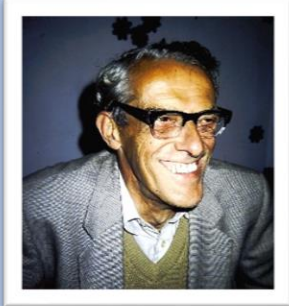


# Newsletter

## Winter 2023

*Celebrating the 100th birthday  
of the founder of the  
Khasdobir Project, Peter East*



On Saturday 29th April from 1.30pm to 3.30pm you are invited to the 100th birthday celebration of the founder of the Khasdobir Project, Peter East, which will be held at All Hallows by the Tower, the oldest Church in the City of London (Byward Street, London EC3R 5BJ) where the founder of Toc H was the vicar for many years.

The programme for the day will include a live zoom link with the Project's Pre-Primary Centre named after Peter, performances by the children and reflections from people who remember Peter, both in Sylhet and the UK. We aim to have a simultaneous cutting of cakes in Sylhet and London.

To book your place please email us at [khasdobir@btinternet.com](mailto:khasdobir@btinternet.com) by Wednesday 26th April 2023. Please specify if you want to join in person or by zoom. (Note the zoom programme will be from 1.30pm to 2.30pm)

As part of the celebrations, we are aiming to raise funds to support the project in the future. Donations can be made at <https://www.peoplesfundraising.com/donation/friends-of-khasdobir>

Or by sending a cheque to our treasurer at April Cottage, 12, Church Street, Rothley, Leicestershire, LE7 7PD

FRIENDS OF KHASDOBIR, BANGLADESH, Registered Charity No: 1185262

### *Remembering Peter East*

*By Ken – Prideaux-Brune*

Peter East was known to everyone in Sylhet as Peter bhai (brother Peter). He used to like walking through Sylhet town with one of the elite and watching his look of horror when a rickshaw puller pedalling by called out: "Hello, Peter bhai". Before moving to Sylhet he had spent 16 years as a Toc H community worker working with the Bangladesh community in the East End of London. He took groups of young men out of London on weekend camping trips and established a hostel where around 25 young men could live, in a building made available by the Wakefield Trust. The building became an unofficial community centre for young Bangladeshis, with anything up to 200 people gathering there at the weekend.

But in 1983, when he turned 60, he decided to retire and go to live in Sylhet for the next five years. He had no clear idea of what he would do there and it was several months before, by chance, he met (I think at the barber's) a local businessman called Harun Ahmed. He immediately felt that this was somebody he could work with, that together they could build something that would last. He moved to Khasdobir, Harun's village, and he and Harun started open air schools (he called them 'Schools under the sky') where some of the poorest children (many of them children whose parents were illiterate) would be prepared to enter primary school.

And then he realised that there were a number of young widows in the area with no means of support and he opened a sewing workshop where these young women could receive a training and be equipped to earn their own living and stand on their own feet. But much of Peter's time was spent sitting outside the little village shop, talking to passers-by but also noticing who hadn't called to buy their daily food. He knew that they would go hungry and he and Harun would take them a small bag of rice.

Much has changed in Sylhet in the 40 years since Peter moved there. There is no longer the same grinding poverty. There is no longer the same level of illiteracy. The pre-primary schools no longer meet in the open air but in shelters so that they can operate through the rainy season. The teaching in the schools and in the training centre is much more professional. But the pre-primary schools and the sewing workshop remain central to the work of KYAG.

