

# On the mark with dream project

*Olympian Joydeep Karmakar Sets Up State-Of-The-Art Range At New Town School To Promote Shooting At The Grassroots Level*

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**Kolkata:** Tucked away in a remote area, far away from the hustle-bustle of New Town and perched on the fifth floor of a new-age school building, quietly rests Olympian Joydeep Karmakar's dream project—a sprawling state-of-the-art shooting range. The peace and tranquil is broken only by the sound of shots fired by five young shooters engaged in target practice. "Keep it up," yells Karmakar as the likes of Mehula, Arnisha and Jasim Ahmed, clad in shooting kit, checked their respective scores.

"This is my dream," says Joydeep, looking around the hall with a sense of satisfaction. "This is the best shooting range in the city, or may be, in the state. I've personally overseen its installation. From designing to colouring to arranging lights, everything has been put in place to meet Olympic standards," he said during an exclusive chat with the TOI.

"Shooting is one sport in which India has been producing champions at the international level quite consistently. However, even though other states have made rapid progress, Bengal and eastern India continues to lag behind in shooting. That's why, I'm trying to reach the grassroots through schools," pointed out the 36-year-old, who finished fourth in the London Games four years ago.

Joydeep, who was keen to take another shot at an Olympic medal, was plagued by in-

juries. He was forced to take a break. As a result, his qualification hopes for Rio went up in smoke. Putting that disappointment behind, Joydeep was left with time to ponder his future and started working on setting up his dream academy. In December last year, the Sports Authority of India (Eastern Region) allowed him to turn one of their godowns into a shooting range.

"I always wanted to set up a shooting range in the city, so, I'm indebted to the SAI regional director (Manmeet Singh Goindi) for giving me a platform to realize my dream. However, my emotional attachment with this new range is getting stronger with each passing day," Joydeep maintained.

"Shooting is essentially an urban sport. If you become a national champion in shooting, it means you have the potential to win international competitions as well. So it makes sense to get students interested in the game," he said.

"Shooting has given me name and fame. Now I would like to return something to the game," he added.

Joydeep's task became easier when West Bengal Rifle Association last year nominated him as the director of its school programme. The New Town School project is the first under this new venture. Similar facilities will be set up in more schools, he assures.

New Town School CEO Vineet Kansal is quite happy to see the venture evincing interest among youngsters. "As part of our curriculum, we have decided to focus on sports like shooting which gives kids an opportunity to taste success at international level. We have got tremendous response from the students and we are now in the process of screening the most promising boys and girls so that we can groom them properly," Kansal said.

Joydeep echoed Kansal's sentiment. "There are quite a few shooting clubs/facilities in the state. But in most cases,



**SHOOTING FOR A CAUSE:** Joydeep Karmakar keeps a close watch on his students during a training session. Pic below: The shooting range at the New Town School



their activities are limited to only shooting, but not training. Shooting is more about mental focus and fitness. It even helps one get rid of attention deficiency disorder. Unless you are adequately trained, you can't sustain success internationally," he said.

Among his current pupils are his son Adrian and current Cricket Association of Bengal's joint-secretary Abhishek Dalmiya's wife, Koeli. "Koeli's is a remarkable story. A home-maker till six months back, she has shown immense potential and won gold in the West

Bengal Open Air Weapon Shooting Championships held last month. She has the potential to make it big," Joydeep said.

With his academy now in full swing and involvement in setting up other facilities at schools, does this mean the end of Joydeep the competitor

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**Joydeep Karmakar**

at international meets?

He shakes his head. "I have had to devote a lot of my time in developing the game in the state. But the competitor in me is very much alive. Come the next Olympics (Tokyo in 2020), I'll be there to take another shot at glory," he signed off.

Pics: Pradip Datta