



FRIENDS OF KOLKATA'S ELDERLY

NEWSLETTER : JULY TO DECEMBER 2020

Dear Friends ,

Wish you all a New Year filled with Hope and good health. The year 2020 was a lesson for us all and we need to move in solidarity for a happy and healthier world.



EXTENTION OF BHALOBASHA

Extension of Bhalobasha - Due to the Pandemic and after a long wait with the lock down we finally decided to start the extension of Bhalobasha.



We are glad to share the news that our building work started since 19th September 2020. We are trying our best to keep our members and staff safe and carry out the work. The progress is well and we are hopeful that by February 2021 we would be able to inaugurate the house. Thank you Bernie Geoghegan and David Stevens, Edmund Rice College, Sean Garvey and all our friends who made special donations for the fulfilment of this dream. Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers.



ADMINISTRATIVE NEWS

We now have **Mr. Ashok Chakraborty**, to help us primarily with the administrative works and related matters in both homes. We have several future plans which we hope would benefit with the professional input of Mr. Chakraborty.



We also have now with us **Mr. Nirmal Sarkar** who is assisting us in creating the psychological assessment of each member. He is also trying to identify their areas of interest which will greatly help us to engage them. The documentation will be of legal benefit too.



RETIREMENT



Bishwanath Bayen, lovingly called Bishu-da, retired in October 2020. He is diabetic and in the last two years his condition deteriorated. He is frail and is unable to carry out small jobs even at his own home. Many may still remember him climbing the coconut trees and serving coconuts with a beaming smile. We will miss him in the house. He received all the benefits and we will keep supporting him in whatever way possible.

Gita Singh who worked as the cook in Charunibash since 2013 resigned. Gita was extremely caring and loving, a touch which all the members now miss. We organized a farewell for both Biswanath and Gita on 20th December 2020 along with the Christmas celebration in Charunibash.



Renuka Barla, our loved cook of Bhalobasha had to leave her job in December 2020, to be with her son and to maintain her own home. We are really very sad as Renuka was a very cool-headed and calm person who worked very well with Sushila and Bela for the last few years.



Change of bank account for receiving foreign donations

This note is especially for all our friends abroad, who need to be aware of the change in the FCRA rules. All NGOs like FOKE, holding permission to receive foreign donation now need to create a New Bank Account in their local State Bank, which will then share their details with the Main State Bank in New Delhi. Our FCRA Account will now be in the State Bank of New Delhi as per the new FCRA Amendment. All foreign donations will have to be made by donors in the new FCRA Account in the State Bank of New Delhi. We will be able to receive foreign donations only till March 2021 in our existing bank account. So kindly do not send any foreign donations to our existing bank account after March 2021. We will intimate you with the new bank account number and other details. This now involves a lot of administrative work which is quite tedious but do-able.

Maintanance: Installation of the CCTV in Bhalobasha was completed in September 2020, before the construction began, keeping the safety and security issues in mind.

We are very thankful to **Concentrix Daksh Services Private Limited**, for granting us a generous donation to develop the infrastructure of Charunibash. We hope to start the work by the second week of January 2021.



REST IN PEACE BINAPANI PAL

Binapani Pal, resident of Bhalobasha since 3rd March 2009, was detected with advanced carcinoma of the gall bladder. She was 84 years of age (possibly more) and was also a COPD patient. The doctors were reluctant to operate with these complications. We brought her twice to the Cancer Department of Chittaranjan Medical College Hospital.



She was hospitalized in Hope Hospital first in November and for the last time again on 9th December. On 10th December at 2 pm, she gave up. In the loving memory of Binapani we organised a prayer in Bhalobasha on 23rd December

"Binapani for me was a calm strength, and important member of FOKE and Bhalobasha. May her soul rest in peace." -Kerry Luxton.



FUTURE MEMBER

We rescued Jyostna Mukherjee on the 29th December with support from the rescue team of Hope Kolkata Foundation. She was admitted in Hope Hospital for medical checkups.

Jyostna is short of sight and will need cataract operation of both eyes. She will be home in the New Year, hopefully fulfilling the void that has been left behind by Binapani.



Vivekananda Mission hospital visited Charunibash and identified 7 of our residents with cataract. The cataract operations will soon be done. Jenny and Dashumi were both admitted in Hope hospital for their treatment and check-ups. Kalyani and Smritikona had their neuro and dermatological check-ups.



