

Towards a better tomorrow

WAHIDA MITU

Shilpi's father is a day labourer. Like other children of poor families she passed her time on the street 10 years ago. But her life changed when she came to know about a school run by Zonta Club and got enrolled in the school.

Shilpi, now 16 years old, read there from class I to class X. This year she appeared in SSC (Secondary School Certificate) examination and is now waiting for result. She just started teaching at the same school after finishing her schooling.

"Now I'm looking for a college where I can study after my classes. I want to teach here as this organisation has fulfilled my dream. I want to serve it till my death," said Shilpi.

In 2000 the Zonta Club-run school merged with Shishu Bikash Kendra (SBK) taking over its financial responsibilities. Many underprivileged children like Shilpi got the opportunity of education at SBK school situated in Rayerbazar in the city.

Bilkis Bari, the principal of SBK, explained why they prefer to take their ex-students as teacher of the school. "We have been choosing teachers from among our former students, because it motivates them to finish their education."

"They know they will have a place here if they do well. Also they are better at teaching these children who are of the same status," added Bilkis Bari.

SBK was established in 1989 at the initiative of three women including Bilkis Bari.

The school runs in two shifts with a total of 150 students who get both formal and non-formal education. The four-hour morning shift starts at 8:00am for the students of nursery to class



A lesson in progress at the Shishu Bikash Kendra, a school that helps children of poor families to get a decent education.

IV. A total of 110 students study in this shift. In the evening shift, which starts at 4:00pm for two hours, the students of class V to VIII get education.

The Zonta Club of Dhaka III, part of a Chicago-based international organisation, has made this school their priority in 2000 when they took over SBK, said Bilkis Bari.

"Every month Zonta donates Tk 30,500 to run the school," said Bilkis. "However our monthly expenditure is about Tk 35,000 including the medical expenditure."

She has to collect medicines from different pharmaceutical

companies and other sources.

The school provides free books, copybooks, uniforms, medicine and breakfast for the morning shift students. The evening shift students get free medicines and school uniform.

SBK follows national curriculum for formal primary education four days a week. In the rest two days SBK imparts the junior level students training on sewing. They are encouraged to do handwork on cushion covers, scarf and tablemats. These are sold to raise funds for the school. Recently some students have started learning computer.

The second shift is for those poor students who read in other schools and do not afford coaching or private tutors.

A doctor comes once a week for medical check-up of the students. Their mothers can also consult the doctor. Medication is provided free of cost, and the children are given anti-worm medicines regularly. They are taught proper hygiene and health care.

Nur Mohammad, a 14-year-old student, is suffering from rheumatic fever and now under treatment of the doctor of the SBK. "My health condition was worse earlier. Now I feel better as I am taking the medicines

regularly," said Nur.

The school arranges music class for the students once a week, apart from regular programmes such as essay competitions and cultural evenings on various occasions.

Mustafizur Rahman, the music teacher, who has been with the SBK from the very beginning said: "They are very sharp and enthusiastic. I never faced problem while teaching them."

The teachers of the school use body language for better understanding of the subjects by the students. They said this is a very helpful method of teaching.

The number of students at primary level is quite satisfactory. But the number reduces when they reach higher secondary level. At this level they want to help their parents by doing jobs in garment factories, automobile shops. Some of the girls get married.

Although the school's focus is on girls and helping them become self-reliant, there are boys who need some help but it is not easy to keep them for long. According to Bilkis Bari, the dropout of boys from the school is more frequent.

The teachers said the school's main problem is lack of space and accommodation. "We have very few rooms which are inadequate to hold classes," said Bilkis Bari. "House owners are not interested in renting out their houses to us."

She said they want to expand the school but they can't because of want of space. "Every year I have to refuse a lot of underprivileged children as I have very limited seats."

The children come from poor families, mainly rickshaw-pullers, day labourers, domestic help and garment factory workers.

Hostels turned homes for police

FROM PAGE 17

When the on-duty police officer at Kotwali police station was asked about these illegal occupants, he expressed his astonishment.

