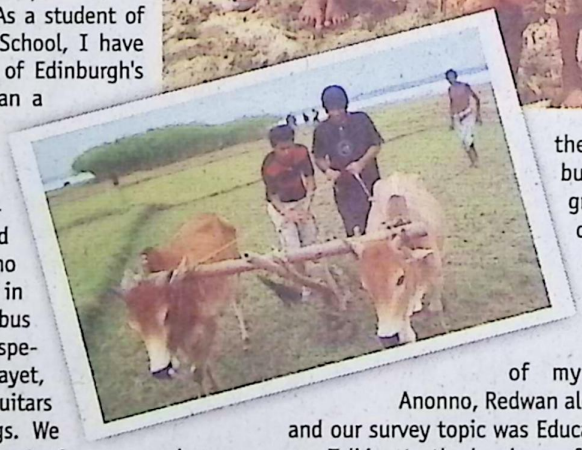
Maple Leaf students visit Rajshahi

Shihab Khan



THERE were thirty-two students, headed by four teachers. The team set out from the school premises on a cool October morning. As a student of Maple Leaf International School, I have been a part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DEA) for more than a year now. With this being my last part of the DEA Programme, I was celebrating my accomplishment but was also saddened by the fact that I would no longer be participating in such trips anymore. The bus ride to Rajshahi was fun, especially when a friend, Rubayet, and I brought out our guitars and hummed a few songs. We reached Rajshahi in about 6 hours.



We settled in at Ashrai National Research and Training Centre in the suburbs of Rajshahi. The place was simply breathtaking with all the greenery around. The only problem was that our rooms would become full of insects once the sun went down. Nonetheless, we did not work much the first day as we reached there just a few hours before sunset. The night went by quickly with all of us playing, singing and enjoying the warmth of the campfire.

The next morning started with a trek to a village a few kilometres away. We saw how women would spend their time making different types of handicrafts and clothes as a source of income by selling them to prospective buyers. Divided into groups, we had to conduct surveys of local people to get an idea of the lives they lead. My group consisted of some of my friends Ibrahim, Anonno, Redwan along with a few others and our survey topic was Education and Child Literacy. Talking to the locals, we found out that almost all the children there went to schools or *madrassahs* and all of them seemed to have an opportunity for a bright future. We met some of the children; a boy, Raihan, wanted to join the Army, and a girl, Tisha, wanted to be a doctor their aims and determination inspired us for sure.

The children we talked to accompanied us as we came across a large lake and at a distance we saw some fishermen busy in their boats while a few farmers ploughed their fields beside the lake. We thought it might be interesting to speak to the farmers and so we did. The farmer's name was Faiz, who is a father of five children.