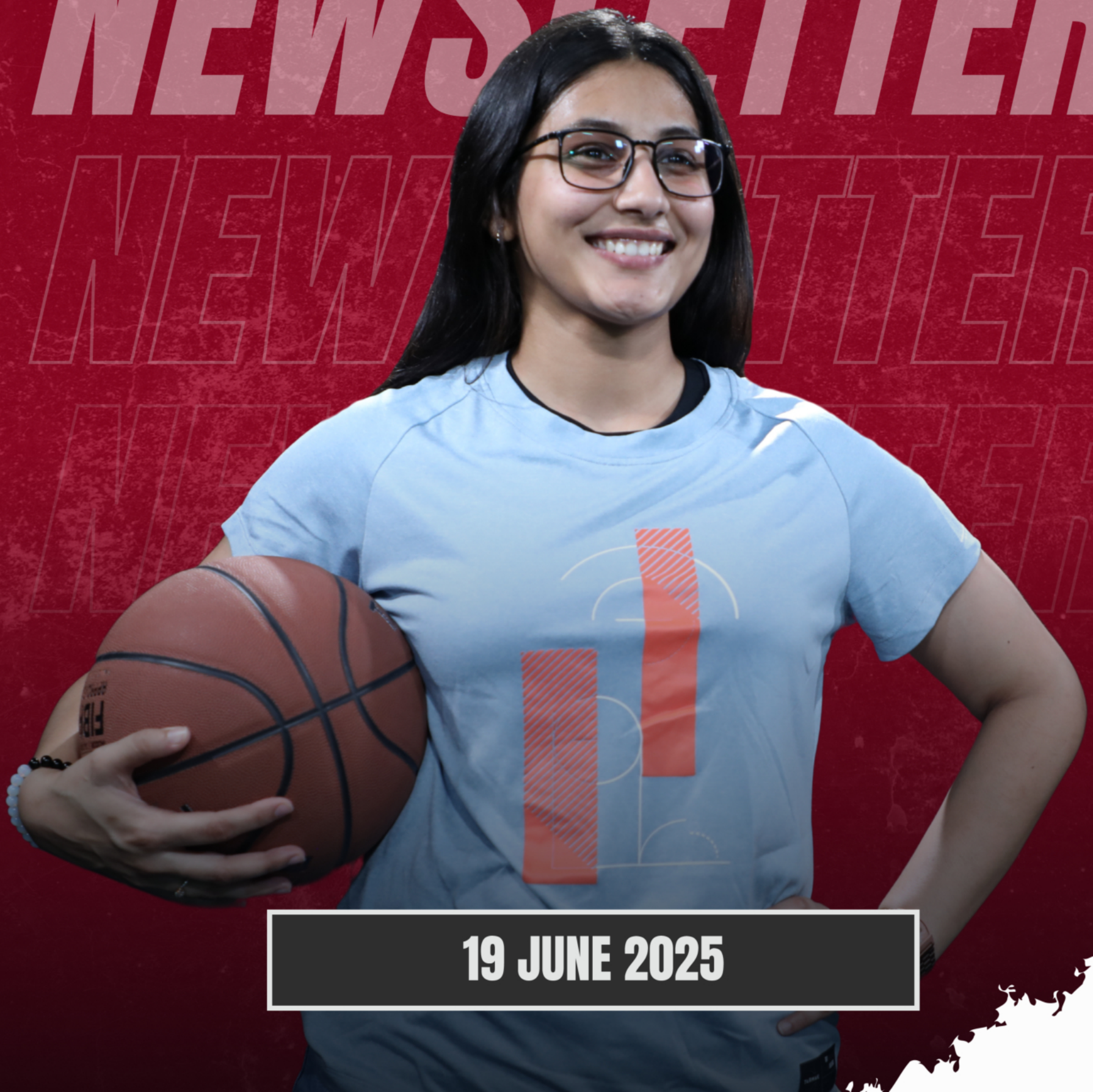
Jio Institute
LEARNING FOR LIFE

Newsletter 2025 | Volume XI
Special Edition

SPORTS CONCLAVE

NEWSLETTER



19 JUNE 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

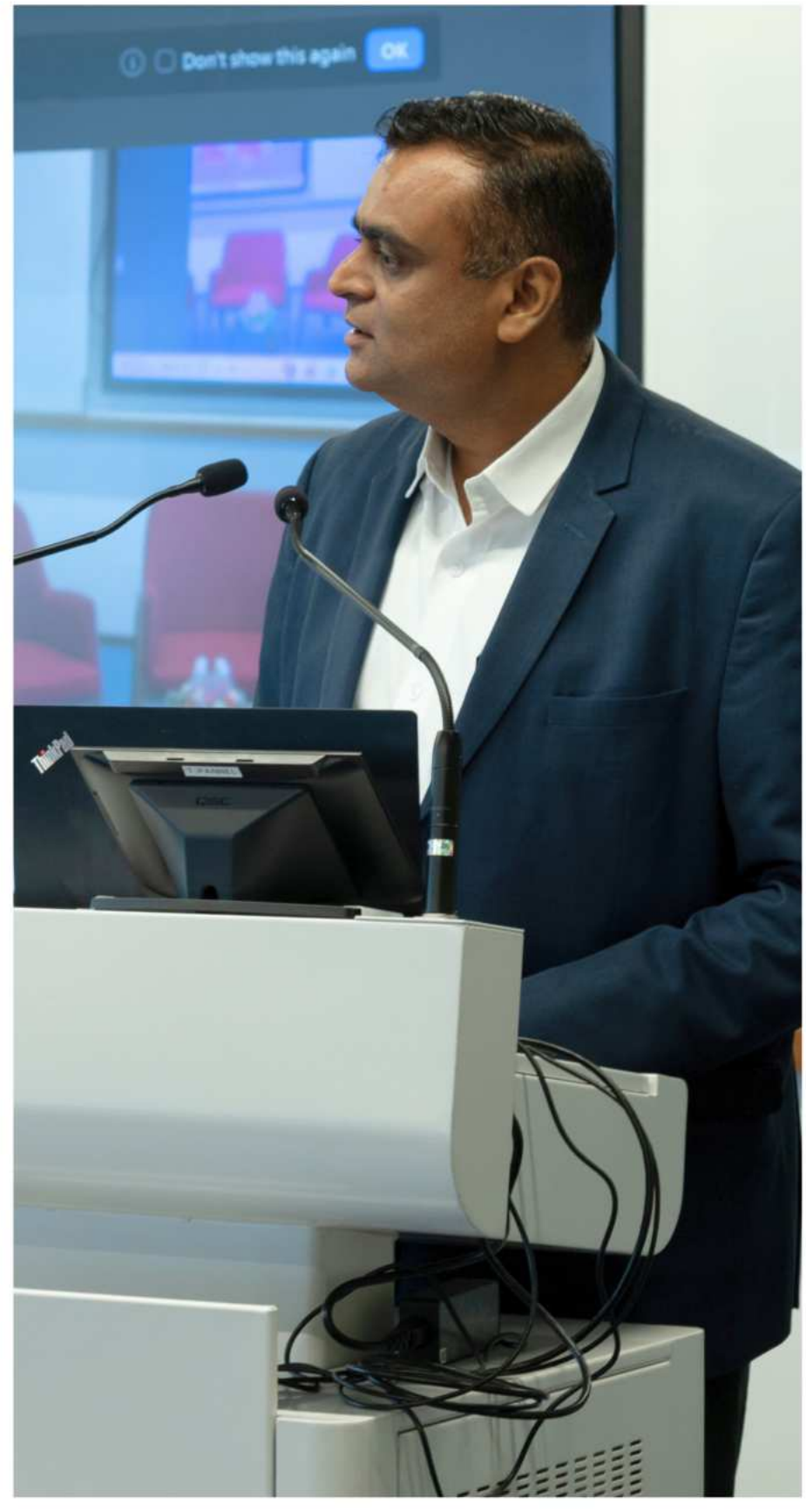
The Sports Conclave organized by Jio Institute featured two comprehensive panels examining critical aspects of India's evolving sports ecosystem. The event brought together industry leaders, former athletes, technology experts, and policy advocates to discuss how technology can transform Indian sports and address the career transition challenges faced by athletes. With the global sports tech market projected to reach **$40 billion** by 2027 and wearable technology already demonstrating **a 30% reduction in sports injuries**, the discussions provided valuable insights into the future of sports in India.

