

Do you know the arduous journey a baby turtle has to go through to survive to its adulthood under natural conditions?

I did not, until I met Md Kutub Uddin Arzu, a young marine conservationist and founder and CEO of Save Our Sea (SOS).

Exploring and saving marine lives and also the biodiversity of the Bay of Bengal and the coastal zones of Bangladesh -

situ nest protection of sea turtles and take part in turtle related research and social surveys.

In short, they save lives of other creatures that inhabit the earth along with us.

The extent of predators' attacks, along with human induced threats, on endangered sea turtles is really disappointing, opines Arzu.

# THE SAD LIFE OF A TURTLE

FAYEKA ZABEEN SIDDIQUA

PHOTO COURTESY: SOS



ENVIRONMENT



their eggs. Even if they do, they return to the water without nesting as they feel threatened due to external factors. Besides, deep sea trawling without the use of Turtle Excluder Devices (TED) is also responsible for turtle deaths. Even though TED helps to reduce the numbers of large sea animals, such as turtles, which are caught in shrimp nets, commercial shrimp trawl industries are often reluctant to use TEDs.

You might say that there's nothing much we as individuals can do to stop these killings. But you'd be surprised how a small, seemingly insignificant act can threaten their survival. Bangladeshis have a terrible habit of littering everywhere we go; this is terribly harmful for the wellbeing of turtles. "We often find turtles which consume plastic packets and straws, as they block or infect their stomach or intestine and they end up dying slowly of starvation," Arzu adds.

Even though SOS has dedicated volunteers who don't want to see the turtles disappear, their capacity allows them to protect only one nesting beach (Golachipa). Also the mortality rate of hatchlings from predated nests is very high.

"There are many NGOs which attempt to save them by adopting 'relocation' strategies, which is not quite effective. Whether hatchlings are male or female depends on the temperature and where they are in the nest; the relocation strategy often abrupt the natural male female ratio," explains Arzu. Instead of doing that, we try to develop a better understanding of how they naturally live.

While doing so, we try to include the local people who live in areas where sea turtles nests are to help the turtle population recover. While human behaviour and negligence threaten the very existence of turtles, there is also great potential for us to make a positive change, believes the saviour.

"The position of a field assistant is voluntary; our volunteers pay for their own travel, food and accommodation. In exchange, they get to earn a weeklong experience of saving endangered sea turtles along with working closely with local communities for this amazing cause," he concludes.

that's what Arzu along with his dedicated team of volunteers do. The Bay of Bengal Sea Turtle Program, a partnership based initiative designed by SOS, is facilitating locally led in-situ protection of endangered sea turtles in the St Martin's Island.

"In St Martin's, you will mostly find Olive ridley species of turtles. If you are lucky, you may even see Green sea turtles that come out rarely," explains Arzu. "Both of them are evaluated as 'vulnerable' and 'endangered' respectively on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species."

What do the members of the SOS do? They spend 24/7 on patrolling in shifts and monitor the nesting activities of baby turtles. They rescue mother turtles and hatchlings from predator attacks. They support the local communities, local government institutions and community based organisations (CBOs) to ensure in-



Md Kutub Uddin Arzu at work.

Taking care of baby turtles is a meticulous and sensitive job, as they are more vulnerable to changes and environmental stress than adult turtles.

They come on the land for a very short period in their life cycle, for the purpose of nesting – the most vulnerable part of their life. Tiny as a bottle cap, baby turtles cannot retract into their shells like terrestrial tortoises with their premature flippers, and thus struggle to survive against attacks by stray dogs. 99 percent of the baby turtles and hatchlings are killed by dogs in St. Martin's – home to at least 400 stray dogs. They also regularly attack mother turtles while they nest.

Apart from the predators that are higher in the food chain and climate induced dangers, unsustainable coastal development and human activities along the beaches also pose threats to their survival. The presence of a lot of tourists on the beach, artificial lights of beachfront hotels and restaurants scare the baby turtles away. In this kind of situation, they don't tend to come out of the ocean to lay

MUSINGS

It is a very common sight in Bangladesh. A child goes to school with a bag that seems heavier than the student" remarks Sensei (teacher) Shahed Kazy who teaches Wado Ryo Karate at Black Belt Academy. A majority of his students are children who take Karate as an extracurricular activity as an addition to their academic studies at school. Pondering through the students strength of the Dojo (Karate school) I ask "what, in your opinion, is the number of hours a child, say attending grade V, should put in for academic studies?". Shahed quotes "A child should study no more than 6 hr day for a 5 days week". He continues "Children should not be given home work on weekends and holidays and should also have a 2 week holiday every 3 months (at the end of a semester) plus, a yearly 5 week annual holiday".

This brings us the issue on the effectivity of the National educational policy 2010 which acts as a guideline for the direction of education in Bangladesh. A Canadian teacher, Sananda Chakraborty Tithi, of Bangladeshi heritage mentioned



## MARTIAL ARTS ENDEAVORS: A JOURNEY THROUGH THE FIGHT GAME

to me that she presumes children in Bangladesh spend about 40% more time with books than their same grade counterparts in Canada. Bangladesh is filled with coaching centers, guide books and private tutors that students avail on top of their regular schooling. Children are often assigned homework on their weekend and holidays. Shahed grimly says "The more a child spends time on studies, the less time a child has for extracurricular activity such as Karate". Simply put, it is an opportunity cost. We reflect on the importance of extracurricular activity in education. Shahed cites examples in Japanese education where Kenjutsu (swordsmanship) and Judo are taught as part of the curriculum he states, "every school should have a physical activity such as Karate that can assist in the student's mental development".

