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COL HIMMAT VERMA (Retd)

THE INDIAN ARMY VETERAN IN PURSUIT OF INDIA'S OLYMPIC GLORY

Kaushal Kumar | The CEO Magazine

India has participated in 28 Summer Olympics since 1900 and 20 times since gaining independence, yet the medal tally has rarely reflected the nation's capabilities, with fewer than 10 medals. With a population of over 65 crore under the age of 44, accounting for 18% of the world population, and the largest diaspora spread across 210 countries, India possesses enormous human resources. With topographical diversity and over 7,500 km of coastline, the country has all the ingredients to excel at the Olympics.

Every time our athletes take the field, we watch with bated breath, hoping for a medal. We witness flashes of brilliance and moments of triumph as they inch closer to glory, only for reality to strike, leaving near misses as all we have to celebrate. Our kids have fire in their bellies. They train under streetlights and dream of gold, but passion alone cannot bridge the gaps.

It is this very challenge that led to the creation of the 100 Medals Targeted Foundation, a registered NGO dedicated to identifying, mentoring, and empowering sporting talent across India. Founded by Col. Himmat Verma (Retd.) in 2021, the foundation aims to democratise sports development, provide world-class facilities, and nurture young athletes from all corners of the country with the ultimate goal of winning 100 medals for India at the 2028 Olympics.

COL. HIMMAT VERMA (RETD): DIRECTOR, 100 MEDALS TARGETED FOUNDATION

Col. Himmat Verma is a third-generation officer in the Indian Army. An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Indian Military Academy, and Indian Institute

of Management Kolkata, he is also a graduate of JNU and holds two postgraduate degrees. In the army, he excelled academically, qualifying for the Long Gunnery Staff Course and the Technical Staff Course through competitive departmental exams.

Col. Verma is a multi-faceted personality with achievements that are both enviable and rare. A voracious reader, sports enthusiast, and an emerging thought leader in sports development, he has contributed articles to newspapers on sports and is currently authoring a book on Paralympians. His passion for fitness and sports extends to squash, golf, running, and athletics, including a gold medal in basketball at NDA and a gold medal in sprinting with a timing of 10.56 seconds. He is also a qualified commando. Outside sports, he enjoys playing jazz drums, photography, and honing his culinary skills every weekend.

As the founder of the 100 Medals Targeted Foundation, a grassroots NGO, Col. Verma is driving a paradigm shift in India's sports ecosystem through various verticals. Col. Verma is a distinguished and accomplished individual whose work embodies his vision of creating opportunities and nurturing potential. Beyond his military career, he actively engages in social initiatives, particularly through sports, to uplift underprivileged communities and promote youth development, positioning his foundation as a strategic think tank for grassroots sports and inclusive talent development.

THE VISION BEHIND 100 MEDALS TARGETED FOUNDATION

India's underwhelming performance in the Olympics was the raison d'être for Col. Verma for starting the 100 Medals Targeted Foundation. "We are a vast nation with diverse topography and demographics, fulfilling the requirements for all body types and sports demands. Yet our performance has been abysmally poor. Parochialism, corruption, and lack of seriousness to win are major reasons. This had to be addressed, and hence we started



COL. HIMMAT VERMA (RETD)

Director - 100 Medals Targeted Foundation





the foundation. Our goal is not to change the existing system but to circumvent unnecessary red tapism, identify talent, and democratise the entire process,” he says. Registered under Section 8 of the Companies Act, the NGO, also known as SAU PADAK, aims to identify sporting talent among children from all sections of society. Col. Verma adds, “We want to make sports accessible in villages and encourage underprivileged children to take up sports by providing education, medical assistance, health check-ups, sports equipment, and infrastructure. Only then can true talent emerge in India.”

The foundation’s mission spans talent identification, mentorship and sponsorship for budding athletes, promotion of indoor and outdoor games, grassroots-level development, organising tournaments, and uplifting sports across the country. Its vision is bold: to achieve 100 medals for India at the 2028 Olympics. “The task is arduous, and there remain several unanswered questions, but this voyage is for the entire nation. With faith, patience, and dedication, we aim to transform India’s sporting culture,” says Col. Verma.

TEAM AND OPERATIONS

100 Medals Targeted Foundation focuses on creating an ecosystem that nurtures young athletes while staying transparent, accountable, and result-oriented. To turn this vision into reality, the foundation operates with a lean core team of 12 employees from Jaipur, ensuring that maximum resources are directed toward the promotion of sports. “Our modus operandi is to remain lean and minimise administrative heads so that more funds can be utilised for the promotion of sports,” explains Col. Verma. Execution and monitoring are managed through project managers appointed according to specific project requirements. The core team has been carefully selected, trained, and oriented, and has remained intact for the past four years. “Careful selection, training, orientation, and retention have been the mantra for having a motivated and engaged team,” he adds.

AGAINST THE ODDS

Running a not-for-profit hasn’t been without its share of tough battles. One of the biggest hurdles has been visibility.