WELCOME ADDRESS

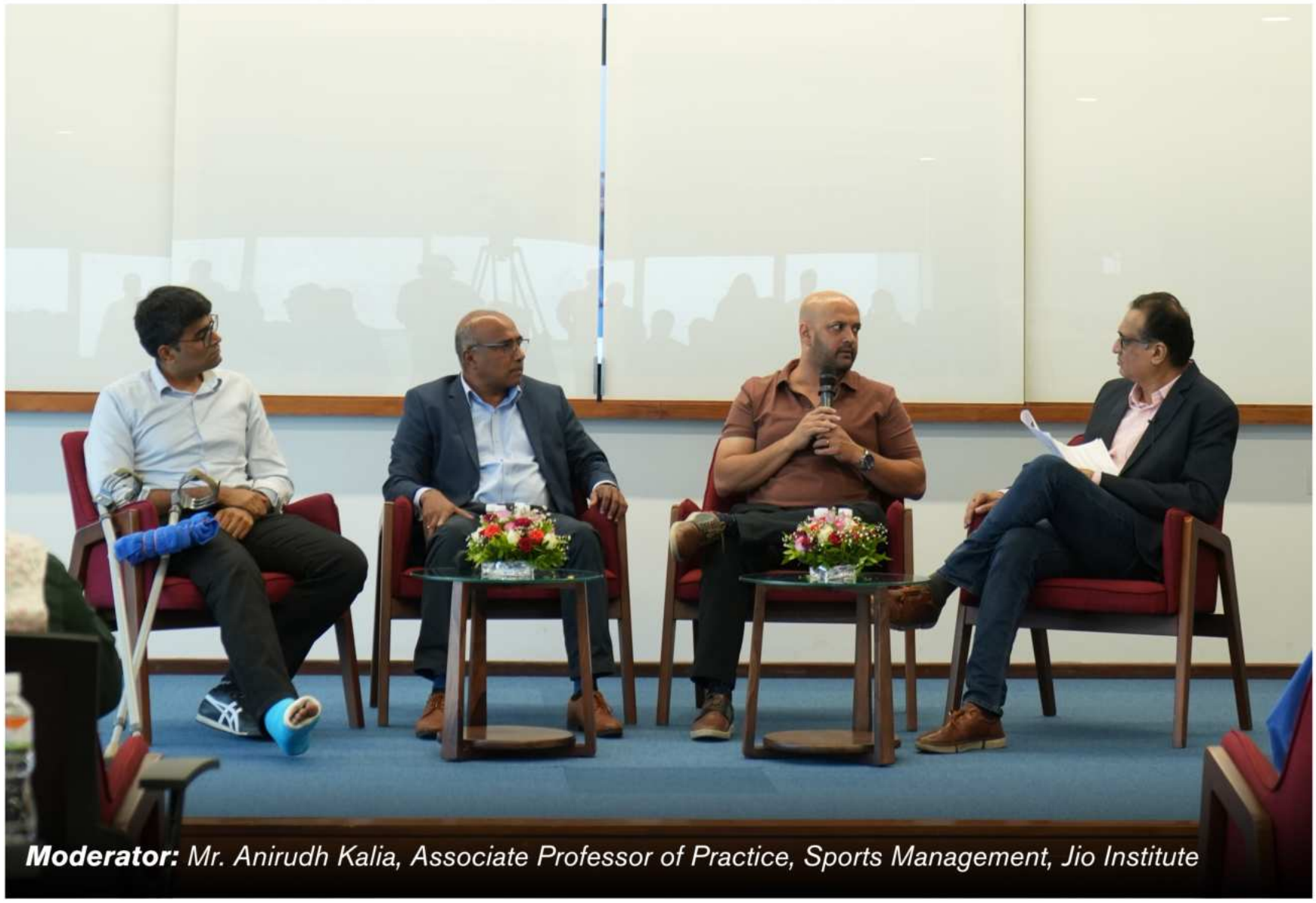
Dr. Palak Sheth, Project Director, delivered the welcome address, highlighting the vision of Founder Chairperson Mrs. Nita Ambani in fostering India's sports ecosystem and advocating for the country's growth in sports events. He emphasized: "*Transform India as a sporting nation" and "celebrate the progress and imagine the future together.*" The address showcased the Institute's achievements, including hosting India's leading high-performance athletics center, featuring elite athletes like Jyothi Yarraji (Olympian-Hurdles), Amlan Borgohain (Sprinter), and Gurvinder (Sprinter) through the Elite Athlete Academy in partnership with RFYS.

A significant milestone highlighted was the **100% placement record** of the recent batch of **16 students** across **13 companies** in various roles, with recruiters including KPMG, Olympic Gold Quest, Grant Thornton, PwC, Dream11, Dani Foundation, SportzInteractive, GoSports, SportsGurukul, FC Madras, ITW Consulting & Sports Village, amongst others. The Institute's comprehensive and industry-oriented approach for curriculum design aims to include sports analytics and AI, sports governance and leadership, and sports digital marketing as core aspects of the one-year, full-time and residential PGP in Sports Management.

The welcome address also noted the Institute's contribution to community sports, having trained over **700 district**, state, and national level sports personnel at their campus, including hosting events like the U-14 girls cricket tournament and hammer throw nationals.



