The Spirit to Survive

Cancer patients are stereotyped as being physically weak and unable to do normal activities. An innovative sports event aims to disprove this notion by showing that cancer patients can be athletic and lead normal lives.



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On a beautiful sunny morning of November, the all too familiar Women's Complex wore a festive look as it was going to host a different kind of sporting event. The uniqueness of the event was that the participants were all cancer survivors. Sanofi-aventis Bangladesh in collaboration with National Sports Council had come up with an innovative idea of arranging a sporting event titled 'Spirit to Survive' for cancer survivors.

Sanofi-Aventis, a leading pharmaceutical group in Europe and the largest global pharmaceutical company in Bangladesh has initiated quite a few projects for cancer survivors. These include projects like "My child matters" carried out in partnership with UICC (International Union against Cancer) to fight against child cancer and events like "Sail to Survive" (a river cruise for the cancer survivors with their family, friends and doctors) and "Healing through Painting" a painting workshop for cancer survivors.

At the press conference announcing the event, Shirin Akhtar, a young woman from Khulna shared her experiences of 12 years after successful cancer treatment. "It was a great challenge for me to defeat cancer. Encouragement from my family and friends and continued support from the doctors helped me a lot to win this fight," Shirin Akhtar said contentedly, "I am going to take this challenge to relay 'The Flame of Hope' because I want all the cancer survivors in the country to join in this sporting event and be enlightened with the light of 'The Flame of Hope'."

The journey of "Spirit to Survive" started with Shirin Akhtar in Tetulia and Mohammad Imran and Ferdousi Kabir in Teknaf by carrying the torch "The Flame of Hope" on November 12 and joined by local people. They returned to Dhaka to join the Olympic Day Run 2008 on November 14 starting from Shahbag to Bangabandhu National Stadium where the formal announcement of the game was announced by a cancer survivor.

The much anticipated sporting event titled was held at Women complex on November 26 where participants (around 80 cancer patients) came from dif-