

#PERSPECTIVE

FENCING

The sport Bangladesh didn't know it needed

If you ever had the chance to pass by the Shaheed Suhrawardy Indoor Stadium in Mirpur, you may have witnessed the laughter and chatter of young athletes; their eyes gleaming with excitement can be seen afar, setting them apart from the rest of the population.



Star **LIFE** Style

They all want to represent Bangladesh on an international platform. Some of them, if only a few, can achieve their goal as well. That being said, among these athletes, a different breed of young aspirants has been growing as they don their fencing gear. They are becoming enthralled with fencing, an exquisite yet strenuous sport that promises a bright and cutting-edge future as their swords.

In Bangladesh, fencing is still a relatively new activity. It gained popularity in around 2007, far later than in its bordering nations. However, it is rather amazing how much excitement young Bangladeshis have for it.

Foil fencer Ahnaf Niloy, whose career began in 2016 at Dhaka Commerce College, is a shining example. Movies such as 'Pirates of the Caribbean' and 'Kingdom of Heaven' inspired his interest in fencing.

"I was enthralled with sword combat because of its charm, history, and grace," says Ahnaf.

There are, however, several obstacles in the way of perfecting this graceful sport, not the

social media and by demonstrating in schools and colleges," he

Success stories, such as those of Fatema Mujib, who brought home a gold medal from the South Asian Games, serve as a beacon of what can be achieved.

The story of fencing in Bangladesh is one of immense potential. The sport requires substantial funding, equipment, and infrastructural support.

"We are working towards participating in international tournaments, but the journey is difficult due to a lack of sponsors. We require good facilities and internationally graded gear to compete at the international level," Ahnaf points out.

Monir Hussain echoes this sentiment, stressing the importance of more substantial public and private backing. "Fencing is expensive, and we need more support to kickstart the fencing hype here. With a bit more assistance, our fencers can achieve remarkable success on bigger platforms."

With people like Ahnaf Niloy and Mohammad Monir Hussain putting in so much effort, fencing



least of which is the cost. A fencing blade alone may cost between Tk 4,000 and 6,000; a mask between Tk 6,000 and 8,000; and a fencing costume as much as Tk 15,000 — according to Ahnaf.

Bangladesh's excessive humidity makes training even more difficult, necessitating indoor facilities and the right equipment. "We often have to pre-order our equipment, which makes it even more troublesome," he continues.

Despite these hurdles, the passion for fencing burns bright.

Mohammad Monir Hussain, the coach and owner of Mirpur Fencing Club, shares, "We have the potential in the youth here; we just need the right guidance and training to reach the international level. Fencing is new to South Asia, but with the right support, we can achieve great things."

Inspiring a new generation of fencers, Monir Hussain's commitment to fencing from the beginning of his adventure began in 2007. "I founded the club to encourage young people to take up fencing. We promote the sport through

in Bangladesh appears to have a bright future. Their tales serve as a tribute to the tenacity of the Bangladeshi youth, who persist in pursuing their goals with unyielding commitment in the face of adversity on the financial and environmental fronts. Their stories are about more than simply sports; they are about pursuing a passion no matter what.

"We are a country of brilliant individuals", as Ahnaf so eloquently counsels. "Many others waiting to prove themselves are just like him. Never give up on your desire, never back down, and never allow someone to convince you that you cannot realise your ambition," he says.

The quiet but resolute development of fencing in a nation where football and cricket are the most popular sports is a tale of optimism, resilience, and the unbreakable spirit of Bangladeshi youngsters. The sound of foil clanging in Bangladesh's indoor stadiums may someday reverberate around the globe with the right backing.

By **K Tanzeel Zaman**
Photo: **Shahrear Kabir Heemel**

