

# The Daily Star

April 03, 2014

*Physically Challenged Persons*

## **Society needs to change attitude towards them**

*Roundtable told*

*Staff Correspondent*

Society needs to change its attitude towards physically challenged persons, and recognise their merit, said speakers at a roundtable discussion yesterday.

They made the observation at the roundtable on "Barriers faced by women with disabilities in education and legal procedures" organised jointly by Physically Challenged Development Foundation (PDF) and Women with Disabilities Development Foundation (WDDF) in association with Brac University Community Service Club at the university.

Showing the results of a survey conducted in one national and six public universities, M Mizanur Rahman, president of the PDF, said that fewer physically challenged women study in these universities compared to their male counterpart due to a lack of accessible classrooms and toilets.

Ashrafun Nahar Mistee, executive director of the WDDF, said not a single trial court in the country has accessibility features for physically challenged persons.

Courts do not want to accept the testimony of female victims who are visually impaired even under the prevention of violence against women and children act 2000 (amended 2003), she said.

Although there are provisions for taking the statement of hearing impaired victims, it is not specified who will appoint an interpreter -- the court or the victim, she said, demanding an amendment to the law.

"We do not need your pity; what we need is a little bit of your cooperation," said visually impaired Jolly Kowser, senior executive at the compliance department of the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

The seminar was also attended by Sayeda Sarwat Abed, director of Brac Institute of Languages.