



## POOL LIES EMPTY as Bogura swimmers train in ponds

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

MOSTAFA SHABUJ

"I don't want to talk about the lack of facilities anymore. Many journalists have come before, interviewed me about it, but nothing ever happens," said Masud Rana, a Bogura-based swimming instructor, who was frustrated by the years of false promises and obliviousness of the authorities.

Masud has been training aspiring swimmers from underprivileged backgrounds free of cost for around two decades.

Many of his students have made a mark in the national circuit, winning gold medals at various competitions and one of his pupils, Morium Akter, represented Bangladesh in the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

Despite the continuous success at the national level, these swimmers from Bogura don't have any proper facilities to train and have to hop around from one pond to another to train, even though on paper a swimming pool does exist in close proximity.

The Bogura Zilla Swimming Pool was constructed right beside the Shaheed Chandu Cricket Stadium and the

(DSA) general secretary Masudur Rahman Milon explained why they haven't been able to keep the pool operational.

"We don't have the funds to operate it. The electricity bill alone will cost us around Tk one lakh per month. We don't even have a recycling machine or a suction machine, so the water becomes unusable in just three days. A few years back, we paid Tk 12 lakh as electricity bill

water. There is also a net in the water, where the hand often gets stuck," she added.

Ishrat Jahan Borsha (15), another promising young swimmer training under Masud, was the champion in individual medley in the Bangabandhu Junior Swimming Tournament in 2023. She, too, spoke about the challenges of training in ponds.

At around 10:00 am last Wednesday, Morium, Ramisa, Ishrat and around 15 others aged between eight and 20 were seen training at the Upazila Parishad Complex pond under the watchful gaze of Masud.

Masud has set up a tent right beside the pond for the female students to change. The water also looked murky owing to the fish cultivation going on.

The swimmers also said that the upazilla parishad had leased the pond to a mosque committee for fish cultivation, and added that members of the committee often scold them and tell them not to come to train there anymore.

However, Bogura Sadar's UNO Firoza Begum said, "We didn't lease out the pond. We are temporarily cultivating fish in the pond. We didn't know that the swimmers were facing problems training in the pond because of it. I will definitely take necessary steps to ensure that the children can properly train here. If need be, I will arrange another pond for them to train in."

Masud, however, was unconvinced by such promises as his previous experience keeps him from feeling optimistic.

His also trains his son, Siam Magfirat (19), who won a gold medal in the national age-level swimming competition in 2022 and also has a gold medal in 50m freestyle in Bangabandhu Junior Swimming Championship.

Masud, who doesn't take any fees from his students, makes a living by training the services teams and through the earning from a mechanical shop he owns, provides training kits to his students.

"You can't find any swimming equipment in Bogura. I have spent around Tk 1.5 lakh and turned my own bedroom into a small gymnasium and I have also bought some equipment. The kids train there in the day and I sleep there in the night," Masud explained.

Bogura DSA general secretary Masudur told The Daily Star that the association will sit for a meeting on Wednesday about opening up the pool. But till that happens, Masud and his pupils will continue jumping from one pond to another to continue their training.



construction cost the local district sports association about three crore taka.

The swimming pool was inaugurated in 2002 but got shut down soon in 2004. The authorities reopened the pool in 2015 but it again got closed down the following year.

Bogura District Sports Association's

and restarted the pool but couldn't keep it running for too long."

As the 51-metre pool lies empty, the swimmers in Bogura are currently training at the Upazila Parishad Complex pond in Bogura Sadar, which is also used for fish farming.

"Even if we don't get a swimming pool, we need a decent pond to practise," said Ramisa Akter Jui, a 12-year-old swimmer who won five gold medals in the Bangabandhu Junior Swimming Competition in 2022.

"The pond where we are training right now is also used for fish farming. The water there is very dirty. Often there are dead snakes and frogs floating in the

"Due to not having a pond for ourselves, we have to go around to different ponds in the city to train, which makes us often catch cold and fever. Changing into our training clothes and changing back to regular clothes after training is also a challenge."

Morium (26), who has been taking part in national swimming events since 2011 and has won 39 gold medals to date, spoke about the challenges the aspiring female swimmers in Bogura face.