PANEL 1: ——— TECHNOLOGY AS THE LEVER FOR TRANSFORMING INDIAN SPORTS



Moderator: *Mr. Anirudh Kalia, Associate Professor of Practice, Sports Management, Jio Institute*

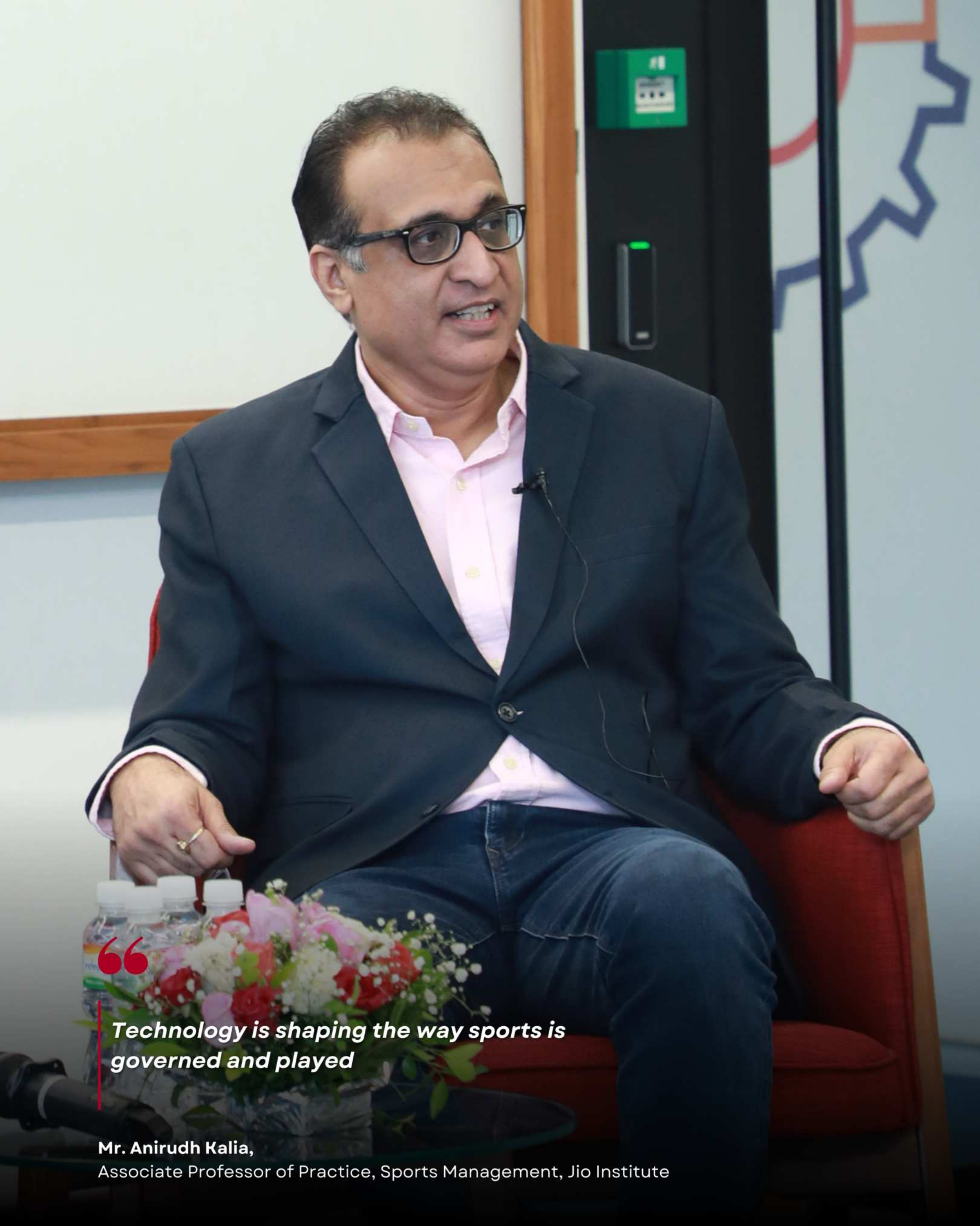
PANELISTS:

1. **Mr. Viren Rasquinha**
   Managing Director & CEO, Olympic Gold Quest | Former Captain, Indian Hockey Team
2. **Mr. Prasanth Shanthakumaran**
   Partner & Head, Digital Engineering and Quality & Sports Sector Leader, KPMG
3. **Mr. Sidhhant Agarwal**
   Founder and CEO of SportVot

OPENING CONTEXT

Mr. Anirudh Kalia opened the panel with a compelling example from the Olympics, noting how all the 100-meter finalists at the Paris Olympics achieved sub-10-second times, with the top two clocking an identical 9.79 seconds. The winner was determined using an Omega camera with **40,000 frames per second**, illustrating his key observation: *"Technology is shaping the way sports is governed and played."*

Mr. Anirudh framed the discussion around *"the aspirations yet cultural issues around sports adoption"* in India, setting the stage for an in-depth exploration of technology's role in addressing these challenges.



