



Int'l Mother Language Day Observed



The wreath is being placed at Shaheed Minar, and the students are taking part in art competition (Inset).

SKS Foundation and its sister concerns solemnly observed *Shaheed Dibosh* and International Mother Language Day by placing wreaths and organizing commemorative programs on 21 February 2025.

Early in the morning, the officials, teachers, and students of SKS Foundation and SKS School & College laid floral wreaths at *Shaheed Minar* in Gaibandha Pouro Park, paying tribute to the language martyrs. A similar tribute followed at SKS School & College's *Shaheed Minar*, where students and staff honored the sacrifices of the martyrs. (See page 3)

National Disaster Preparedness Day Observed



In Lalmonirhat District, a discussant is addressing the audience, and in Gaibandha District, community children are taking part in art competition (Inset).

SKS Foundation observed *National Disaster Preparedness Day (NDPD)* on 10 March 2025, reinforcing community resilience against disasters. In line with this year's theme—*"Dorjoge Purbavash Prostoti, Bachay Pran Khoykhoti"* (Disaster Forecast & Preparedness Save Lives & Reduce Losses), SKS organized a range of grassroots-based activities across its working areas. (See page 3)

Consultation on Implementation of CWIS Action Plan Held

A study (Shit Flow Diagram-SFD) has revealed that 90% of fecal sludge in Gaibandha Municipality, and 61% in Muktingar Union of Gaibandha are not being safely managed. This includes fecal sludge that is not emptied from containment, not delivered to fecal sludge management (FSM) services, and not treated. The SFD findings indicated that the remaining 10% in Gaibandha Municipality and 39% in Muktingar Union are considered safely managed, primarily because the fecal sludge remains contained and is not emptied.



Dr. Mohammad Mujibur Rahman is presenting the study and CWIS Action Plan to the stakeholders.

To address these critical sanitation challenges, Gaibandha Municipality and Muktingar Union have developed their Citywide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) and Safe Sanitation Services Improvement Action Plans respectively. The Plan's short-term (2024-2026) goals include upgrading unsafe containment systems, converting single-pit toilets to twin-pit systems, and ensuring safe waste transportation. Plans also involve acquiring vacuum tanks, securing land for Fecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs), and staff training. The medium-term (2027-2030) objectives focus on modernizing all containment systems and achieving full sewage treatment at FSTPs. Long-term (2031 and beyond) plans aim to further improve containment systems and involve the private sector in managing FSTPs.

This was shared in a Stakeholder Consultation on Implementation of the Citywide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) Action Plan organized by SKS Foundation in collaboration with the Center for Smart Infrastructure Resilience and Sustainability (CSIRS), and Women Development Program (WDP). The consultation was held at SKS Inn, Gaibandha on 27 February 2025 under the FANSA-BD's *Rising for the Rights* Project. Stakeholders including representatives from Gaibandha Municipality, Muktingar Union Parishad, DPHE, NGOs, sanitation workers, media personnel, community leaders, and development organizations attended the event. (See page 3)

Farmers' Exposure Visit Held



Farmers are in field visits and sharing their learning (Inset).

A group of 24 farmers, both male & female, from Ulipur Upazila visited agricultural demonstration plots in Krishnapur village, Kurigram Municipality, as

part of an Exposure Visit under SKS Foundation's RMTP-Seed Project. Supported by PKSF and IFAD, the visit on 26 February 2025 provided a platform for farmers to exchange knowledge and experiences in cultivating oilseeds and pulses.

During the visit, demonstration farmers shared insights on growing sunflowers, mustard, peas, and lentils. The farmers noted that cultivating oilseeds and pulses doubles the yield compared to traditional rice and jute farming. Agriculturist Md. Hafizur Rahman Sheikh, Project Coordinator, emphasized the significant shortage of oilseeds and pulses; these have both nutrition and economic returns, and this flood-prone area's soil is well-suited for these crops. However, these oilseeds and pulses are not widely practiced in the disaster-prone region as many are hesitant to adopt new crops.