Update on Shyamoli

Those of you who follow our newsletter will remember that Shymoli was a challenge for us. She was young,,

hence, was transferred to AVIEW home with the intension that she would find an engagement; however, she proved us wrong. On 4th July 2020, from AVIEW home we transferred her to a paid old age home. Within 3 months we were requested to find another home for here. On 28th October she lost all her composure and we had to admit her in ANTARA rehabilitation centre where she was detected with schizophrenia. While the treatment was in process we requested Samiran Mallick CEO of Hope Hospital to help us find a permanent home for Shaymoli in Missionaries of Charity. Samiran kindly made all arrangements and after a short stay in Hope Hospital Shaymoli was taken to Nirmala Kenndy Centre in Dum Dum on 4th December 2020. We only wish that Shymoli settles and finds peace within herself. Samiran needs special mention for this support.



OUTREACH PROGRAMME

The joy and benefit of networking with local groups and NGOs

For both our Follow-up schools and the Women Empowerment programmes we are networking with two local and very enthusiastic NGOs, - Behala Sujon Social Welfare Centre and Uttoran Foundation, with no financial transactions involved. Agreements were finalized specifying the roles of both partners. Collaboration with Uttoran Foundation will focus on finding opportunities for income generation for all the women in our tailoring group as well as for some young girls in and around Bhalobasha.



The 9 ladies who completed their training in tailoring will now be primarily involved in production. Uttoran Foundation is securing small orders for them, but due to the prevalent pandemic situation it is a slow process.



Since November 2020, Aparupa Choudhury (Trustee of Uttoran Foundation) has also started a handicrafts training for young girls and students in Bhalobasha. As the schools are not functioning, this is a good opportunity to use the spare time and offer the girls with some extra skill.



Agreement with Behala Sujon Social Service (BSSS) aims to enhance the quality of education. BSSS would regularly monitor and evaluate the education centres, provide opportunities to children with extracurricular activities and train local young girls in teaching. Two teachers training programmes for our teachers were completed by Mrs. Piyali Sen. Volunteers are being arranged for dance, art, craft and drama for Saturdays; the first class started since 4th December in Bhalobasha.



Update on the Tailoring Unit

The second batch of tailoring unit consists of 15 women from around Madhubati village. The classes were resumed after lockdown, from 16th September 2020. They have now learnt to sew items like shirts, petticoats, blouse, night dresses, skirts, frocks, salwar kameez and palazzo. The batch will officially end in February 2021. But, since, the students requested to extend the training for another month it will end in March 2021 with evaluation and certification.

Awareness and orientation: On Covid-19 and oil free cooking

Mr. Nirmal Sarkar facilitated two Awareness programs, by NOBO KOLOROB and RANGAMALA MEMORIAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (RMDI) on COVID 19, at Bhalobasha, for our staff, parents and young girls involved in the vocational training.





OTHER OUTREACH ACTIVITIES



Distribution of rations to 100 families in and around Madhubati

On 3rd August keeping to the norms of social distancing we distributed 100 packets (5 kgs rice and 3 kgs lintels) to the most needy families, identified by our staff. Thank you Uttoran Foundation and Zomato Foods for this initiative.



Food programme in Bandel

We supported the NGO Mahajiban in continuing the Bandel lunch drive which started during the lock down. 15 days lunch expenses in October 2020 was sponsored by FOKE, with generous donations from friends.

Reaching out to the people of Malatipur

We cancelled our Annual Blanket distribution this year. Instead, we did a lunch, clothes and blanket distribution in collaboration with a group of youths 'Red Flash' for a specific community (nomadic tribe) in Malatipur.



Rescue and rehabilitation

A young self motivated man, Biplab, who was distributing meals to mentally ill homeless people during the lock-down period, came in contact with us. We accompanied Biplab one day to witness these people and make plans for rescue and rehabilitation. We were glad to find Prosenjit's home within 2 days, who went missing for 2 months. The man in the photograph is severely challenged and we do not know his name. He was rescued and was given shelter in Asha Bari, and this process was facilitated by Mr. Ashok Chakraborty.



Mr. S. K Baidya shared his expertise to follow healthy food habits, cooking without oil and using general herbs as natural medicines, with the view to benefit from natural ingredients available in our kitchen and garden.

Felicitation: In celebration of 200 birth centenary of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, RMDI recognized our work and felicitated our caregivers in Bhalobasha.