Technology is shaping the way sports is governed and played

Mr. Anirudh Kalia,
Associate Professor of Practice, Sports Management, Jio Institute

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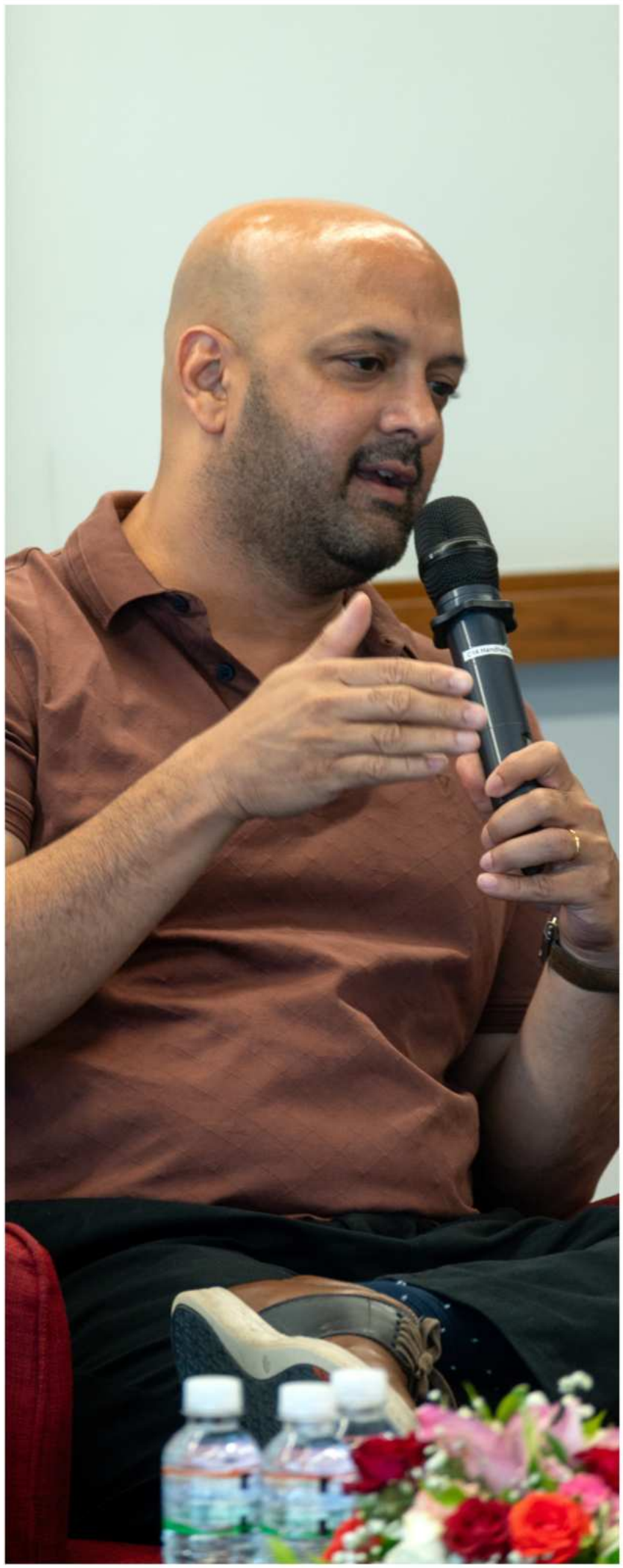