As a mentor, Shahed believes that Karate can enable and empower children

### THOUGHTS ON COMPARATIVE PEDAGOGY ON EDUCATION AND KARATE WITH A MENTOR

MOHAMMED TANVIR MOSHARRAF  
PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

and thus assist in child development on top of their academic studies. He also believes that teaching Karate requires a certain skill-set on top of Karate credentials and considering the responsibility that falls on teachers, the teaching method should be examined. A look closely into his classes at dojo and

comparing them to the regular academic teaching we see in schools that follow the national curriculum, we can see an unmistakable sharp difference in teaching methods as well as the attitude of the teachers. The schools in Bangladesh seem to be locked into what is referred as the 'Banking method' by the educator Paulo Freire, in his book 'Pedagogy of Oppressed'. Freire states "Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits."

On contrary the classes at the Dojo are very interactive where all techniques are demonstrated and practiced allowing real

life experience. The students and teachers communicate frequently, with questions being asked from both sides. This reinforces critical thinking and critical consciousness for both teacher and student. The instructors incorporate games that allow children to think out of the box. We can apply excerpts from the Karate teaching method to our academic classroom so that students find their studies more interesting and also enjoy a higher learning curve. A Karate lifestyle will help our children focus, stay healthy, be confident develop respect and learn conflict resolution that is essential for child development. I believe as the nation moves towards improved teaching methods, case studies from a karate teacher can supplement a teacher's skills as well as child development.

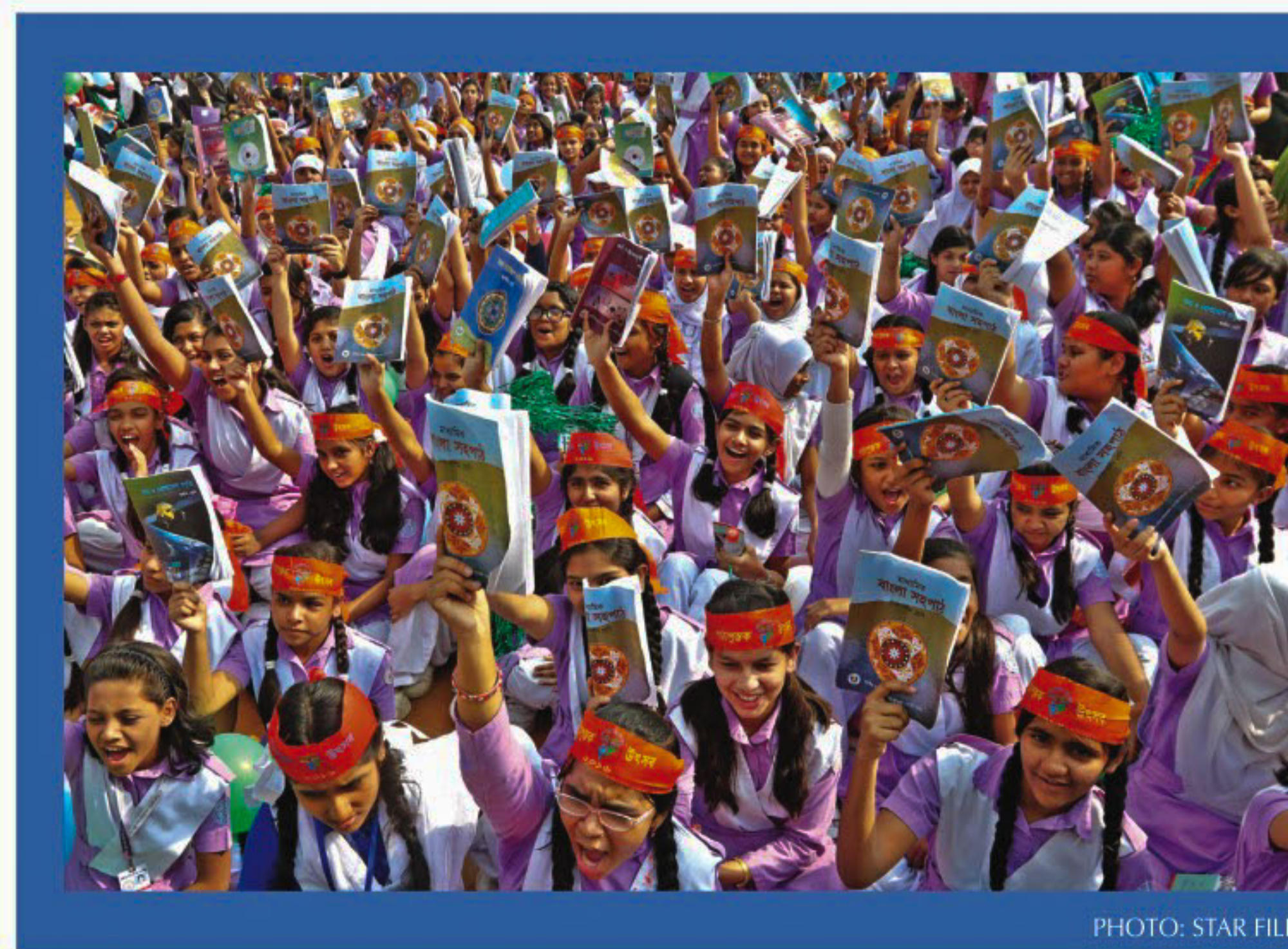


PHOTO: STAR FILE

NUMBERS

# 44,000,000

It is the number of school children who were handed over a new set of textbooks at all primary and secondary schools all over the country. This year, like the last six years 4.44 crore students of pre-primary, primary, secondary and technical education schools and ebtedai and dakhil madrasas received 33.38 crore copies of textbooks on the first day of the new academic session.