

age twelve by an accident in a chemistry laboratory at school. Perhaps it was this very tragedy that made Sir John determined to overcome his disability, continuing his education by learning Braille and earning a scholarship to Oxford where he studied Law and Social Science/Sociology. In 1941 he joined the Royal Assistance for the Blind as assistant secretary which involved him in working for the rehabilitation and employment of the blind. But it didn't stop there. He wanted to do more and, so in 1946, he along with his wife Jean visited many countries that were then colonies of the British Empire. The trip inspired him to establish Sight Savers International in 1950 of which he became director. During this period he helped to pioneer efforts

Class size is limited to 20 students per classroom and emphasis is given on working independently and thinking creatively.

Commitment



Sir John Wilson students at the celebration function.

that restored sight to more than one million people in the British Commonwealth. He founded the IMPACT movement, a UN initiative to prevent major causes of avoidable disability.

In 1993 Sir John founded IMPACT Foundation Bangladesh (IFB), a charitable trust and non-governmental organisation continuing the work of the global IMPACT movement in the country. Interestingly, the organisation is headed by another dedicated individual who also lost his sight in a childhood accident. Mansur Ahmed Choudhuri is IFB's dynamic leader and an example of how an individual can defy all odds and use his talents to help others. With respect to the school, Choudhuri says that modern education should incorporate two aspects: "They are firstly to equip the pupils with the present day need as opposed to traditional rigid syllabus-based studies and secondly to train them towards an innovative attitude for the nearer future."

With more and more students pouring in and its first batch of O'level students appearing in the examination this summer, the school is ready to expand. Its premises will soon shift to a 2.75-acre land at Bashundhara, which has been bought by its governing trust. The trust, called the Social Services and Management Trust, includes five organisations: Duncan Brothers, Camellia Duncan Foundation, United Insurance Company, Octavius Steel and Impact Foundation Bangladesh. At present the school's principal is another British woman, Ann M Burghard who emphasises the need to

adapt what the students learn within the cultural context of Bangladesh: "Our students are learning English in a Bangladeshi culture. We must embrace the local heritage and make children of all nationalities within the school proud of their time in Bangladesh." She also mentioned that the coming ten years would be spent on developing students' social and global awareness. "As a school we wholeheartedly support one charity but we need opportunities for our students to be more hands on, to work with disadvantaged youngsters, the sick or the elderly so that they develop their social conscience. We need to continually upgrade our computer facilities to keep our students abreast of technological developments." Considering the school's founder Sir John Wilson, who combined altruism with far-sightedness, such goals are in complete harmony with his philosophy. ■