Sub: Visit to Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) from August 04-12, 2016

I visited Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) from August 04-12, 2016 to witness Summer Olympics-2016. During my week-long stay, I had the opportunity to visit a number of venues; on an average, 2 events a day. I spent maximum time on witnessing the events in which India participated, including Hockey matches of Men & Women, and a few matches each in the disciplines of Badminton, Lawn Tennis, Rowing and Shooting.

2. I was unable to witness the events in Wrestling and Athletics, which were held in the latter part, but witnessed most of the India specific events on return on television through live telecast.

3. Notwithstanding the disappointment in terms of medal tally, I would like to place on record that there has been some progression in our performance across certain disciplines, which include Archery, Badminton, Gymnastics, Hockey (Men & Women), Rowing and Lawn Tennis. In Shooting, Athletics, Wrestling and Boxing, there has been mixed performance. Some of the highlights in Athletics are the performance of Lalita Shivaji Babar in 3000m Steeplechase and that of Manish Rawat in Race Walk (20 KM) and T. Gopi and Kheta Ram in Men's Marathon. However, the performance in 4x400m Relay, both Men & Women, was disappointing to say the least and so was our performance in 400m and 800m Racing.

4. Some of my broad observations on the performance are as under :-

   i. Overall, there has been some element of progression in terms of performance level in certain disciplines, but the same has been negated by the regression in terms of medal tally.

   ii. The medal uncertainty was on account of negligible presence in measurable sports. Even though, Shooting and Archery also come under measurable sports, unlike Athletics, Swimming, etc., the performance here lacks in consistency. So much so that even if the finalists in an event are made to shoot in back to back events, the results are likely to differ in each event.

   iii. There were some near misses in events like 10m Air Rifle (Men), Vaults (Gymnastics) and Lawn Tennis.

   iv. There were some difficult draws, especially in Boxing, where two of the boxers lost to eventual Gold medalists and one to an eventual Silver medalist.
v. Some athletes showed physical fitness issues, which is certainly a matter of concern and reflects on inadequate monitoring.

vi. Some athletes performed below par in terms of personal best, which again is a matter of serious concern.

5. The lacklustre performance of the Indian contingent certainly requires deep introspection and remedial measures. While we do need to make some changes, but they do not necessarily require to be very radical changes. Many good steps have been taken in the past few years such as liberal funding norms, introduction of TOPS, setting up of Mission Olympic Cell, etc. These were steps in the right direction, but may require more gestation period before they can produce concrete results. In some areas, some streamlining is required.

6. A few of the issues that need to be looked at closely are listed below:

i. Greater emphasis on integration of sports sciences with coaching and monitoring.

ii. Performance of coaches, especially foreign coaches, needs to be evaluated very minutely.

iii. Hiring of foreign coaches should be done very carefully based on strong and proven track record.

iv. Coaching development also needs special attention.

v. High performance coaches and support staff should be identified in advance for each discipline and they should also be given greater exposure for updating their knowledge.

vi. National coaching camps should be outcome-specific and should not be held in a routine manner. It may be better to hold national camps in a staggered way rather than continuously throughout the year.

vii. Last but no least, budget should be enhanced. For example, given that 6-8 months, the weather conditions are hot and humid, we need some good indoor facilities for athletics, apart from high altitude centres.

7. We need to have a long-term approach and prepare / implement plans on a project / mission mode. I suggest a 3-pronged strategy for Olympic preparations:

   a) A set of sports disciplines may be identified where we have very little presence and the objective is of participation in Olympics through qualification. These could include disciplines like Swimming, Triathlon, Fencing, Judo, Taekwondo, etc. The idea should be to raise our standard so as to be able to compete at the Olympics. There would be no medal hope in this category barring some freak performances, if any.
b) The next category should consist of such disciplines where our effort would be on progression. In other words, in these disciplines, our goal would be to perform better such as reaching Quarter-finals, Semi-finals, Finals level, and to be within Top 8 / Top 16 positions. Athletics is one major discipline here. Here again, a medal or two may come, but that will not be the primary focus.

c) The final category would be medal focused disciplines. These cannot be more than 4 to 6 disciplines. Here, our effort would be to have a strong bench-strength to minimize the uncertainty in medals. Most countries with strong sports achievements have such specialized approach. For example, Japan, which figures in the Top 10 in medal tally (6th position), gets bulk of its medals from Wrestling, Judo and Swimming; South Korea (8th position) from Archery and Taekwondo. Uzbekistan (21st position) gets bulk of its medals from Boxing, Wrestling and Judo; Iran (25th position) gets bulk of its medals from Wrestling and Weightlifting. Similarly, Cuba gets it from Boxing and Wrestling. In these disciplines, we must ensure that our facilities on par with the best in the world, the athletes are given the best in terms of training and exposure. Most importantly, we need to have the highest level of sports science support and physical fitness.

8. Above all, it is necessary to have permanent institutionalized structure for Olympics and separate projects for each of the medal focused disciplines. SAI proposes to prepare a detailed strategy paper on these lines.

\[Signature\]

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30.08.2016

To
1) Secretary (Sports), MYAS
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3) OSD to MOS (I/C), YA&S

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