

Bring plastic and study in this Assam school for free

Students Have To Deposit 25 Waste Items Every Week



Students of Akshar Forum
make bricks out of recyclable
plastic waste

Guwahati: A young couple from Assam has set up a school with a unique enrolment criterion — students must collect and bring 25 items of plastic waste every week. The plastic waste is then processed by the students at the recycling unit on the premises and turned into ecological bricks, which are used for developing the campus infrastructure.

Akshar Forum — the model school in Guwahati's Gorchuk area — was established in June 2016 by Mazin Mukhtar and his wife Parmita Sarma. It has 110 students, aged from four to 15, who come from the nearby villages.

“To stop the widespread burning of plastic in the villages, we decided to educate the community on the hazards of burning them. We also made the parents pledge to stop burning plastic and send as much plastic waste as possible from their homes,” said Parmita.

Mazin arrived in India from New York in 2013 for a school project. He met Parmita, a student of social work from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, while working in the education sector. “Many dropouts were working in factories and stone quarries from a very young age, in very difficult conditions. We decided to set up a school that will suit their financial needs while providing them quality education,” Mukhtar said. The school also follows a unique teaching method where teenagers in poverty are paid to teach the students. Further, the curriculum of the school specifically aims to combine conventional academics with vocational training.

The couple also plans to introduce a fellowship programme called ‘Akshar Fellowship’ to train graduates, in the unique methods followed at the school. The trainees will then replicate the teaching techniques at government schools.