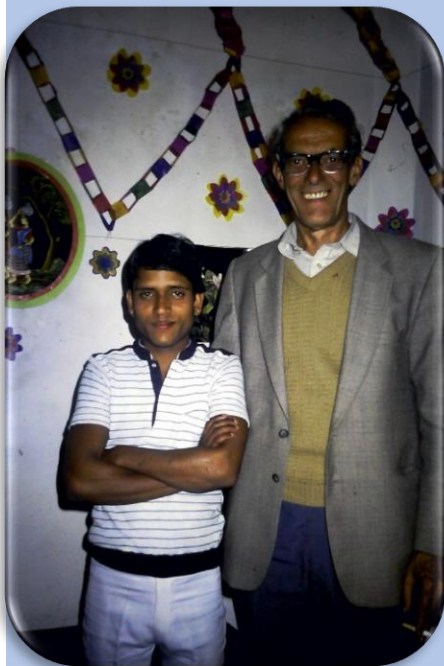
Peter never came across as the professional, the person with all the answers. The people he worked with were never his clients. They were first and foremost his friends. Friendship was fundamental to his work both in London and in Sylhet. Peter bhai was indeed an appropriate name.

*Chairman* Mike Sherriff  
*Treasurer* Phil Watson, April Cottage, 12, Church Street, Rothley, Leicestershire, LE7 7PD  
*Newsletter Editor* Monjur Elahi, 47 Chart Downs, Dorking, Surrey, RH5 4DF Email: [monjurelahi@msn.com](mailto:monjurelahi@msn.com)  
*Patrons:* The Rt. Hon the Baroness Morgan of Cotes; Rt. Hon Sir Kevin Barron  
*Web Site* [www.khasdobir.org.uk](http://www.khasdobir.org.uk)

## Our next annual meeting – a date for your diary

Our next annual meeting will be held on Saturday 1st July 10am to 12 noon by zoom. Please book the date and join us to hear live from the project in Sylhet and receive a report from trustees who visited this year. Learn the latest about our financial position and fundraising. Please email us at [khasdobir@btinternet.com](mailto:khasdobir@btinternet.com) to confirm your attendance and be added to the list to receive the zoom link nearer the date.

## Gallery



Peter East with Haroon Ahmad

## 124 Children from our pre-schools enter primary school

One of the original aims of the Khasdobir Project was to ensure that children from poorer backgrounds in Sylhet are admitted to primary schools. This remains one of the main purposes of the project. Our pre-schools concentrate on working with children in the “colonies”- small slum areas adjacent to better off housing in Sylhet city, and children from the tea estates.



Each year in January children from the project take up places at local primary schools. We ensure that they have a birth certificate, which is essential for entry, and have learnt basic skills so that they can start well in their new school. This year 124 children from the project started at primary school in January. 19 now attend schools on the tea gardens run by the National and Private tea companies. The remainder attend 3 Government Primary schools in Sylhet city, most attending the Khasdobir Primary School, where Peter East originally helped with the construction of additional school accommodation to help the school cope with an increasing number of children.

All the children who move on from our pre-primary centres now receive a leaving certificate to celebrate their early education.

## Top of the class

**Fatima** is nine years old and attends Gous Uddin Government Primary School in Sylhet. She is in her third year. Previously she was a student at the first pre-primary school that we opened in Badambagicha and before that she attended a school under the sky.

Fatima enjoyed attending our pre-primary school and she especially liked the teacher, who is one of the longest serving teachers in our schools. Her favourite subject was Bangla and she enjoyed singing songs in Bangla. She and her mother were very pleased when a sheltered school opened, and her mother said there was a big improvement in the school environment. It was much better that children could attend even when it was raining.

For the last 3 years in the class exam Fatima has achieved first place. She enjoys her studies and now her favourite subjects are Maths and English. She misses the games that she used to play at the pre-primary centre. After studying Fatima would like to be a doctor.

Fatima has two sisters and one brother. One sister is studying, and one is married. Her younger brother attends our pre-primary centre at Badambagicha. Her father collects and sells old clothes, and her mother sews. The family were originally from Dhaka but moved to Sylhet because they could not find work in Dhaka.



## Stay with us, Support us!

We are compliant to EU General Data Protection Regulations

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Also notify us if you no longer wish to receive the newsletter (by either post or email).

Please email to [khasdobir@btinternet.com](mailto:khasdobir@btinternet.com)



## Christmas Puppet Show and Songs

On Saturday 17th December our supporters were treated to a puppet show from the children of our Chowkidekhi pre-primary centre, with songs, dances and poems from children of other centres that we support. The story this year was about the Heron and the Crane.



