



Tamanna Aktar Nura earned the highest GPA in her SSC exams in 2019.

PHOTOS: STAR

NURTURING DREAMS

Talent isn't measured by limbs

AZIBOR RAHMAN, back from Jashore

Seventeen-year-old Tamanna Aktar Nura was born with no arms and only one leg. She earned the highest GPA in her high school graduation exams. She took the exams by holding a pen between her toes.

"I want to prove that physically challenged people are not burdens to society. I believe in my own potential. I want to be a BCS cadre," shared Tamanna, who loves reading, writing, and drawing.

From the day that she was born, Tamanna's paternal grandfather thought of her as a bad omen. "I have not maintained my relationship with my father. When Tamanna was just 18 months old, my wife and I decided to move out of his neighbourhood," said Md Raushan Ali, Tamanna's father.

Now, they live in a brick house on the side of a water body at Alipur village in Jhikorgacha of Jashore, in rather unhygienic conditions. The house was built for them by

Tamanna's maternal grandfather, Dr Abdul Khalek. However, he does not visit them, as he has not been able to come to terms with Tamanna's condition till date.

Tamanna's parents receive no financial support from their own family members. Her father teaches at a madrasah, but earns no salary, as the institution is a non MPO. His only source of income is his private tutoring jobs. He has been facing many setbacks in his work due to the pandemic, for over a year.

Initially, no schools were willing to accept Tamanna, because of her special needs. "The Principal of Ajmain Adus Pre Cadet School was very kind to us. He agreed to enroll Tamanna into his school after I told him about her in detail," explained Md Raushan Ali. "Tamanna's mother laid out a mat in a corner of the classroom for her. Ever since then, my daughter has stood first in each of her classes. She completed her SSC exams with

GPA 5 from Bankra J K Secondary School, in 2019. She is a science student."

"Tamanna is a brilliant and polite girl. She is attentive to her studies. She is also excellent at drawing and debating," said Helal Khan, Headmaster, Bankra J K Secondary School.

Tamanna now looks to achieve GPA 5 in her HSC exams.

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YOUTH IN ACTION

Empowering marginalised groups through education and employment

LABIBA ANJUMI KABIR

Muhammad Afjal Sultan Sufi is one of the nineteen Bangladeshi changemakers to receive the 2021 Diana Award. He founded Doorbin Foundation when he was just 19 years old, with a goal to help those in need.

Afjal has been passionate about social work from a young age. Currently, he is pursuing his BSc in Electrical and Electronics Engineering from Port City International University in Chattogram.

Doorbin Foundation started out with winter clothing drives and distribution drives of relief materials. However, Afjal soon realised that these efforts were helping marginalised groups in the short term, but were not reaching the depth of their problems. Bearing that in mind, he set up a project to enable indigenous people in Tripura to access employment and education.



PHOTOS: COURTESY

Muhammad Afjal Sultan Sufi.



Doorbin Foundation set up a project to enable indigenous people in Tripura to access employment and education.

His campaigns have helped many children to start schooling. He also organised a training session on the causes and effects of domestic violence to educate kids about the harmful effects of child marriage.

For their amazing efforts, Doorbin Foundation was due for recognition. However, getting acknowledged from a platform like The Diana Award was far from Afjal's expectations. "Receiving the award gives me strength to carry on my projects. This achievement has also introduced me to many young and talented people from across the globe. I share this award with my team at Doorbin Foundation and my family, who have always been supportive,"

he says.

Afjal knew that developing a project for the education and employment of minority groups will not be easy. "I knew that I will face objections, and difficulties in communication, to say the least. However, helping people to ease their lives even a little bit is bigger than those problems to me," he shares.

Afjal aims to combat against discrimination of minority groups, and help them gain their rights with Doorbin Foundation.

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SPOTLIGHT

Thriving as freelancers: Young professionals share their experience

SADIA TAHSIN

Freelance jobs have opened up an array of opportunities for young professionals in recent years, across different industries.

Alongside being a staff photographer for an online news portal, Piyas Biswas has been freelancing for three international organisations and a newspaper based in Bangladesh, since 2016. "If someone is passionate and wants to turn freelancing into a viable career, they must know people from their industry, gain certifications, and create a strong portfolio to sustain amidst the competition," he shares. His work has been published in *The Guardian*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *CNN International*, *BBC Bangla*, *Deutsche Welle*, *Yahoo News*, *AP*, *MSN*, *Forbes*, *UCANews* and *The Daily Star*.

While the coronavirus pandemic obligated different professionals to newly cope with the work-from-home culture, many freelancers have always worked this way. However, working is harder for women, as they are often expected to deal with all the familial responsibilities while maintaining professionalism at

their jobs equally well.

"My workload increased by many folds amidst the pandemic. Being a mother, I had to adapt to newer family dynamics, since my children are always home," says Azanta Rezwana Mirza, a freelance writer, editor, and transcriber. "That being said, flexibility and efficient time-management are sought after in our trade, since clients do not check how long we work, but rather, how effectively the projects get delivered."

Abdullah Rayhan, a first-year English Literature student at Jahangirnagar University, is a writer at SteamPug Content, an agency that provides freelance employment to young professionals to earn money through specialised writing. He occasionally writes for the Literature page of *The Daily Star* as well. "I want to pursue my career in Literature. Besides pocket money, freelancing helps me build and improve relevant skills such as critical reading, writing, researching and time management among others," shares Rayhan.

Umme Hani Esha and Zarin Tasnim Noushin are part of Women in Digital, a social enterprise that facilitates female creators who want to work in digital platforms to showcase their skills.

"I have ample opportunities as a freelance graphics and website front designer to build international client relationships," says Esha. "Work flow has declined globally due to the pandemic. However, locally, it has increased because clients are outsourcing from us. Frankly, the income is usually flexible, just like the nature of the work itself."

Zarin, a graphics and website designer, recently started working as a digital marketer as well. She chose to freelance since she lives out of Dhaka, and finds it difficult to commute back and forth. She gets to keep all the profits, work from the comfort of her home, and choose her own clients. However, the unpredictable and inconsistent workload, unpaid legwork, and absence of employee benefits are drawbacks of the job, she adds.



ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

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