



4th Year, 1st Issue (January-March 2022)

International Mother Language Day 2022

Vow to Uphold the Glory of the *Bangla* Language



Rasel Ahmed Liton (Right) is laying the wreath

SKS Foundation and SKS School & College observed the *Shaheed Dibosh* and International Mother Language Day with due significance organizing discussion forum and cultural program at SKS School & College's *Shaheed Minar*. SM Parvez Tamal, Chairman of NRBC Bank, graced the event as the Chief Guest with Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive, SKS Foundation and Chairman, SKS School & College in the chair.

Speaking at the occasion, the Chief Guest said, "The way we have got our mother tongue, none other countries in the world have got their language. We got the *Bangla* language through war, at the cost of our blood & lives. *Ekushey* February is now recognized as the International Mother Language Day only for our language- *Bangla*. The *Bangla* language has earned international recognition. My special appeal to our new generation is that we must love the country and protect the dignity of our mother tongue." (see page 3)

British Dy. High Commissioner Visited SKS Foundation

Javed Patel, Deputy High Commissioner, British High Commission, Dhaka, visited SKS Foundation. On 22 March 2022, along with a 7-member Delegation of the British High Commission, Dhaka, he visited SKS' Head Office, Gaibandha, and some activities of its *Action for Socio-Economic Security and Rights for Excluded and Marginalized Women and Girls (ASSR for EMWG) Project*, implemented by the technical assistance of *Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF)* and financial support from the Government of UK. (see page 3)



British Deputy High Commissioner (Left) is welcomed by Vice-Chairperson and officials of SKS Foundation

SKS Won the RTV NRBC Bank Krishi Padok 2022

SKS Foundation won the RTV NRBC Bank *Krishi Padok 2022* in the Best Agricultural Organization category for its special contribution to the agricultural sector of Bangladesh. Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive of SKS Foundation, received the Award in a Function at Pan Pacific Hotel Sonargaon, Dhaka on 1 February 2022. Dr. Mohammad Abdur Razaque, MP, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture as Chief Guest, SM Rezaul Karim, MP, Minister, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, was present at the Function as the special guest.



Rasel Ahmed Liton is receiving the Award from SM Rezaul Karim, MP, Minister, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock

Recognizing SKS Foundation as a national development organization, the organizers upheld that as agriculture remains the main source of lives & livelihood of the marginalized amidst flood & river erosion, SKS Foundation has been undertaking sustainable and agriculture-friendly initiatives through various projects/programs targeting the betterment of the farmers, especially in the *char* areas. SKS Foundation's major investment goes to resilient farming and producing nutritious food, fruits & vegetable and seed preservation.

Int'l Women's Day Observed

SKS Foundation observed International Women's Day 2022 focusing the theme "*Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow*". SKS organized a series of events i.e. Rally, Debate Competition, Discussion Forum, and Development Fair on the Day, 8 March 2022, at *Pouro Park*, Gaibandha. The day-long celebration was opened with a colorful Rally followed by a Discussion Forum at the *Pouro Park*.



Mahabub Ara Begum, Gini, MP is speaking at the Function as Chief Guest

Mahabub Ara Begum, Gini, MP, and Whip of the National Parliament, graced the event as the Chief Guest. Md. Oliur Rahman, DC, Gaibandha, was the guest of honor of the function while Nargis Jahan, DD, Department of Women's Affairs, Gaibandha, and Shahid Ahmed, Panel Mayor, Gaibandha Municipality, were the special guests with Dr. Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman, Dy. Chief Executive of SKS Foundation in the chair. (see page 3)

Storage Needed for Char Products



Md. Belal Uddin, DD, DAE is speaking at the Workshop

SKS Foundation under its *Making Markets Work for the Char (M4C Phrase III)* project supported by Swisscontact Bangladesh, organized a workshop titled 'Financial Linkage with Output Market Actors' to ensure crop selling and access to financial services of the *char* traders & farmers. Agriculturist Md. Belal Uddin, DD, Department of Agricultural Extension, Gaibandha, inaugurated the Workshop as Chief Guest on 27 February 2022 at Zilla Parishad Conference Room, Gaibandha. Md. Shah Mowazzem Hossain, District Marketing Officer (DMO), Department of Agricultural Marketing (DAM), was the special guest with Md. Rabiul Hassan, Intervention Area Manager, M4C, Swisscontact Bangladesh in the chair.

