

# BALAKNAMA

UNIQUE NEWSPAPER FOR AND BY STREET CONNECTED CHILDREN

Balaknama is the newspaper presented by Street and Working children themselves to fight for their own rights and problems because they are being completely ignored.

## HAR GHAR TIRANGA CAMPAIGN CHILDREN HOISTED THE FLAG, CELEBRATED JOYFULLY, AND RECEIVED CERTIFICATES"

Balaknama reporters: Sarita, Kajal, Hansraj, Rajkishore, and Kishan

Under the banner of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, an initiative launched by the Prime Minister to celebrate the Independence Day has not only encouraged citizens to hoist the national flag at their homes, offices, and establishments but has also ignited a sense of patriotism among street and working children living in adverse conditions. These children enthusiastically participated in various competitions in schools to express their joy on this special occasion. Let's find out how the children of Jaipur celebrated Independence Day. Street and working children associated with various alternative education centers in Jaipur joined the Har Ghar Tiranga campaign, where they hoisted the national flag and uploaded selfies on the campaign's online link to receive certificates. When these children saw their names on the certificates, their happiness knew no bounds. Twelve-year-old Damini, a resident of the slum in Jaipur, shared her excitement: "I hoisted the flag on my rooftop for the first time, and I'm very

happy. I feel very proud to have the tricolor flying over my house." Similarly, 13-year-old Rohan, from the Prem Nagar slum, shared, "I took a selfie with the tricolor and uploaded it to the campaign's online link as instructed, and I received a certificate, which made me very happy." On this auspicious day, these street and working children also visited their local police station and celebrated this national festival with police officers in great joy. Police personnel and workers explained that the main purpose of these activities was to foster a friendly relationship between the police and the children so that the children could better understand their rights and the law. The children tied tricolor wristbands and pinned badges on the police officers. Both the children and the officers exchanged sweets, and in this way, the street and working children ensured their participation in the Amrit Mahotsav celebrations and celebrated Independence Day with great enthusiasm. Chamak (name changed), a resident of the slums near in Noida, shared her experience. As everyone knows, we celebrate Independence Day



to mark the freedom of our country, which was achieved in 1947. Every year, we celebrate this day with great joy. Schools start preparing in advance for Independence Day, and many children participate in various activities. I am currently studying in the 7th grade, and this year I took part in the dance competition at my school. We celebrated Independence Day by singing the national anthem, hoisting the tricolor, and participating in the dance competition. Additionally, we spoke to children living in Gurgaon. Nine-year-old Badshah, who lives in the slum, shared, "This Independence Day, we kids had a lot of fun and

decorated our Education Club beautifully." Together with other children, we hoisted the flag at our center and took part in the dance competition, which was immensely enjoyable. The education center also distributed laddoos to us, which we ate with great delight. Nine-year-old Rohan (name changed), a resident of the slums in Shivaji Park, Delhi, shared his experience: "Just like every year, Independence Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm. This year too, we went to our school, hoisted the flag, and participated in a rally. During the rally, we chanted 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' with all the children. On our way back

from school, we bought a big flag, which we waved all the way home. All the kids in our slum gathered to wave the flag and shouted patriotic slogans together. We knew about the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign, where we were supposed to hoist the flag and upload a photo to an app to receive a certificate. However, we didn't know the name of the app. So, we took selfies with our flags and put them up on the rooftops of our slum homes." The next day, when a social worker from the CHETNA organization came to our education center, we informed her about this. She told us the name of an app, and after uploading a photo on it, we received the certificate. We were very happy to receive this certificate. Ranjan (name changed), a 16-year-old boy living in Sector 5 of Noida, shared that on the morning of Independence Day, we proudly hoisted the tricolor flag. In the evening, I made my own kite at home and flew it with my own hands. Not only that, since roof is quite big, we set up speakers there and played patriotic songs, celebrating the joy of Independence Day with great enthusiasm.

## RISING TREND OF FAST FOOD AMONG CHILDREN: A CAUSE OF VARIOUS DISEASES

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak  
Talkative Reporter: Rehan

While fast food is convenient and cheap, consuming it regularly over a long period can come with a high cost. Fast foods like burgers, pizzas, fries, and shakes often contain more fat, calories, and highly processed carbohydrates than your body needs in a single meal. If you frequently enjoy eating them, it can quickly increase your weight, leading to obesity, and make you susceptible to various diseases. In this context, when Balaknama reporter Deepak visited the

Lakhesara slum in Jaipur, he met a 12-year-old boy named Rehan. Rehan was sitting on a cot outside his house, watching people pass by. The reporter asked Rehan why he wasn't in school today and why he looked so sad. Rehan replied that he had a stomach infection and had been on medication for about 45 days. When the reporter asked what caused the stomach infection, Rehan explained, "I used to eat a lot of chow mein and Maggi noodles. I didn't like eating roti and vegetables, and Maggi was very easy to make. So,



whenever my mother wasn't home, I would cook Maggi and eat it, and sometimes I

would buy chow mein from outside and eat it. Because of this, I started experiencing

severe stomach pain a few days ago. When I saw a doctor, he conducted several tests and found out that I had a stomach infection caused by eating too much fast food." Rehan further shared that the doctor advised him to include homemade food, fruits, vegetables, milk, curd, etc., in his diet along with his medicines to recover. He said, "Whenever I used to eat Maggi and chow mein instead of homemade food, my mother would always scold me and encourage me to eat proper meals. I wish I had listened to her; then I wouldn't be sick today."



# RAINY SEASON: FLIES BURDEN WORKING CHILDREN, INFECTION RISK

Balaknama Reporter: Rajkishore  
Talkative Reporter: Sumit

When our Balaknama reporter Rajkishore visited the settlements in the Wazirabad area of Gurugram, he spoke with some children who revealed that they were facing a lot of difficulties due to flies. The children shared, "Right now, flies have made our lives very difficult. There are so many flies inside the house that it's impossible for us to live comfortably; wherever we look, there are flies. In this rainy season, the swarm of flies has made it impossible for us to eat or drink properly. We are afraid that a fly might

fall into our food. If we open our mouths, they fly in, causing nausea. Sometimes they even get into our ears or noses, and they've set up camp everywhere, from food to our beds. Because of these flies, people in the settlement are frequently getting sick." The children explained that the risk of spreading diseases like dysentery, typhoid, and cholera is very high, along with many other potential infections. "We just don't know what to do anymore," they said. "No matter how much we clean inside or outside, the flies do not go away. When we go to study at the Chetna center, there are a



lot of flies there too. Although the flies reduce somewhat when the fans are on, when the electricity goes out, it

becomes almost impossible to study, even though the center is kept very clean. But due to the surrounding filth,

flies still come there. We are now really frustrated." When our Balaknama newspaper reporter Rajkishore asked the children why there were so many flies at their center, they said, "There is a drain nearby where people throw rice, bread, food, etc., which causes flies to breed and multiply significantly. All these flies then fly over to our center. Additionally, there is a tenant next to our center who bathes and uses a bathroom nearby, which also attracts more flies. Although these flies don't bother us as much throughout the year, during the rainy season, they become excessive, making our lives very difficult."

## TEEN GIRL FORCED TO BALANCE STUDIES WITH DOMESTIC WORK

Balaknama Reporter:  
Hans Kumar

When Balaknama reporter Hans Kumar visited the Amar Park area in West Delhi, the local Talkative Reporter Saniya shared the story of a 14-year-old girl named Yasmin (name changed), who lives near her house. Yasmin is a 9th-grade student struggling to balance her work as a domestic helper, her studies, and her responsibilities. Despite facing immense pressure from her mother to prioritize work over education, Yasmin helps her family by working as a cleaner in large houses. Every day, after returning from school at 1:30 p.m., Yasmin quickly changes her clothes and heads out to clean houses, sometimes even skipping meals to prioritize her work. She is very serious about her studies, even though she doesn't get enough time to devote to them. According to Talkative Reporter



Saniya, despite the constant threat of being expelled from school due to financial difficulties and a lack of books and notebooks, Yasmin remains vigilant about her education. Her family is struggling financially and relies on the income generated from household chores. Despite these

challenges, Yasmin has vowed not to give up on her education. Her story testifies to the condition of many girls living in such circumstances, who fight against all odds to fulfill their dreams amidst economic hardship and family pressure. Yasmin's story is not only a unique testament to her personal struggles but also the voice of millions of girls who are deprived of their right to education. Children like Yasmin, who remain determined to achieve their dreams despite economic hardship, truly highlight the need for change in our society.

## ORPHANED MONU'S JOURNEY OF STRUGGLE AND RESILIENCE IN DELHI

Talkative Reporter: Saniya,  
Reporter: Kishan

During their visits to the streets of Delhi, Balaknama reporters observed the harsh realities faced by working children. Despite enduring severe conditions, these street and working children are compelled to labor during their tender years. One poignant story was shared by a girl from a local settlement about a 16-year-old boy named Monu (name changed). Monu, originally from Bihar, has been living in Delhi for the past five years. He works tirelessly selling chole-bhature (a popular Indian dish). Intrigued by Monu's story, the reporters approached him to learn more about his life. Monu revealed that he lost both his parents at a young age. His father passed away when he was just two years old, and his mother died when he was seven. After his mother's death, he went to live with his uncle and aunt. While his uncle initially took good care of him, his aunt began to mistreat him over time. Faced with her harsh treatment and taunts, Monu ran away from home at the age of eleven, feeling abandoned

and without support. Struggling to find work and constantly being turned away due to his age, Monu eventually made his way to Delhi. There, he encountered an uncle who, upon hearing Monu's story, took him in and offered him a job washing dishes. This uncle, who ran a chole-bhature stall, initially paid Monu 6000 rupees per month. Over time, as Monu grew older, the uncle promoted him to fry the chole-bhature and increased his salary to 9000 rupees. The uncle's stall also offered other food items like chowmein and momos, and Monu started working alongside others who were employed there. He lived with the uncle without paying rent and gradually began selling both chole-bhature and chowmein. His salary was increased to 15,000 rupees as he took on more responsibilities. Monu's daily routine is from 6:00 AM to 3:00 PM selling chole-bhature and from 5:00 PM to 11:00 PM selling chowmein. Reflecting on his situation, Monu says, "Those who have no one are looked after by a higher power." His story is a testament to his resilience and the unexpected kindness he received amidst adversity.

# JUNIOR STUDENTS UNSAFE DUE TO SENIORS' DRUG USE IN SCHOOL

Bureau Report

Reporters met with children receiving education at schools around Trilokpuri and attempted to understand the issues children are currently facing at school. When journalists learned about the children's problems, they discovered a major issue: the school, which is located near Trilokpuri, has classes from 8th grade to 12th grade. This school also accommodates many older students. However, these older students do not respect the younger children; they often threaten and physically assault them. Daily fights and



altercations occur over various issues at the school. Most of the

older children, around ages 16, 17, and 18, use drugs like

solution behind the school's toilet. If any younger student or even another older student witnesses this and reports it to a teacher, the drug-using students retaliate violently after school. They ensure that no one dares to report such incidents again. For example, an 8th-grade student once saw a 10th-grade student using drugs behind the toilet and immediately reported it to a teacher. Although the teacher reprimanded and threatened the drug-using student, the student who made the complaint was later attacked outside the school after dismissal. The drug-

using student, armed with a blade, injured the complainant. Unfortunately, no one was present to help the injured child, and the passing students feared the blade and did not intervene. When this incident reached the teachers, they could not provide any solution or take action. The injured complainant is now hospitalized. Children reported that if parents knew about such incidents at this school, they would not admit their children here. They noted that complaints to teachers do not lead to any resolution, leading many students to silently witness and tolerate such misconduct.