Encouraged by the potential benefits, the visiting farmers showed interest in overcoming obstacles and adopting oilseed and pulse cultivation in the upcoming season.

Hosne Ara Begum becomes

(from page 4) A resident of Uttar Dhanghara village in Ballamjhar Union, Gaibandha Sadar Upazila, Hosne Ara Begum is a Master Craft Person under the *Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment (RAISE)* project of SKS Foundation. She is also a small entrepreneur and the Founder of 'Swapnokuthir.' Despite facing domestic abuse and being abandoned by her husband, she persevered and rebuilt her life as an entrepreneur.

Md. Shahidul Islam, Divisional Commissioner, Rangpur, presided over and Keya Khan, Director General, Department of Women Affairs, graced the event as the Chief Guest. Keya Khan said, "If men do not become aware, women will not receive the dignity they deserve, no matter how educated and empowered they are. So, we must work together to ensure that men and women can contribute equally to society."

Aminul Islam, DIG of Rangpur Range; Mohammad Rabiul Faisal, Deputy Commissioner; Md. Majid Ali, Metropolitan Police Commissioner; and Md. Monir Hossain, Additional Director, Department of Women Affairs, also spoke at the event as Special Guests.

International Women's Day

(from page 4) Alongside its on-ground activities, SKS Foundation further amplified its International Women's Day 2025 campaign in electronic media and by publishing a special supplement in a leading daily newspaper, reaching a broad audience and promoting awareness of gender equality, women's rights, and empowerment.

Religious Leaders to Promote Inclusive Sanitation

To promote inclusive and gender-sensitive sanitation services, a View Exchange Workshop with social and religious leaders was held on 20 February 2025 at the Lalmonirhat Municipal Shopping Complex Hall. Lalmonirhat Municipality organized the Workshop, held under the *WASH Systems for Health* Project of SKS Foundation and WaterAid.

Sree Harananda Roy, *Pouro Nirbahi Officer (PNO)*, inaugurated the Workshop. Thirty-four participants, including imams, khatibs, priests, and clergy men from different religions attended the Workshop alongside municipal and project officials. Mohammad Ayub Ali, Executive Engineer; A.S.M Ashrafuzzaman Talukder, Urban Planner; and Suman Kumar Saha, Capacity Development Expert, WaterAid Bangladesh, enriched the Workshop sharing their valuable inputs. A.K.M. Abdul Matin, Project Manager, SKS Foundation, facilitated the Workshop.



A participant is expressing his view in the Workshop.

The social and religious leaders emphasized promoting Behavior Change Communication (BCC) to advance gender-transformative WASH services. They recommended developing a sanitation service list of the Municipality to be shared through religious institutions, ensuring the public is aware of available services. They also suggested distributing leaflets and a hotline number to inform residents about the municipality's vacuum tanker service and its fees to avail the sanitation services.

Nutrition Awareness & Learning Fair

(from page 4) Beginning with a vibrant rally, a discussion forum was held with Khokon Kumar Kundu, Director-Finance, SKS Foundation, in the chair. The Chief Guest emphasized the importance of nutritious food and hygiene practices in reducing illnesses and healthcare costs. The Upazila *Nirbahi Officer* said, "Nutritious food and proper hygiene practices can reduce illnesses, decrease the need for frequent doctor visits, and lower expenses. At the same time, they enhance productivity and income."

Other speakers, including agriculture, health, livestock, fisheries, and education officers, echoed the importance of balanced diets and proper hygiene. They highlighted that nutritious food does not have to be expensive, as affordable options like vegetables and locally produced vegetables also provide essential nutrients. Kapil Kumar Pal, Nutritionist, PKSF and Baharam Khan, Coordinator, Field Operations, SKS Foundation, also participated in the discussion, urging attendees to adopt healthy habits such as handwashing and maintaining clean sanitation facilities. Prizes were distributed to winners of the poetry and quiz competitions.

