

Each person I meet is here for a reason. They care about their fellow suffering humans. That's the highest form love can take.

providing physiotherapy, occupational therapy, counseling and vocational training." Dr Kamal is the Head of Medical Services at CRP.

Anwar Hossain is a beneficiary of that. In 1988, when he went to a well-reputed hospital with a chest pain, the doctor told him he had a tumour in his back and needed surgery. "He mistakenly cut two nerves. I was paralysed from the chest down immediately. They referred me to CRP. In addition to giving me physiotherapy and counselling, they showed me videos and brought role models from here and abroad to boost my confidence. They encouraged me to work and gave me a type writer." Today he is a project manager of CRP and also the secretary of SCIDAB (Spinal Cord Injuries Development Association Bangladesh).

One of the main challenges after spinal cord injury is to regain independence. "Physiotherapy helps improve independence in daily activities," Professor Tomasz Tasiemski PhD says. "A person first must be independent in order to continue education, work, and look after the family and so on. Participating in sports is also very important for the physical and psychological development of the patients." Dr Tomasz, Head of department of Sports for People with Disabilities has travelled from his native Poland to be here. During his first week in Bangladesh, he trained the trainers at CRP.

It's after lunch and we are at CRP—a 15-minute drive from the conference—to see the place that has turned so many lives around. What we see as soon as we enter the premise takes us by surprise: A tri-nation tournament! "In power lifting, Hafizur Rahman has just won the first prize lifting 102 kgs (225 pounds)," Pappu Lal Modak, sports trainer at CRP, eagerly says. "Our basketball team has beaten India 76-5. Mehedi Hasan Rizvi from Bangladesh has reached the semi-final in table tennis."

At the basketball court outside a group of players practices while spectators cheer them on. Pintu, a 16-year-old who broke his backbone after falling from a

Spinal Cord Injury Factsheet

- The term 'spinal cord injury' refers to damage to the spinal cord resulting from trauma (e.g. a car crash) or from disease or degeneration (e.g. cancer).
- Every year, around the world, between 250 000 and 500 000 people suffer a spinal cord injury (SCI).
- The majority of spinal cord injuries are due to preventable causes such as road traffic crashes, falls or violence.
- People with a spinal cord injury are two to five times more likely to die prematurely than people without a spinal cord injury, with worse survival rates in low- and middle-income countries.
- Spinal cord injury is associated with lower rates of school enrollment and economic participation, and it carries substantial individual and societal costs.
- Symptoms may include partial or complete loss of sensory function or motor control of arms, legs and/or body. The most severe spinal cord injury affects the systems that regulate bowel or bladder control, breathing, heart rate and blood pressure. Most people with spinal cord injury experience chronic pain.

Source: WHO

tree whizzes past me on his wheelchair, singing a popular film song. When was the last time I sang a song aloud?

The overall picture of the country, however, is very different with few exceptions. For people like Pintu, the built environment is full of uncertainties and anxieties. None of the public spaces is designed with their needs in mind. Be it bus stops, railway stations, shopping complexes, public buildings or toilets, they feel short-changed by poor planning and sheer neglect.

The Bangladesh Army is one of those exceptions. In 2012, Kaniz Fatima, now a Second Lieutenant in the Bangladesh Army, met with an accident when she was about to get commissioned. "It's not easy to lead this type of life. Things are totally changed. No one will perceive what I am feeling...from a very fast, speedy life...now it's totally still. That was more shocking when I lost my father after my accident. He couldn't bear my condition."

The Army offered her full support. "There is no example in any other army in the world that when a trainee officer received this type of injury he or she was



Emdad Hossain Mollick does not allow his physical condition to limit the power of his imagination.

“No one will perceive what I am feeling...From a very fast, speedy life...now it's totally still.”

fought for just like the civil rights movement in the US." In 1982, he was a 21-year-old on a break from college in Fraser Island in Australia. While diving into the ocean, he hit his head and broke his neck at C4-5 level.

"In 1989 I came to visit CRP with two of my colleagues, Richard Frost and Simon Gue. Simon and I designed a wheelchair while studying for a Masters in Industrial Design at the Royal College of Art in London. After meeting Valerie and seeing how CRP works, we went back to the UK and founded Motivation." Today Motivation (www.motivation.org.uk) is internationally recognised as a leader in the design, production and distribution of high-quality, low-cost wheel chairs, trikes and supportive seating in developing countries. "The wheelchairs you see here were designed by me," David says politely.

The name that keeps appearing in every conversation is Valerie Taylor, the founder of CRP. Where is she? Why isn't she in the front taking pictures as is the norm? Then I spot her in a corner talking quietly to a lanky gentleman. Someone tells me that's Jon Moussally, MD from the US and founder of *traumalink*. Dr Jon's organisation trains volunteers and local communities in basic

retained in his or her job," Second Lieutenant Kaniz says. "All my seniors, course mates, my UNIT CO (Commanding Officer), 2IC (Second-in-Command), ADJUTANT are very supportive of me, and my commission has become possible because of the CAS (Chief of Army Staff), the present Commandant of BMA (Bangladesh Military Academy) and my Term Commanders."

Second lieutenant Kaniz also works as an official translator for Queens University, Canada, all the while remaining paralysed from C4-C5 level. "When the accident took place, from Chittagong, I was taken to DHAKA CMH by a helicopter. Then the Army sent me to Bangkok. After coming back I received treatment at CRP for six months. I think CRP is the best for the management of spinal cord injury."



Second Lieutenant Kaniz Fatima



David Constantine



Anwar Hossain