



Newsletter

Winter 2024

FRIENDS OF KHASDOBIR, BANGLADESH, Registered Charity No: 1185262

The Mayor of Camden visits the Khasdobir Project

On 4th October the project was pleased to welcome the Mayor of Camden, British Bangladeshi Nazma Rahman, and her delegates from Bangladesh and Britain to visit the project.

In the morning the mayor visited three schools. At our office-based school she heard rhymes recited by the children and taught the children an English rhyme – “One, two, three, four five once I caught a fish alive”.

From the office we went to Malnichara tea estate, the oldest tea garden in the Indian sub-continent. There the children performed songs and a dance. The mayor was interviewed by British Bangladeshi television channel “S”.

At our Lakkatura centre the mayor attended a guardian meeting and chatted to the children and the guardians about their lives on the tea estate and their children’s education.

After a simple lunch at the office the mayor observed our training courses and was especially impressed with the work produced by the embroidery students. This was followed by a visit to the new Tree Top Adventure Farm in Sylhet, with our trainees. The Adventure Farm is a family run outdoor activity centre, the first of its kind in Sylhet. There, despite the rain, the young people and the mayor enjoyed a tree top obstacle course including a zipline, tightropes, swinging logs and wobbly bridges. Although this adventure farm is very close to the city of Sylhet none of the young people had ever been there before.

During the visit the mayor said “I visited... 6 years ago and the project has improved massively. The school was under the sky before and now they have made a room which has a ceiling fan. The school service will be running regardless of the weather. The teachers here are doing a fantastic job.”



Annual meeting of our supporters:

Saturday 6th July 2024 10am by zoom

Please make a note in your diary and try to join our annual meeting of supporters to hear reports from trustees who have visited the project, find out about our plans for the future, and meet the staff who work on the project and the children and young people who benefit from your support.

To receive the zoom link to join email: khasdobir@btinternet.com

Puppet Show



This year children from our new Khasdobir school told the story of the little red hen for our Christmas puppet show. 21 supporters and residents of a care home joined us and almost £300 was raised. It is not too late to donate at:

<https://www.peoplesfundraising.com/donation/friends-of-khasdobir>

or send a cheque made payable to Friends of Khasdobir to our treasurer Phil Watson.

Chairman
Treasurer
Patrons:
Web Site

Mike Sherriff
Phil Watson, April Cottage, 12, Church Street, Rothley, Leicestershire, LE7 7PD
The Rt. Hon the Baroness Morgan of Cotes; Rt. Hon Sir Kevin Barron
www.khasdobir.org.uk

Support from the Rotary Club in Sylhet

At the shelters that are now used by the pre-primary centres that we support it is important to provide a toilet and water for the children. We have these facilities at all the schools. Often they are constructed and paid for by the local community. Thanks to The Rotary Club in Sylhet for paying for the tube well and toilet at the new centre on the tea garden and to members of the community for undertaking the construction work.



Pass it on

We circulate our newsletter by post and email. After you have read your copy please consider passing it on or forwarding the email to friends and family who might be interested in the project. Please encourage them to contact us by email to be added to the list for receiving the newsletter. The number of supporters we have is gradually decreasing as, sadly, many of the original supporters are now dead. To sustain the future work of the project we are keen to welcome new supporters to join us and take part in our activities.

Introducing Mohammed Hussain – Chairman of one of our new Centre Management Committees

Mohammed Hussain is the recently elected chairman of one of the Centre Management Committees. These have been formed during the past year as a means of helping to keep the work of the project going if there are no longer enough funds being sent from the UK. Each centre has a committee. They are collecting local funds and most have already opened a bank account. Committee members visit the schools, and some have helped to provide items of equipment. One committee organised and funded a magic show for the children attending the school. One organised food distribution for families in the area served by the school.

Mohammed is 48 years old and was born on the tea estate. His mother and father worked on the tea garden. He remembers that in his childhood there were shortages of food and sometimes there was no work on the tea gardens. He has 6 sisters and 2 brothers, but Mohammed is the only one amongst them who is still living and working on the tea garden. The others live in Sylhet city or the neighbouring district town of Moulvibazar. One brother lives in Saudi Arabia.