# ACADEMIC INEQUALITY IN SCHOOLS FOSTERS DISCRIMINATION AND HATRED

Balaknama Reporter: Kajal  
Talkative Reporter: Reshma

Discrimination against economically and socially disadvantaged children is common in private schools and reflects a broader societal issue. However, this problem is also pervasive in government schools. Reports have emerged from the Senior Secondary School in Vidyadhar Nagar, Jaipur, regarding alleged discrimination faced by girls from the Gujarati community residing in the nearby slum areas. 13-year-old Rekha (name changed) explains, "Whenever we go to school, we often have to endure very unusual behavior. We are made to do squats if we're late, and we are reprimanded harshly. The mention of 'Gujarati' and 'slum' often comes up during these reprimands. In such a

large school, only Gujarati girls face this kind of social inequality openly. Sometimes, we are threatened with a Transfer Certificate (T.C.) if we miss school, and our parents are scolded as well." Additionally, 11-year-old Riya (name changed) recounts her experience, saying, "Due to my mother's illness with chikungunya, I couldn't attend school for a few days. When I returned after she recovered, I was scolded harshly and sent back home." The economic and social conditions of Gujarati girls, who do not progress to the classroom level due to their environment, lead to discrimination. Their parents have minimal involvement in school activities, and they are not invited to meetings or treated properly. 12-year-old Kajal (name changed) shares, "I have heard several times from



my teacher that she will issue T.C.s to Gujarati girls because they are not good at studying and belong to the slum; they should stay there." Gujarati community, which has lived near the school for over 20 years, mostly relies on street vending and is economically and socially among the weakest

in the area. Even while working, their children attend school. Unfortunately, both teachers and students view Gujarati girls with this prejudice, and neither integrates with them nor attempts to create social balance. However, the fault does not lie solely with the students but also with the

teachers who perpetuate such mindsets. Teachers are role models for students, influencing their learning and development. Students often emulate both their virtues and flaws. Thus, a teacher's behavior, experiences, and statements can inspire students to adopt similar behaviors in their future lives. Discrimination against a particular community's girls in the school is highly unfortunate. The school's disregard for rules, unusual treatment of students, denial of admissions, failure to ensure parental participation, and viewing these students as inferior perpetuates educational inequality and severe discrimination. Such discrimination pushes the entire community further to the margins and alienates them from mainstream society.

## HEAVY RAINS FLOOD SLUMS, FORCING CHILDREN TO STAY AWAKE ALL NIGHT



Balaknama Reporter: Deepak  
Talkative Reporter: Alia

Due to heavy rainfall in several areas of Jaipur, street and working children living in makeshift houses in slums face numerous challenges, including waterlogging inside their homes. During a visit to various slums in Jaipur, Balaknama reporter Deepak spoke with children about their experiences. A 13-year-old

girl, Alia, shared, "This month, it has rained heavily several times. When it rains during the day, we lift our belongings and place them on higher ground. We also sit on elevated spots, but when it rains at night, our beds get wet, and we have to stay up all night sitting. We can't even sleep comfortably, and one day it rained so heavily that water entered our house." An 11-year-old girl, Simran, explained, "Because

the pathways and roads around our slums are unpaved, they get flooded during the rain, making it very difficult to move around. The whole area becomes muddy." The children shared with a sense of resignation, "We know that rain is very important. Without it, we would face water scarcity, but we lack proper housing, which causes us to face many problems. During the rainy season, these problems worsen even more because many people in our slum work as scrap collectors, and they cannot do their sorting work when it rains, leading to financial difficulties. The spread of dirt and mud throughout the slum is causing seasonal diseases, and there is a foul smell during these days. Also, there is no drainage system in our slum, which is why water often gets into our homes."

## STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN FIND KEEPING PIGEONS AT HOME AUSPICIOUS

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak

As we all know, different animals and birds are associated with various beliefs in our society. In this context, a report has emerged suggesting that keeping pigeons at home and taking care of them is considered very auspicious. When a Balaknama reporter spoke to street and working children from the Lakhesara slum in Jaipur to gather more information on this, 11-year-old Arif shared, "We have about six pigeons at home, and I really enjoy taking care of them. My mother says that keeping pigeons at home is auspicious because if any

member of the family faces trouble, that trouble befalls the pigeon living in the house instead, keeping the person safe."

When the Balaknama reporter visited Arif's home and saw the pigeons, there were several colorful ones. The reporter asked Arif where he got these pigeons, what he fed them, and what their names were. Arif explained that they all have different names like Diana, Sweetie, Raja, and Shayar. Some of the pigeons were white, and to make them look more beautiful, ink from pens, wet colors, and gulal (colored powder) were used. Furthermore, Arif mentions that when pigeons flutter their wings, it is considered a good omen in the house. These pigeons are fed jowar (sorghum), bajra (millet), and other grains. Occasionally, when there is a need for money at home, the pigeons are sold at the local markets. A pigeon can be sold for around 300 to 500 rupees. Additionally, there are some families in the slum who consider pigeons a symbol of peace and happiness, but they advise against keeping pigeons at home because it is not good to keep birds in captivity. However, I love taking care of the pigeons and keep them with great affection. But I do feel very sad when a pigeon is sold outside the home.

## MYSTERY BEHIND THE SUDDEN FIRES IN ELECTRIC POLES

Talkative Reporter: Kavita  
Reporter: Kishan

Accidents can occur for a multitude of reasons, and this was evident when Balaknama reporters visited a settlement in Noida. During their visit, the children shared alarming information about frequent fires in the settlement's electric poles, attributing them to various causes. Neha, a 14-year-old girl (name changed), explained that the settlement comprises approximately 450 slums with a significant power issue. Many homes, around



200, have electrical appliances beyond basic needs, including bulbs, fans, air conditioners, coolers, refrigerators, and even

e-rickshaw batteries. These appliances are constantly in use, leading to an overload on the electric poles which cannot

withstand the excessive power. As a result, the electric poles, situated outside the settlement, often catch fire, whether it is day or night. The nearby houses are the first to suffer, as fires from the poles spread to adjacent homes, raising the risk of a larger blaze engulfing the entire settlement. The fires also lead to prolonged power outages, making life difficult for residents. Children, in particular, face challenges when the lights go out at night. They struggle to sleep properly due to the lack of electricity, which affects their ability to attend school regularly.



