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Prothom Alo introduces audio news

Staff Correspondent

From now on, visually impaired people who have internet access can listen to news of daily Prothom Alo by logging into a new link of its website.

Prothom Alo yesterday launched the web link named "Prothom Alo Sruti" where they can listen to its audio Bangla news uploaded using a Bangla language processing software.

A team of Centre for Research on Bangla Language Processing (CRBLP) of Brac University has developed the software named Bangla text to speech (TTS).

Dr Ainun Nishat, vice-chancellor of Brac University, Prof Mumit Khan, Head of CRBLP and his team, Saiful Islam Khan, project officer of Strengthening Government Integrated Education Programme, formally launched the web link at Prothom Alo office in the city.

The link has all the contents of the news which can be downloaded and run through any audio player, the organisers said.

Speaking on the occasion, Editor and Publisher of Prothom Alo Matiur Rahman said they have launched the initiative to help visually impaired people listen and know about the events happening in the country and globe.

"It is just a beginning and we want to improve it further," he said.

It is a part of the newspaper's social responsibility and it is indeed a big opportunity for not only the visually impaired but also the aged persons and those who are uneducated, he said.

Dr Mumit Khan, head of CRBLP, said there is a problem in sound quality and they will work for improving it.

The Bangla TTS software was launched few years back though the English TTS was introduced 40 years back, so it will take some time for improvement, he said, adding the software is open for all.

Saiful Islam Khan said it is a fulfilment of a long cherished dream.

He also said there are around 1,500 visually impaired students in different educational institutions across the country, but they do not have internet access.

He urged the mobile phone operators to come forward to this end.

Visually impaired Rasel Hasan said a new window has been opened with launching of the link. "Now we can know about the newspaper's reports independently."

Hailing the initiative, Dr Ainun Nishat said this initiative will help the aged persons and also those who remain very busy.

The university will give all the logistic supports to strengthen the partnership of Prothom Alo and Brac University, he said.

Advocate Mosharaf Hossain of Bangladesh Visually Impaired People's Society, Jahirul Islam of Jatiya Pratibondhi Forum and member of CRBLP also spoke at the function.

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