



Foundation stone laid for SAI National Centre of Excellence in North Bengal's Coochbehar district

SAI Media

May 21, Coochbehar: Minister of State for Sports Shri. Nisith Pramanik and Minister of State for Railways Smt. Darshana Jardosh laid the foundation stone of the Sports Authority of India National Centre of Excellence in Coochbehar on Saturday. A Memorandum of Understanding was also signed between SAI and the Ministry of Railways on the occasion.

Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Shri Anurag Singh Thakur also joined the event virtually, alongside Tokyo Olympics medallists Neeraj Chopra and Lovlina Borgohain. Also in attendance during the occasion in Coochbehar included Tokyo Olympics silver medallist Ravi Kumar Dahiya, Men's hockey team players Manpreet Singh and Nilakanta Sharma, Women's hockey team players Salima Tete and Nikki Pradhan as well as North Bengal's very own local favourite heptathlon athlete Swapna Barman.

"Initiatives like Target Olympic Podium Scheme and Khelo India scheme has made it sure to do the best possible for athletes,' mentioned Shri Thakur. "Opening of this NCOE is another big step taken especially by Nisith Pramanik ji and Darshana ji. We wanted to make one of the best sporting facilities in North Bengal and today, the foundation stone has been laid. This will help over 1000 athletes get the training who will in return help India reach new heights in the sporting arena."



Expressing his delight while laying the foundation stone of this High Performance Centre, Shri Pramanik said, "Today is a historic day for the development of sports not just in North Bengal but also for India. I thank Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, whose vision made this sports hub possible here. In every region, from north to south and east to west, Modiji has been envisioning the overall development of sports. Before March 2024, we want to inaugurate the NCOE here in the presence of Shri Modi ji.

"We believe in positivity. There are numerous talents here. We want champions here across every nook and corner. Therefore, we are making available the best of infrastructure here. Let us work together to make the best of facilities for our future champions. We want to develop 10 more Khelo India Centres in North Bengal," added Shri Pramanik.

Tokyo Olympics gold medallist Neeraj Chopra asserted the role this NCOE will play in building more future champions. "When athletes are starting out, they need a lot of infrastructure facilities. When I started out, there weren't much facilities in my village, but things have changed now," mentioned Neeraj Chopra virtually during the event. "I thank Anurag sir, Nisith sir and Darshana ma'am for establishing the SAI centre. I wish this NCOE all the best and I hope that a lot of future champions emerge from this centre who will make our country proud."

The National Centre of Excellence will provide aspiring athletes of Coochbehar with excellent sporting facilities, besides providing top class coaching facilities covering 12 sports disciplines. NCOE Coochbehar also has a 100-bedded Hostel for athletes including Kitchen, Dining hall, a Recreational Zone, as well as a Residential Area for Staff. It also has both an Outdoor training area and Indoor Sporting facilities.



Tokyo Olympics silver medalist Ravi Kumar Dahiya mentioned this NCOE is a big step in developing grassroots athletes. "I want to thank both Railways and Govt of India. This is a massive step for developing grassroots athletes. Many athletes emerging from here will make the the country proud."

Boxer Lovlina Borgohain mentioned she is looking forward to visiting the centre soon. "A SAI NCOE in North Bengal is a fantastic opportunity for athletes. I myself am indebted to SAI for the role they played in my life when I started out with the SAI Guwahati center. If I can, I will really want to go to Coochbehar and meet the young athletes training in the NCOE," Lovlina said.

Manpreet Singh, captain of the Men's Hockey Team that won the bronze medal in Tokyo Olympics, emphasized the importance of the NCOE in modern sports. "I want to thank the Government for starting this NCOE in Coochbehar. There will be 12 sports disciplines featuring here, world class coaching facilities, best equipments, great facilities, and so on. This is very important in modern sports. The Khelo India scheme has also helped in awareness of sports across universities. There are many youngsters I've come across who are in national camps due to Khelo India. We're going in the right way."

Local favourite Swapna Barman said, "It's a big dream come true for sports in North Bengal and it has become a reality. I cannot thank the Government, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Indian Railways and Sports Authority of India more for this."

With the establishment of this centre, SAI will now have a total of 24 NCOEs across the country. The NCOEs impart specialized training to promising athletes by providing state of the art infrastructure and playing facilities, sports science support,



individualized diet prescribed by trained nutritionists and overall supervision under the best coaches, qualified support staff and High Performance Directors.

EOM