"I only know that some police personnel are living there temporarily with permission from the District Council Office," he said.

"I heard that some minor staff along with their families from different ministries are living there too," he added.

When contacted, about the illegally occupied hostels, Prof. Dr. Sirajul Islam Khan, vice-chancellor of the university said: "We are now emphasising on starting the administrative functions, giving priority to the appointment of a treasurer, registrar, controller and others staff support staff."

"Once these areas are filled we will take action to free the hostels from their occupants," he said.

"A fact finding committee to look into the actual picture of occupation allegations has been formulated, but we will need sometime to work things out," he added.

Nasrin Begum, the acting registrar and principal member of the committee said: "We have gone much ahead in this context. It will be easy for us to rescue the hostels from occupiers because the police department will help us. The hostels occupied by local people will be saved too soon."

A senior teacher going into the history of these illegal residents said that it resulted from a clash between the DCC's 71 number ward commissioner

Alhaj Md. Hossain Mollah and hostel residents in 1984.

"The commissioner along with some local people occupied the hostels driving away the students," he said.

However, Hossain Mollah said that the local people were disturbed by the mugging and anti-social activities by the hostels residents at that time. So the people themselves drove the students out for the sake of peace and security of the locality.

Although the Ministry of Education officials inspected the twice place later on, they did not permit students to reside in the hostels showing some lame excuse related to security, university sources said.

Irregularities in accounts

FROM PAGE 17

"I am aware that law obliges accounts have to be kept in the UGC format and the auditor has to be approved by the chancellor," he added.

However there are some universities who partially comply with the rules.

The financial statements submitted by East West University during 1997 to 2002 were not audited by chancellor-approved chartered accountant.

When contacted, Acting Vice-chancellor of East West University Dr Md Musa said, "We have got an auditor approved by the chancellor to audit our accounts of 2004-05 fiscal year."

"Neither education ministry nor the UGC ever raised any objection that the financial statements of previous years were not authentic as the auditor or auditing firms were not approved by the chancellor," said Dr Musa.

According to the UGC records, Independent University Bangladesh (IUB) submitted financial statements to the UGC in 2001, 2002 and 2003 but the accounts submitted were not audited by chancellor-approved chartered accountant.

"Governing Council of the university appoints an auditor and we inform the education ministry of it seeking chancellor's approval but the ministry has not made response to any of the letters," said IUB Vice-chancellor Dr Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury.

"We keep accounts in our own format, get them audited by chancellor-approved auditor and submit to both the education ministry and the UGC," he said adding the UGC has never raised objection regarding the format.

The UGC chairman said, "We will take immediate measures asking for financial statements of all previous and present years from all the private universities done in a lawful manner."

"We could not pay adequate attention to the financial matters, as we have been engaged with preparing evaluation report, amendment to the private university act, strategic report on higher education, formation of accreditation council and other matters," said the chairman when asked why UGC did not raise objection to the irregularities.

Jatrabari flyover

FROM PAGE 17

flyover. If the work could be started, a major portion of underground construction could be completed before the rainy season begins," said an official working on the project.

The investing and implementing authority will complete the project on the Build Own Operate and Transfer (BOOT) basis.

DCC will get a five percent share of the profit from the income of the flyover without making any financial investment.

The constructor of the flyover will own and operate the flyover for 24 years and afterwards will handover the ownership to DCC.

Unlike the other flyovers in the city, commuters will have to pay a toll to use the flyover. The rates for using the flyover have been fixed. A motorcycle will have to pay Tk 5, a CNG autorickshaw - Tk 10, a car - Tk 35, a jeep - Tk 40, a microbus - Tk 50, a minibus - Tk 100 and a trailer - Tk 200.

The flyover that will be constructed at a total estimated cost of Tk 706 crore will have 13 ramps and six entrances with four lanes on either side.

Starting from the Nawabpur road and Fazle Rabbi road intersection, the alignment follows Saheed Fazle Rabbi road keeping Gulistan Garden, Bangabhaban and Rajdhani market on the left side and intersect with the Hatkhola road at Tikatuli intersection.

11x3

11x2

9x3