World Water Day Observed



One of the discussants is addressing the audience.

Upholding the significance of water conservation, SKS Foundation observed World Water Day 2025. On the Day, 22 March 2025, SKS Foundation's WASH for Urban Poor Project, Phase-II organized a Discussion Forum at Railway Mess Camp, Saidpur Municipality, Nilphamari, with the participation of the community, focusing on the theme of "Glacier Preservation".

Md. Pappu Hossain, President of Railway Mess Camp, chaired the Discussion Forum, with Md. Moninul Islam, Inspector of Conservancy, Saidpur Municipality, and Md. Salim Ahmed, CBO leader, attending as guest.

Speakers emphasized that although Bangladesh does not have glaciers, water remains a crucial resource that must be preserved. They warned that water scarcity is increasing and urged the community to use water responsibly and prevent pollution to ensure long-term sustainability.

The discussion also highlighted pressing local water issues, including continuous leakage from water points and lack of access to safe water in certain areas. Participants stressed that water is a fundamental right and called for urgent action to ensure water justice.

Speaking at the event, Md. Moninul Islam, Inspector of Conservancy, Saidpur Municipality, emphasized that ensuring safe water & sanitation is a shared responsibility between communities and service providers. He called for collective efforts and meaningful dialogue to address these critical issues and ensure sustainable water management.

National Disaster Preparedness Day

(from page 1) In Gaibandha, including Gaibandha Sadar, Sundarganj, and Fulchari upazilas, SKS Foundation organized community-based awareness campaigns and discussions on disaster preparedness. A children's drawing competition was arranged in Gaibandha Sadar and Fulchari, encouraging young participants to creatively express their understanding of disaster risk reduction. Alongside, a special radio program broadcast essential disaster preparedness messages. In Sundarganj Upazila, a rally and a mock drill demonstrated emergency response strategies engaging the local community.

In Lalmonirhat district, SKS organized rallies and discussions in Mogoalhat, Kulaghat, Rajpur, and Khuniagach unions. Union Parishad members, school teachers, students, and women's group members actively participated, strengthening local engagement on disaster preparedness.

To amplify its NDPD campaign, SKS also disseminated messages through social media and published a special supplement in a leading daily, reaching a broader audience and reinforcing public awareness of the importance of disaster preparedness.

Int'l Mother Language Day

(from page 1) A special cultural program took place at the *Shaheed Minar* premises, featuring performances of patriotic songs, poetry recitations, and speeches. Students also depicted the significance of the Language Movement through their artwork, reflecting on the sacrifices made to preserve the Bengali language.

Addressing the gathering, Md. Abdus Sattar, Principal, SKS School & College, emphasized the historical significance of the day. At the end, the winners of the art competition received books and certificates in recognition of their creative expressions of language and heritage.

Consultation on Implementation of CWIS

(from page 1) A.K.M. Hedayetul Islam, ADC (General) and Administrator of Gaibandha Municipality, graced the consultation as Chief Guest. Dr. Mohammad Mujibur Rahman, Professor of Civil Engineering at United International University and Director of CSIRS, presented the findings. Mohammad Alauddin, Senior Assistant Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer of Gaibandha Municipality, presided over the consultation.

Emphasizing the importance of safely managed sanitation, the Chief Guest urged the stakeholders to work together for the implementation of the CWIS Action Plan. He also informed that Gaibandha Municipality is ready to extend its collaboration to implement its CWIS Action Plan.

Attending the event as guest of honor, Ahsan Habib, Chairman of Muktingar Union Parishad, opined that this study opened the scope for further working on safely managed sanitation. Other participants in the consultation discussed the key challenges in sanitation, including inadequate sewage systems, waste management, and lack of health awareness. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of active community participation and raising awareness to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive sanitation plans. Stakeholders also recognized the role of local government in planning and implementing CWIS initiatives, allocating sufficient budgets for sanitation services, and establishing CWIS units.

