



Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports

The review of the National Sports Development Code came within days of the Supreme Court upholding the Lodha Committee recommendations in cricket, and former athletes' appeal to the Court to implement these reforms in other sports as well. This is yet another *crucial initiative taken up by Sports Minister Vijay Goel*, who is close to bringing sports onto the Concurrent List.

Until now, the minister has walked the talk—cracking the whip on errant sports federations, revamping the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), and getting the Indian Olympic Association to desist making tainted administrators Suresh Kalmadi and Abhay Chautala life presidents. Excerpts from an interview with THE WEEK: **The Sports Ministry has launched a number of initiatives under your watch. Which of these has been most satisfying?**

Every stakeholder is cooperating with us to promote sports, which I earlier thought there could be problems with. Now we have formed a committee to **review the National Sports Code**—to study and recommend as per recent developments, including Court judgments and *international best practices*. Within 15 days, we will finalise the reports and implement it. These recommendations require more accountability of federations. But, we respect their autonomy as well.

We have a team of bureaucrats and state sports ministers who are on same page. Most satisfying for me has been that whatever we try to do, we get a lot of cooperation. Most dissatisfying for me has been the judging of the ministry on basis of medals alone.

There is concern that the Sports Code under review will get diluted, especially on issues of public servants being disallowed to hold elected posts in federations.

We will bring out a code that will be acceptable to all national sports federations (NSFs).

But NSFs don't want any tenure cap.

But how can you say we are relaxing the tenure cap? Nothing will be done to cause a fight between NSFs and the Government. We will do everything in consultation.

What about ministers?

How many ministers are currently NSF heads? Politicians, too, have their good and bad qualities, and are resourceful. I do not agree that politicians should be left out of NSFs. Lodha Committee has not barred politicians from being part of sports bodies.

Are you under pressure to bring ministers in?

No. All those who know Vijay Goel know that *I never take any pressure from any one or from any quarter. I speak my mind.*

The recommendations are not yet finalised and out, how can you say it will be diluted? Age and tenure were brought in not to put a strict cap alone, but to ensure that people do not occupy posts for decades in sports federations. Personally, I have always spoken for politicians and MPs to come under age cap of 70 years, so that a politician will work now knowing he has only so much time to perform.

... My mind is clear—I will favour only what helps sports and its promotion.

States and sports on the Concurrent List?

We are very close to bringing sports on the Concurrent List. It is a matter of making a Cabinet note. Only one state disagreed. Tamil Nadu wasn't against the idea of bringing it on the Concurrent List, but it said the state is not yet ready to do so. We have had two conferences of state ministers, and a three-day workshop too. We are taking many initiatives, but these take time to give results. Be it me or the media, everybody wants to see results today. We are doing things differently. People are judging us only through medals. That is not fair. Medals are being won by sportspersons, it is their hard work.

I don't want everything in sports to be shrouded by secrecy. Sports has become so serious and competitive now. Where is the fun element? Our effort will be *to bring back the fun element in sports*

Are you happy with the budget allocation for sports?

I am satisfied with the 40 per cent increase in budget allocation. But no matter how much you increase, it will always be less for such a large country. As far as preparing international teams is concerned, we have never had shortage of funds. *Any individual athlete can walk in and meet me and discuss what they require.*

Your ministry has been strict with errant NSFs and asked them to fall in line.

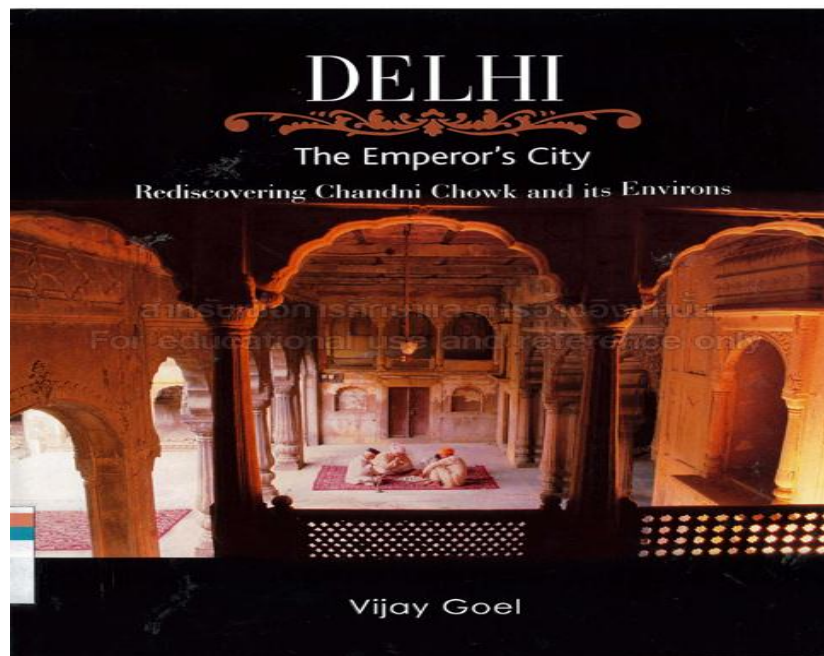
We are very clear that NSFs cannot flout the guidelines of the Ministry. We are now sending questionnaires to NSFs asking them to tell us how many national championships, international competitions each one has organised. But I am working as their Patron, I am not fighting with them. I told Anil Khanna of the AITA that he would be considered to be part of various Ministry committees as senior administrator, only if he follows the rules in tennis.

