

Troubled world of sports of autistic children

DURDANA GHAS

Farhan, 11, was strolling with his mother at the Chandrima Udyan in the city. Sometimes the child was breaking into a run but all on a sudden running out of steam.

Sometimes he bumped against people ambulating down the park who gave him strange looks. However, he enjoys his evening out more than anybody else.

"It would have been better if there was an open space for him but there is none. I have to take him somewhere to play and burn

designer.

"Mostly the pool authority gives the excuse of special children relieving themselves while swimming. But these children are toilet-trained and this can happen in case of normal children too," he said.

Marufa Hossain, executive director, Tauri Foundation and principal of School for Gifted Children, a special needs school, said negative attitude and lack of trainers are major impediments to ensuring sporting facilities and physical exercise for chil-

said.

"There is a big playground of physical college nearby but we cannot get them play there because other children show negative attitude towards them. Even if our children are allowed to play just one hour a week they would be pretty happy," said Marufa.

"I think if special children and normal children play together then the next generation would refrain from showing negative attitude," she added.

Noor Salam, the only licensed

socialise, make friends and form peer groups. It also creates a sense of achievement in them," said Noor.

"In most cases when a special child is back from school he remains at home. Besides, there is a tendency among some parents to hide their children at home. But this stay-at-home approach makes them bad-tempered and overweight. This is the reason why a good number of special children suffer from obesity which itself is a disease," said Noor.

in case of swimming it sometimes turns very difficult for reasons beyond our control and lack of trainers, she said.

"We wanted to let the special children swim in our pool but parents of normal children raised objection saying autistic children sometimes cannot control bowels. They said that they would not use the pool if we allow them. "Some of them said they would use the pool if we change the water after the autistic children finish swimming. But it takes around Tk 15,000 to change the water once. The swimming pool is our only source of income, so we had to pay heed to them."

"Children with disabilities have the same rights like normal children and we are working with the ministry so that they have a playground of their own," she added.

Asked, Brig Gen Shawkat Hossain PSC, director, BKSP, said that special children come to their field on the eve of Special Olympic.

"For allowing them [special children] to use field regularly we will need a separate compound otherwise the players would complain. We also need special coaches from abroad but funds are needed for that," he said.

But not all are same.

"Shishumela, Nandan and Wonderland are a few wonderful places that always allowed our children to play. Xindian, Happy Today food court are places where we can go for eating out," said Marufa.

MA Halim, general manager, Wonderland, said that they never faced any kind of problem because of the special children playing here.

"We maintain a certain timing for them and other normal school children. It's a satisfaction for us to allow them to play," he said.

Rokonuzzaman Khan, manager, Xindian Restaurant, said that sometimes children with disabilities come to his restaurant for lunch.

"We don't feel any problem when they are here because they are well-mannered and their teachers accompany them," he said.



out his fat because he is growing overweight," said Munira Azam, mother of the autistic boy.

According to parents and teachers, most autistic and physically challenged children are getting obese just for lack of open space where they could go and play to their hearts content.

"My 4-year old daughter likes to play in water but I have to remain content with the bathtub because she is denied the opportunity to using pools," said Emran Ahmed, father of another autistic child and an interior

dren with disabilities.

"Swimming and riding are very important exercise for children with disabilities. But this city has no place for these. For several years I tried to take my daughter to a swimming pool. But none of the pools in the city allowed," said Marufa, also a parent of a physically challenged child.

"As a parent I feel sad when I see that my child has to remain content with indoor games. We are ready to pay extra bucks for these facilities if needed," she

coach for special children in Bangladesh who is currently working with National Association of Sports for the Persons with Disability (NASPD), said that physical exercise and sports are like rehabilitation therapies for children with autism, cerebral palsy, down syndrome and physically and intellectually challenged children.

"Firstly, sports and physical activities keep them physically fit. It increases their confidence and chasing power. It helps them

"One big barrier is that a disability sport is very expensive. This problem can be solved by training special coaches locally," he added.

A few months ago an application was submitted from the foundation to the Mohila Complex in this regard.

Asked, Kamrunnahr Dana, general secretary, Bangladesh Women's Sports Council, said since 2003 special children are using the playground of Mohila Complex adjusting with their normal time schedule. However,



Delicious dishes from 'Opar Bangla'

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Finding a recreational spot is a matter of luck in Dhaka city. So the city dwellers, to relieve the monotony, often indulge in eating out at various restaurants with family members.

Besides, youths are in quest of latest sensation and new arrival. In line, different restaurants are preparing new cuisines and trying to introduce world-class cuisine giving the city dwellers a chance to tickle their taste buds with exotic flavours.

After the Chinese and Thai food festival, the newest edition is culinary fiesta from the other side of Bengal.

Kazana at Gulshan section 2 is going to organise 'Opar Bangla' food festival to celebrate Pabla Baishakh, presenting mouth-watering deli-

cacies from Kolkata.

Master chef Santosh Sing from the 'city of joy' arrived in town to share the taste. He will be preparing ranges of traditional Bengali dishes that people in Kolkata relish.

