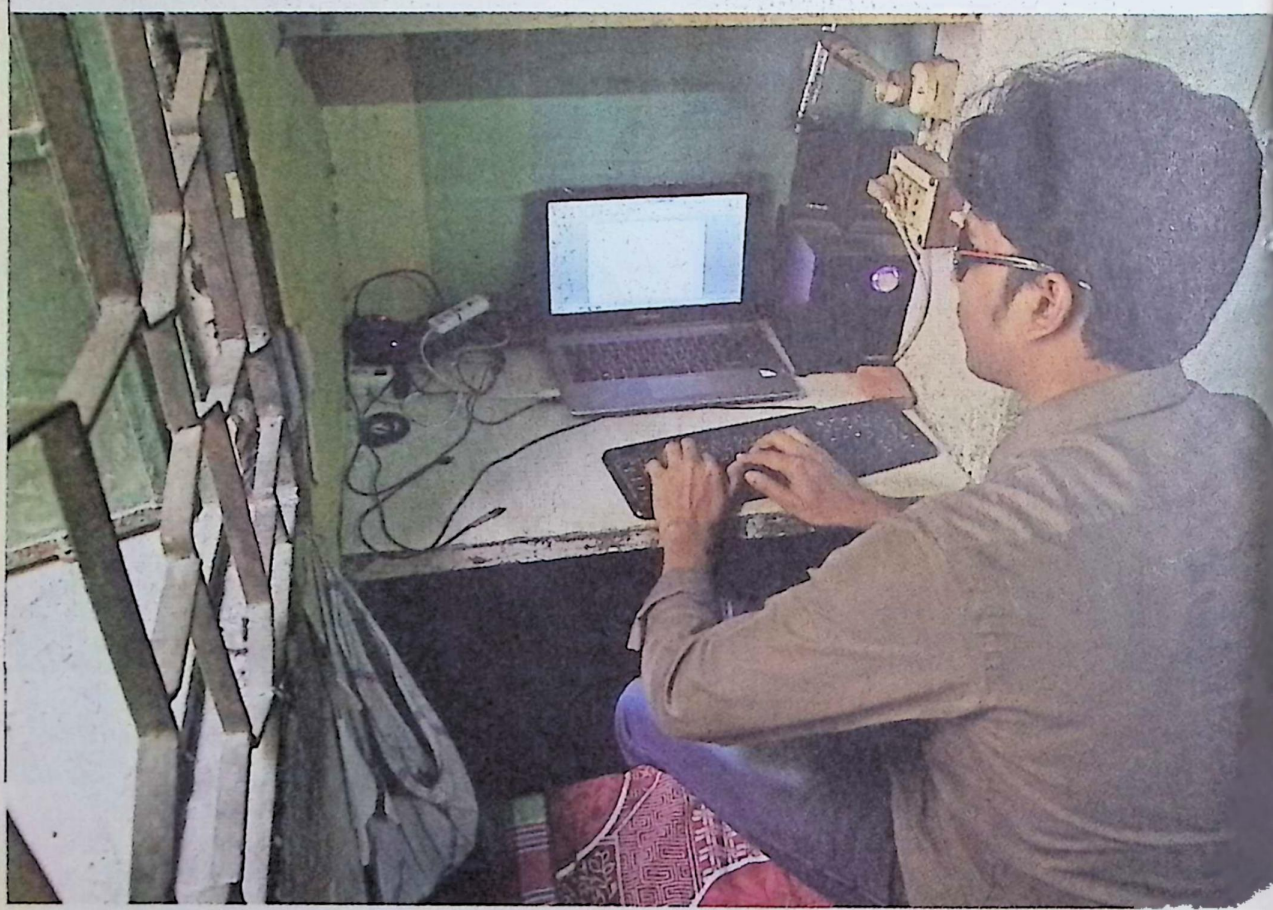
distant dream. His family, determined to help Mahbub to further his studies, has to move to Sherpur to admit Mahbub to a special school. But after a blind student finishes her primary schooling, the student and her parents have to find a friendly, inclusive school that will take the child in, accepting her special needs. According to Shamim, it is very hard for blind students to see their parents go door to door literally beseeching the teachers to accept their children. Most of the schools are reluctant to accept these students though their brilliance and academic performance sometimes is far better than their normal counterparts.



Now visually impaired students can use computers through screen reader software like JAWS. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

The schools that accept these children in most of the cases can do little to give them any special service. Mir Hussain, a blind student of political science says, "Our secondary education is totally dependent on the Braille textbooks provided by some NGOs. But in the higher secondary level we have no such facility. We have to appoint 'readers' to read the whole book and convert it into Braille on our own using Braille type writers."

The process of sitting for the exams is even more challenging. Blind students must manage to get 'writers' from younger classes long before the scheduled exam. These 'writers' write the answers of the examination questions as dictated by the blind students. If they can't manage someone, there is no other way a blind student can sit for the exam and being dropped out becomes the only option left before them. Even in most of the exams, especially in the admission tests, the appointed writers sometimes can't make out questions written in English. So in the exam hall where time is the determiner, these blind students with amateur 'writers' have to face severe difficulties.

Overcoming such difficulties, a few students further their studies and even fewer among them can reach the highest echelon of education in Bangladesh. Getting admitted into Dhaka University is like fulfilling a dream, but for the blind students it translates into the beginning of an even bigger challenge. A student has to wait for a year to be allotted a room in the residential halls. Getting a seat in the dormitories without any support from political big brothers is almost impossible.

But at the university most of these students find friends who are compassionate and eager to help them. They are also very curious to know how their