During Mohammed's childhood there was no school in the area and he attended one of the Schools Under the Sky based on Malnicherra Tea Garden. He remembers Peter East and Harun because they used to visit the school. The teachers name at the time was Aktar. Mohammed was one of the first children from the area to attend the Khasdobir Primary School.

For three years Mohammed has been a labour leader on the tea garden, looking after 265 workers.. As chair of the Centre Committee, he visits regularly and organises the meetings with the other seven members who are all guardians of children who attend. For a long time he had dreamed that there would be a pre-primary centre in the area and he hopes that in future it will be possible to organise sewing classes and coaching from the centre for people living locally.



We are looking for new trustees

We are a small charity that has been supporting the Khasdobir Project in Sylhet for almost 40 years. We are always looking for people interested in joining our committee, which meets 3-4 times a year. The duties of a trustee are described here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-trustee-whats-involved> If you, or somebody you know, would be interested in joining us then please email us at: khasdobir@btinternet.com

Dental camp treats 350 children from the Project

On the 18th December 6 dentists from the UK were due to arrive in Sylhet to provide dental examinations and treatment to the children at our centres. Unfortunately due to problems with their plane they could not depart on the scheduled date so arrived 2 days later. Despite this, with the help of dentists based in Sylhet, they saw 350 children with dental problems during their 4 day stay.



The team of dentists were all part of [Dental Aid Network](#). They aim to promote oral health for the impoverished around the world that cannot access dental care. They achieve this through oral health education and by providing simple restorative and emergency dental treatment. Thanks to the dentists for helping children at the Khasdobir Project.



A new sewing group at our Hilwachara Centre

In July 2023 Shima Bauri (pictured below), who lives near the Hilwachara Centre, established a new sewing group for women. It meets on five evenings a week from 5pm to 6.30pm, after school, and when work in the tea gardens has finished. About 30 women attend. They are making items such as shalwar and children's clothes. At present they are sewing by hand but in future hope to use the sewing machines at the centre.

Shima was born in Sreemangal, a different district of Sylhet. She moved to Hilwachara in 2018, after her marriage. In Sreemangal she completed her higher secondary education in humanities. Recently Shima started attending the sewing class at the Project Office. She attended for 3 months and learnt a lot but could not continue because the fare for travel to the office was too high. Instead, she decided to form a group where women and girls could meet and learn to sew together on the Hilwachara tea estate. Shima says the women who come have learnt a lot and are already making clothes for their families. This makes a big contribution to the well-being of families because tea workers are amongst the lowest paid workers in Bangladesh.

One of the older women attending the class, who also moved to Hilwachara after her marriage, has one child. She is a housewife. It is the first time she has learnt sewing and she says the course is going well. Currently she is making a kameez, which is almost complete. Eventually she hopes to make clothes and sell them to other families so that she can avoid working on the tea estate.

Rafi currently attends the Lakatuura High School where her favourite subject is English. She is aged eleven. She has a brother who also attends school. In future Rafi hopes to earn money by making and selling clothes. To date she has made clothes for a small child.

Boishaki is 15 years old. She was born in Hilwachara and left school one year ago. Currently she is not working. She does not want to work on the tea estate. Both her older sisters work there, but Boishaki does not want to join them. If possible, she wants to earn money by making and selling clothes instead. She has already made clothes for her sisters.



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

YES, I'd like to help...

1 Friends of Khasdobir, Bangladesh Registered Charity No. 1185262

2 Gift Aid Declaration

I am a U.K. taxpayer, and wish the charity to treat all donations that I make as Gift Aid donations from the date below, so that the tax I have paid on those sums can be recovered by them.

Name, including Mr, Mrs, Miss or Ms, and first name

.....

Full Address

.....

Postcode Date

Signed

E-mail Address (optional)

Notes:

This declaration is in force from the above date until it is cancelled. It need only be made once.

I confirm that have paid or will pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax (added together) for the current and each following year; 6th April to 5th April, until further notice, that is at least equal to the amount of all the tax that the charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts each tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand that The Friends of Khasdobir charity will reclaim the tax on my donations to them.

If your financial circumstances change, and you cease to pay income tax or capital gains tax at a level at least equal to the sum that you donate to all charities and CASCs each year, then please let the charity know by writing to the Treasurer.