

'kid' is a slang expression for a child. And I thought how many parents are being deceived into paying for their child's education in such schools in which they cannot even make up an accurate name for themselves?

A very large number of the English Grammarbooks in Bangladesh have huge numbers of mistakes in them. This makes me very angry because some of them are bought by poor people who spend their precious money thinking they are helping their children. While I was teaching in Haluaghat, I used to check the English examination question papers for mistakes. These question papers were bought, by the school, from a business in Dhaka. In one question paper, I found 62 mistakes. You and I may smile but it is not funny. We feel ashamed. We want to be proud of Bangladesh and Bangladeshi work. We do not want to feel ashamed.

Tomorrow I want us to try and understand why people do not want to check their work. Today I just want us to feel determined to change this attitude beginning with ourselves. It is no good asking God to help us unless we are doing what we can to help ourselves. There is an English saying, "God helps those who help themselves." Maybe there is a similar saying in Bengali. We must do what we can. So get into the habit of doing your best and checking – and you will find that ...

.....God will bless you.



PROOF-READING!

Assembly 25 – Tuesday February 25th 2003

This week I have been sharing with you how much your country and mine need people who love accuracy, who want to get things right. We have been thinking of the number of mistakes that are

made in the spelling of basic English words on notices all over Dhaka, in English books and examination question papers. The last example I want to show you is this bag, which I saw in a shop and I had to buy it. There was a world conference in, I think, the year 1998, and people created a good saying, "Education for all 2000". Bangladesh produced a jute bag with this slogan on it and guess what? EDUCATION FOR ALL 2000.'

I do not know whether to laugh or cry but, whenever we feel sad or angry about something, it is a good use of that energy to analyse reasons. Why are there such mistakes? I think a lot of mistakes come about because people cannot believe they are wrong so they do not check. Many people who have had just a little education can be very proud and think they know more than they know. There is an English saying, "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." Some people who have had a little education think that no one can teach them anything. You, on the other hand, are getting a lot of education and I want you to be so confident that you can be humble enough to say, "Wait a moment! I better check this. Now, who shall I ask who knows more than I do?" There are many people who do not like to admit that ANYONE knows more than they do about anything. But the truly educated person has no problems with that! They think, it is better to look a little foolish now, than to look a lot foolish later! It is very sensible to plan a new noticeboard for your business and then say, before the painter paints it, "I better check this for mistakes." Otherwise you advertise your foolishness.

Maybe, one day, some of you will work as a proof-reader – that is someone whose job it is to read a book that a publisher has printed just a few copies of and the publishing firm have to check it for mistakes before they do the final print-run. The work of a proof-reader is very important. If you miss one mistake in a book, a good publisher will have to print lots of little bits of paper and stick them into the book with the word 'Errata' on – which is

Latin for 'mistakes' or 'errors'. That costs him a lot of money so he likes to employ good proof-readers who check very carefully.

I think that some firms in Dhaka do not have any proof-readers. They do not check! One day, I looked at a little alphabet book that an educational project was giving out hundreds of copies to, to Primary Schools all over Bangladesh and I found 17 mistakes – including 'V is for violin' – and there was a picture of a DRUM! The people who wrote this book were, maybe good at English but they did not check before it went into production so thousands and thousands of copies of this book were printed. Just as the printers of the awful English grammarbooks do not check before the final printing. I want you to think about this. Checking is the boring part of any job – but it is very important. One day, your life may depend on a good mechanic in a garage who checks the brakes on your car and notices something wrong and reports it and repairs it. Learn to take pleasure in trying to do every job you are given to the best of your ability.

God bless you.



WE ALL NEED HELP TO REMEMBER.

Assembly 26. February 19th 2003

I have been talking this week about accuracy. I hope you are learning at school to enjoy getting things right and realizing that means being organized. There is one very important way in which this school helps you to be organized. You all know what I mean when I say 'school diary' – yes? This school produces a very expensive and very nice diary to help you to organize your work so you bring the right books to school every day and do the right homework every evening. I am discovering that the diaries are wonderful in theory but some of you cannot or do not know how

to use them in practice. Some of you even think that, now that you are in the Senior School, you do not need to have a diary because you are so clever and well-organised that you can remember everything in your head - but you can't. The fact is that the whole diary business is in rather a mess and I am asking you all, both teachers and pupils to sort it out.

I took 3A yesterday and, when I asked them to write their homework in their diary, many of the class could not find February 18th in their diaries. It is quite a skill – you have to know the days of the week in English, the months of the year in English and the numbers in English up to 31. Please may I ask class teachers, Maths teachers and English teachers to combine to help younger children find dates in their diaries?

Also, some of the pupils had done classwork all over the page so that there was no room to write down their homework. Please do not do this. You have exercise books to do classwork in. Some of them had nothing written down for days. Why not? You and your parents should be able to read the diary every evening and know what homework you have and what books you should put in your bag for the following day. When we teachers want work to be done by a certain date, please, everyone, write down in your diary for the evening before, the reminder to bring that work to school the next day. I know that school life is very complicated – like the whole of life. Your education here is education for life. We have to learn to be organized. I have to keep a diary to help me to remember things. We all develop our own ways of helping ourselves to be organized.

There was one very serious thing I forgot, on our Foundation Day Ceremony. Do you remember that awful electricity cut when the dancers were only half way through their dance which they were doing so well, having rehearsed for weeks? We said, "Oh, we will have the dance at the end!" - but we forgot! There was the prize-giving, looking after our Guest of Honour - and, by the end of the session, I had completely forgotten the promise to have the