

BEYOND WINNING

Pakistan Institute of Development Economics

SPEAKERS

Dr. Ameer Ali Abro, University of Sindh, an academic working on the sociology of sports.

Rana-Nasrullah, veteran athletics and fitness coach.

Shan Muhammad Sham, karate Coach and national champion.

The Themes of the discussion were:

- 1) Sports as a bridge to shorten distances in a diversified society. Sports as uniting factor in an ethnically diverse society.
- 2) The lack of stadiums and sporting facilities.
- 3) The Mindset of the Pakistani Society towards physical fitness and sports.
- 4) Consequences of over reliance on technology for official, social and entertainment purposes.
- 5) The problems sports men and women of Pakistani society face before they start training or make it to the trials.

Summary

Sports can be used as a tool that could bridge gaps in a diverse society as that of Karachi, a diverse society with ethnic, religious, sectarian diversity. However, sports organized by local private sport associations some of local bodies had shown positive results in terms of directing the energies of the youth in a positive direction. Dr. Abro shared his findings that sports provide an option, a way out from extremism and deviant behavior and the youth associated with sports are less likely to indulge in such activities. The professor also mentioned that the trend of housing societies need to be revisited. Spaces for sports need to be opened up.

Parents and educational institutions alike are not aware of the importance of good physical health. We spend a lot of money on expensive curative medical services but we don't understand the importance of preventive health care. We can avoid many health problems by being associated with sports by investing time and money in it. We need to make parents and teachers/administrators of the education institutions aware of the importance of sports for physical and mental wellbeing. We as a nation need to understand that there is no tradeoff between academics and sports. These points were deliberated upon in detail by Mr. Nasrullah Rana.

An professional athlete has to overcome many obstacles before he or she is awarded an opportunity in a trial or camp. There are social barriers, economic restraints, lack of financial support and lack of adequate access to sporting facilities. Our athletes have made us proud by winning titles at international level despite a broken sports structure. Most athletes come from a humble background and for professional athletes, their sport is also a source of bread and butter. But they become champions by defying these odds. The golden brother, veteran karate coach Mr. Shan Muhammad Sham shed light on the problems faced by sports men and women and their achievements. Nargis Hazarra, one of Mr. Sham's students became the first South Asian female to win an international title in martial arts. There were many more examples that the coach had seen in his life where associating with sports changed the trajectory of lives. Shan said that for him and his two brothers, the trio known as Golden Brothers' things weren't easy and they had to put a struggle inside and outside the Dojo.

The key outcomes of the conference were

- 1) The society needs to be made aware of the importance of Good health and how important sports are to Good health.
- 2) If we want to make champions winning titles in Olympics, we need to address the socio-economic aspect that proves as a hurdle for sportsmen/women.
- 3) Focusing on just a few sports makes the industry suffer. There needs to be a wider array of choices available to the youth.

- 4) Housing societies and urban planning needs to be regulated and land should be used efficiently. We need to rethink our policy about housing societies.
- 5) Organized sports training should begin from primary school. Athletes can be prepared only if we start working on them in early years. Therefore , sports at school level should be made mandatory.

Conclusion

The modern day world's overwhelming reliance on Technology, has made life easier but at the same time has brought many ill-fitting replacements. Technology has influenced our bank transactions or shopping behavior at grocery store but it has been a negative influence on our physical health.

We have neglected our health, the most important asset of human life and we have mistakenly adopted the belief that there is a tradeoff between physical fitness and an accomplishing career. However, its not the case. A healthy mind will lead to healthy body and a healthy society.

Champions are not made in a day. It's a lifetime investment that goes into creating a champion worthy of competition in the Olympics and international events. therefore, the importance of sports should be reflected in our school system at primary, junior high and high-school levels. The schools should be mandated to have a serious and workable sports program.

Sports men and women pay a very high opportunity cost by making “their passion ,their profession”. We need to found out mechanisms of how to make it economically feasible for sportsmen and women to focus on their sports. Incentive schemes and stipend programs need to be designed. By finding ways to decrease the opportunity cost we can come up with a booming sports industry, an untapped potential exists. It's about time, that we decide its not only our football that goes to the FIFA world cup but our footballer too has to be taken to that level. We as economists can find ways to make it possible. PIDE as a research institution can play a role by providing research and surgical intervention guideline to “*make Sports better.*”

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