

# AGENTS OF CHANGE

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## Courage, confidence and communal harmony

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Martial arts help to gain ground for many, especially women, when it comes to self-defense. "I usually train girls in rural areas, where women are often victims of sexual harassment, stalking and domestic violence, under project Oporajita, initiated by Lal Sabuj Society. When the girls reach the training ground, I find them anxious and fearful of revolting against gender discriminatory crimes and offenses," mentions Ayesha Siddika, a national and international Black Belt in Taekwondo, who currently serves as the assistant instructor and executive member at Bangladesh International Taekwondo Association. "However, with time, they become not only physically stronger, but also more confident, which equips them with the voice to fight against such offensive

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actions."

Being involved in intensive research, Ayesha says that over 80 percent of her students from these training camps only come to her because they want to become brave. She once came across a student who was a victim of domestic abuse, and had only joined the class because she wanted to regain her courage, as she could not tolerate her circumstances any longer. "This has forced me to think about the necessity of this sport, and arrange training sessions countrywide, especially for girls," adds Ayesha, who is also the Founder President of Bangladesh Beach Tennis Association.

People in different office jobs are



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

also significantly interested in martial arts. "I always wanted to learn martial arts as a child, but could not pursue it as I had to focus on my academics. However, when I started working, I was bored with the professional monotony and wanted to pursue my passion," says Hasnahena Lucky, a social and market

researcher who is also a yellow belt in Shinkyokushinkai Karate. "Practicing karate has not only made me more confident as a person but it has also made me very patient, and improved my concentration. It has helped me to reduce stress, and improve my performance at work."


The benefits of pursuing martial arts are endless, whether one takes it up as a hobby, a necessity, or a profession. Feeling confident in their ability to defend and protect themselves with the skill set acquired through this sport can empower people to live with less fear and more freedom.

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