## BALAKNAMA REPORTER HELPED A STREET AND WORKING GIRL ADMITTED TO SCHOOL



Talkative Reporter Ruby and Reporter Kishan

When the reporters from Balaknama reached Noida Sector 5, they met with Balaknama's talkative reporter. The talkative reporter, Ruby, shared that one day, while exploring the Sector 5 market, they were trying to find out what kinds of activities children in the area were involved in. They saw many children engaged in different types of work. Then, their attention was caught by a 12-year-old girl who was working as a scrap collector. Her name was Tanu (name changed). The journalists tried to find out from Tanu whether she was attending school. She explained that there are three members in her family: her two brothers, herself, and her mother. Currently, her father is not around, and her brother is quite young. Her mother's health is not very good, which is why Tanu has to work as a scrap collector to support her family. They live in a rented slum, and most of the household responsibilities fall on her shoulders. The journalists then

asked Tanu why she does not go to school. Tanu said, "First of all, I really like the idea of going to school, and I want to attend, but due to family responsibilities, I can't go. However, if someone could help me get enrolled in school, I would definitely go." So, the reporters visited Tanu's mother and spoke with her. Tanu's mother explained that they do not have enough money to send her to school, and Tanu does not have time to study because of their circumstances. After hearing this, the reporters provided answers to both concerns. They informed Tanu's mother that it's not necessary to enroll her in a private school. She could enroll her children in a government school, where there are no costs involved, and Tanu could attend school in the morning and work afterward. These suggestions seemed important to Tanu's mother. The reporters then gathered the necessary documents and took Tanu to a government school, where they successfully enrolled her in the first grade. Now, Tanu goes to school every day and is very happy.

## MOBILE GAME ADDICTION: HINDRANCE TO CHILDREN'S OVERALL DEVELOPMENT

Balaknama Reporter: Hans Kumar  
Talkative Reporter: Suhani

When Balaknama reporter Hans Kumar visited Shakur Basti in West Delhi, the talkative reporter Suhani shared with him about a 14-year-old boy who lives near her house. The boy's name is Armaan Ali (name changed). He has developed a bad habit of playing mobile games, particularly popular ones like Free Fire and BGMI, which is having a severely negative impact on his life, resulting in a significant decline in his studies. Initially, despite his mother's continuous efforts to make him prioritize his studies, the boy ignored her advice and instead pressured his parents to buy him a new smartphone. When his parents refused,



explaining that he should focus on his studies and participate in physical activities during his free time, he stopped going to school altogether, which angered his father. Due to the increasing tension in the family, one day, his father

## BOY TURNS AWAY FROM DRUGS AND BAD COMPANY, EMBRACES EDUCATION

Balaknama Reporter: Hans Kumar  
Talkative Reporter: Ibran

When Balaknama reporter Hans Kumar visited the Amar Park area of West Delhi, he uncovered a surprising revelation shared by a talkative reporter and local youth named Ibran. Ibran told the story of a 13-year-old boy named Annu Kumar (name changed). Annu was once a promising student enrolled in the sixth grade at a nearby school through a center run by the CHETNA organization. However, his life took a troubling turn when he fell under the influence of bad company and developed a dangerous addiction to drugs. After this, Annu stopped going to school and began scavenging without telling his family to support himself. His friends, Pappu, Bablu, Shahenshah, Hussain, Pranav, and Nadeem (all names changed), along with other children, also helped him



with scavenging. They would go to different areas to collect garbage. The little money they earned from collecting trash, Annu often spent on feeding his addiction. Sadly, Annu's father had passed away, leaving his mother to work hard as a house cleaner and cook in various households to make ends meet. Despite all these challenges, Annu's mother persistently tried to send him back to school, even though he often argued with her. Determined to help her son, Annu's mother first scolded him to keep him away

from bad company and then started sending him back to school so he could resume his studies. She sought the help of teachers and well-wishers of the family to convince Annu to focus on his education and leave behind bad influences, reminding him that his father was no longer in this world and that the entire responsibility of the household fell on her. Gradually, Annu's childhood got back on track, and he began to concentrate on his studies, finally turning away from bad company.

## DISCARDED DRUG NEEDLES ENDANGER CHILDREN

Bureau Report

There are people in our society who are found indulging in various types of substance abuse. As you may know, there are many forms of substance abuse, including chewing tobacco, smoking cigarettes, using marijuana, inhaling glue, and injecting drugs. Often, the remains of these substances, such as wrappers, packets, or other paraphernalia, can be seen scattered across various places and streets. However,



when drug paraphernalia, particularly needles from injections, are discarded in open spaces, they pose numerous problems to nearby residents, especially children. To gain more insight into this issue, Balaknama reporters visited a slum area in Delhi and spoke with the children living there. A 16-year-old boy from the slum explained in detail, "We live with our parents in a rented slum in Delhi, and there are many slums in this area. Most of the people living in these slums consume some form of drugs. Although there are various types of drugs, there is one form that these addicts use the most, and it causes numerous

problems for us due to the way they discard the empty drug paraphernalia." He continued, "Many adults in the slum consume substances like cigarettes, glue, and marijuana. However, when they can't access these substances, they resort to injecting drugs, and they throw the used needles in open spaces. This careless disposal becomes a source of trouble for passersby and especially for children. The addicts openly inject drugs and then throw the needles in open areas. When we children go to the field to play, which is near a wooded area, we often find discarded needles scattered there. While playing cricket or tag, we sometimes get pricked by these needles. Often, these needles have blood on them, and getting pricked can lead to serious infections. Therefore, we have to be very cautious while playing in these areas." "Moreover," he added, "if small children find these needles on the streets, they might pick them up, fill them with water, and squirt each other, which increases the risk of spreading diseases. Sadly, people frequently get pricked by these needles, but no one takes steps to stop this menace."

**CHILDREN'S HELP  
LINE NUMBERS**

**CONTACT THESE TOLL FREE  
NUMBERS IF YOU FACE ANY  
PROBLEM.**

Child line Number

**1098**

Police Helpline Number

**100**



# PRINCIPAL VISITS SLUM SETTLEMENT FOR STREET CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Balaknama Reporter: Kajal  
Talkative Reporter: Salman

Reports of mistreatment of street and working children by teachers in various government schools in Jaipur are frequently heard. However, a positive story has emerged from the government higher secondary school in Galvanagar, which serves the Ganeshpuri slum area of Jaipur. During a conversation with children from the slum, Balaknama reporter Salman shared, "We have often seen Chetna activists visiting our slum to encourage children to attend educational

centers and schools. But this was the first time that our school principal joined them in visiting the slum. He met with the parents of children who were irregular in school and explained that this is the age for their children to study and not be involved in child labor. He emphasized that education is a right for children and encouraged parents to understand this." In addition, the principal visited the homes of Vikas (name changed) and Shama (name changed) because Akash had not been attending school for almost a month and had started working at a photo



shop. The principal spoke to Akash's mother, encouraging her to send Akash to school

daily. He also assured her that the school would help secure a scholarship for Akash to assist

financially. The principal's continuous visits to the slum led to positive changes. About five children, who did not have the necessary documents, were enrolled in the school. The principal allowed them to attend and gave them about a month to submit the required documents. Salman, a student, mentioned, "All the teachers in our school treat street and working children well and strive to understand and solve the problems they face in life. If all government schools worked with this mindset, no street or working child would be deprived of education."

