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SAYING GOODBYE PROPERLY

Assembly 106 – Tuesday July 29th 2003

Tomorrow at this time, I shall be at Zia International Airport. Superintendent Lenin's wife, Mita, will be sitting in the tower, where she is an Air Traffic Controller and I will be off to the UK for a month's visit! So this is my last Assembly until we see each other again on the first day of the new school year, Sunday September 14th. Actually, I shall be back on September 2nd. I sincerely hope I shall not have a bad fall or a bad health report or something. I want to come back very much.

It is very important to say goodbye properly – and I feel I cannot leave this term behind without saying how very unhappy I am about the way some pupils have said goodbye to this school. In most schools, all over the world, there are a very small number of pupils who have to leave in the middle of term – usually because their parents are moving house, or their work is taking them overseas. Normally, in most countries in the world, pupils leave at the end of term. Not, it seems, in Bangladesh! In Bangladesh, some pupils are not allowed to say goodbye properly.

What happens in some schools in Bangladesh, I find very shocking. One day, one is teaching a class and notices an empty desk and the rest of the class say, "Oh, he/she has left!" When this first happened to me, I thought, "But they haven't said goodbye!" But this is the way some pupils leave. Now some parents are very good and they come and talk to us. They say, "We are moving house to another part of Dhaka and, because of transport problems, we want our child to go to a local school there." Or "Our child comes to school in the car of someone who is leaving so she has to leave also." Or maybe, the parents feel that our school is not giving a good enough education to their child but

they come and talk to us about it and this is very helpful, because we are not perfect but we want to learn to become a better and better school. But often, pupils leave without giving us any warning. They just disappear and, I have to say, this is very upsetting for their teachers, as well as for many of their friends. When a teacher has taught a pupil, especially for several years, that teacher really cares about that child and is really hurt, when it leaves and sad that they cannot say goodbye properly. Of course, you are perfectly free to leave the school and transfer to another school but why is it so impossible to stay until the end of term, have your class party, your examinations, receive your school report and then leave with a nice goodbye to everyone? That is what happens in nearly every other country. Why is it impossible in Bangladesh? We are not going to be horrible to you, just because you are leaving! Why sit at home for weeks, wasting your time, or go to another school at such an inconvenient time, when maybe the syllabus is different for the examinations and you will get a poor mark! I find this very hard to understand.

Please encourage your parents to come and talk to us about anything that is worrying them. We are listening. And, if you do leave, please do not feel you have to make a big fuss and create complaints to make it look as though you are leaving because the school has done something very bad. One boy had given his mother lots of complaints about the school, that were found to be baseless and when his Coordinator found out his little game, he said, "Oh, well, I am going to leave anyway, because all the other children in my family go to .....school and it will mean that transport is easier." Well that is fine – and a very good reason to transfer to another school, but why try and be nasty when you leave? It is like someone walking out of a house and smashing a window as they go out. It is unnecessary to say goodbye in a nasty way. You can say goodbye in a nice way. But please feel free to share any complaints with us because, as a school, we want to improve and, as I often say to you, we all have to learn from our

mistakes and our friends can help us to do so. That is the way, we can walk beside one another and be friends.

I wish you all the best in your examinations. Sleep well, eat well and read the question paper carefully!

God bless you.