

# Academy which produced Sakshi shut since July last year

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**CHANDIGARH:** The wrestling academy at Chotu Ram Stadium in Rohtak, which produced Rio Olympics bronze medallist Sakshi Malik, along with a dozen other international women wrestlers, was shut down in July last year by the Haryana sports department.

Sakshi, along with 17 other national and international wrestlers, were trainees of the academy when it was shut down.

Over the years, Rohtak has become the premier hub for women's wrestling in the country. The day boarding academy at the Chotu Ram Stadium has played a big role in it. Last year in April, the state sports department rolled out a circular to all its district sports officers asking them to stop all the nurseries and academies running across the state till July, as the department would be reviewing their results. But despite producing world-class wrestlers and many medalists (every fourth medallist in the women's section of the senior national championships last year was from the centre), the sports department has not restarted the wrestling academy.

Even when the academy was functioning, the facilities were



■ The wrestling centre wears a forlorn look.

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not up to the mark. In the name of gym, they just had a few loose weights and, for the last two years, the department had not procured or supplied any consumable sports items. The wrestling mats had also lived their life and were crying for replacement. This is not a one-off incident. The fate of all the 33 nurseries and 17 academies in the state is the same.

The Rohtak academy was part of the state government's sports excellence programme and, as per the day boarding scheme, the trainees were getting a monthly scholarship of ₹2000. In the residential academy scheme, the trainees were getting a daily diet allowance

of ₹150, along with sports equipment and other facilities.

"As most of the wrestlers, especially girls, hail from poor background, ₹2000 per month makes a huge difference in meeting dietary expenses and the likes. Since the closing of the academy in July last year, many girls are finding it very hard to sustain the training intensity without the money to maintain their diets," said international wrestler Neetu, who is hoping that the academy will restart soon.

The acclaimed Shahbad hockey nursery, which has the credit of producing about 40 international women hockey players, is also closed since July last year.