## CHILDREN CLEAN TRASH IN FRONT OF EDUCATION CENTER, PROMOTE CLEANLINESS



Reporter: Kishan

When Balaknama reporters visited the slums near Shivaji Park in West Delhi, they noticed that the majority of the residents there engage in collecting and sorting scrap materials. In this slum, CHETNA, an organization, runs an alternative education center made from tarpaulin and plastic sheets. In any slum where scrap work is prevalent, you will often find a lot of trash and debris scattered around. However, in most slums, the small bits of leftover trash are ignored by the workers and end up flying around in the wind. As a result, children and adults living in these slums often fall sick.

When the reporters arrived at the center, they observed a significant amount of garbage piled up outside. Upon speaking with the children, they explained, "We try to clean this area, but the people around here keep making it dirty again and continue to scatter trash everywhere. Moreover, when we ask them to help keep the place clean, most people just ignore us." Understanding the situation, the reporters encouraged the children, saying, "You all come here to study. Together, you

can keep the area around your center clean."

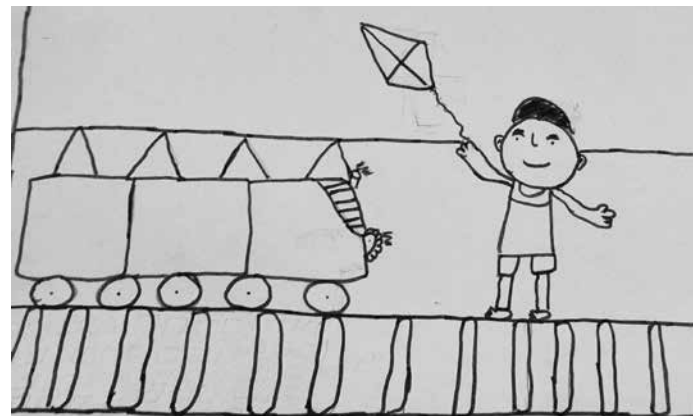
The reporters decided to help the children clean up that day. They asked the children to bring brooms, shovels, sacks, and other tools from their homes. The reporters used shovels to gather the dirt from around the area, and the children swept the place clean. Afterward, they leveled the ground by spreading the dirt evenly. In just two and a half hours, the reporters and children together transformed the area outside the education center, making it much cleaner and more pleasant.

When asked about their feelings after the cleanup, the children expressed their joy, saying, "We are very happy now that we have cleaned up the area outside our education center together. We take responsibility to ensure that no one will spread dirt around this education club again, and we will be healthier as a result." The reporters also conveyed a message to the surrounding residents not to litter. Upon seeing the cleaned area, the local residents praised the children and the reporters. Both the children and the locals were very pleased with the outcome.

## 8-YEAR-OLD CHILD NARROWLY ESCAPED FROM A TRAIN WHILE FLYING A KITE

Balaknama Reporter: Hans  
KumarTalkative Reporter: Raj

When Balaknama reporter Hans Kumar visited the N-86 Lawrence Road area in West Delhi, the local reporter Raj shared a harrowing incident that had recently occurred. An 8-year-old boy, Faheem (name changed), narrowly escaped being hit by a train. According to eyewitnesses at the scene, Faheem was flying a kite near the railway tracks with some friends when he accidentally wandered onto the tracks. At that moment, a freight train was approaching from the opposite direction. The locomotive pilot, upon noticing Faheem on the tracks, acted quickly and wisely by applying the emergency brakes, stopping the train just a few feet away from the boy. The train's driver and guard scolded Faheem and his friends and warned them and others



present about the dangers of playing near railway tracks and the potential accidents that could occur. Faheem's parents were called to the scene, where they apologized and took their son home after giving him a stern warning. This is not the first time such an incident has occurred in the area, highlighting the need for increased caution and awareness among both children

and parents. Last year, a 10-year-old boy lost his leg after being struck by a train while crossing the tracks. Although the railway authorities have launched public awareness campaigns, more initiatives and actions are needed to prevent such incidents. It is essential to implement robust safety measures near railway tracks to prevent similar accidents in the future.

## STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN FELL ILL AFTER EATING EXPIRED FOOD

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak

As we know, expired food products can become harmful because they may harbor harmful bacteria or germs, or their nutritional value may degrade. In a recent visit by Balaknama reporter Deepak to the slum area of Prem Nagar in Jaipur, it was discovered that children fell ill after consuming expired food items. An 11-year-old boy named Riyan shared that a few days ago, some traders dumped expired packets of chips, Kurkure, and other snacks in the slum. When the children saw the pile of food, they were overjoyed and grabbed the packets of chips and Kurkure. However, these innocent children were unaware that



the food items were expired. When the children started feeling unwell, with some, like Alia, Shinku, and Sohaib, experiencing severe stomach pain and vomiting, their parents took them to the doctor. Upon questioning, they revealed what they had eaten, and it was then that the doctor informed them that the

chips and Kurkure packets the slum children had consumed were expired. Riyan explained that the joy of finding food overwhelms the children, so they did not pay attention to the expiration date. However, traders should understand this and never dump expired items in open areas where children might access them.



