

Dhaka Day by Day

Caring for the Old

by Samia Islam

There are hundreds of people on the streets trying to get through life by begging alms from the hurrying, scurrying public. Not all these people have the options of getting a job and a shot at a decent life. Among them are the helpless old people who have no other means of earning their livelihood other than depending on a pittance from strangers because their own children have forsaken them in their hour of need. At times, everyone is overcome by the urge to do something for the helpless old people on the streets. But not many of us make the time or the effort to stand up and take action. Those that do take the time are the people who change the world.

One such individual, Mr. Khatib Abdul Zahid Mukul has invested his time, money and energy into a rehabilitation centre which offers shelter to the down-and-out old people. The centre provides all basic amenities of life which every human being has a right to enjoy. Mr. Zahid has established the Old Home Rehabilitation Centre near Monipur/bazaar, Rajendrapur. It's housed in a one-storey, tin-shed, brick building. During

the city streets. Only 40 people are residing in a facility that has the capacity to house 500 people. When asked what he thought was the reason behind the poor response, Mr. Zahid, who has an office in Motijheel, points out that although old age homes satisfies the need for a safe shelter, it cannot be a replacement for family life. It cannot provide for the emotional needs of an individual. So, after a few days at this safe but impersonal life, they leave in search of a place to belong. And there are the others who come to the shelter after being driven out by their children who refuse to support them. On such occasions, the children usually realize their mistake and come to take the parent back. When helpless people have a place to go to if mistreated, they no longer have to take indignity in silence and this gives them the power over their kids to demand better treatment in their old age. Mr. Zahid thinks that in this regard his establishment has been a success.

He recalls that while growing up in Pabna, he often saw old people being mistreated by their



her visit in 1995, Mother Teresa laid the foundation stone for the facility in 1995. Currently the home stands on 60 bighas of land. A number of fish ponds, vegetable gardens, dairy and poultry farms have been set-up to make the centre self-sufficient. Income from all these endeavours go into a fund that finances the day-to-day expenditures of the establishment.

At present, there are about 40 people living in the home. The residents have a stand-by nurse and a compounder living on the premises. An MBBS doctor comes twice a week for general check up. Apart from eating hours, daily routine includes time for prayers, light exercise, recreational activities, adult education classes etc. The food is nutritional and adequate. There is a 200-book library. Indoor games are available for recreational purposes. The wide open spaces and greenery all around offers tranquillity and refreshes the mind. In all, it seems to be the answer to the prayers for any homeless individual, but oddly enough the response has not been overwhelming considering the number of people on

own flesh and blood just because they did not have the strength to fend for themselves. Although they had spent a lifetime trying to provide for their children, the kids found them to be a burden in the twilight of their lives. Ever since those days Mr Zahid has wanted to do something tangible to reach out to these people, to get them back the dignity they so richly deserve.

Unlike other dreamers, after achieving considerable degree of success in business, he didn't forget his childhood aspirations. He first established this shelter in Uttara in 1987. But scarcity of land for further expansions led him to shift to Rajendrapur where he found ample land to facilitate the financial self-sufficiency of the centre, so that if anything should happen to him, his centre would not get closed down for the lack of funds. In future, he plans to expand his shelter with branches in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country as well as in all the SAARC countries. We just hope that more and more people are inspired by him to add to the common good instead of indulging in the rat-race we call life.



Members of Parbottya Gano Parishad brought out a procession in the city yesterday protesting the killings of 28 woodcutters in Rangamati recently. — Star photo



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Metropolitan



Employees of Power Development Board held a protest march in the city yesterday. — Star photo

What's on today ...

Workshop: A two-day workshop on the 'Interim Report of the Urban Poverty Reduction Project', organised by Local Government Engineering Department in collaboration with Asian Development Bank, will begin. Chief guest: LGRD and Cooperatives Minister M Zillur Rahman. Venue: Hotel Sonargaon. Time: 9 am.

Seminar on diarrhoeal disease: A seminar on 'Spatial patterns of diarrhoeal disease in Matlab, Bangladesh,' organised by the Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh will be held. Michael Emch, junior research fellow, American Institute of Bangladesh Studies, will be the principal speaker. Venue: WVA auditorium, Rd: 16, House: 20, Dhanmondi. Time: 4:30 pm.

Film show: Rainbow Film Society and International Film Critic Association of Bangladesh (IFCAB) in association with Information Department of Indian High Commission has organised a four-day long film session commencing today. 'Gandhi', directed by Richard Attenborough, will be screened today. Venue: Indian High Commission auditorium. Time: 6 pm.

Anti-drug NGOs' meet: A meeting of the convening body of the National Coordination Council of Anti-drug NGOs will be held. Venue: VHSS, 273 Baitul Aman Housing Society, Rd: 7, Adabor, Shyamoli. Time: 10 am.

Rotary Club of Dhaka North: The regular weekly meeting of the club will be held. It will be a joint meeting with Rotaract Clubs of Dhaka North and Dhanmondi. Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, Managing Director, Ralli Karma Sahayak Foundation, will speak on 'Opportunities for income generating activities for the youth'. Venue: Sonargaon hotel. Time: 5:30 pm.

Rotary Club of Dhaka Central: The regular weekly meeting of the club will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club. Time: 1:30 pm.

Rotary Club of Dilkusha: The regular weekly meeting of the club will be held. Venue: Purbani hotel. Time: 5 pm.

Teachers urged to impart 'proper education'

Education Minister A S H K Sadek, yesterday called upon the teachers to discharge their responsibilities so that the posterity get proper education to build themselves as worthy citizens of the country, reports BSS.

He said that teachers were the mainstay of the nation to produce an educated working force to shoulder future responsibilities.

The education minister was speaking as the chief guest at a function organised by the Bangladesh Government Secondary Teachers' Association Okiya Parishad at the Dhanmondi Government Boys High School in the city yesterday morning.

The parishad also held a seminar on 'Eradication of Terrorism from Educational Institutions and the role of Teachers in raising the Standard of Education.'

Mayor of Dhaka Mohammad Hanif, State Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Abdul Matin Khasru and Director General of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Prof Rashida Begum attended the function as special guests.

Mamta Arafat, convener of the parishad and headmistress of Dhanmondi Government Boys High School, chaired the function Shamsur Rahman Khan Shahjahan, joint-secretary of Awami League was the discussant.

Sadek said the teachers should impart proper lessons to the students in the classrooms in such a manner so that they did not require to go to private tutors.

Top officials of BTC were also present on the occasion including Leaf director, G Mainuddin, production director, Saiful Islam and corporate affairs manager, Mahmudur Rahman.



Bonsai nursery of Bangladesh Tobacco Company began free distribution of saplings in the city on Saturday. — BTC photo

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY
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MR. & MRS. MAQSOODUL HAQUE
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