

FRIENDS OF SHAMAYITA MATH

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Dear members and Friends of Shamayita Math

I am happy to note that we have gained more members this year, including several Bengalis and other Indians with ties to West Bengal. Some of the new members are very active - not least Deepshikha Daga, who now is a member of our Board and our Event Manager. My sincere thanks to old and new members who are helping to make conditions better for children in West Bengal.



Bente with the students and teachers in Dangapara

Our Secretary, Bente Hagelund, paid a visit to Shamayita Math for 10 days in October. Amongst other activities, she visited the village school in Darangpara, the school Friends of Shamayita Math have funded and where most of our contributions are addressed - to school books, school uniforms and a hot meal on schooldays. It seemed teacher and pupils thrived. Bente also had the opportunity to say hello to the 7 children who are sponsored by our members. You can read more about the sponsorship programme on our homepage. Many of the children have an extra challenge apart from being poor - they belong to one of India's tribal people so in addition to their mother tongue Santali, they have to learn to speak, read and write Bengali and English.

Shamayita Math was originally established to provide education for girls in the area with a primary school and a convent school. Together there are 600 students. Over time several activities were added: Hospital, mobile clinic, sewing school for village women, agricultural center etc. The local population has expressed a strong desire for a Convent school for boys since economic problems and long distances prevents attending a school in bigger cities. A building for this school is now under construction and the school has started in a temporary location and already has 375 students. In India there is no tradition for mixed classes when children reach a certain age.



Convent School for boys are slowly rising in the landscape

Last year I wrote that Christianshavn Rotary Klub had donated 29.000 DKR to a collaborative project with Friends of Shamayita Math. The project concerns establishing and strengthening Child Protection Committees on selected areas of Bankura district of West Bengal. The purpose is to spread knowledge about Childrens Rights in local communities and try to prevent transgressions. One issue are child marriages, which are unlawful in India, but sometimes still occur. It takes time to change old traditions. It is unfortunate it still happens but great that somebody like Shamayita Math works to better conditions. In the first yearly report it is mentioned that 5 child marriages were prevented by intervening and discussions with the involved families. Other issues can be medical help to sick children or help to poor families to buy school books so children can attend school. Bente Hage-lund had the opportunity to pay a visit to 2 of the Child Protection Committees.



A child protection committee is presenting local problems to visitors

In my summer newsletter I told about our big event in May with Indian food and songs and great dances performed by the children in "Deep's Dancing Divas". We had a great day and fine support for Friends of Shamayita Math, so we have decided to have a similar event next year on 26 May. An invitation will be issued later, but please reserve the date and remember to bring children and grandchildren along.

Deep's Dancing Divas are also arranging a music and song event as a tribute to the great Indian musician R. D. Burman (1939-94), who has composed music and songs for more than 300 movies. I think most Indians are familiar with his songs. The event takes place at 2 February 5 PM in the assembly hall at Grønnemoseskolen, Høje Gladsaxe Torv, 2850 Søborg. An invitation to the event will be forthcoming. We support the event and any surplus goes to Shamayita Math.

Next year's general meeting takes place 11. March 6.30 PM at Deepshikha Daga's place, Lyngbyvej 263B, Hellerup. All members are welcome.

At the end of this year, we have 72 members, a gain of 6. We have transferred 26.750 DKK to Shamayita Math.

With more members and activities e.g. sponsorships it is more expedient to use different mobile pay numbers so it is clearer what the contribution is intended for. You can see the new numbers here:

Friends of Shamayita Math in general: box97814

Participation in events: box22169

Remember to write "box" before the number. You can also write a short message about the purpose of your donation.

I wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a happy new year. If the festival season inspires you to a small donation, it would be very much appreciated.

Lars Fynbo

Chairman of Friends of Shamayita Math