## SUCCESSFUL "BAL SAMVAD" HELD BETWEEN STRET CHILDREN AND HARYANA POLICE

Balaknama Reporter: Sarita

When Balaknama reporter Sarita visited the Goga Colony, Palda Dhani, and Ghasola communities in Badshahpur, Gurugram, she learned that at all CHETNA's education centers, a "Bal Samvad" (Children's Dialogue) was organized between street and working children and the Haryana Police. In these dialogues, children are taken to different places and are given information about those places. This time, all the children were taken to a police station, where they learned about various laws. The children enjoyed this very much as they knew little about



laws and child rights, and the police provided them with valuable legal information. On the other hand, the police were very happy to do something for these children. Many children interacted with Haryana police officers. One child asked, "Sir, what did you do to become a

police officer?" The concerned police officer explained that he first studied diligently, then passed the physical test, and also underwent NCC training. He said he passed all the tests required for police training. He reassured the children that becoming a police officer is

not as difficult as it seems and encouraged them to pursue it if they wished to become police officers when they grow up. Some children asked, "Sir, do all those who commit wrongdoings go to jail?" The policeman explained that if a crime is proven, the person is punished and imprisoned for a few years. After serving their sentence, they may be granted bail or released. However, the severity of the punishment depends on the severity of the crime, and there is always an opportunity for rehabilitation. The police officer also informed the children about cybercrime, explaining that it is rapidly spreading across the country, with many fraudsters

using it to make extra income. For example, clicking on a suspicious link can result in money being deducted from your account. He advised the children not to follow instructions from unknown callers or respond to messages from unknown senders. He stressed the importance of being vigilant and spreading awareness about cybercrime to protect oneself and others. The police also informed the children that if they ever face any trouble, they can call the toll-free number 112 to contact the police. Additionally, they can call the 1098 Child Helpline, which is available 24/7, to report their problems.

## CHICKENPOX TARGETS CHILDREN, INFECTION RATE RISING

Balaknama Reporter: Kajal  
Talkative Reporter: Shivani

In the JDA Bapu Basti of Jaipur, there has been a recent outbreak of chickenpox among children over the past two weeks. This has led to several cases of the disease affecting children from different communities in the area. The illness is causing significant disruption in the children's schooling, with 7-8 working children from three nearby families currently suffering from the disease. 11-year-old Vani (name changed), a working child who started attending school in July, has also been infected due to her brother's illness. Unfortunately, the parents, due to superstitious beliefs, are not seeking proper medical treatment. They believe that the disease will go away with rituals rather than medical intervention, and fear



that seeking treatment might anger the deity. Chickenpox is commonly spread due to unhygienic conditions, and in the past two weeks, 9 children in the slum have been affected. Fortunately, the cases are not severe, and the children are slowly recovering. The lack of awareness about health issues in the community is a long-standing problem. Parents believe that chickenpox is a yearly occurrence that can be cured through rituals rather

than medical care. 8-year-old Arun's (name changed) mother mentioned that they avoid going near the child when he has chickenpox and do not clean under the bed where the child sleeps, fearing displeasure from the deity. However, she acknowledged that in cases of severe trouble, they would not hesitate to seek medical help. The slum has a small clinic in poor condition, and it lacks interest in spreading health awareness. Changing such superstitious beliefs in slum areas is challenging, and there is a pressing need for parents to become more informed about their children's health to protect them from such superstitions and ensure better health outcomes. Superstitions and old beliefs persist in slum communities and, along with other issues, continue to impact the lives of children adversely.

## FAMILY DISPUTE FORCES A CHILDHOOD INTO BEGGING



Balaknama Reporter: Kajal,  
Talkative Reporter: Simran

During a visit to various slums in Jaipur, Balaknama reporter Kajal met a 13-year-old girl, Simi (name changed), in the slum area of Mangyawas. Simi shared that she used to live with her parents in Jaisinghpura

Khor, but a few days ago, her older sister ran away with a boy, stealing all the household items, including expensive jewelry. Simi was aware of her sister's actions as she would notice whenever her sister took something from the house, but her sister always threatened her and forbade her from telling their parents. Due to this incident, there has been a lot of conflict in the family, and the community holds a meeting every day, but no resolution has been reached yet because her sister sold all the jewelry to someone, and now that person can't be traced. Due to these problems, Simi's parents sent her to live with her grandmother, who sells cumin and utensils. However, her grandmother's business hasn't been doing well recently, and they struggle to even arrange for two meals a day. Therefore, Simi now has to accompany her grandmother to beg, and the money they get from begging is used to buy necessities, ensuring they have food for both meals. The girl sadly recounts how times have changed; everything was going well before. She used to go to school, but what her sister did caused great trouble in the family. Because she didn't inform her family about her sister's actions in time, she now faces the consequences and has been forced into begging.

## FINANCIAL STRAIN FORCES INNOCENT CHILD TO LEAVE SCHOOL AND TURN TO RAG PICKING

Balaknama Reporter: Hans Kumar

During a visit to the Shivaji Park area of West Delhi, Balaknama reporter Hans Kumar met an 8-year-old boy named Dubbu (name changed) living in the slums, who has been forced to abandon his education and childhood due to his family's dire financial situation. Despite being enrolled in the second grade, Dubbu's parents were compelled to withdraw him from school, forcing him into scavenging to support his family. This heartbreaking story highlights the struggles faced by underprivileged children and the urgent need for their support. Dubbu, once a promising student, now spends his days collecting trash and



returns home in the evening to help his mother. His dream of becoming an honest police

officer has been shattered, as poverty has deprived him of his childhood and education, casting a shadow over his future. Local residents report that Dubbu's family lives in severe poverty and struggles to make ends meet. Despite their best efforts, his parents cannot afford to send him to school. The lack of financial support and resources has forced Dubbu to leave school and work to sustain his family. Varsha, a worker from Chetna NGO who had previously enrolled Dubbu in school, expressed her disappointment and concern for his future. "He was a promising student, but poverty has robbed him of his educational opportunities. We need to support these children and ensure they receive the

education they deserve." His story serves as a reminder of the struggles faced by marginalized children in India. According to UNESCO, over 6 million children in India are out of school, with poverty being a major contributing factor. As Dubbu's story attracts attention, he expresses a desire to return to school and fulfill his dreams. "I want to become a police officer and make my family proud. I hope someone will help me achieve my dream." His narrative calls for increased support and resources to provide education based on merit for underprivileged children. Will Dubbu's dream of becoming a police officer remain unfulfilled, or will he receive a second chance at education? Only time will tell.



