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MANMOHAN SINGH 1932-2024

QUIET. PERFORMER.



SILENT, SELFLESS AND STRONG

Manmohan Singh's legacy is not only one of economic and diplomatic achievements, but also of a leadership style rooted in dignity, respect and unwavering dedication to the nation

BY PANKAJ PACHAURI

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reams have been written about Dr Manmohan Singh's humility, intellect and self-effacing personality since his passing in the last week of 2024. A statesman who preferred quiet action over flamboyant rhetoric, Singh's leadership style stood in stark contrast to the grandstanding often associated with political figures. As a result, this strong personal trait was misunderstood and misinterpreted by many as an inherent weakness in contemporary politics and diplomacy, where leaders often seek to achieve an imaginary 'halo' even while performing mundane duties as heads of government or state. In contrast, Singh seldom courted personal glory or self-aggrandisement. There existed an impenetrable wall between his personal and public life, which led to many personal sacrifices during his tenure.

For 10 long years, the media and commentators speculated whether Singh



giant shuttlecock illuminates the night sky in Bhubaneswar. It is a new building, designed to look like a cork base.

Laser lights are beamed upwards from the terrace's perimeter at an angle to resemble feathers. This is Shuttle—a newly built badminton high-performance centre (HPC) inside the Kalinga Sports Complex. "It is an iconic infrastructure," says former All England champion Pullela Gopichand. "It says to Bhubaneswar that we are here." Shuttle by Dalmia Bharat Group was made possible through a collaboration with the Odisha government and the Pullela Gopichand Badminton Foundation.

In 2017 and 2018, the three entities came together with a shared vision to establish a state-of-the-art badminton facility in Bhubaneswar. With the Odisha government's commitment to making the state a premier sports destination, Dalmia Bharat Group's financial expertise and the Odisha government's tune of ₹75 crore corporate social responsibility initiatives—the dream was realised after years of dedicated effort.

Inaugurated by Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is also the president of the Badminton Association of India (BAI), on December 12, Shuttle is unlike any other badminton facility in the world. The stunning aesthetic of the centre is further enhanced by its outdoor landscape which features a walk of fame honouring the history and development of badminton in India. Additionally, there is an amphitheatre with seating for 200, and a reflective pool, adding to the visual charm of the structure.

The government of Odisha views the world-class facility as a pivotal moment for badminton development for the entire country. "Under the guidance of Pullela Gopichand,



It will serve as a hub for advanced coaching and talent grooming, thereby propelling badminton in Odisha and India to unprecedented heights.

Suryabanshi Suraj
minister of state for sports and youth services, Odisha

the centre will not only inspire budding players but also attract elite athletes," says Suryabanshi Suraj, the minister of state for sports and youth services, Odisha. "It will serve as a hub for advanced coaching and talent grooming, thereby propelling badminton in Odisha and India to unprecedented heights."

What truly sets the HPC apart is its expansive 77,000sqft of indoor space. Housing the Dalmia Bharat Pullela Gopichand Badminton Academy (DBPGBA), it features eight fully air-conditioned courts, where the badminton legend will strive to identify and develop the next generation of badminton champions. The courts, built to international standards, comply with Badminton World Federation requirements.

In addition to its courts, the HPC offers top-notch dormitory facilities for 36 players—22 boys and 14 girls—and a cafeteria that caters to their nutritional needs, all in the same building. The walls and furniture of the dormitories and cafeteria are painted in the Indian tricolour to inspire the young players. The walls also feature motivational quotes. The space has been thoughtfully designed to provide a supportive environment, helping the young

players train and grow while they are away from their families.

The Odisha government had invited corporate entities to contribute to developing sports facilities within the Kalinga complex. Dalmia Bharat chose to invest in badminton. "The objective is to sharpen the badminton talent further," says Puneet Dalmia, managing director, Dalmia Bharat. "We have seen many people not fully leveraging their talent because of the financial burden of getting training outside India." Shuttle also focuses on nurturing the mental and emotional well-being of athletes through a dedicated yoga and meditation centre. "We have adopted a holistic approach, because to perform at the top level in high-pressure situations, you don't just need talent but also a calm mind," says Dalmia.

The day-to-day operation of Shuttle will be overseen by Gopichand and his team. The DBPGBA will collaborate with the Odisha State Badminton Association and the Sports Authority of India to conduct trials. Additionally, they will also visit pockets of Odisha to scout young players. Suraj says talent identification programmes will be implemented at grassroots level