The Workshop was attended by representatives from Traders Out-grower Scheme (TOS), large trading companies, agro-processing companies, Department of Agricultural Extension and Marketing, commercial banks, and Microfinance organizations.

Md. Belal Uddin said, "Lack of suitable storage system is making the *char*-farmers deprived of getting the optimal price of their products. To get rid of the loss, increasing storage system is direly needed, and to this government and private sectors need to take initiative." Md. Shah Mowazzem Hossain said, "To establish a safe vegetable market adjacent to *char* areas, the government is assessing the feasibility of this enterprise."

24/7 Delivery Service

(from page 4) Opening the 24/7 service on 2 January 2022, at Bamondanga Union Health and Family Welfare Centre, Barrister Shamim Haider Patwary, MP said, "Although Bangladesh has been graduated from LDC to a developing country, the challenges remain in the health sector at the remote areas. It's appreciable that SKS Foundation has initiated to make quality health services available along with 24/7 delivery facility at the remote areas. I am sure, this initiative in the rural area will help our disadvantaged mothers to get maternal and newborn healthcare and reduce the unexpected mortality."

Justifying the Project at Gaibandha, Dr. Shamim Jahan, Deputy Country Director, Save the Children, said, "Gaibandha district is one of the high maternal and neonatal mortality areas in Bangladesh; so, the district has been chosen for this service." AHM. Shumsuzzman Azad, Project Coordinator, MAMOTA said, "The Project provides services like safe normal delivery, well-linked referral networks with Upazila Health Complex and Gaibandha Sadar Hospital along with comprehensive anti-natal and post-natal care free of cost."

A Bangladesh Bank Delegation

(from page 4) The delegation also visited a ToT course at SKS Resource Centre, Bharatkhal, Saghata. Distributing the certificate, Md. Abdul Hakim said, "As arable land is lessening, agricultural productivity must be increased to meet the huge demand. So, we have to continue training and support for modern agricultural technology." The visit was wrapped up having a meeting with SKS Foundation's high officials led by Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive of SKS Foundation.

Depletion & Pollution of Groundwater

(from page 4) The Keynote Presenter and the Panelists emphasized the importance of exploring, protecting, and sustainably using the groundwater with due importance to this scarce resource. Presenting the Keynote, Dr. Anwar Zahid, Director, Groundwater Hydrology, Bangladesh Water Development Board, upheld, 'groundwater is being decreased due to unjustified withdrawal, and pollution by human activities. Referring to the challenges, he pinpointed, "An estimated 32 cubic km of groundwater is withdrawn annually for irrigation (90%), domestic and industrial in Bangladesh. The shallow irrigation wells have been increased in numbers throughout the country from 133,800 in 1985 to 11,82,525 in 2006 and about 16,00,000 in 2019. Due to the increased abstraction of groundwater, the groundwater table has been lowered from low with time and the permanent decline of water level is also observed at an alarming rate in urban areas and the *Barind* tract. Again, 24% of the land area is exposed to extremely high to high risks of elevated arsenic, salinity, and groundwater depletion hazards."

Among the Panel Discussants, Dr. Kazi Matin Uddin Ahmed, Professor, Dept. of Geology, Dhaka University said, "We are heavily dependent on groundwater for all purposes without doing justice to this scarce resource. We need a separate law and a separate institution that will manage the groundwater assessing, monitoring, and distributing this scarce resource."

Dr. Chowdhury Sarwar Jahan, Professor, Dept. of Geology & Mining (Ex-Pro-VC), University of Rajshahi, said, "In the *Barind* tract, the crisis is getting deep to deeper. Every year the layer of water level is going down. We need a crop mapping in managing the groundwater."

Dr. Dilip Kumar Datta, Professor, Environmental Science Discipline, Khulna University, said, "We need a nature-based solution. To lessen the dependency on groundwater we must focus on surface water."

Dr. Tanvir Ahmed, Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, BUET, and Director, ITN-BUET, said, "To meet the greater demand of readily available water in our economy including agriculture, extraction and over-extraction of groundwater is being taken place. Moreover, contamination of groundwater is also causing the decline of the available drinking water too."

Hasin Jahan, Country Director, WaterAid Bangladesh, said, "Groundwater is inter-connected to surface water and the quality of groundwater is also related to the water table. As the water table is being lowered and the use of chemical is increasing, the water quality is being contaminated."

