

# Stirring social change through theatre

Friendship Char Theatre is more than a community development programme

NAZIFA RAIDAH

Fatima Begum (not her real name) is from Dattar char, located in Kurigram's Chilmari upazila. She lived with her husband Baniz and three sons, all of whom are married.

Fatima had a habit of mistreating her daughters-in-law, putting them through both mental and physical distress. She even kicked two of her daughters-in-law out of the house.

In February 2021, a theatre show was arranged in Dattar char named "Dojtal Shashuri", which focused on domestic violence, dowry and torture at in-laws' house. At the end of the play, there was a scene in which the mother-in-law killed her son's wife, and eventually the police arrested her for the crime.

Fatima was also present among the audience watching this drama. Resonating with the story, she finally realised the repercussions of her actions. The next month, she visited the Friendship Legal Information Booth and talked with a paralegal there. She told the paralegal that she changed her ways and admitted that her hostile behaviour towards her daughters-in-law was completely wrong. She even promised to never repeat such an action.

This is how Char Theatre, a programme organised by the social purpose organisation Friendship, makes a mark. Although many organisations take part in creating social change, not many make it a two-way street — where both the stakeholders and organisers are actively involved in creating the change that they want to see. Friendship's Char Theatre programme



was introduced in the char communities of Gaibandha and Kurigram in 2015. The programme consists of two theatre groups, one in each district with 12 actors who are recruited directly from those communities.

At present, the two theatre groups cover programmes in 80 chars, 57 in Kurigram and 23 in Gaibandha. Besides, the theatre groups (which are now expanding) are also performing at different shows in important events or platforms.

In Bangladesh, the tradition of spreading important social messages began through Jatra Pala or street performances. People at Friendship took that concept to build this behavioural change programme.

The topics of the dramas are based on daily life and societal issues faced by the people of char communities, including

domestic violence, women's rights and gender discrimination, dowry, disabilities, parental rights, child rights, early marriage, stalking, awareness on Covid-19, drug addiction, citizenship rights and legal processes, ICT and its merit and demerit, and cultural preservation and national heritage.

Each drama runs for 40 to 45 minutes and always starts with some local music to let the community know that the play will shortly commence. The scripts for the plays are developed in collaboration among the head office, field-level personnel, and actors.

Since both the actors and personnel are from the char areas — they have a far better understanding of which issues need to be prioritised and upheld in the plays. This places a sense of ownership within them while creating the content.

"I'm immensely inspired to work hard because of the respect I get from the community working as a part of Char

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## States must do more for human rights

Says UN on migrant workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

States must do more to uphold the human rights of migrant workers, UN Human Rights Office said yesterday while launching a new report on temporary labour-migration programmes launched within and from the Asia-Pacific region.

The report, titled "We wanted workers, but human beings came", comes ahead of International Migrants Day on December 18.

In a statement, the UN Human Rights Office said every year, millions of migrants leave their countries under temporary labour migration programmes.

These programmes are predominant in migration governance in some regions, including Asia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. They promise to provide economic benefits for destination countries and development dividends for countries of origin, reads the statement.

The report detailed how, in many cases, temporary labour migration programmes impose restrictions on a range of human rights.

It highlights situations in which migrant workers are forced to live in overcrowded and unsanitary housing. They are unable to afford

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## No place to study

Students suffer as school building construction left abandoned for three years

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

The construction of a school building in Tangail's Basail upazila has not been completed in three years, hampering the education of the school's children.

As a result, classes are being taken at small rented shops for over one and a half years.

The contractor and the authorities blamed the price hike of construction materials and the shortage of necessary funds for the delay.

According to Directorate of Education and Engineering, Tk 66 lakh were estimated for the construction of a one-storey building for Dumnibari High School in Kawajani union at the end of 2019.

**A total of 240 students of Dumnibari High School only had two tin-roof structures where they attended their classes. When the construction started, one of the old tin-roof structures was demolished. After that, two small shops in the market adjacent to the school were rented for conducting classes of fourth and fifth-grade students.**

Kazi Traders, a construction firm, received the tender and was supposed to complete the work by October 2020.

However, the construction work started on May 2021 and stopped again within a couple of months after the structure's base was built. The firm has not resumed construction work since then.

Meanwhile, 240 students of Dumnibari High School only had two tin-roof structures where they attended their classes. When the construction started, one of the old tin-roof structures was demolished.

