

Farzana's resilience brings her closer to getting the job of her dreams

Farzana Akter is a visually impaired woman. She lost her eyesight during her higher secondary level. Study materials for visually impaired persons are not only very expensive but hard to find in Bangladesh. The books (printed in Braille) are rare at the primary or secondary level. Notwithstanding these obstacles, Farzana successfully received her MA degree in history from Dhaka University.

At present, she is struggling to find a decent job. Her dream is to work for a bank so she is appearing for examinations for jobs at different exams. In April this year she submitted an application for the post of Officer (Cash) at the Agrani Bank. Though Farzana's application complied with all the conditions mentioned in the advertisement announced by the Bank, the Bank authorities rejected her application on vague "Miscellaneous" grounds and refused to provide the admit card for the exam. The Bank issued admit cards to the candidates on 24 April, 2013 and fixed the date of exam for 3 May, 2013. Farzana was very disappointed and frustrated at her disqualification particularly because she was unaware of the grounds of her disqualification. A national daily, *Prothom Alo*, communicated with the chairman of the Bank on behalf of Farzana. The Chairman clearly stated that they would not engage any visually impaired person in the position that Farzana had applied for and hence, her application had not been considered. On 1 May, 2013 *Prothom Alo* published a story titled "*Chuke alo nei bole...*" reporting the actions of Agrani Bank.

Farzana who is used to fighting against the odds, stated without ambiguity that no work is impossible for her. The job advertisement mentioned that there was special quota (govt. declared) for persons with disabilities and there was no restriction for the visually impaired. So why such deprivation? Does it not amount to deception on part of the Bank for they accepted Farzana's application (with money)?

The Constitution prohibits any form of discrimination with regard to employment in the public sector in Bangladesh. Moreover intending to create a "Level Playing Field" and for the advancement of backward sections, the framers of the Constitution inserted Article 28 (2) & 29 (3) empowering the State to frame special provisions. By virtue of these articles the State provides different opportunities e.g. seats reserved in Union Councils for women, declaration of quotas for orphans or PWDs, relaxing age limits for freedom fighters. By notification in the official gazette, the government initiated quota system and relaxed age limit by two years for the candidates with disabilities. This was also mentioned in the said advertisement published by Agrani Bank. Infringing its' own rules and principles, why did Agrani Bank want to impede the path of Farzana's advancement? And why did the bank authorities want to violate her fundamental rights?

Before the day of the exam (3 May, 2013) Farzana rushed to the BLAST head office instead of preparing for the exam. A team from BLAST collected Farzana's admit card by communicating and advocating with Agrani Bank. Responding to BLAST's request, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) also came forward and helped Farzana in receiving her admit card. Finally, Farzana can appear in the exam and expects to achieve success.

We too expect her to succeed and want her progress to continue. We also wish for progress in establishment of rights of persons with disabilities at all levels in the State, society and

institutions. The differences between non disabled and disabled citizens should be removed by conscience and consciousness.