The Virtual Seminar was opened by a welcoming speech by Dr. Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman, Deputy Chief Executive of SKS Foundation. Around 100 representatives from development partners, national & international organizations, academia and media joined the Seminar.

Swedish Ambassador Visited

(from page 4) Alongside, the Ambassador visited the 'WASH Block' and exchanged views with the Tulsiram Government Girls' High School students. She said, "Cleanliness is a collective issue. So, the cleanliness learned from school should be disseminated among your neighbors." She continued, "Menstruation is a normal and natural biological issue of women. There is nothing for shy feeling about maintenance of menstrual hygiene."

Being at the Saidpur Municipal House, the Ambassador said, "The relation between Bangladesh and Sweden is historic and long-standing; that had started with the recognition of Bangladesh by Sweden. In that way, Swedish people continue standing with Bangladeshi people, and this Project is supported by the Swedish people for the greater view of development."

SKS School & College Placed 2nd in the Independence Day's Parade



March Past of SKS School & College's Parade Team

SKS School & College stood 2nd on the Independence and National Day's Parade on 26 March 2022 held at Shah Abdul Hamid Stadium, Gaibandha, organized by the district administration. Md. Oliur Rahman, DC, Gaibandha and Mohammad Towhidul Islam, SP, Gaibandha, received salute from the Parade. Alongside government departments, 30 educational institutions from primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels attended the program. Out of the 10 educational institutions at the secondary level, SKS School & College came up second with an impressive presentation on 'post-Independence Bangladesh'. Md. Oliur Rahman, DC, Gaibandha handed over the prize as the Chief Guest.

Int'l Women's Day Observed

(from page 1) In her speech, the Chief Guest said, "Future generation needs to be educated so that both men and women can coexist with dignity. And this responsibility must be taken by every parent; so that their children show respect to the women. We need to be aware of ourselves to prevent violence against women."

The guest of honor said, "The role of women in building the country is no less than men. They fought alongside men in our Liberation War and gave their lives. Like the developed countries, the women of Bangladesh are now advancing. Women must continue this progress."

In the concluding remarks, Dr. Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman emphasized the importance of raising awareness on violence against women at the individual, family and society level and called upon all to come forward to prevent violence against women.

Vow to Uphold the Glory

(from page 1) Rasel Ahmed Liton said, "We are proud that *Bangla* is now internationally recognized. Regrettably, even though we are Bengali, many do not speak *Bangla* among ourselves. We have forgotten the real glory the *Bangla* language has brought to the nation. Inspired by the language movement in 1952, we won the Liberation War in 1971. So, let's set a promise, we will protect the dignity of *Bangla*. We must make ourselves promise-bound today not to mix *Bangla* and English while speaking and writing."

Abdus Sattar, Principal, SKS School & College, also spoke on the occasion. Among others, teachers, students, parents, officials of SKS Foundation and NRBC Bank were also present at the occasion. The event ended with a cultural program organized by the students of SKS School & College.

Preparatory Workshop on Model Health Complex

Upazila Health Complex, Fulchari, Gaibandha organized a Preparatory Workshop on Model Health Complex in partnership with SKS Foundation supported by *WaterAid Bangladesh* under the *WASH in Institution Project*. The Workshop was held on 2 February 2022 at the Upazila Health Complex. UP Chairmen & members, Market Management Committee, teachers, journalists, and staff of UHC, CBO leader, local elites, and students attended the Workshop.

Inaugurating the Workshop, the Chief Guest Dr. A.M. Akhtaruzzaman, Civil Surgeon, Gaibandha said, "To upgrade the UHC service, we all doctors, nurses, patients, and people need to work together. Although we have limited resources, we still can provide better services having coordination of all parties from service holders to service providers."

The special guest GM Selim Parvez, Chairman, Upazila Parishad, Fulchari said, "To ensure better services at the local level, this model of a health complex will encourage us to replicate in our area. Alongside, I would like to ensure all the supports from upazila for this hospital."



Dr. A.M. Akhtaruzzaman, Civil Surgeon, Gaibandha is speaking at the Workshop

The chairperson Dr. Md. Rafiquzzaman, Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer said, "I request all to realize the limitations of the institution and to help me to initiate a model health center at Fulchari UHC."