After that, two small shops in the market

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To spread the light of knowledge throughout a remote village in Lalmonirhat's Tipar Bazar area, a local youth named Jamal Hossain founded a small library with just 10 books. Now almost 8 years later, the library is facilitating a reading community of 1,500 members with 10,000 books.

## Spreading light in remote corners

Lalmonirhat college student running local library since 2014

S DILIP ROY

With a goal to build a well-read society, Sarpukur Youth Forum Library, situated in a remote village of Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila, has been a hub for like-minded people who love to read and educate themselves.

The library, located in the remote village Tipar Bazar and established in 2014, started with only 10 books. Now it houses almost 10,000.

What's even more fascinating is that a college student of this village, Jamal Hossain, is the library's founder and director.

Students of various educational institutions in surrounding villages rush there to read books every evening.

Although the library room is dilapidated, it's still a popular place for gathering. Not only students but teachers, farmers, villagers and academics visit the place as well. They sit on the ground and read books together because of the shortage of space inside the library.

The library now has more than 1,500 members.

Sajib Mia, a 10th-grader, said, "This library has become a part of our lives.

I've been coming here since I was in sixth grade. Besides reading books in the library, we've been doing various social activities in the village."

HSC student Shakil Islam told The Daily Star that without this library, their desire to read books would've never blossomed.

**"This library has become a part of our lives. I've been coming here since I was in sixth grade. Besides reading books in the library, we've been doing various social activities in the village."**

SAJIB MIA, a 10th-grader

The founder Jamal Hossain said, "The slogan we run by is 'Let books be our constant companion'. One can never play a role in building an ideal society if one doesn't love books."

When asked what are his future plans for the library, Jamal said, "I dream of modernising this library and enhancing its capacity."

## Two fugitive convicts held in Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) have arrested two fugitives, convicted for separate offences, from Hatirjheel and Keraniganj areas in Dhaka.

The arrestees were identified as Md Sheikh Farid, sentenced to four years in prison in a drugs case, and Dr MM Shamimuzzaman, jailed for one year for cheque fraud.

Rab-3 commander Lt Col Arif Mohiuddin Ahmed said they arrested Farid from Hatirjheel and Shamimuzzaman from Keraniganj early Thursday.

A drug case was filed against Farid in November 2020 with Kotwali Police Station in Chattogram and a cheque fraud case was filed against Shamimuzzaman with Pirojpur Sadar Police Station in October 2017.

They had been on the run in different areas of the capital since the cases were filed, said the Rab official. Legal steps are underway against them, he added.

Professional Masters in International Relations (PMIR)



Department of International Relations  
University of Dhaka

Admission Announcement (Revised Schedule)

9th Batch, Spring-2023

Professional Masters in International Relations (PMIR)

The Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka invites applications from the interested candidates for admission in Professional Masters in International Relations (PMIR) for Spring 2023 session. This eighteen-month accelerated professional degree programme contains the following features:

(a) a total of three semesters;  
(b) 12 course units consisting of 48 credit hours;  
(c) research module on International Relations;  
(d) classes on weekends (Fridays and Saturdays).

**Application Requirements**

1. Bachelor's degree in any discipline from any recognized university with at least 2<sup>nd</sup> class or a CGPA of 2.5 (on a 4.0 scale) in their academic career.  
2. The applicants with a CGPA of at least 2.5 in the Post-Graduate Diploma in International Relations (PGDIR) Programme offered by the Department are eligible for direct admission.  
3. Applicants on service must apply through proper channel.

**Admission Procedure**

• Prospective applicants can collect application forms from and submit them to the office of the Department on working days (10 a.m.-4 p.m.). Each form costs Tk.1500/-  
• Last date of submission is 10 January 2023.  
• Attested copies of all certificates & transcripts along with 2 passport size photos should be submitted with the application form.

**Contact Details**

Office of the Chair, Department of International Relations, 5th Floor, Social Sciences Faculty Building, University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1000. Phone: 9661920-73 ext. 6541 & 6542 (between 10am-4pm). Mobile: 01871542055, 01819203709  
01922113262 (between 11 am-5 pm only). Email: ir@du.ac.bd; Website: <http://www.duir.ac.bd>

\*The Programme Coordination Committee reserves the right to make necessary changes to the above provisions \* 120-2223

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