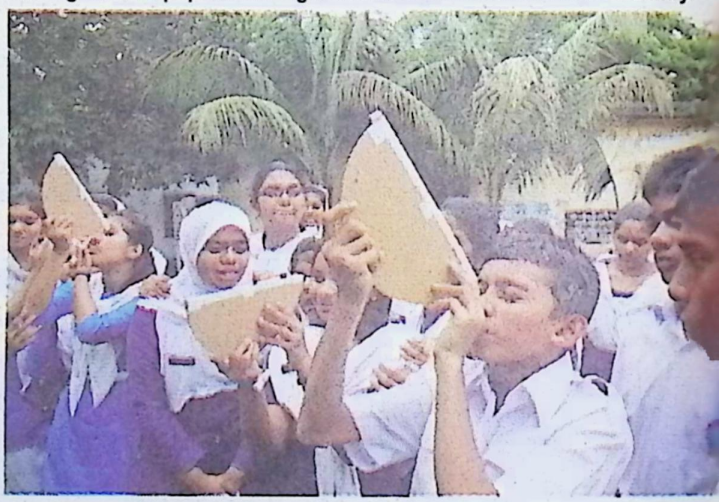


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Fun School

FAYEKA ZABEEN SIDDIQUA

The aspiring scientists aged between 12 to 16 years, are busy experimenting how concave and convex lens refract or bend light rays coming from an object. Another team is busy designing their own working telephone with help of a long string and two plastic cups to investigate how sound travels.

Evidently they have fun carrying out such scientific activities, which seem far more complicated in their regular text books. Once they practically engage into the scientific experiment they discover that even simple science equipment can liven up a topic and make it easier for them to understand.

This is how a group of students from BUET, Medical Colleges and Dhaka University are making science popular among students of schools around the country. "We try to promote quality learning not only by helping children learn what is in the text book but also by defining what they need to learn to become independent learners," says Tanvir Arafat Dhrubo, a final year student of Department of Mechanical Engineering, BUET and also the founder of the Shikkha Desher Jonno, a non-profit organisation run by volunteers.

This student organisation started its journey, on March 15, 2012 with the objective of simplifying the traditional education system in an attractive way for students of rural high schools in our country. To implement this goal they are using science to both enlighten and delight the students. "We are trying to prove that to be scientific you don't need to be in a well-equipped laboratory wearing white coats", says Dhrubo. "Science is all around us and we can make our own scientific kit with different materials that we have at our home."

So far they have reached schools of Dhaka, Brahmanbaria, Chandpur, Laxmipur, Lalmonirhat, Kustia, Jhinaidah, Khulna, Jessor, Bogra, Habiganj, with their study material. These volunteers run most of these activities during their semester breaks. Interestingly Shikhkha Desher Jonno solicits donations from family, friends and alumni, "We are not seeking any donation yet from any donor agencies, however, this year as we are planning to register this organisation as a foundation we might be in need of a greater fund," says Umme Rumman Usha, an active member of this organisation and also a final year student of the same department.

As part of their project they have developed some instruments or teaching aids which will allow students to learn through a practical approach. They believe, these instruments, if used in a proper way, will free the students from dependence on guide books, coaching centres or other such expensive aids.

The volunteers are also working on the documentation of all their materials into a compiled magazine and also a short film, so that every school they are working with can have a copy of it.

"Being scientific involves being curious, observing, asking how things happens and learning how to find answers which often our text books and traditional teaching staff fail to do," says Md. Humayun Kabir, Headmaster of Ashuganj Haji Jalil High School. "When these volunteers visited my school with their materials, they have shown