

For a Better Future

India is finally investing in sports infrastructure

Boria Majumdar

With each Olympics and India's miserable performance in them, one hears enough talk about the lack of a sporting culture and the absence of world-class infrastructure as the main reasons for India's debacle. While the sporting culture part is witnessing a real transformation with a large number of sports gaining importance and health and fitness issues taking centre stage in the country, high quality infrastructure still remains a concern. Though one might point at the large stadiums and other sports-related infrastructure in each city facing huge problems of under-utilisation, the fact remains that sportspersons have to look beyond India's shores for accessing training facilities that are expected to make the difference between stepping on the winners' podium or returning home empty-handed.

And who better than the country's first individual gold medallist to not just talk about moving in the right direction on infrastructure but actually getting down to acting on it.

True to his promise post Rio, Abhinav Bindra has launched a high-performance centre in Chandigarh in collaboration with TechnoBody, an Italian company, where athletes can access

facilities that are on par with any centre in the world. With equipment that Bindra himself used for training for the Rio Olympics, the centre has opened its doors for any athlete who wants to raise standards to compete with the best and more important is free for any Indian elite athlete.

"For the longest time we have lamented about the lack of facilities in our country. This is an attempt to redress the problem and this will not only get us on par with the West but will actually get us ahead of the curve. For 22 years of my life I have been searching for a thing like this. Had I found it earlier I'd have won another Olympic medal", says Bindra with a laugh.

From Ahmedabad comes another interesting development called The Arena from TransStadia, the venue for the 2016 Kabaddi World Cup, which India just won. A spanking new sports infrastructure project, this multi-purpose venue can house 14 sporting disciplines, making it India's first and largest integrated convertible multi-sports facility.

"The indoor stadium features the patented T-box technology which enables us to set up seating within minutes," says Udit Sheth, the person behind setting up the country's first private-public-partnership (PPP) multi-use urban sports infrastructure facility.

The Arena from TransStadia, the venue for the 2016 Kabaddi World



While the Bindra facility is smaller and meant for the high performance athletes who aspire to Olympic glory, The Arena can surely help make India a favoured destination for major sports events. In fact, if the grapevine is to be believed the third edition of the IPTL may well be held there a month and a half down the line.

"China has a 1000 of these high performance centers. The USA too have them in abundance. It is only fair our athletes have access to the best facilities to be able to compete with the best", says Bindra.

While the focus for TransStadia is in developing entertainment spaces revolving around sports, what could

be of interest to India's athletes is the sports rehabilitation centre housed in Rs 536-crore complex. The Arena has an avant-garde Centre which caters to injured athletes with an aim to provide medication and relief.

It also has a state-of-the-art mobile medical van with a team of specialised doctors who test and guide kids across the country, giving them insights into different sports best suited for them – an initiative that Sheth feels will revolutionize the science of sports in India. Couple this with Bindra's facility for assessment and training under one roof and India does seem to be making giant strides in the sports infrastructure realm.