

‘Do good without expectations’

Bidyanondo founder Kishore Kumar Das talks with Star about his journey

SHARIFUL HASAN

Bidyanondo Foundation has so far served millions of people, and in the process, touched their hearts with its activities. To honour its contributions, Queen Elizabeth II of the UK has recognised its founder Kishore Kumar Das with the Commonwealth Points of Light award.

However, Kishore doesn't think the award should change anything; the organisation wants to continue its work as usual.

Kishore, aged 40, set up Bidyanondo in 2013 and has improved access to education for over 1,200 children from marginalised backgrounds, said UK High Commission in Bangladesh in a statement on Friday.

The founder, who is currently living in Peru, was contacted over the internet for an interview with The Daily Star about the award. He talked about his thoughts, values and volunteer work among other subjects.

Asked about his reaction after getting the award, Kishore said while the award is nice, the work should speak for itself. “We always see that those who do charity or similar work, regardless of whether it benefits the people, the organisers become rich and famous. Many apply for recognition or rewards... We have never applied for these; we did not go anywhere for any prize. We just did our work,” he explained.

Then what is it that really matters? He said each of their volunteers works for their own unique reasons. “My feeling is that I don't think we have done much for people. We have to do more. So, let's do it for the people.”

Kishore, a computer-science graduate from Cuat, established the organisation with the slogan “Read, Play, Learn” to provide opportunities for disadvantaged children to study. They are known for giving out many of its services for a token price of Tk 1, a practice intended to avoid the stigma of accepting charity.

But what was the spark that started it all? Kishore said one day, he talked to his sister, Sripa Das, about doing something for others. “Encouraged by my sister, we started teaching five children in Narayanganj. Then, I saw new problems emerging. We started working on solving those. And this led to many new initiatives.”

Many people from different countries are now involved with Bidyanondo. Kishore always says volunteers are the organisation's strength, but where do volunteers get the strength from?

Kishore replied, “I think education and values are vital. We, all the volunteers, discuss values. There is no fear of losing out if you do something without any expectation.”

Regarding future plans for the organisation, he said they don't think much about the future, because thinking about these means saving money for a distant time. “We don't want to do that. From the beginning, we wanted to spend money immediately; donors like that. But in the future, I want everyone to live in peace together. Charities don't solve the main problems. We want to show that we all have to live in harmony.”

Talking about crises plaguing the society, Kishore said, “I will not blame or say anything to the young generation, I will blame policymakers. I studied engineering. How much were we taught about ethical values? Did our education system address this?”

“Those who applaud me, I will ask them to tell their child to do something for the people. This value must be incorporated in all matters, from schooling and family relations to education policy-making,” he added.

“None of us should think we are superior... You see, there is enough food and resources in the world,” he said. All people need is taking care of others and living with the right values, he added.

“Those who applaud me, I will ask them to tell their child to do something for the people. This value must be incorporated in all matters, from schooling and family relations to education policy-making.”



KISHORE KUMAR DAS
Founder of Bidyanondo



Shariful Hasan is a freelance journalist writing for The Daily Star



Like many who are planning to spend Eid vacation with their loved ones, this mother and her child came to Kamalapur Railway Station on Sunday night to purchase tickets for Nilphamari. However, after waiting the whole night, they couldn't even reach the counter because of the never-ending queue. When this photojournalist took this photo around 6:00am yesterday, the two were seen dozing off, tired from all the waiting.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Lack of knowledge, poverty key barriers

Says icddr,b report on consuming fortified food



Speakers at the roundtable on “Food Fortification towards Sustainable Nutrition Security”, jointly organised by CARE Bangladesh, Plan International Bangladesh, Eco-Social Development Organisation (ESDO) and The Daily Star, held at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Poor household income and lack of knowledge are among the reasons hindering people's choice to consume fortified food in parts of Rangpur and Nilphamari districts, according to a report of International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b).

The report was shared yesterday during a discussion on “Food Fortification towards Sustainable Nutrition Security” jointly organised by CARE Bangladesh, Plan International Bangladesh, Eco-Social Development Organisation (ESDO) and The Daily Star held at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

The icddr,b research was conducted under ESDO's project “Joint Action for Nutrition Outcome”, funded by European Union and Austrian Development Cooperation.

Food fortification has received worldwide recognition for its potential to address the issue of micronutrient deficiency as one of the most cost-effective strategies to increase the regular consumption of micronutrients, the report says.

One of the health consequences of micronutrient deficiency is anemia, caused by iron deficiency, and remains one of the biggest public health concerns in Bangladesh, it says.

Food fortification is the practice of deliberately increasing the content of one or more micronutrients (i.e., vitamins and minerals) in a food or condiment to improve the nutritional quality of the food supply and provide a public health benefit with minimal risk to health, according to the WHO.

The report says 37 percent of respondents had faced difficulty in buying fortified food and 40 percent had not been able to buy fortified foods.

The most common reason mentioned for not being able to buy fortified food during Covid-19 was decrease in income (97 percent), it says.

It adds that only 41 percent of respondents had heard about fortified food, and among them, 52 percent did not know the process of food fortification.

Less than half of respondents (48.9 percent) were using other fortified food in addition to iodised salt. Almost all the respondents knowingly consumed iodised salt and knew that packaged salts are iodised, it says.

It recommended that although the target population comprises pregnant and lactating women and adolescents, husbands and household heads should also be informed of micronutrient deficiencies and ways to address it.

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Strengthening partnership on green transition

Bangladesh, Denmark sign framework document

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Denmark yesterday agreed to strengthen partnership on climate and green transition, as Bangladesh aims to get 40 percent power from renewable energy by 2041.

It is just 3.5 percent now.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Danish Minister for Development Cooperation Flemming Moller Mortensen signed Sustainable and Green Framework Engagement document at a city hotel towards this end.

Denmark is the first country to enter into a “framework engagement” with Bangladesh. Under it, Denmark will provide knowledge and technology towards attaining a sustainable and greener future for Bangladesh, said a joint statement.

This development takes place when Crown Princess Mary Elizabeth of Denmark is on a three-day visit to Bangladesh. She is scheduled to go to Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar and climate vulnerable communities in Satkhira.

“Denmark would support Bangladesh to check environmental degradation in Cox's Bazar caused by huge influx of Rohingyas from Myanmar,” Momen told reporters after a meeting with the Danish minister.

“Denmark has expertise in renewable energy, especially in wind power. They will oversee the

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From Left, Danish Minister for Development Cooperation Flemming Moller Mortensen, Crown Princess Mary Elizabeth of Denmark and Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen at the signing ceremony yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

ACC approves charges against 8

UNB, Dhaka

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday approved the charge sheet against eight people, including North South University treasurer Mohammad Shahjahan and former treasurer of Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) Air Commodore (ret'd) Robiul Awal, for document forgery at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

As the allegations fall under the jurisdiction of the ACC, the commission's deputy director Farid Ahmed Patwary filed a case against the eight after a Dhaka court ordered the ACC to probe into the case lodged over forgery, deputy director of ACC public

relations office Muhammad Arif Sadeq told the news agency.

Earlier, police filed the charge sheet against six persons. The accused were former Central Chhatra League vice president Tariqul Islam Momin, PMO staff Fatema Khatun, Nazim Uddin, Rubel, North South University student Forhad Hossain and former treasurer of Bangladesh University of Professionals' Air Commodore (ret'd) M Abdus Salam Azad.

Mohammad Rafiqul Alam, director-7 of PMO, filed the case with Tejgaon Police Station.

According to the case, a document with the prime minister's decision on

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