

Children to meet PM Modi, demand their right to play

Soumya Pillai

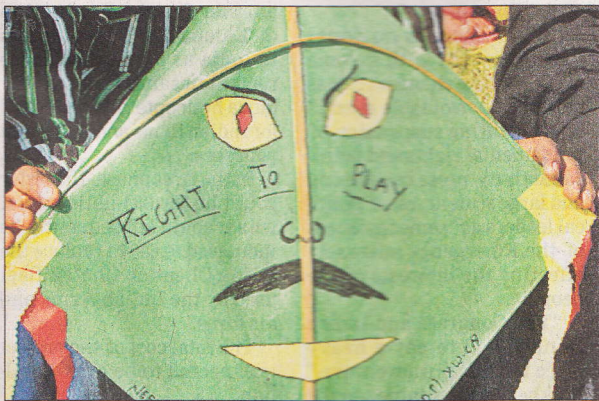
■ soumya.pillai@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Eight-year-old Prateek Kumar held his kite over his head. Watching colourful kites sail across the sky is Kumar's favourite pastime, but this time he flew it for a purpose — to reclaim his right to play.

Hundreds of children like Kumar gathered at south Delhi's Indraprastha Park on Thursday under the banner of NGO Butterflies - an organization that has been working with the street children of the city - to formulate a charter of demands for more free play space for children. Similar campaigns and marches were carried out across the capital.

Children were asked to write their experiences and demands on their kites. This will be presented to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Lieutenant-Governor Najeeb Jung.

"My friends and I are forced to play on the road because the local playground is full of men playing cards, drinking alcohol or doing drugs. We have no other option. I want Modiji to do something for us," said Kumar, a resident of Jasola.



■ Children were asked to write about their experiences and demands on their kites.

HT PHOTO

The charter of demands, Play in Early Childhood Development, demands dedicated spaces in colonies, schools and private residential areas solely for playgrounds. It also asks for mandatory sports period in the curriculum.

"Each school should have at least one teacher trained in psycho motor development. Each child must also have access to safe playing areas in or around the school for at least five hours a week," read the charter.

The charter also addressed

the need to engage out-of-school children. "Every child deserves to play. It is an unwritten right that every child is born with. Involving street children in sports and games helps them come out of habits like alcoholism, drug addiction and other behaviour related problems," said Rita Panicker, director of Butterflies.

The charter will be presented to the PM by the children who will also discuss their experience of poorly maintained playgrounds in their respective areas with him.