Hosne Ara Begum becomes a 'Sreshtho Adammo Nari'



Hosne Ara Begum is receiving the crest from the Chief Guest.

Hosne Ara Begum, a program participant of SKS Foundation, has been honored with the 'Sreshtho Adammo Nari 2024' (Best Indomitable Woman Award 2024) at the divisional level. She was previously selected as a "Joyeeta" at the upazila and district levels in Gaibandha. The Department of Women Affairs organized the ceremony on 28 January 2025 at the Rangpur Tourism Motel Auditorium. Keya Khan, Director General, Department of Women Affairs, handed over the award to 5 women recognized as 'Sreshtho Adammo Nari 2024' in 5 different categories. Hosne Ara Begum received the award in the category of 'Women who have overcome the effects of torture'. She was presented with a certificate, a crest, a sash, and a cheque of BDT 25,000 as part of the recognition. (See page 2)

Nutrition Awareness & Learning Fair Held

SKS Foundation organized *Nutrition Awareness & Learning Fair 2025* on 20 February 2025 at Fulchari Upazila Parishad premises in Gaibandha. The day-long Fair featured 6 stalls aiming to raise public awareness about food and nutrition, featuring a colorful rally, a discussion forum, a stall exhibition, poetry and quiz competition, and a cultural performance. Supported by PKSF under the *Safe Fish, Fish Production, and Marketing sub-project of the Rural Microenterprise Transformation Project (RMTP)*, the fair attracted a huge number of visitors, including students, project participants, and locals. Jagatbandhu Mondal, Upazila Nirbahi Officer, inaugurated the fair as the Chief Guest. (See page 2)



The Chief Guest is addressing the audience, and the crowd is flocked in the Fair (Inset).

International Women's Day Observed

Under the theme "For ALL Women and Girls: Rights, Equality, Empowerment," SKS Foundation observed International Women's Day with vibrant activities across its working areas on 8 March 2025.

At Char Fulchari Government Primary School in Fulchari Union, Fulchari, Gaibandha, SKS Foundation, in collaboration with *Manusher Jonno Foundation under the Community-based Resilience Women's Empowerment and Action (CREA) Project*, organized an engaging program featuring a discussion session, speech, slow-motion cycle race, and a handprint campaign advocating for women's rights and recognition of women's unpaid household works. Women and girls from char areas participated in the event.

Most. Akhtara Banu, a member of the Climate Action Group and the Upazila Gender Equality and Climate Action (GECA) Committee, presided over the discussion session. Speakers, including Lovely Begum, Hamida Begum, and Jahanara Begum, members of the Women's

Group, along with Hasina Parvin, Project Manager, LTP, SKS Foundation, highlighted the ongoing gender inequalities in *char* communities and called for recognition of women's contributions and rights.



In Gaibandha District, a community woman is addressing the audience, and in Lalmonirhat District, women are attending a rally (Inset).

The participating women imprinted their hands on a large white canvas as a symbolic demand for respect and acknowledgment of household chores. Additionally, schoolgirls participated in a slow-motion cycle race, promoting confidence and empowerment. The program concluded with a prize-giving ceremony.

In Lalmonirhat, with support of WaterAid and SKS Foundation's *WASH Systems for Health* project, Lalmonirhat Municipality organized a vibrant rally and a discussion session at the Municipal Shopping Complex auditorium. Women, including female volunteers from 9 wards, and officials of the municipality participated in the program.

Md. Rajib Ahsan, DD, Local Government Department, and Administrator, Lalmonirhat Municipality, led the rally, which paraded through the streets before gathering for a discussion session. Speakers emphasized the importance of ensuring women's rights, prioritizing their needs in municipal services, and enhancing access to women- and disability-friendly WASH facilities. The municipal administrator addressed public concerns and assured necessary actions. Among the attendees was Harananda Roy, *Pouro Nirbahi Officer (PNO)*. (See page 2)