A different Durga Puja Celebration

This time there was no Pujo outings, but members enjoyed watching all the pujos on television. FOKE during Durga Puja 2020 reached out to a section of society that we rarely think of during festivals. The elderly who are physically challenged and shackled by poverty were identified from a single large locality in South 24 Parganas by Radhika Singh, (friend and committee member) who verified

their financial condition / background and tried to understand the possible benefits of receiving the wheelchairs and walkers. Two of the eleven beneficiaries were not elderly; rather they were extremely young – twenty years of age, but severely physically challenged and in need of help. The walkers and wheelchairs were distributed in three tranches in October 2020.



Stall during the Puja

Special thanks to Radhika, for initiating the distribution of the wheel chairs and also for sponsoring the stall from where cakes made by a very young volunteer, donated art works from friends, and necklaces made by residents of Charunibash were sold to raise funds. It was our very first effort and we thank Shilpi Sen for volunteering to mind the stall.





CELEBRATION OF BIRTHDAYS

Due to the pandemic situation Chandrayee missed volunteering in Bhalobasha school, but she could not miss celebrating her birthday with her students. The students were so happy to see her. Esha – Grand-daughter of Mr, Ashok Chakraborty, celebrated Virtual Birthday. While Mr. Chakraborty and his son arranged all the snacks and fish fries, Esha was connected on video call so we could speak to the birthday girl. Sambrita celebrated her birthday on Christmas day with the members in Bhalobasha.



ANNUAL PROGRAMME

Annual programme in Charunibash was celebrated on a low key, compared to other years, keeping the pandemic situation in mind. The children performed, while some of the members joined in the dances too. We thank Moushumi Mukherjee and her mother for their contribution towards the food packets for the children and for sponsoring the lunch for the occasion. Thanks to the members of Behala Sujon, for visiting and helping with the food packets.



Organization and groups, namely, Danpitye, Dishari, RMDI, Jagorani, Kolkata Neelkantha, Amra Apanjon, Bondhu, Saradiya, Uttaron Foundation, Bhim Army, Nobo Kolorob, Agrani Sangha young students c/o Manisha, Diamond Harbour- Lady Police group, visited with gifts, grocery and shared quality time with our members.

We acknowledge with thanks, contributions from our well-wishers and remain ever appreciative of your support. Thank you Mr. Sujoy Ghosh for promising, to sponsor the monthly cost of Gas cylinders in Bhalobasha. The sponsorship from his company Humaquest, started from December 2020. Special thanks to Raja Das our builder and his colleagues for carrying out the building work with interest and consideration. All our visitors and long term friends, committee members and above all the staff members have worked hand in hand all through this very difficult year.

Distribution of recycled clothes

The tables in Bhalobasha were laid out in categories with the clothes donated to us. All the laborers working in the building sites, parents, students and rickshaw pullers were invited to choose and take what suited them most. More clothes were distributed amongst NGOs and individuals which over the months friends had donated. Thanks to all for donating the clothes.



THANK YOU for all the donations received financially, in kind, by way of celebrating special days and sponsoring lunches, but above all for the love, respect and trust we have received from each one of you.



DONATION IN KIND

We received 3 good beds, dinner table with chairs and long sitting benches by Mr. and Mrs. Bagchi. Friends of Calcutta donated two oxygen cylinders with accessories, keeping in mind the emergency for the elderly during this pandemic.



MEMORY DONATION



Mrs Ratna Bagchi, Mrs Nupur Saha, Ms. Arundhati Chowdhury, Mrs. Sudipta Seth, Mrs. Jaya Barman, Mrs. Piyali Sen, Mrs. Anuradha Dutta Gupta, Mr. Sadananda Goswami, Dr. Ketoki Sharma, Mrs S. Sen, Mrs. Ruma Ganguly, Mr. Pradip Baroi, Mrs Arpana Basu, Sankha Ghosh and his family remembered their loved either by way of a lunch or by donating in kind.

Sponsoring lunches



Mahalaya, the onset of pujo, was celebrated with lunch like all years in Bhalobasha by DISHARI. They took every possible precaution and celebrated the day with all. The Saptomi lunch was sponsored by Mahasweta Chalraborty and her family. Raja Das our builder sponsored the Bijoya Dasomi lunch (Biriyani) for both homes.

Thank you Sahadeb Some, our President, for spending the big days of Durga puja in Charunibash. Mr Nirmal Sarkar and Sahadeb made Christmas special by being the Santa. There are many who helped us and is helping us silently, we remember them all with gratitude.



May we have learnt from one of the most trying years in human history that was 2020. May the wisdom gathered from our experiences become our means of sustenance for life and teach us to start to care for our loved ones, our environment and ourselves in a responsible way.

Warmest regards,

FOKE TEAM



Thank
you