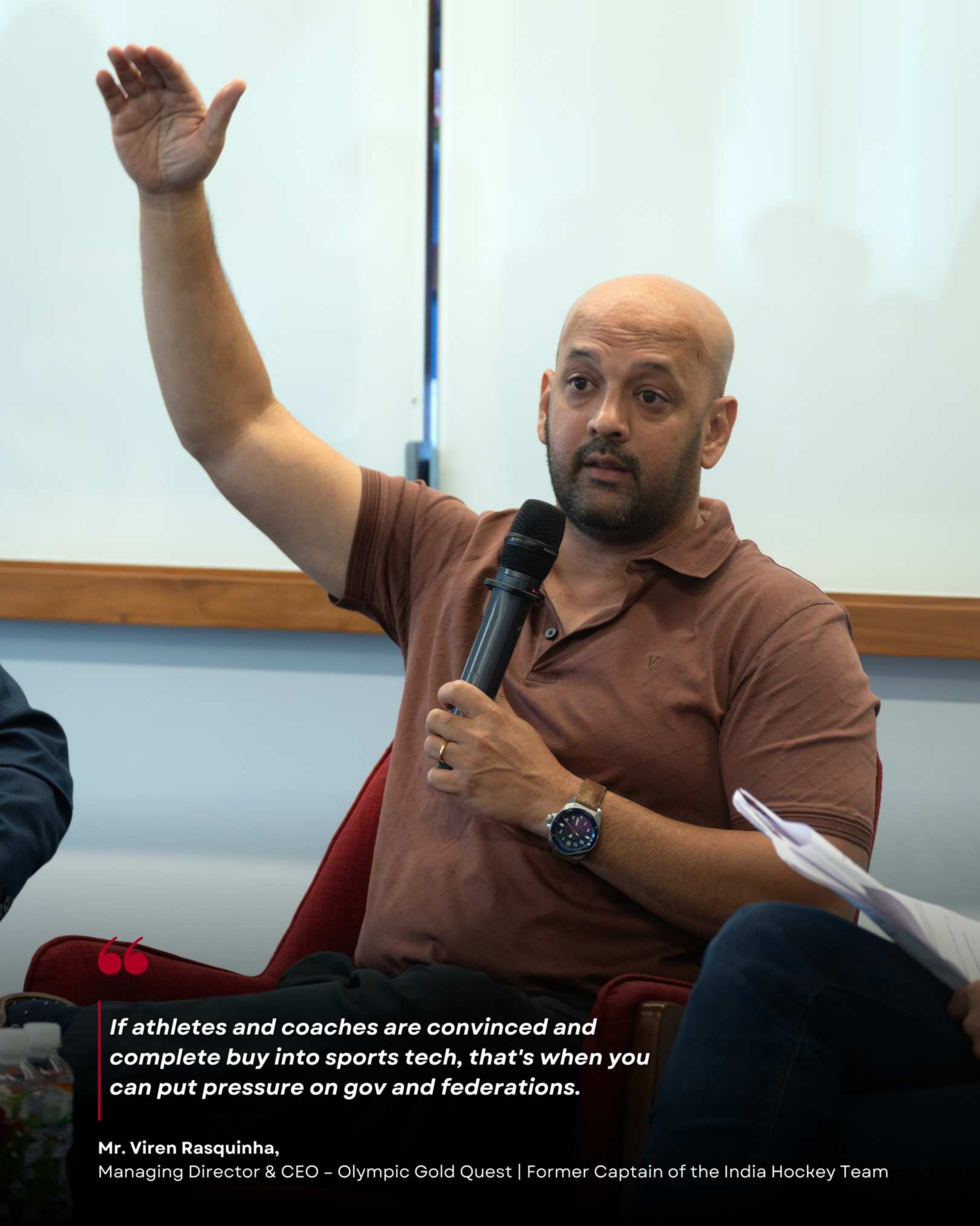
VIREN RASQUINHA: EARLY TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION AND EVOLUTION

Mr. Viren Rasquinha provided valuable historical perspective on technology adoption in Indian sports, describing the current state as *"very nascent"*, drawing on the fact that only four years worth of significant technological progress has happened since the 1990s.

HISTORICAL MILESTONES IN SPORTS TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Viren shared two pivotal moments in his technology exposure:

- **2002 Hockey World Cup Innovation:** The first for him, occurred during the 2002 Hockey World Cup in Kuala Lumpur, where Rick Chrisworth collaborated with Australian technicians to develop lightweight, sleeveless ice jackets. These innovative cooling devices allowed Australian hockey players to regulate body temperature during the brief 1-3 minute rolling substitutions, demonstrating early practical applications of sports science technology.
- **2004 Video Analysis Revolution:** Around 2004, teams began implementing video analysis for penalty corner strategies in hockey, enabling real-time information gathering and tactical adjustments. Mr. Viren contrasted Indian and Western approaches to video analysis, noting that while Indian teams would watch entire games, Western leagues focused on sharp, concise 90-second analysis segments with specific, actionable insights.



If athletes and coaches are convinced and complete buy into sports tech, that's when you can put pressure on gov and federations.