# UNSAFE ROADS HINDER CHILDREN'S SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

**Talkative Reporter: Sandali Reporter: Kishan**

The lack of safe road construction has become a daily struggle for both children and adults traveling through the streets. When Balaknama reporters visited a village near Sector 5 in Noida, they learned about the difficulties children

face on their way to school. Naina, a 13-year-old girl (name changed), shared her experiences, saying, "We live in a large village near Sector 5. Most children in our village go to school every day, but we face a significant problem on our way that sometimes discourages us from going to school. There is a bridge along the way with

damaged walls, and no one has paid attention to it. The path has become very narrow, and people often set up vegetable and fruit stalls there, causing traffic jams. Additionally, there is a drain beside the bridge, and bamboo sticks with sacks are used to cover the gaps." This bridge is used by both older children (grades 6-8)

and younger children (grades 1-5). During school dismissal times, children hurry home, increasing the risk of accidents. Several children have fallen from the bridge, and some have been injured. In one incident, a child's arm was broken, leading their parents to withdraw the child from school to avoid further accidents. When

the children informed their parents, the parents spoke to the teacher, who then reported the issue to the police. The police notified the road construction authorities, and work to repair the bridge has now begun. This development brings relief to the children, who are hopeful that they will soon be able to use the path safely and without worry.

## CHILDREN FEAR ELECTRIC SHOCKS DURING RAINY SEASON

**Balaknama Reporter: Kumud**

Who doesn't enjoy playing in the rain? Rain brings joy to everyone, and children often revel in the fun of playing on rooftops during monsoons. While rain provides a pleasant relief from the heat, it can also be a source of fear, especially in the Lawrence Road community in Delhi, where small slum dwellings pose significant safety risks. The roofs of these slum houses are made of makeshift materials like tarpaulin, and electricity meters are installed very low due to the limited space inside these huts. This means that the electrical wires often hang dangerously low, within reach of children. During rains, water seeps through the roofs and often reaches the electricity meters, increasing the risk of electric shocks when children touch electrical switches or wires. Many homes in these areas have exposed electrical wires at low levels, creating a constant risk of electric shock for both children and adults. The situation becomes particularly dangerous when water accumulates inside the



homes, and children have to manage the water while avoiding contact with the electrical wires. Children like Shobha expressed their fears, saying, "When it rains at night, electricity comes into our house. I am very scared at night." Similarly, Balak Raju mentioned, "I am afraid to touch the electrical switches during the rain." Esha added, "During the rain, water fills up in our home. When I try to remove the water, I am scared to touch the walls because sometimes they carry electric shocks." This issue underscores the urgent need for safety measures and proper electrical installations in these vulnerable communities to protect children from the dangers of electric shocks during the rainy season.

## CHILDREN FACING ABUSE WHILE FETCHING WATER IN SLUM AREAS

**Balaknama Reporter: Hans Kumar**

In the slum areas of Shivaji Park, West Delhi, children are enduring abuse and exploitation while fetching water due to a severe water shortage. Balaknama reporter Hans Kumar witnessed a distressing incident where 12-year-old Srishti (name changed) and her friends were caught filling water from someone else's motor pump. They had managed to fill only a few buckets when the owner scolded and abused them, causing the children to cry. This is not an isolated incident. Srishti and other children in the area are frequently forced to either collect water from others' homes or secretly fill water due to the lack of



water supply in their locality. The absence of water tankers exacerbates the problem, leading to children being subjected to exploitation and mistreatment. Local authorities must address this issue urgently and work together to provide water supply to the residents of Shivaji Park's slums. This

incident highlights the struggles children face in accessing basic necessities and the urgent need for resolving the water crisis in the area. The government and local officials need to take immediate action to address the water shortage and at least provide water tankers to the community.

## UNPLANNED SLUM STRUCTURES: A MAJOR THREAT TO CHILDREN'S SAFETY

**Reporter Akash**

It is commonly believed that a child feels safest within their own home. However, when the structure of a home itself becomes a source of accidents,

it becomes a serious concern. During a community visit, reporter Akash met 13-year-old Rahmat (a changed name), who was seen with a bandage on his hand. Rahmat shared that while descending the iron stairs in his makeshift home, his finger got caught and cut. He was promptly taken to the hospital, where his finger was reattached. A similar accident occurred with 8-year-old Rehana (a changed name) from the same community. Her finger also got trapped in the iron stairs and could not be saved despite hospital intervention. Even the limited play areas for street and working children lack safety measures. During a visit to a park in Chunabhatti, Akash found that the swings and open gym equipment were in such a dilapidated state that they could cause accidents at any time. 11-year-old Shalu (a changed name), who frequently plays at this park, reported that it is the



only nearby place to play. All the children use these swings, but injuries and scratches are common. Playing and having a safe space are fundamental rights of children. Can the government and society not ensure these rights? This is a significant question. Ensuring basic facilities and safety for children is essential and requires continuous efforts.

## SCHOOLYARD BRAWL: STUDENTS CLASH OVER GAME DISPUTE

**Balaknama Reporter: Hans Kumar Talkative Reporter: Nihal**

During a visit to the Amarpur area of West Delhi, Balaknama reporter Hans Kumar learned from local talkative reporter Nihal about a recent incident at a school where a dispute during a game led to a physical altercation among students. The incident, which occurred during the lunch break, has sparked significant discussions about student safety and behavior. According to eyewitness students, the conflict began during a game of "Maram Pitty" (a popular game played with a rubber ball) when one student accidentally threw the ball too hard, hitting another student. This led to a heated argument between the two students. The situation escalated further when the



student who was hit organized a confrontation after school with a group of friends, while

the other student's friends also joined in support. What started as a game-related dispute quickly turned violent. Some students alerted the principal about the situation, prompting the teachers to intervene and calm the situation. All students involved were asked to come to school with their parents. They were informed that they would not be allowed to enter the school until their parents arrived. The following day, the students brought their parents to school, where the principal issued a stern warning in front of the parents, stating that any further involvement in fights would result in expulsion from the school. The parents also reprimanded their children. This incident highlights the need for increased supervision and guidance from both parents and teachers to prevent such occurrences in the future.

