Taking on Another Challenge

Keshob Roy, winner of a UN award, has taken on another daunting task: to ensure 100 percent school attendance of rural children

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Keshob Roy, winner of the prestigious 'Youth courage award for education' of the United Nations (UN) has now taken on another important mission. He wants to make sure all children in the village go to school, which is why he is so hell bent on collecting birth registration certificates from the local union parishad; birth registration certificates are a prerequisite for enrolment in primary schools.



Keshob Roy, UN award winner's efforts.

The UN declared 12 July 2013 as 'Malala Day' to honour teenage Pakistani activist Malala Yousuf Jai. On that day, the UN secretary general awarded Keshob Roy of Bangladesh for his extraordinary efforts to stop child marriage and bring back drop out children to schools in his area.

Son of a day labourer, Ozindra Borman (60) of Binnaya kuri village, Jaldhaka upazila, Keshob is now an HSC examinee this year from the Business Management College (BM) in Jaldhaka.

Keshob's main target is to collect birth registration certificates for children from poor families so that they can get admitted to the local schools.

"Many poor guardians find collecting birth certificates from the union parishad too much of a hassle and hence don't admit their children to school," explains Keshob

He says that he has taken many of the children to nearby primary schools, submitted certificates and helped them get admitted. So far he has collected birth registration certificates of 29 children and enrolled them into school this year.

"Admission in primary schools is closed from 31 January and now I am collecting birth certificates for another 12 children who got admitted without the certificates after I convinced the school authorities that I would collect and submit certificates before first term examination in June," he adds.

Lalmohon Roy (28), father of Binoy (6), a student of Binnayakuti Purbopara Government Primary School in Koimari union, admits that earlier he was reluctant about getting his son enrolled into school.He thought that it was pointless as he would prefer that his son helped him in the field and add to the family income.

"Keshob came to my house a number of times early this year and persuaded me to admit my son to school" says Roy. He even deposited the required birth certificate fee to the UP fund from his own pocket," he adds.

Locals inform that Keshob continues to pursue his former mission and has been able to stop 47 child marriages so far with the help of upazila children's team and local union parishad. He has also ensured that those girls who were being forced into marriage, were readmitted to schools.

Ironically, Keshob himself was compelled to drop out from school when he was a student of class seven and work at a pawn shop (scrap iron shop) at a local market to feed his family. A social worker of the upazila, Bivutibhusun noticed Keshob's keen interest in education and readmitted him in school taking him out of the shop.

Encouraged by Bivuti, Keshob became member of union children's team. He is now president of Upazila Children's Team in Jaldhaka and also the member of the national children task force. Keshob says he will always be grateful to this kind soul for helping him to find his dream again.

Local leaders are also impressed with Keshob's dedication. Chairman of Koimari UP, Kohinuzzaman Liton is convinced that with the efforts of Keshob and his well-wishers, the goal to make his union free from the curse of early marriage and also ensure that every child in his union goes to school can certainly be achieved.

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