

When Aditya Kedia and Diya Tantiya of Class VIII stepped up to the edge of the stage to touch the school flag and take oath of office as head boy and head girl on behalf of all their peers standing in a semicircle behind them, the moment got etched in their memories forever. It was The Newtown School's first foundation day and the investiture ceremony for the first students' council was taking place on the occasion.

Facing them was an auditorium full of guardians, including their own families, governing body members and guests. At the far end of the stage, principal Satabdi Bhattacharjee was reading out the pledge for them to repeat.

"I never felt so nervous and scared in my life. It was not stage fright. Such is the weight of the responsibility bestowed on us that I was worried about letting my teachers and friends down," said Diya. "Actually, every moment in school seems different ever since I have been informed that I have been chosen the head girl," she added, with a beaming smile. The teenager from Kaikhali was delighted to be following in the footsteps of her elder sister who was a prefect at Sushila Birla High School. "Now there are two of us in the family," she said, fondly glancing at the bright orange sash wrapped over her shoulder.

All 20 members chosen for induction in the council — the youngest and cutest of them belonging to Class II — had been thus anointed with sash and badge a while ago by the principal and the chief guest Abhinav Chandra, additional secretary, labour department.

Chandra urged students not to join the rat race to be the best in studies. "To reach a consumer base of five million, radio took 34 years, colour TV took 11 years, internet took four and half years, Facebook took four years and now ebay has taken just two years. E-commerce is now the single largest employer in the country. Technology is changing so fast that the job that you are being trained for may not exist by the time you pass out," he said. The message, interpreted by most students and teachers as a signal not to take stud-

Taking GUARD

The Newtown School held its maiden investiture ceremony for its students' council, reports Sudeshna Banerjee



Best House trophy for 2015-16 being awarded to Newton House



Principal Satabdi Bhattacharjee administers the oath of office at the investiture of the students' council. Pictures by Sudeshna Banerjee

ies seriously left the former amused and the latter bemused.

The architect of the school Abin Chaudhuri was one of the guests who handed over the prizes. "A school depends not just on infrastructure but on the quality of the teachers and students. This is the seventh school I have designed. The experience was pleasant as all my ideas were accepted by the authorities," said Chaudhuri, whose son Turya studies in Class IV of the school.

Parthasarathi Ghosh, the curator of Eco Tourism Park, and Sujata Mitra, a teacher at Basanti Devi College, also took turns in doing the honours alongside Sunil Agarwal and Sanjay Khemka, the founder-directors.

The students also put up a dance



Chief guest Abhinav Chandra anoints Aditya Kedia as head boy

item, choreographed by Rupa Das. After the investiture ceremony got over, the head boy and girl got to work immediately, keeping an eye on students who were coming out of the

auditorium. "This is the toughest part of the job. Friends don't take us seriously when we try to discipline them," grimaced Aditya, who had to clear a written test and an interview to become head boy.

Aditya was not alone in his predicament. Junior school prefect Saurya Tripathi was facing the same problem. The Class V student might be having his mother Smaranika as the school counsellor but he sure seemed in need of counsel about dealing with "friends who don't listen" to him.

A paper she presented on astronomy earned Jyotsna Bhageria the literary captain's badge. "I have to handle events connected to literature and represent the school in cultural events," she underlined her duties solemnly.

Vaibhav Chirania was a natural choice as sports captain, being adept at four sports, including roller hockey. "I learnt it all in my earlier boarding school in Mussoorie." Vice-captain Aryan Sharma turns out for a Salt Lake coaching camp in the under-14 tournaments of Cricket Association of Bengal.

Those who take classical dancing to be more of a girls' thing need to meet Devarshi Mallick, the school's cultural captain. The Class VIII boy from GC Block has learnt Bharatanatyam for eight years and Bihu for six years. "I also attended an Odissi camp for two months," he says. "I am not a good dancer yet. I sing well, though I am not trained," admitted his deputy Om Sharma, clearly impressed by his senior's credentials.

Two Cinderellas & 40 thieves on stage



Cinderella tries out her glass shoes. Pictures by Chanchal Ghosh

Both *Ali Baba* and *Cinderella* presided over Hariyana Vidya Mandir's junior school annual day recently. In fact, there were two Cinderellas!

The students of the day section had put up three acts — the kindergarten classes put up *Cinderella*, classes III, IV and V did *Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves* and students of

classes I and II had put up a show to protect the environment. The auditorium was houseful with parents recording the plays.

"I play Cinderella," said Subhasree Basak, a blond wig-sporting cherub in a frilly pink frock. "I play Cinderella too," said Bianca Nag, a cute girl in a blue dress and what looked like her original black hair.

Teacher Mitali Das, who directed the play explained that Bianca played Cinderella at home and Subhasree played it at the prince's ball. "The students are so little that a costume change would not have been possible," said Das. "This was the kids' last event with me before they graduate to the next class. So it was a sort of farewell too."

Teacher Puloma Sen directed 30 students of class I and II to a dance drama on saving the environment. "When it comes to getting across a message, music and dance are sometimes more successful than books," she said. The students, led by Suparna Ghosh of Class II danced to songs like *Aware Bhavre* and *Maine kaha phulo se*. The parents had helped out a lot too, by making sun-

flowers and flower pots out for the dances.

Satarupa Hore, another teacher, directed *Ali Baba*.

The costumes and make-up of the show were excellent and no one could have guessed that the feisty Abdullah, who helped Marjina save their master Ali Baba in the play, was actually a girl. "I am an energetic dancer and there were lots of dances in this play so I got Abdullah's role," smiled Sandipa Maitra after the show. The stage Marjina-Abdullah turned out to be close friends in real life too. "Sandipa is my best friend and we had great fun rehearsing and performing the show," smiled Aarshi Banerjee, who played Marjina. Both the girls learn dancing

and stole the show with their performance.

The dialogues and music were all played backstage on CDs and internet downloads while students lip-synched.

The shows were followed by prize distribution in three categories — all-round achievement, general proficiency and all-round improvement. "I've worked very hard this term," said Ritam Sarkar of Class III, after winning the general proficiency award. "My father teaches me math and computers while my mother teaches all other subjects. In fact, my mother tests me at home before my school tests and her tests are way tougher!"



Cinderella dances with the prince

Brinda Sarkar