

# Into a new realm of sporting

TransStadia is all set to put Ahmedabad on the global sporting map



The recently concluded Kabaddi World Cup 2016, in which 12 countries participated and the host country India grabbed the top slot, was the first sporting event held in Ahmedabad's upcoming state-of-the-art stadium, The Arena, built by TransStadia. "This marks the opening of a new stadium, where many more sporting events will follow," says Vijay Rupani, chief minister, Gujarat. "In the year of the Olympics itself, Gujarat would like to lead the way in achieving the objective of building a quality stadium".

A brainchild of the 37-year-old Udit Sheth, founder & MD, SE TransStadia Pvt Ltd, Mumbai, a part of Setco Automotive Limited, an automobile clutch manufacturer, work on the stadium has just begun and, by 2017, it will be fully operational. "TransStadia will serve as an *avant garde* venue, housing 16 sporting disciplines, making it India's first and largest integrated multi-sports facility. It is a destination and not just a stadium", explains Sheth, an alumnus of the Sloan School of Management, Boston, who, on his returned to India, had pitched this concept to Narendra Modi, the then CM of Gujarat, and was given a go ahead for breeding a sport culture for the city of Ahmedabad.

In fact, the project is in the heart of a city centre, which once housed the defunct Abad dairy, measuring about nine acres in Maninagar, the

constituency represented by Modi, when he was the chief minister. So, the project has a long association with Modi from the time he was the Gujarat chief minister.

"I had pitched the idea of a state-of-the-art multipurpose, multi-sport social sports infrastructure to as many as 10 chief ministers in 2008. Of them, four, including our current prime minister, responded. While one of them got replaced, another one was running out of money, and the third one was facing corruption charges linked to the 2010 Commonwealth Games. Modi ji and his team promptly responded and were supportive from day one. Today, what you see is in a way his dream turning into a reality," says Sheth candidly. A fitness expert and nutrition programmer, he imbibes the true spirit of a sportsman and had set out to establish TransStadia in 2008, with the belief that India can emerge amongst the global frontrunners in the sports arena.

Sheth has carefully designed the specifics of the project to make it financially viable. Firstly, the 1.4 million sq ft built-up area has a 78:22 ratio of space dedicated to sports versus non-sport area (retail, hospitality, health club, gym etc). "Today, the challenge most stadiums in India face is the need to come up with a model that is self-sustaining, with most of them being underutilised and

financially overbearing," says Sheth. "This mixed usage of space makes it a more financially viable proposition."

Sheth has made a FIFA standard football natural turf, with a seating capacity of 20,000, as the centre piece of the project. The land for the project, given on lease for 35 years at a nominal price, was allotted in 2013, following a state cabinet approval in 2011. As per the concession agreement signed with the Gujarat government's tourism department, TransStadia will give a minimum 2 per cent of their revenue to the state authorities for the development of sports in Gujarat.

The project involves offering urban infrastructure for sports & entertainment within the built-up area, besides hospitality in the arena, where food & beverages would add to the revenue stream.

TransStadia is also equipped with a dedicated entry for players with two dugouts, four international standard locker rooms and 14 hospitality boxes overlooking the pitch that convert into guest rooms, enhancing the player experience. Apart from the 70,000 sq ft of area for retail that will be sub-leased soon to various outlets, the work for building a 150-room four-star hotel is also on. A membership drive for an exclusive club is also underway for a fee of ₹6 lakh per family and, so far, over 400 members have signed up. The Arena project has drawn inspiration from several sports