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Editor (Star Weekend)

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PHOTO: PHAN CHAKMA

Perhaps there is a soul hidden in everything and it can always speak, without even making a sound, to another soul." – Frances Hodgson Burnett

SNAPSHOT

| INITIATIVE |

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DIFFERENTLY-ABLED

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

PHOTO: KAZI TAHISIN AGAZ APURBO

Mehedi Hasan, a visually impaired youth lost his sight at the age of four. However, due to his strong determination and relentless support from the family, Mehedi has achieved a Bachelor's degree from Dhaka University's Department of Political Science in 2014. Last year, when his father passed away, Mehedi, the eldest among four children, take over the responsibility to run the entire family. "Although I am a university graduate with a very good result, I was rejected to apply for many jobs due to my blindness. Bangladeshi organisations are very reluctant to employ physically challenged people in appropriate positions," shares Mehedi at the ECMY Career Expo organised by the Physically Challenged Development Foundation (PDF) at The Daily Star in Dhaka.

Mehedi's struggle to get a job to support his family might come to an end after attending the career expo as one of the participant employers asked for Mehedi's curriculum vitae as soon as Mehedi finished his heart touching story. Nonetheless, in our country, Mehedi's story is shared by all the educated physically challenged people. After overcoming thousands of obstacles during their time as students, those who are physically challenged face even more obstacles and discrimination to get proper jobs after completing their education. To address these issues, PDF initiated a project last year called Enhancing Capacity and Mainstreaming Youths with Disability (ECMY). Under this project, this youth led voluntary organisation trained 100 young men and women with disabilities and organised this career expo to manage suitable jobs for them.

"The training covers a wide range of topics such as computer operation training, training on office management, spoken English courses and even sports training were provided to the trainee youths," says Mamunur Rashid, Vice President of PDF. "We have arranged training for them according to their will and requirements," he adds.

From PDF, Shirin Akhtar received training on using computer software that can convert text to speech. "The software is called JAWS. Since I am a student with visual impairment, it is very helpful for me to learn all the functions of this software. In our institutions, we have to use Braille books which are very outdated and full of errors," says Shirin, a fourth year student of Kabi Nazrul Government College in Dhaka. "After learning the functions of this software I will install it in my computer and I will be able access all our textbooks and a lot of supporting material through this programme as this will read out the texts for me. It will also help me a lot to get a job because with this software I can operate computer as fluently as any other person," says an enthusiastic Shirin. This initiative has changed the lives of a hundred young men and women. However, compared to the crisis we have



been facing, this initiative will only be successful if it can be done in a large scale. At present, it has been found that 1.4 percent of Bangladesh's total population are physically challenged. If such large amounts of people remain uneducated and unemployed, the loss of human potential and resources of our nation will be irrecoverable. "In many areas of Bangladesh and in our society physically challenged people are often treated as burdens. This

malpractice has to be stopped and their capacity must be recognised and it is possible if we can take initiatives like ECMY and if our mass media share these differently-able people's success stories," says Dr Sheikh Mahmud Ali, a retired bureaucrat and a discussant of the career expo. To break out from such stigma, PDF initiative to ensure employment for the physically challenged people can be an example for us. ■



MAILBOX

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Of Melodies and Rights

Lucky Akhand is not only a musician, but an inspiration to the young generation. He sacrificed his whole life for the love of music. He didn't want to be rich, he wanted to be an artist. Now, he is in the hospital, unable to financially bear his own treatment. It's appreciated that some well-wishers have come forward with help. On the other hand, there are worries too. Although, Lucky Akhand didn't work for money, he could have been wealthy. A lot of his songs are available on YouTube and other sites. These are being downloaded free of cost. His songs are his creations. He has legal ownership on these. If the policy of copyrighting would have been followed in the country, he could have earned a big amount. Then he would not have to depend on others for his treatment. Copyright law is followed all over the world, why not Bangladesh? It's high time the government takes proper steps against the violation of all kinds of copyright and preserves the rights of writers, authors, singers etc. Arif Billah Department of Law University of Dhaka



Congratulations to Bangladesh Descent Russian Olympics Gold Winner

We, the people of Bangladesh, heartily congratulate Ms. Margarita Mamun (Rita), the Bangladeshi descent Russian Olympics Gold winner in rhythmic gymnastics, at only 20 years of age. Her father was from Durgapur village of Rajshahi district in Bangladesh. She is now well known as the 'Bengal Tiger', named by the Rio 2016 Olympics Committee, after she won. I would suggest the authorities to name one road in Rajshahi Divisional District Town after her, placing a photo of her at the games on the road, which will be inaugurated with a ceremony and a grand reception, arranged by our present government and the concerned district administration authorities, to honour her in our country forever. By taking Bangladesh's name on that platform, I, now a 75-year-old, pay her my respect. Mohammad Anwarul Quadir Ex-president, Naogaon City Press Club

5 Reasons Why You Should Read

I would like to thank Naziba Basher for her article regarding why one should read published on August 26, 2016. Reading really is something that helps people achieve perfection. Take any developed civilisation, modern or ancient, if you think about their development, it would be clear to you that the subject that played the key role behind their development is acquiring knowledge, which is impossible without absorbing oneself in reading books. I was very pleased when I learned from the article that reading books not only enriches you with knowledge, but it also decreases stress, which is the source of many a disease in this contemporary age. Whenever I see someone reading a book on a bus while stuck in traffic congestion, I feel proud. Unfortunately, day by day, this sight is becoming rare. I hope the article by Naziba Basher inspires many to read more. Enam Hasan Madaninagar, Narayanganj

The opinions expressed in these letters do not necessarily represent the views of the Star Weekend.



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