British Dy. High Commissioner

(from page 1) Welcomed by Mst. Parvin Akter, Vice-Chairperson of SKS Foundation at SKS Head Office, Gaibandha, the Delegation had a view-exchange- meeting with SKS' senior officials on the organization's profile, program, particularly its intervention areas on preventing the violence against women.

The Delegation had a visit to an adolescent group at Taluk Refaitpur village at Badiakhali union of Gaibandha Sadar upazila. Learning the boys' and girls' exemplary steps in preventing child marriage, the Deputy High Commissioner said, "Your courageous acts in stopping child marriage are remarkable and praiseworthy that you need to continue to make and get a better future." Being at Jot-Gourh Sarkar village in Boali union under Sadar upazila, and listening to parents' difficult life stories of being married early and overcoming their struggles, the Deputy High Commissioner said, "Your life struggles will teach the new generation. Your development stories, however, will inspire and be an example of other women still struggling."

Swedish Ambassador Visited Saidpur FSM Plant

Alexandra Berg Von Linde, Swedish Ambassador to Bangladesh, visited the Fecal Sludge Management (FSM) Plant at Saidpur, Nilphamari. On 17 March 2022, she visited some other activities of the *WASH for Urban Poor Project* implemented by Saidpur Municipality and SKS Foundation with technical assistance of WaterAid Bangladesh and financial support from the Government of Sweden.



Swedish Ambassador, along with other officials is observing the FSM Plant

Welcomed by Rafika Akhtar Jahan, Mayor, Saidpur Municipality, Hasin Jahan, Country Director, WaterAid Bangladesh, and Dr. Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman, Deputy Chief Executive, SKS Foundation, the Ambassador visited the newly constructed FSM. Observing the FSM, she said, "The Sewage Treatment Plant is an important and bold step towards sustainable healthcare. We are proud to be a partner in the construction of the country's largest 'Sewage Treatment Plant'." (see page 2)

World Water Day Seminar 2022 Depletion & Pollution of Groundwater is the Key Concern

'Depletion and pollution of groundwater is the key concern for the invisible resource' the speakers made this remark focusing on the theme of this year's World Water Day 'Groundwater-Making the Invisible Visible'. The Virtual Seminar *Groundwater: Let's Protect the Invisible Resource* was organized on 21 March 2022, the eve of World Water Day-22 March. Being the networking body in the WASH sector, FANSA-Bangladesh, hosted by SKS Foundation as the Secretariat, along with SWA, BAWIN, MHM Platform, FSM Network, IWA- BD Chapter, and WaterAid Bangladesh organized the Seminar. (see page 2)



Participants are taking part in the Virtual Seminar on WWD 2022

24/7 Delivery Service Introduced in the Remote Areas



Barrister Shamim Haider Patwary, MP, is speaking at the opening ceremony

SKS Foundation introduced round-the-clock healthcare for pregnant mothers at 6 Union Health and Family Welfare Centers in Gaibandha. The 24/7 facility service was inaugurated respectively on 2 January 2022 at Bamondanga, 27 December 2021 at Tarapur, 29 December 2021 at Sonaroy Union Health and Family Welfare Center of Sundarganj upazila, 15 November 2021 at Padumshahar, and 28 December at Uria Union Health and Family Welfare Center of Fulchari upazila in Gaibandha through *Promotion of Maternal and Newborn Health (MAMOTA)* Project consortium with Save the Children, funded by KOICA. (see page 2)

A Bangladesh Bank Delegation Visited SKS' Program

A 3-member delegation led by Md. Abdul Hakim, General Manager of the Agricultural Credit Department of Bangladesh Bank visited SKS' *Small and Marginal Sized Farmers Agricultural Productivity Improvement and Diversification Financing (SMAP)* Project intervention supported by Bangladesh Bank on 2 January 2022 at Saghata upazila in Gaibandha. Md. Rayhanul Islam, Deputy General Manager and Md. Anwarul Morshed, Joint Director were the other 2 members of the delegation.



Md. Abdul Hakim is distributing certificates among the trainees

The delegation met *Togor Mahila Somity's* members at Chitulia village in Bharatkhalhi union. Encouraging raising milking cows and egg-laying, Md. Abdul Hakim said, "Besides, financial development we also need to focus on the nutritious food to be healthy." He also inaugurated a cattle vaccination camp at Gotia Government Primary School at Bharatkhalhi union. (see page 2)