

Courage, confidence and communal harmony

The youth's growing interest in martial arts

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The origin of martial arts dates back centuries to its birth in China, later merging towards all of Asia under the guidance of Indian Monk Ta Mo in early 500 AD. Over the years, it has become a popular sport among the youth in Bangladesh and beyond.

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PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

makes people more disciplined, and helps to reduce stress," he adds.

Mixed martial arts, a blend of karate, boxing and wrestling among other traditional forms, demands a lot of hard work. "Focusing on one particular form provides people with a lifelong return. For instance, the training in Shinkyokushinkai Karate is arranged for students to reach target levels systemically," says businessman Asef Masood, a black belt (2nd Dan) in Shinkyokushinkai Karate, who also

volunteers as an instructor. "Discipline and strategies such as breaking down complicated movements with strikes, feints and blocks into smaller parts allows students to master them quickly. These strategies are applicable to other aspects of students' professional or academic life as well, as they enhance one's problem-solving skills."

Practicing martial arts not only contributes to body building and skill development, but also helps build communal harmony among students.

"Students become part of a community, where their confidence is boosted through rigorous training, competitions and friendships with people from various backgrounds and age groups, making them more accepting of new cultures and perceptions," adds Asef.

Martial arts is a common hobby for fitness lovers, and it prevails as a motivational factor for many. "I started Kyokushinkai Karate because I felt unhealthy and wanted to be fitter and stronger," shares Siaam Ibn Ali, a Computer Science and Engineering student at North South University, who had to stop his training in 2016 due to family issues. "I returned to the dojo with Shinkyokushinkai Karate in 2019. I had gained a lot of weight during the break, but within just a few months, I started regaining my fitness and got better. I have been training since then and now, I am a black belt (1st Dan)."

Siaam wants to become a professional fighter, and has bounced back in full swing. "For me, it is more about passion than just being fit. I wish to push myself even further to become a champion someday. I feel motivated by videos of other athletes who do exercises like one hand pull-ups and handstand clap push-ups, and other martial artists showing splendid moves. No matter how much I improve, I aspire to keep going," he asserts.

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Mohammad Hossain, Founder and Owner of KO Fight Studio, students of martial arts develop several qualities which contribute to their personal, professional and academic life. "All our students have to take the oath on 'Osu' which means 'yes'. It develops a positive mindset in them," he says. "When they come to the dojo (a hall where martial arts are practiced), they come prepared to hit and be hit. This enhances their endurance, and makes them more prompt and responsive."

Alongside being a strong contributor to building physical resistance, martial arts increases one's focus. "The training

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