

The Indian Express

August 23, 2017

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Pro Kabaddi 2017: After Kabaddi success, TransStadia eyes to host more sports in Ahmedabad

TransStadia Founder & MD Udit Sheth, in an exclusive interaction with indianexpress.com, talks about how Narendra Modi gave him the green signal for the project in Ahmedabad and the sports they are eyeing to host at their facility.

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Written by **Saundarya Mehra** | Ahmedabad | Published: August 22, 2017 6:39 pm



A wide angle view of the football ground. (Source: Express Photo by Saundarya Mehra)



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A wide angle view of the football ground. (Source: Express Photo by Saundarya Mehra)

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After successfully hosting the Kabaddi World Cup, the Arena by TansStadia is hoping to bring international football to India. A multi-sport facility, the Arena is home for the Gujarat Fortunegiants – one of the four new debutants – in the 2017 edition of Pro Kabaddi. The TransStadia Founder & MD Udit Sheth in an interaction with indianexpress.com talked about the challenges they faced to complete the project, their future plans and how it stands apart from the already existing sports infrastructures in the country.

How did you come with such an idea and which all chief ministers did the company approach?

Before writing to different chief ministers, we were very clear that we wanted to get into viable infrastructure. Just not wanted to build a stadium and host events. When we had an opportunity to have a look at these technologies which allowed us to change the utilisation, change the formats and have different things on it, we decided to go ahead and approached all the ten demographics. And we got a response from 3-4 states like Maharashtra, Delhi, Gujarat and Meghalaya. Shiela Dixit ji, Ashok Chauhan, CM of Meghalaya and Narendra Modi showed interest. While Chauhan ji got replaced, Shiela ji was facing corruption charges for the 2010 Commonwealth Games. To my real surprise, it was Narendra Modi, who gave me an appointment and saw the merits of my design and gave me the green signal. And thus we decided to start up the pilot project in Ahmedabad.

Is it true that the land bought by TransStadia was first owned by a renowned local milk factory?

Yes, it is true that the land was earlier owned by Abad Dairy. If you look at the stadium it is located in the center of the city. It was not easy to get a land like this. So we asked the government to arrange us the land and took them under confidence that the rest of the cost for building the infrastructure will be looked

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What kind of technologies are being used/ available in The Arena by TransStadia?

If you have a look at TransStadia, we have three patent technologies. We have a steady arena technology, T-Box technology and turf protectors technology. So the first thing you can do here is cut down the capex. Because you are not building five different things but you have one thing which can be used for five different things. We broke the spectator facility from the regular training facility. We kept the cost of spectator facility very low while investing in new technologies.

How was the facility used after Kabaddi World Cup?

I think from the time World Cup has happened, that's when we did a soft opening. Since then almost every leader from every state has come, many athletes have come. They have enjoyed the facilities here and want this project in all over India. Our idea is to at least have a 200-day schedule, be it sports or non-sports activities, in our public areas. While making sure that our services don't deteriorate, our customers get the world class experience. Our 80,000 sq ft retail area is all booked out. It has already become a city center while people only see it as a stadium. Thus money is flowing in and there is no money crisis.

How did you manage to convince AKFI and Star Sports to host the Kabaddi World Cup in an incomplete project?

It's very broadcaster friendly. If you ask Star Sports, they will tell you what their experience has been. We were an unfinished project. But we were possibly the easiest project at that time for them. For us the main agency was Star Sports. We had approached the CEO and shared our vision. They liked the facilities and the



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How are you maintaining the stadium, the up keeping, and the costs

We actually officially started only in March 2017. Till then we were doing a test run. We had to get our work processes in places, systems in place. So all that earlier spent during the test run was taken into project funding. Revenues come in later on. Now we have foot fall, we get 20-23 days of booking. I think revenues have started and I have no doubt it's not only the envy of Ahmedabad but also the envy of India.

If you look at Pro Kabaddi, it has come here for seven days which gives us national visibility. The World Cup gave us worldwide visibility. And we are expecting Gujarat to pick up many more teams in all the leagues. And I'm pretty much sure that all teams will want to make TransStadia as their home base. This stadium has a very big advantage looking at the spectator standpoint.



What are the future plans for the stadium? What kind of events can we expect to be held in Ahmedabad?

There is an Asian Table Tennis championship competition coming up here then after badminton league and the indoor futsal league is in talks with us. We are in talks with the boxing federations to bring world championships to Ahmedabad. I am more than convinced that Gujarat will overdose on international events.



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PRO KABADDI L

Zone A

NO. TEAM

- 1 Gujarat
- 2 Pune
- 3 Haryana



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Are you looking for hosting Asian Games or National Games?

No, when we are talking about Asian Games, they need a multi-facilitated venue. They need multiple venues at the same time and we are not multiple venues. We could have been a part of a FIFA World Cup as we have a football stadium.

Despite having a football stadium, why didn't TransStadia bid to host FIFA U-17 World Cup?

When India had bid for the FIFA U-17 World Cup that time our project had not started. So, they shortlisted six locations at that time. However, we were kept on standby when two of the shortlisted venues were still under completion. And if you see, none of them is a football only stadium. They either have an athletics track or are a cricket stadium with a football pitch. So, there are possibilities of worst spectator experience because they are going to be quite far. However, we are going to bid for U-19 World Cup and I'm sure that Gujarat will be shortlisted. We recently had a FIFA's Mission XI Million in Ahmedabad. So, the international football federation knows about us and the facilities we are capable of.

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Zone A

NO. TEAM

- 1 Gujarat
- 2 Pune
- 3 Haryana
- 4 Jaipur
- 5 Mumbai
- 6 Delhi

PRO KABADDI LEAG

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Zone



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Bengal Warriors

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