The puppet show was our main Christmas fundraising event. We introduced puppet shows for supporters during the covid lockdown and following a visit from a well-known children's puppet team to the project in 2019. The children get huge pleasure from taking part in the shows, from learning the stories and doing art and craft work related to the story. We now hope to make this an annual event in our calendar – providing a fantastic educational opportunity for the children and raising much-needed funds for the project.



Embroidery by Tamana

## Dump The Lump Initiative

On the occasion of Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October 2022, SCORA, Bangladesh Medical Students Society put together a month-long campaign titled 'Dump the Lump' to raise awareness on the detection and prevention of breast cancer.

The initiative took place in 5 districts: Dhaka, Gazipur, Mymensingh, Manikganj and Sylhet, where a workshop was held at one of our pre-primary centres on the tea estates. In addition to the workshops the students collected donations to enable women to receive free ultrasonogram and mammogram.

35 medical students received training on the diagnosis and early detection of breast cancer with the help of 5 oncologists and surgeons and then carried out their initiative in slum areas, Bihari camp, tea garden, coil factory, transgender community and other public places. The medical students worked with the women at these sites to collect their disease history and demonstrate the process of self-screening for breast cancer.

The initiative has received widespread support from Honorable Member of Bangladesh Parliament, Simin Hossain Rimi as well as actresses Suborna Mostafa and Afsana Mimi, who handed out prizes to the winners of the art competition on breast cancer awareness. At the end of the program, the 35 medical students were awarded certificates in recognition of their work at the residence of the first Prime Minister of Bangladesh, the late Tajuddin Ahmed.

Finally, Jannatul Ferdous Elma, National Officer of SCORA, from Bangladesh Medical Students Society Bangladesh and Iftekhar Ahmed Sakib, from Bangladesh Medical Students Society Bangladesh conducted a radio show on Radio Bangla 92.5 F.M to bring further awareness of the campaign to members of the public.



## Introducing one of our embroidery students

**Tamana** is eighteen years old and lives in Badambagicha, an area that has been served by the project since it started. Last year she joined the embroidery class held at the office centre. She is also attending school and will soon be taking her secondary school examination.

With help from our embroidery teacher Tamana is currently creating a beautiful navy blue and red bed sheet. After completing this she hopes to produce other items of embroidery that can be sold. Her long term ambition is to open a small shop in Badambagicha selling embroidery.

Tamana's father is dead, and she lives with her mother, sister and one brother. Her mother currently receives a widows' allowance from the project and her younger sister attends the sewing class. Currently the only income for the family is from sewing that her sister sells and the allowance from the project. Tamana hopes that if she can sell embroidery in future it will help to provide the family with essentials.

At school Tamana's favourite subject is Bangla and she especially enjoys reading the work of the Nobel prize winner, Rabindranath Tagore.



If you receive your newsletter by post and we do not currently have your email address it would be extremely helpful if you could provide it to us so that we can communicate with you occasionally about our various on-line events using email. It is still possible to receive a paper version of the newsletter. If you want to stop receiving a paper version of the newsletter and just receive an email copy, then please let us know. You can contact us at: [khasdobir@btinternet.com](mailto:khasdobir@btinternet.com)

# YES, I'd like to help...



## Charity Gift Aid Declaration – multiple donation

### Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate

Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year. Your a needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer.

### In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box below:

I want to Gift Aid my donation of £\_\_\_\_\_ and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years to:

**Name of Charity** \_\_\_\_\_

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

### My Details

Title \_\_\_\_\_ First name or initial(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Surname \_\_\_\_\_

Full Home address \_\_\_\_\_

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Postcode \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

### Please notify the charity if you:

- want to cancel this declaration
- change your name or home address
- no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains

If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

*Please send this page to:*

*Phil Watson, April Cottage, 12, Church Street, Rothley, Leicestershire, LE7 7PD*