

Tech school for kids

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Back in May, we came across seven steel violins installed on the walls at an art exhibition at the Bengal Art Lounge in Gulshan. These violins would automatically start playing when visitors came close to them.

If that doesn't surprise you then you might be surprised to know that the idea came from a group of 20 tech whiz kids. They used sensors in the violins that trigger a sound when you come close.

This group of children is being mentored at The Tech Academy. This is a tech firm that sponsors children's talents in electronics, software programming, hardware and

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robotics at Moar in Banani in the city.

Working with circuits and programming, with guidance of their mentor Shams Jaber, the kids have started on another interesting idea of a gadget with sensors for the blind.

Their "Batman Gadget" can help blind persons from bumping into objects.

"This gadget is in an early stage. It's being tested as a children's game," said, Shams, a dropout from the business school of BRAC University now tinkers with different ideas with the kids exploring technologies and ideas.

Shams said, the whole world is moving forward with technology. Programming is a language that should be learned from childhood like any other language.

"We want to create such an environment to guide and nurture the curious young minds."

So far, these tiny techies have made a Bluetooth-based toy car, a GPS tracker, games and their software and hardware.

They have started a project to convert singer Anusheh Anadil's car into a solar and wind powered car. They often launch new games at her company, Jatra.

"Children are naturally curious and I support Tech Academy because they allow that curiosity to be alive and be the driving force of all their innovations," said Anusheh, Creative Director of Jatra Bangladesh.

She said, "I was very impressed by all the young kids from the Tech school who taught us about how to generate electricity from not just the sun and wind, but also from plants and walking shoes."

Shams along with some partners started WNES-Research and Innovation Centre in 2013 to teach children programming, robotics and engineering. They later changed the name to The Tech School.

He has opened a free school for the underprivileged-family kids three months back at the Ain O Salish Kendra premises. It has been running free schools at Bandarban for the last one year and at Fatikchhari for the last six months.

Shams along with two other mentors teach 15 kids each from the free schools with a vision to develop the kids as gadget makers instead of growing up as consumers, he said.

They have also planned to start two more projects for the Dalit community and madrasa girls in associations with Leaping Boundaries, Shams said.

"The Tech Academy is our ICT training partner and we are going to launch a vol-

unteering project for madrasa girls tentatively by January 2016," said Sadia Afrin, programme manager of Leaping Boundaries that is working for supporting madrasa students with general and technical knowledge like English, ICT, Soft Skills and Psychosocial Support.

From time to time, the academy arranges for its kids to meet teachers and students of Shahjalal University of Engineering and Technology, Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology, Brac University and even the USA's Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), he said.

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