

### Gift of light at mass wedding

SHUBHI TANDON

A city-based trust on Sunday organised the wedding of 126 underprivileged couples and gifted them items they would need to set up a household, including solar lights and fans to those from areas without electricity.

Among the other gifts were cots, bedding, utensils, suitcases, make-up, dresses, groceries and even soaps. Those who have electrical connections got bicycles.

"Our team found that there are several villages without electricity. We decided to gift a solar set, which includes a light and a fan, to each couple from those areas. Our technicians will visit them once every three months to check if the solar sets are working properly," said Sushil Kumar Goenka, the secretary of Vishwa Jagriti Mission Trust, which organised



Couples at the mass wedding on Sunday. (Bishwarup Dutta)

the mass wedding at Haldiram Banquets.

"We use kerosene lamps at home, which costs us nearly Rs 300 a month. We cook and eat before it gets dark to save money. The solar light will make our lives a lot easier and reduce our expenses," said Palash Kayal, a resident of Dayapur at Gosaba in the Sunderbans.

"We even got a fan that will work on the sun's energy. This means that we will not always have to use hand fans," said

Chiranjeet Mondal of Hetalbari at Kalidaspur in the Sunderbans.

After the wedding, the smiling couples posed for photographs with their relatives.

"A wedding would have cost us at least Rs 50,000, which is much more than we can afford. We got to know of this mass wedding through a local organisation. The gifts have left us speechless," said Bidyendu Joddar, 28, a resident of Kocchikhali in the Sunderbans.