

In sports powerhouse Haryana, Mewat stands totally neglected

GOVERNMENT APATHY Districts like Mewat have no sports infrastructure while Haryana sports department spends 1 crore on minister's eight-member delegation junket to Rio

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MEWAT: The Haryana government spent around Rs. 1 crore to send a nine-member delegation to Rio, led by the state's sports minister Anil Vij. The money splurged on the trip could have been better used to develop grassroots sports infrastructure in the districts which have been under neglect for a long time now.

The plight of Mewat is a classic example of this apathy. The district, which was carved out of Faridabad and Gurgaon in 2005, is yet to get a basic sports stadium.

In the past decade, Haryana has risen in stature to become a sporting powerhouse in the country. The state has produced Olympic medalists as well as many international athletes and Olympians. But the government is yet to tap fully into the state's potential as a nursery for sporting champions. There are many areas where grassroots sports programmes have not reached, Mewat being one of them, despite its close proximity to the NCR.

It's been 11 years since the formation of Mewat but the government is yet to sanction and build a stadium. Till now, no land has been allotted at the district headquarters in Nuh.

The sports department office in Nuh runs from the first floor of a housing board flat with inadequate staff. There are seven coaches from different disciplines posted in the district but they neither have the support nor the infrastructure to run the coaching centres. In the last four years, the coaches have not received any consumable sports items or sports equipment, either.

"The government has always neglected Mewat," says Imran Khan, a resident of Nuh. "The authorities behave as though Mewat doesn't exist on the map of Haryana. What bigger proof of this than the fact that they have not built a single stadium here in 11 long years."

NON-FUNCTIONAL ATHLETICS ACADEMY



■ **Boxers training at the Nagina Tehsil in Mewat. The sports department has not provided a single pair of gloves to the centre. As most of the trainees are from poor families, they find it difficult to buy gloves on their own. (right) The rural stadium is in a bad shape.**

PHOTOS BY SAURABH DUGGAL

In December last year, the state sports department under its scheme named SPEED, opened an athletics nursery at Mewat Model School, Nuh.

Fifty seats were allotted to the academy, out of which five trainees were selected on the basis of a trial. They were supposed to get a monthly scholarship of Rs 1500.

But the players who were selected belonged to remote villages and none of them joined the academy. The 45 other athletes were supposed to be selected through an open trial. But till date no trials have been held and the academy has not started functioning.

BOXERS WITH NO GLOVES

In 2014, a boxing coach was posted in Mewat but the sports department has failed to provide a boxing ring. Last year, the coach finally started the centre at a small private school in Nagina which has a boxing ring provided by the education department.

But the sports department has not provided a single pair of gloves to the centre. As most of the trainees are from poor families,



they find it difficult to buy gloves on their own. They either train without gloves or share the one or two old pairs they have.

Despite such shortcomings, three of the centre's trainees have got medals in the state school meet and one got a chance to represent Haryana in the nationals.

A hockey and a gymnastics coach are also posted in Mewat, but without equipment or facilities for the disciplines.

ANTI-SOCIALS AT KHEL PARISARS

Mewat got six mini stadiums at the block level under the 'Rajiv Gandhi Khel Parisar' rural infrastructure development scheme.

The conditions of these stadiums are so bad that they have never been used for sporting activities. Instead, they have become hubs for anti-social elements.

The sports department has failed to maintain the khel parisars—caretakers have not been appointed and there is no

electricity. Despite repeated appeals seeking funds for maintaining the rural stadiums, the sports department has failed to take action.

"It is not that we don't have any sports culture in Mewat. Here in almost every village you will find a volleyball court and in some there are even two. In the evening it's totally jam packed. But what is missing is a proper coaching system and support from the government," says Mohamed Sayed from Katurpur village in Nagina block.

When asked about the neglect, sports minister Vij responded that Mewat is a priority for the department just like any other district. "For the first time in 11 years, a district sports officer (DSO) has been posted in Mewat. Now that the DSO is posted, he will monitor the sports there and in the coming months, things will be sorted out," added Vij.

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