**CHILDREN'S HELP LINE NUMBERS**

**CONTACT THESE TOLL FREE NUMBERS IF YOU FACE ANY PROBLEM.**

Child line Number

**1098**

Police Helpline Number

**100**



# CHILDHOOD DISRUPTED BY FATHER'S SUDDEN DEATH

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak,  
Talkative Reporter: Saniya

In the slums of Jaipur, many children are compelled to work to support their families. During a visit to Kali Ka Bhatta slum, Balaknama reporter Deepak encountered a distressing story. Ten-year-old Nia lives with her mother

and four younger siblings in a makeshift shelter made of tarpaulin on a hill. Nia recounted that her father passed away suddenly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although he had been ill for some time, both her parents had worked to support the family. When the reporter asked Nia why she wasn't

attending school and what she did all day, Nia explained that her mother cleans houses, while she sells snacks like chips, kurkure, and biscuits from a cart outside. Her father used to take the cart far and wide to sell goods, but since his death, the cart had remained at home. Her mother now buys a small stock of items for the cart,

which Nia sells throughout the day, earning about 20 to 30 rupees daily. Following her father's death, the family has faced numerous challenges. They lack the necessary documents to enroll Nia in school and have not been able to access government benefits due to the absence of a death certificate. Despite her mother's

efforts to obtain the certificate, it remains unavailable due to insufficient information. Nia also mentioned that the rainy season has worsened their living conditions, forcing them to seek shelter in others' homes and rely on begging for food. With a sense of resignation, she wonders when their situation will improve.

# INNOCENT CHILDREN FALLING VICTIM TO DRUG ABUSE

Balaknama Reporter: Kajal,  
Talkative Reporter: Tarun

During a visit to the slums of Jaipur, Balaknama reporter Kajal observed a boy smoking a cigarette behind a wall in Jaisinghpura Khor slum. When the reporter tried to speak with him, the boy fled. However, upon speaking with other children in the slum, Tarun revealed that 12-year-old Ronnie (a changed name) and his 9-year-old brother Suleiman (a changed name) live with their grandmother in the same slum and are involved



in smoking cigarettes and using cannabis. It is alarming that the children's parents, who live in the Karbala area of Jaipur, also engage in drug and alcohol abuse despite the father's epilepsy. They collect money through begging, which they then spend on alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs. Due to their parents' habits, the children were taken in by their grandmother. However, when the grandmother goes to work, Ronnie resorts to begging in the neighborhood and spends the money on drugs. Furthermore, Ronnie has two sisters who, despite having a family, live in an orphanage. Ronnie has become so addicted to drugs that he cannot sleep, feels no hunger, and experiences anxiety unless he uses drugs. Some people behind the slum sell cannabis and even provide it to Ronnie on credit, making him sell drugs in return. According to the other children in the slum, since Ronnie's arrival, more children have fallen into the habit of drug use.

# THE COST OF FLYING KITES: SHARP MANJHA SEVERES CHILDREN'S FINGERS

Balaknama Reporter Nitin

The joy of flying kites is unparalleled, but this hobby can sometimes turn painful. Such was the case for 12-year-old Monu (a changed name) living in Kamla Nehru Camp, Delhi. While flying a kite on the roof of his house, Monu's finger got caught in the manjha, resulting in a severe cut. The child was promptly taken to the nearby Acharya Bhikshu Hospital, where doctors determined that the finger could not be reattached. The child is in considerable pain, and his family is distressed. Learning from this incident, many children in Nehru Camp have decided never to fly kites again. Meanwhile, 11-year-old Divyansh (a changed name) from the same camp shared that not only do children get hurt by Chinese manjha, but it also endangers many birds. Birds such as pigeons and sparrows often get entangled in the manjha while flying, leading to injuries or sometimes death, which is



distressing for children as well. Beat Officer Sagar Rathi from Kirti Nagar Police Station also visited the Nehru Camp to explain the dangers of Chinese manjha to the children and advised them to avoid using it for kite flying. As a reporter for Balaknama, I, Nitin, want to raise awareness among other children about such incidents through our platform. I urge all children to avoid flying kites with Chinese manjha and stay safe.

# CHILDREN REVEAL: SHOCKING TRUTH OF ELECTRICITY THEFT IN COMMUNITY



Bureau Report

Whenever people need to save money or other resources, they adopt various tricks. During a conversation with journalists, children revealed a new trick used by people to save money and steal electricity. Fifteen-year-old Faiz (name changed) explained that while people may steal various items, this particular type of theft is quite unusual. In this settlement, every house has electricity and meters installed, but most residents steal electricity to avoid increasing their meter readings. The people in this settlement steal electricity through ground earthing methods. When electricity is

flowing to everyone's homes, they drop the fuse of their light meters, causing the meter's light and unit readings to stop increasing. They then dig a hole about 10 feet deep, tie a wire to an iron rod inside the hole, pour salted water over it, and cover the hole. They then connect the wire to the electric poles, allowing electricity to flow to their homes. This stolen electricity can power various appliances such as refrigerators, coolers, and fans. However, when they learn that an inspector is coming, they remove the wires from the poles and lift the fuse on their meters to prevent the inspectors from discovering the theft.

# INFECTION SPREADS AMONG CHILDREN FROM CATCHING FISH IN DIRTY DRAINS

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak  
Talkative Reporter: Ajay

For some of us, fishing might be a way to relax, connect with nature, and leave our busy lives behind. However, for others, fishing is not just a pastime—it is a way of life, or rather, their livelihood. A similar story emerged from the slums of Jaisinghpura Khor in Jaipur, where children fish to meet their basic needs. A 12-year-old boy, Jai (name changed), shared that he goes fishing with his friends (Suresh and Kamal) in ponds and drains a short distance away from the slum. The boy explained that these days, the water flow in the ponds and drains is very strong, and



they don't have a fishing net, but they still manage to catch fish by putting their hands in the water. When they catch a big fish, they cook and eat it. If they catch small fish, they take them home, fill a water tank

or container with water, and keep the fish there. However, he mentioned that recently, small boils started appearing on his hands, which then filled with fluid, developed white marks, and began resembling a fungal infection. These boils sometimes itch intensely. When they consulted a doctor, they discovered that the infection was caused by catching fish in the drains, and it had spread from his palms to the rest of his body. The boy also mentioned that around 7 to 8 children in the slum are suffering from this disease and are being treated at a nearby government hospital, but the medicines haven't brought much relief yet.

You can also support in the publication of the Balaknama newspaper, For more info please contact : [info@chetnango.org](mailto:info@chetnango.org)

This newsletter is for limited delivery only. All the pictures are printed by the approval of the children.

Balaknama thanks Sardar Nagina Singh Ji & Family and Abhinav Outsourcing Pvt Ltd for helping us in publishing our newsletter. You can also help us with publishing. Balaknama is written originally in Hindi by children reporters. This is translated version of Hindi and translation assistance is taken from adults ensuring the original feel intact.