

# IPC chief hails sports facilities

AILYN AGONIA - DOHA The president of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Sir Philip Craven said Qatar has the wherewithal to host one of the IPC's prestigious events. It has sports ambience as well as good facilities, he said.

Talking to Qatar Tribune on Wednesday, the accomplished Paralympian said the IPC is keen on extending its support to Qatar along with its other members in grooming more athletes in their countries.

"Qatar has very good facilities at the Aspire Zone and we know that organising our events here is quite possible. But right now, we have not yet discussed these things. But when we do it with the rest of our member countries, about 160 of them, we will extend our support to Qatar in order to encourage more athletes here and let them experience the benefits of participating in sports at any level. This is one of the prime functions of our members like the Qatar Paralympic Committee," he said. The IPC has 26 paralympic sports and its goal is to develop the interest of every nation to their activities through conducting clinics for coaching athletes and referees. Among its much-awaited competitions include the winter games, which will be hosted by Vancouver this year, and the summer paralympic happening next in the UK, Sir Craven's home country.

Aside from maintaining a good relation with the sports committee in Qatar, Sir Philip is also maintaining a good connection with the Shafallah Center. This is Sir Philip's second year to be among the key personalities at the prestigious International Shafallah Forum and he admired the centre for holding such a meet.

"I am a great supporter of the theme 'Achieving Independence' simply because I am a very independent person. I get very angry if anybody tries to stop me from being independent. People with disabilities are not prisoners of their own bodies or minds," the accomplished paralympian remarked.

He also lauded the presentations of Shafallah on employment which emphasised the need to ask the consent of the students on the work environment being offered to them. "I am glad to hear that each individual are being asked whether he or she is comfortable in a certain environment rather than being forced to accept what is being given to them," he said. Sir Philip also wanted to correct the use of the term 'disabled' to describe or brand people with disabilities. "The word gives negative thought to people's mind. People with disabilities are not prisoners of their own bodies or minds. It hardly matters if you lost a leg because rest of your body still works. The key is to maximize the use of what you have. Don't worry what you don't have. And sports are a wonderful way to get the people out in the world."

Sir Philip's many astounding contributions in Paralympic Sport led to his election as President of the International Paralympic Committee in 2001. He was knighted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for his services to Paralympic Sport in 2005. He was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for his services to Wheelchair Basketball. A selfconfessed 'very competitive athlete during his time', Sir Craven said that the key was not aiming to win but participation in sport events.

