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Rise from rubble, realise dreams

Twelve-year-old Alisha Alimuddin was enraptured in the show, *Breaking Boundaries*, performed by the less privileged children of the Salaam Balak Trust, New Delhi, choreographed by Astaad Deboo. Perhaps, she was nurturing the dreams of breaking her boundaries, and visualising the rise from the rubble she now lives in to her aspiration of being a doctor.

Alisha and others like her were attending the launch of the Anand Paul Education Support Programme, an initiative of the Paul Foundation under Apeejay Trust. The programme will mainstream about 500 children from in and around Park Street to school by 2011. Children from the wards 59, 60, 61, 62 and 63 of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation (CMC), who have either dropped out or have not enrolled in school, will be identified and helped to gain admission. In Phase 1, children will be imparted education through 10 centres opened in association with Cini Asha and Focus.

Shikha Mukherjee, chief executive of The Paul Foundation, said: "The problem of dropping out is not the disinclination of the child. There are



Children of the Salaam Balak Trust, New Delhi, perform *Breaking Boundaries* at the launch of the education programme. (Anindya Shankar Ray)

difficulties with learning, absenteeism of teachers in schools and inadequate infrastructure. We felt that if we could enrol the children in age appropriate classes and give them remedial support they would stay on in school."

Completing 100 years, the group struck to their area. "I am delighted that the programme will address the needs of the people closest to our heart — Park Street," said Karan Paul, chairman, Apeejay Surrendra Group.

Attending the launch, Sister Cyril, principal of Loreto Day School, Sealdah, highlighted the practical aspects of education. "Without education, you won't be able to read what is written on the buses. You won't be able to read the posters." But, she added: "Education is not just about reading or writing, it is also about how to think, how to use your brain, how to talk to each other or even how to admire a garden,"

she said. Educationist Krishna Bose cited the example of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, who studied under lamp posts, reinforcing the fact that where there is a will there is always a way.

—J.M.