"It's very difficult for girls in Bogura to learn swimming. There are no swimming pools. We used to go to a pond at the municipality park before, which has been closed off for some time due to some renovation work. There, the girls didn't have a place to change into their training clothes. The boys and the girls have to train together," she said.

## Inter seek Serie A triumph with Milan derby win

AFP, MILAN

Inter Milan can secure their 20th Serie A title on Monday by piling on more humiliation on AC Milan in one of the most hotly-anticipated city derbies in years.

But Monday night's clash has even more at stake than usual as Inter can ram their superiority down Milan's throats by claiming both local bragging rights and the Scudetto with five matches of the season to spare.

Regardless of what happens Inter should beat Milan to a 20th league crown as they have a near unassailable 14-point lead over their city rivals.

But a sixth straight derby victory would further highlight the football power shift in Italy's economic capital, where two teams who have been crowned European champions a combined 10 times are locked on 19 Serie A titles.

It would also be sweet revenge for Milan beating Inter to the 2022 Scudetto on the final day, when many observers agreed Simone Inzaghi had

thrown away the chance to claim his first league title as a coach.

Inzaghi had been labelled a cup manager throughout his career.

However, after losing to Manchester City in last season's Champions League final, his Inter



team -- helped by some judicious moves in the summer transfer market -- have kicked on to become Italy's dominant team.

Inter will have a full squad available and a full week's rest in preparation for the derby while Milan crashed out

of the Europa League with a 2-1 loss against Roma in the quarterfinal on Thursday.

The last time Milan beat Inter, back in September 2022 when the Rossoneri were still reigning champions.

Simone Inzaghi said his team are not obsessing over their chance to win the Serie A title by beating their local rivals AC Milan.

"We've had a magnificent season, it's been a great run. Tomorrow could be a special day for all of us. But we're not obsessing over it," coach Inzaghi told reporters.

"If tomorrow is the day then great, we're working hard so that it is, but it's not an obsession for me nor for my players."

Inter head into Monday's clash having won the last five Milan derbies, two of those wins taking Inzaghi's team to last season's Champions League final.

"The last five derbies have given us great joy, they've taken us to a Champions League final but we know tomorrow that those derbies won't mean anything," added Inzaghi.

### SHORT CORNER

#### Mohammedan seek Papon's intervention in hockey

Mohammedan Sporting Club sought the intervention of youth and sports minister Nazmul Hassan Papon for justice over the title-deciding match of the Premier Hockey League against Abahani, claiming that the club is not getting cooperation from Bangladesh Hockey Federation. On Friday, Mohammedan, despite leading 3-2 in a chaotic last match of the league against Abahani, refused to play the last 18 minutes over an umpiring decision and got into a brawl, eventually forcing the match officials to declare Abahani as the winners.

#### Verstappen adds China to his list of victories

Triple world champion Max Verstappen won Formula One's first Chinese Grand Prix in five years on Sunday with McLaren's Lando Norris finishing second to deny Red Bull the one-two. The victory from pole position at a Shanghai circuit that last hosted a grand prix in 2019 was Verstappen's fourth in five races in 2024 and came after he also won the season's first Saturday sprint.



#### Messi double keeps Miami on top in MLS

Lionel Messi scored twice and created another for Sergio Busquets as Inter Miami beat Nashville 3-1 on Saturday to maintain top spot in Major League Soccer's Eastern Conference. The goal was Messi's ninth goal in as many games in all competitions this season for Miami.



#### Imranur wins top BSPA sports award

Bangladesh sprinter Imranur Rahman won the sports person of the year award at Kool BSPA Sports Award 2023 held at the city's Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel on Sunday. Bangladesh national cricket team captain Najmul Hossain Shanto finished as first runners-up while national footballer Rakib Hossain finished as second runners-up in the same category.

\*\*Read full stories on The Daily Star's website



As heatwave sweeps over the country, rendering the populace hapless against rising temperatures, Abahani skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto takes a sip from a green coconut at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday to find a bit of relief while contemplating the key Super League fixture against Prime Bank on Monday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED