

Games, sports must be resuscitated in schools

MOST schools not holding sports activities for their students and even not holding annual sporting meets, in gross violation of the national education and sports policies, as they lack playgrounds is unacceptable. Schools in rural areas, having open spaces, also cannot hold games and sports as they cannot afford the expenses of sports equipment. Playgrounds are crucial for a vibrant student life. It is all the more so because such facilities provide breathing space for them, somewhat jaded by their arduous efforts at studies. It is worthwhile to note that games and sports are very effective for growing students as they provide physical exercises, indispensable for physical fitness, in an interesting way. As games also teach students discipline, obedience to rules and self-control and promote what is called esprit de corps and a sense of fair play they need to be viewed as an integral part of school education. The current state of affairs, however, should be attributed to the lack of interest of teachers and parents in games since result-oriented schooling has placed sports and games on the back burner. Consequently, Bangladesh has fallen even behind its South Asian neighbours in track and field events as well as games.

Allegations are rife that the authorities of some schools have failed miserably to protect their school playgrounds for some time. It needs to be pointed out that there used to be a number of playgrounds with schools about a decade or so ago. But, regrettably, for apparent indifference of the authorities concerned to the students, on the one hand, and prevalence of land grabbers belonging to successive governments, on the other, many of those playgrounds disappeared over the years. Some of these playgrounds have been taken over for buildings; the minimum breathing space required for students has thereby been stamped out and the power of money, of a section of people, and greed of some officials, have colluded to transform what were once lively places meant for students into a veritable jungle of concrete.

As the National Sports Policy 1998 is a policy document with regard to its stress on making schools centres for players and sportsmen and the government is under a constitutional obligation to ensure national growth and physical fitness of students, it must act expeditiously to bring about a positive change in the policy in question and rearm the schools with allocation of adequate funds and human resources so that this dismal situation is reversed in no time.