Mr. Viren Rasquinha,
Managing Director & CEO – Olympic Gold Quest | Former Captain of the India Hockey Team

PANEL 1: ——— TECHNOLOGY AS THE LEVER FOR TRANSFORMING INDIAN SPORTS

CURRENT TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS

Mr. Viren highlighted the widespread adoption of wearable technology in modern hockey, where every team member uses heart-rate monitors to track multiple performance indicators including sleep quality and quantity, fatigue levels, and hydration status. This comprehensive monitoring has proven crucial because inadequate sleep exponentially increases injury probability, giving coaches and trainers unprecedented visibility to make informed training decisions.

He shared a specific example of a Paris Paralympic gold medalist badminton player whose heart rate during training was significantly lower than during competitive third sets, leading to targeted training adjustments that ultimately contributed to medal success.

DATA ANALYSIS CHALLENGES

Mr. Viren emphasized the critical importance of understanding who analyzes data and their level of expertise. He cautioned against simplistic metrics, using the example of Messi's relatively low pass percentage, which fails to account for the higher risks he takes that often result in assists or goals. As he noted: ***"Using pass-percentage data is not the right way. Messi's is very low, but he takes higher number of risks with passing, often resulting in assists or goals."*** This sophisticated understanding of data interpretation is essential for meaningful performance improvement.

VARAD SONAVANI
Emcee, PGP Co'26, Sports Management

TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION PREREQUISITES

A key insight from Mr. Viren concerned the necessity of athlete and coach buy-in for successful technology implementation. He noted that **95% of Olympic Gold Quest's 430 elite young athletes** come from non-metropolitan, smaller cities with limited educational backgrounds. These athletes require training and sensitization toward technology adoption, making it unfair to simply label coaches as averse to technology without providing proper education and support. As he emphasized: *"If athletes and coaches are convinced and complete buy-in for sports tech, that's when you can put pressure on gov and federations."*

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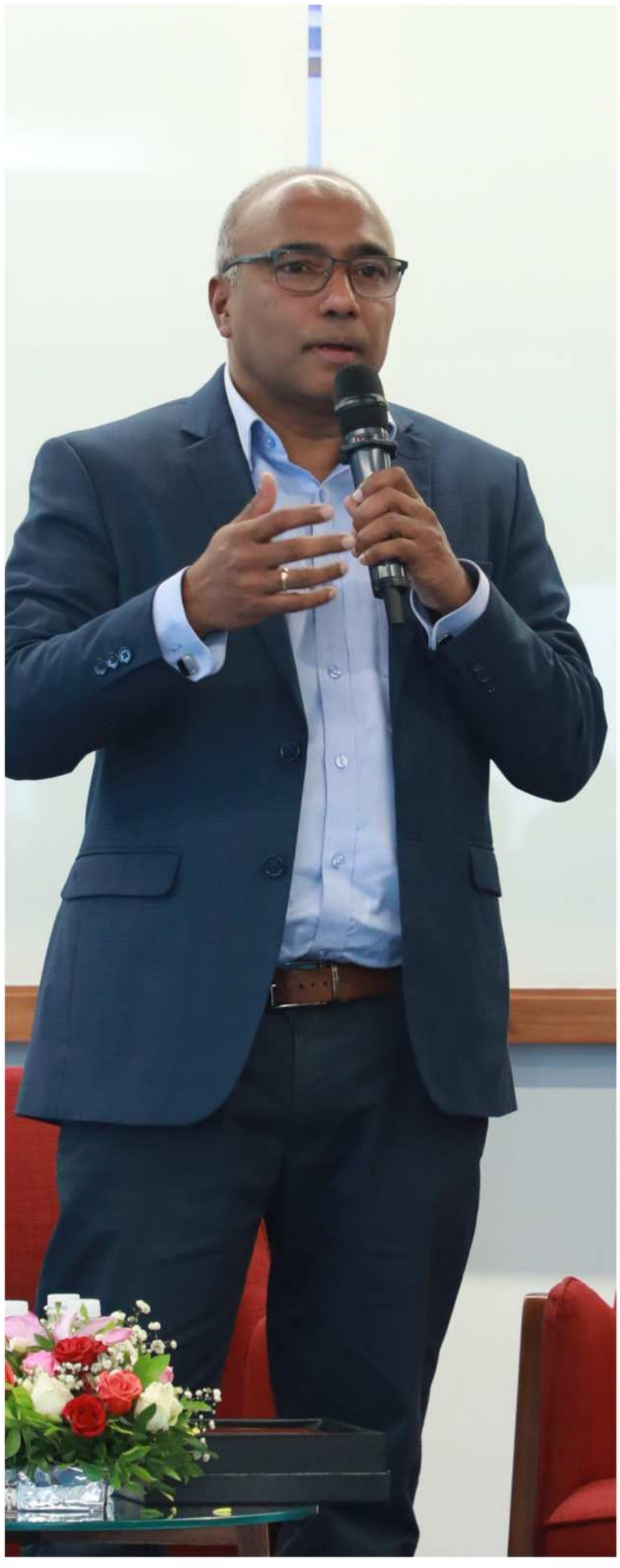


PRASANTH SHANTHAKUMARAN: INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE AND MARKET ANALYSIS

Mr. Prasanth Shanthakumaran provided comprehensive industry analysis, revealing that India's sports industry is valued at **$30 billion** with 15% annual growth, while the sports technology sector represents $2.7-3 billion and is growing at an even faster pace.