During a showcase session of his gastronomic creations last Thursday, the chef explained, "I have been a chef for the last 12 years, cooking dishes from all over world but I have finally decided to settle down with Bangali cuisine."

"The variation, unique use of spices, the aroma and sensation of Bangla cuisine are the most alluring amongst all. The lavish cuisine gives you a chance to relish the food languidly at heart's content," he added.

During a ten-day festival from April 15 to 25 the chef will prepare tempting dishes such as *chorchori, sukto*, succulent

chingri malai, dab chingri, crisp kobiraj cutlet, several *daal* items, chicken curry, *paturi* from various freshwater fish, *mishti* polau and more.

Around 15 dishes, each having its unique Bangali recipe will be on the menu.

As an added bonus, sweets from Kolkata including *roshogolla, chhanar payesh* and *yoghurt* will also be there.

"This is a typical menu enjoyed by every Bangalee in Kolkata. Both the Bengals have similar taste in food yet there are sharp twists in some recipes which developed in years of separation," said General Manager of the restaurant Avishek Sinha.

"But both the Bengal celebrate Pabla Baishakh in the same manner, with traditional food, music and festivity," he added.



A student of Fine Arts Institute painting masks for the colourful procession marking Pabla Baishakh tomorrow. Festive mood resonates on the Dhaka University campus as the students are at the final stage of their annual preparation to celebrate the first day of Bangla new year.

Tug-of-war over an open space

DCC permits a body to hold Baishakh fair at Gulshan Central Park but the occupants refuse to buzz off

TAWFIQUE ALI

Gulshan Youth Club and an event management firm, Rupkotha Productions Limited, are at odds over organising programmes at Gulshan Central Park on Pabla Baishakh (April 14), the first day of Bengali New Year.

Officials of Rupkotha said they have taken permission from Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) for holding a daylong Baishakh fair and cultural programmes at the venue.

But Gulshan Youth Club that occupies the playground has announced Baishakh programmes on the same date at the same venue saying that four advisers of the interim government will attend the programme.

According to records of the DCC, DMP and ministries concerned, the club has not taken permission for organising such programmes.

Moreover, Rupkotha officials alleged that Youth Club authorities have asked them not to hold any programme there on that day.

Rubaiyat Thakur Robin, managing director of Rupkotha, said one Gias who identified himself as a staff of the club warned the Rupkotha staffs off when they went to Gulshan Central Park on March 27 to see the facility.

"When I went to the playground again on April 6 for preparatory work, Gias told me again that we would not be allowed to organise the festival there," said Robin.

Mustafizur Rahman Bhuiyan,

general secretary of Gulshan Youth Club, wrote a letter to the DCC on April 3 claiming that four advisers, Anwarul Iqbal, Hossain Zillur Rahman, Dr AMM Shawkat Ali and Mahubul Jamil, have consented to attend the daylong Baishakh programmes to be organised by Youth Club.

Contacted, Shafiqul Islam, private secretary to Mahubul Jamil, adviser to the youth and sports ministry, said the ministry is not aware of any such programme. "We have not received any such invitation," he said.

Prodip Raihan, private secretary to Education Adviser

Hossain Zillur Rahman, said Gulshan Youth Club has sent an invitation but it has not been approved. "The adviser is not going to attend the programme," he added.

GM Saleh Uddin, private secretary to AMM Shawkat Ali, adviser to the food ministry, said the adviser has no schedule to attend the programme.

Rupkotha authorities meanwhile filed a general diary (GD) on March 28, with the Gulshan police in this connection.

Aminur Rashid, second officer of Gulshan Police Station, said they have not received any infor-

mation in connection with visit of four advisers at Gulshan Central Park on April 14.

Regarding the GD, he said that he has mentioned in his report that Rupkotha has obtained permission as per proper procedure and rules.

Dhaka City Corporation realised Tk 23,334 from Rupkotha on March 18 as rent and allotted the field for holding Baishakh festivals at the playground.

Office of the DMP commissioner issued permission in favour of Rupkotha on March 24. Rafez Alam Chowdhury, president of Gulshan Youth Club, said

they will hold Baishakh festival and sports events at the playground on Pabla Baishakh.

Replying to a question on whether they have obtained permission from the authorities, he said, "We do not seek permission, we just inform DCC."

He claimed that the advisers have given consent to attend the programme.

According to documents obtained by The Daily Star, president of Gulshan Youth Club in a letter to the DCC mayor on March 30 asked for a permanent lease of a part of the playground in favour of the club.

But the city mayor in his note on the letter ordered legal actions for eviction of unauthorised occupancy at the playground.

"I have ordered the chief estate officer to evict any unauthorised entity and occupancy of Gulshan Youth Club from the playground," said Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka.

The DCC will have its full control over maintenance of the field as per its own rules in the interests of the locals, said the mayor.

Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk), the original owner of the parkland, has meanwhile served notice on the Youth Club regarding its occupancy at the playground.

"We have served notice on the Gulshan Youth Club asking for their legality of being at the playground," said Rajuk Chairman KAM Haroon. "We have not found any documents in support of their occupancy at the playground."