The Prime Minister's promised task force for Olympics has been set up. Will its brief overlap with work of TOPS?

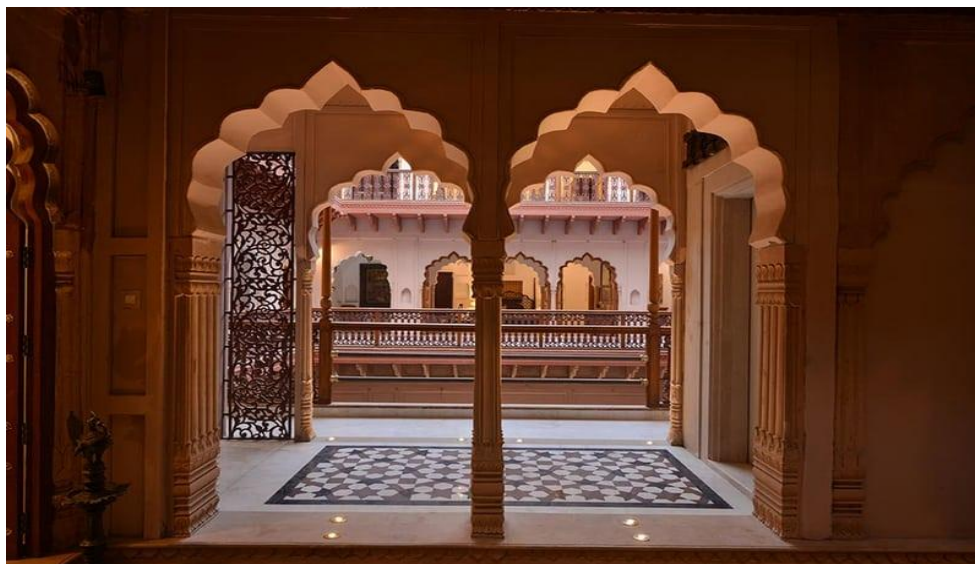
Please see the members who are part of the task force. Before deciding on this we spoke to all stakeholders. We met with Arjuna awardees, Khel Ratnas, etc. It was on the basis of their views that the task force came into being. We called meetings of NSFs, sports ministers and PSUs asking them to contribute to NSDFs.

You have revamped the TOPS scheme—there was an urgent need for the same, post the Rio Olympics.

We will decide where players are going to train in consultation with athletes. Earlier, officials would ask them where they wanted to go and train, and send them without reviewing their performances. We also decided we will not wait for a core group of probables to be formed. As and when one is identified we will start providing all facilities for his/her training.



*Vijay is one of DU's more dynamic student leaders since his DUSU days 1970s and proved a creatively - inclined conscientious Cabinet Minister as MoS in Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Cabinet 1999 -2004 . During his tenure as Parliamentarian representing Shahjahanabad he designed, developed and set in motion a major historicocultural restoration of the historic Chandni Chowk and its equally historic **galis** and **katras** .His book "Delhi: The Emperor's City " launched September 22, 2003 is among the best referents on Delhi 6, while his corporate restoration of **Haveli Dharampura** (2293 Gali Guliyani Dharampura Delhi 6 Tel: 011-23261000 , 011-23263000 , <info@havelidharampura.com> <reservations@havelidharampura.com>) is a notable business venture for Sustainable Tourism .*



Haveli Dharampura *Shahjahanabad*