“Social media marketing has occupied centre stage for every organisation,” says Col. Verma. “This has been a huge challenge because the army restricts or bans the use of smartphones, let alone social media. For someone like me, adapting to this new digital reality was not easy.”

Another major roadblock has been the perception of NGOs. “Unfortunately, NGOs are often considered shady organisations, and the CSR space is already very saturated. Getting grants, donations, and other philanthropic support is a herculean task, especially when you’re new in the field,” he explains. On top of that, funding cycles follow the classic egg-or-hen dilemma. People want to see results before supporting the mission, but results need funding to materialise. “How long can I sustain the NGO with my pension?” he asks, a question that reflects the struggle of many small but committed social ventures.

Yet, despite the odds, Col. Verma finds strength in his years spent in the army, including training at the National Defence Academy and the Indian Military Academy. “Those years trained you for life, not just the army,” he says. Under his leadership, the NGO has earned a reputation for financial prudence, transparency, and a result-oriented approach in a remarkably short span.

What also sets the foundation apart is its clear and focused mission. “Our core area of functioning is dedicated to

Olympic sports. The real advantages and benefits will be visible once we are fully operational, and that can happen any day now,” says Col. Verma.

WHAT SHAPES THE FOUNDATION

As the foundation works to transform India’s sporting landscape and chase the ambitious goal of 100 Olympic medals, its operations are guided by a set of core values that have remained constant over the years.

CORE PRINCIPLE

The core principles emphasize honest representation, truthful reporting, and ethical financial practices, ensuring clear communication about how funds are used. They involve taking responsibility for actions and outcomes, maintaining ethical accounting, and providing accurate donor reports. Organizations are expected to operate independently of any political party or agenda, focusing solely on humanitarian or development goals. They must uphold the dignity, rights, and confidentiality of the people they serve while conducting fundraising activities ethically and communicating transparently about how contributions will be utilized.

OPERATIONAL VALUES

The organization is committed to upholding universal principles and promoting social equity while fostering an inclusive environment that respects diverse perspectives and

backgrounds. It values understanding and respecting local cultures and traditions in all its operations and ensures strict adherence to national regulations and legal requirements within India. Guided by a strong sense of public-mindedness, the organization acts with the public’s interest at heart, focusing on the broader well-being of society.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

The organisation’s culture is rooted in a dedication to serving others and making a positive difference in society. It upholds a clear vision and mission that align with its core values, ensuring purposeful and value-driven actions. The organisation engages in responsible advocacy for its cause while maintaining independence and focus. Furthermore, it fosters practices and a culture that promote long-term effectiveness, sustainability, and the overall viability of the NGO.

RECOGNITION AND VALIDATION

For the 100 Medals Targeted Foundation, success is defined by the adherence to the core principles of the organisation. “Success for us means ensuring that every process, from talent identification to mentorship, is foolproof and flawless, thereby validating the systems we have built,” says Col. Verma. The foundation also measures success by the trust it earns from corporates, philanthropists, and government agencies, which enables the execution of long-term programs for sports development across India.

Inclusivity is central to this vision. Success includes making meaningful contributions to the sports ecosystem with a focus on specially abled citizens, gender equality, and rural India, while ultimately working to radically improve India’s medal tally at the Olympics.

The foundation’s journey, though deliberate and steady, has already seen notable milestones. Top brands such as CK Birla, AU Bank, Kedia Builders and Colonisers, Hindustan Salt, and Callaway have sponsored its events—an achievement that highlights growing confidence in its mission. In October 2024, the Indian Army ADGPI acknowledged the foundation’s talent identification golf tournament in Jaipur through a tweet, further validating its efforts. Recently, the organisation was awarded the Certificate of Achievement by Brandcouncil Ratings, Ranking, and Research as a ‘Future Brand in Focus’.

Every initiative undertaken by the foundation has received an encouraging response from the community, and social media feedback has become an informal but meaningful measure of impact. These milestones, combined with its mission-driven approach, continue to guide the NGO as it works toward transforming India’s sporting landscape.



THE ROAD AHEAD

The most important work for the 100 Medals Targeted Foundation right now is on project reports that can create an impact on India’s medal prospects in the shortest span of time. “This will help us establish our credibility even faster,” says Col. Verma. At the same time, the foundation is exploring how to achieve the target of 100 medals with the least effort and optimal use of resources.

Looking ahead, Col. Verma sees immense potential in the sports industry. He says, “Sports is one of the fastest-growing industries with a market potential of 600 billion. As a nation, I think we have not even started. Hence, the scope is immense.” He adds that once the desired impetus is received from the government, one recent example being the reduction of GST on sports goods to 5 per cent, sports in India is bound to grow, even organically.

BE THE CHANGE

When asked what advice he would give to those starting in the industry or considering their own initiatives, Col. Verma extends an open invitation to anyone passionate about transforming India’s sporting landscape. “The more the merrier,” he says. *“The more people who join this mission, the faster India will reach its target of 100 Olympic medals.”* His words serve as both encouragement and a call to action, inviting corporates, philanthropists, and individuals alike to contribute to a movement dedicated to redefining the nation’s sporting future.