

because of what their children are saying. When children are given information and skills, you can be agents of change, in your home and world! We are training you to be very special people.

God bless you.



### **SAFETY HELMETS!** *Assembly 50 – Thursday March 27<sup>th</sup> 2003*

*(Take bicycle helmet)*

I want to continue to think about the theme of safety and security. What is this? Safety helmet – when I am riding what? Many people who ride bicycles in the UK wear these now – not *motor* cyclists – *ordinary* cyclists. There are so many accidents but people are safer with helmets. I remember when most people never wore safety helmets on motor cycles. Then the law was passed. ‘You must wear a safety helmet!’ and most people thought, ‘Motor-cyclists will never wear helmets. They are people who are too independent. Some of them are young men who say, ‘No one is going to tell me what to do!’ But it worked for 3 reasons:

The first was that it was the law and, if the police found someone not wearing a helmet, he or she had to pay a lot of money as a fine. The second was that the makers of the helmets made them in lovely colours and designs and they became a fashion item and even young men were not ashamed to wear them. Thirdly, many young people knew people who had been killed when they were not wearing a safety helmet and had had very serious head injuries. In many cases, if they had been wearing a helmet, then they would still be alive. So everyone wears safety helmets on motorbikes now in the UK and, moreover, their passengers have to also. Please remember that, in a motorcycle accident, the person on the back is usually in more danger than

the driver. If there is only one helmet between two, then it is the passenger who should be wearing it, not the driver. But it is best of all if BOTH of you have helmets. I know some of you come to school on the back of motorbikes and do beg you to ask your fathers to buy you a helmet.

Moreover, in most other countries, the passenger at the back is NOT allowed to sit sideways. It is terribly dangerous because, if you fall off backwards, it is the back of the head that hits the road. But this is a problem for women in your culture, yes? Please think about it, girls. Sitting astride is so much safer.

I am very pleased to say that, for the first time in Bangladesh, I have seen builders with helmets on a building site. This also is common practice in other countries. Things fall down from high up on building sites. Again, we introduced a law and wondered if anyone would obey it but building firms told their men, ‘Either you wear your safety helmet (and other protective clothing) or you have no job.’ So that was that. And the numbers of people killed on building sites has dropped. In many countries, the law is very strict and a building firm or other employer can be fined a lot of money for not obeying the safety regulations, if one of their employees is killed or injured. Also, the insurance firms will not pay any compensation, if the worker is hurt when he is not wearing a helmet!

Gradually, I hope, Bangladesh is becoming more safety conscious. A lot depends on the push of ordinary people to demand safer practices so that everyone can benefit. So many accidents are unnecessary – on the roads, at work, at play. Let us be conscious of life’s dangers and care for others as well as ourselves.

God bless you.