

CHALLENGING THE STIGMA

MIZANUR RAHMAN'S INITIATIVE TO CHANGE THE WAY SOCIETY VIEWS DISABILITY

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN



PHOTO COURTESY: PDF

Practice going on for the upcoming Physically-Challenged Premier League.

When Mizanur Rahman became enrolled into Jahangirnagar University in 2006, he was not sure whether he would be able to continue to meet the costs of his education. Says the founder of Physically-Challenged Development Foundation (PDF): "While I was struggling with trying to meet the costs of my education, I met Barkat from my department. While receiving training in BKSP, Barkat had a severe spinal cord injury and became

disabled for the rest of his life. I used to help him in his studies and it was while assisting him that I got a new vision for my life." It was this vision that led Mizan to start an innovative initiative that would change the lives of thousands of people with disabilities.

Since its establishment in 2008, PDF a completely youth led voluntary organisation has been working for disabled children and youth through diversified activities. Its

campus based activities have ensured a safer and friendlier campus life for thousands of disabled students all over Bangladesh. It has brought to the forefront the issue of the rights of the disabled. It has contributed significantly in increasing quota in different universities and in the job sector for the disabled people.

As a social activist Mizan has brought the change in his

the inspiration and a great support in all of my activities. And believe me; whether it's about family or the organization, she is more active than me." This amazing couple has a one-year-old healthy young boy.

By the time Mizan was a third year student of the university, he was regularly assisting Barkat. His interactions with Barkat made him realise just how



PHOTO COURTESY: PDF

Besides raising awareness on the rights of the disabled, the PDF also provides humanitarian support.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

During the Summer Challenge Programme young participants move into the community and get first hand experience of social work.

own life that he wants to see in the society. Mizan married Suraiya Akter Bably, a visually impaired woman in 2012. Suraiya is the first blind student to get admitted to Jahangirnagar University. Mizan says, "Suraiya has been

unwelcoming the campus was for students with disabilities. To his dismay he found out that there was an unofficial ban on taking in students with disabilities like visual or hearing impairment. In a university programme Mizan



Mizanur Rahman

As a social activist Mizan has brought the change in his own life that he wants to see in society.