



HMYAS Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya underscores the importance of quality coaching for India's sporting rise at NSNIS Patiala's "Grassroots to Greatness" conference

Developing good coaches as important as nurturing talent, say international experts

Two-day international conference titled "Grassroots to Greatness: Talent Identification and Athlete Development" began at SAI NSNIS Patiala on Friday with 600-plus participants

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International experts and academicians participating in the two-day international conference titled "Grassroots to Greatness: Talent Identification and Athlete Development" here at the Netaji Subhas National Institute of Sports (NSNIS) on Friday unequivocally emphasised the need for India to develop quality coaches to meet Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of being among the top-5 sporting nations in the world by 2047.

Talking about the initiative, Hon'ble Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya said: "We are proud to host the 2nd International Conference on "Grassroots to Greatness – Talent Identification & Athlete Development", continuing our commitment to sports excellence. India aims to become a global sports powerhouse. Initiatives like Khelo India are creating pathways for young athletes... Our focus is on grassroots development, sports infrastructure, and leveraging technology for athlete success. This conference brings together global experts to share best practices in talent identification, LTAD, and sports science integration."

NSNIS Patiala is the apex national institute for sports coaching and sports science education under the Sports Authority of India (SAI). The conference saw participation from 600-plus aspiring coaches, eminent athletes, sports scientists, administrators, academicians, and students, along with 30+ renowned national and international experts, making it one of the largest knowledge-sharing platforms in the field of sports development in the country.

The conference was declared open by Hari Ranjan Rao (IAS), Secretary (Sports), Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (MYAS) and Director General, SAI. Hari Ranjan Rao said that the Sports Ministry is "working tirelessly to create a robust sports ecosystem."

Prof. Nenad Trunic, Dean of Faculty of Physical Education & Management in Sport (Singidunum University, Serbia), expressed his excitement to participate in the elite conference: “I would like to thank the Sports Authority of India for inviting me to this conference in Patiala, it’s a great honour for me. It is a great opportunity for all of us to share information, exchange opinions and ideas with not only aspiring coaches but also the students and athletes entering the coaching domain. It also gives people like us the chance to provide solutions to the challenges faced by Indian coaches.”

FIBA basketball coach Richard Lee Brooks, who doubles up as the youth coach for the Slovakia national team, said that upskilling and imparting knowledge to the coaches is more important than just looking for talent as one child may have innate talent but how you nurture them and guide them is what will fetch medals at the international level.

“I generally used to coach the national teams but was also sometimes required to coach the youth teams, because what you guys call youth teams or grassroots team, we had none. So, we pretty much started from the top. Teach the coaches how to teach and brought the kids in. Indian basketball is growing now, obviously it’s a long road ahead. So, it is important how you teach your coaches. This is why such international conferences become so invaluable as they offer those insights, hitherto unknown,” Richard Lee Brooks told SAI Media.

Other prominent experts who participated in the conference were Farruh Ahmedov (Head of Scientific Department, Samarkand State University), Dr. Pinar Yaprak (Assistant Professor, Türkiye), Prof. Dr. Hanno Felder (Acting Director, Olympic Training Center) and Dr. Martin Toms (Associate Professor of Global Sport Education & Coaching, Birmingham University, UK).

Established on May 7, 1961, Netaji Subhash National Institute of Sports is Asia’s largest sports institute spread across 268 acres in Patiala. The institute has produced 17 Padma Shri, 12 Dronacharya, 17 Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna and 175 Arjuna awardees since its establishment.

“Patiala has been my second home in the last 15 years and it’s great to see the developments here. Conferences like “Grassroots to Greatness” are really important. To support the journey of any Indian athlete at any level we have to understand what goes behind creating those champions. Best part is that we have got trainees here who will go out and be the next generation of coaches and help identify talented athletes. That is crucial as we all want India to be at the top of the medals table,” Martin Toms told SAI Media.

Senior coaches and officials from the SAI interacted with the experts and also shared their practical experiences and strategic insights in identifying young talent, building long-term development pathways, and preparing athletes for international success.

Speaking on the occasion, Sarvjit Singh (IAS), Special Chief Secretary, Government of Punjab said: “Conferences like these are of utmost importance as it helps our coaches gain valuable knowledge about international best practices. Punjab Government’s sports budget used to be between Rs 250-300 Crore, now that has tripled to almost Rs 1000 Crore. We are upgrading about 3000 existing playgrounds at village panchayat levels with proper grass turf, watering system, toilets and change rooms etc. The number of coaches have also increased seven times from 350 to around 2300, with outstanding coaches immediately getting Government jobs, this shows how serious the State Government is about sports development.”

Ayushman Kumar