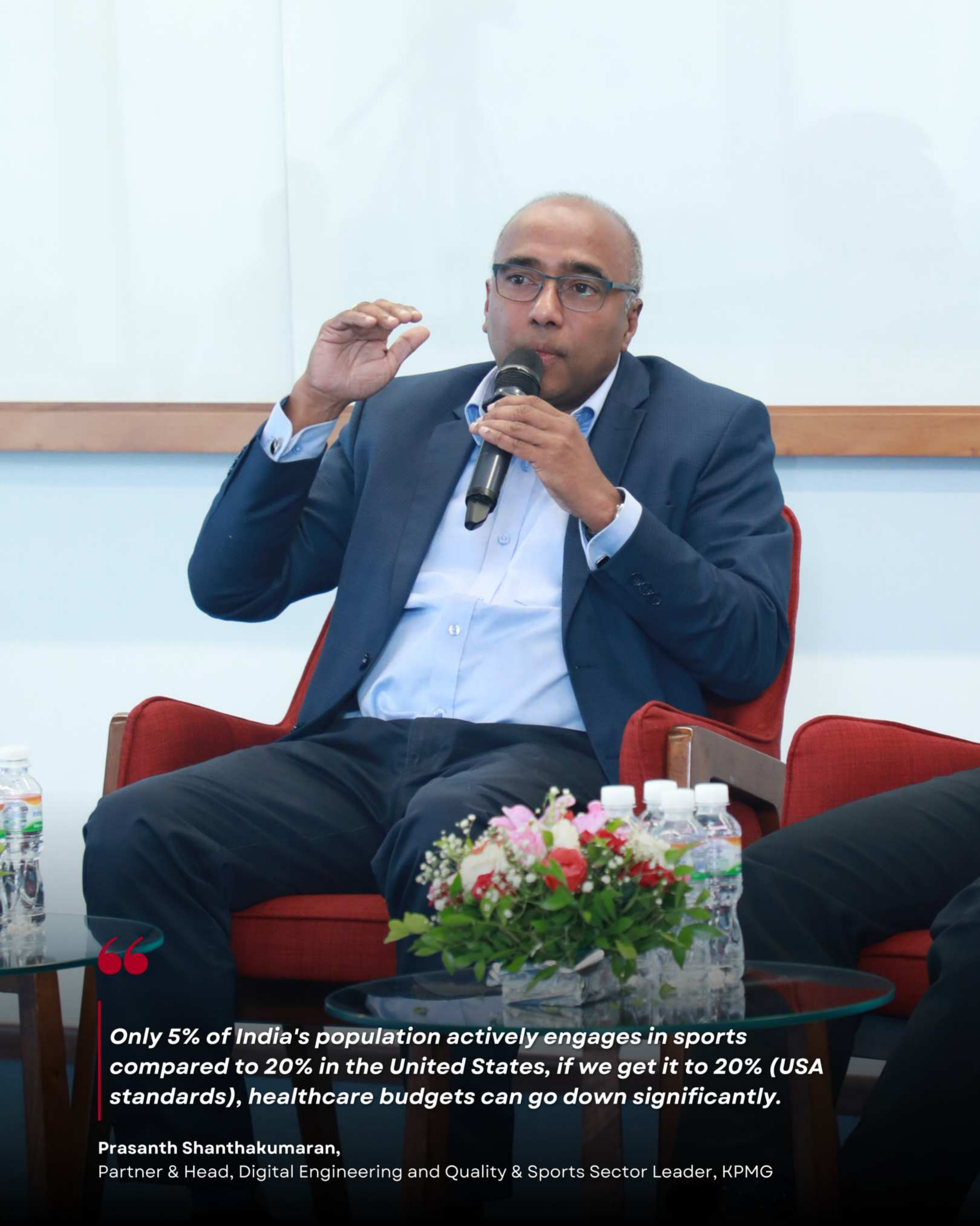
FOUR PILLARS OF SPORTS TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Prasanth outlined four critical areas of sports technology application:

- **Management and Fan Engagement:** Including ticketing systems, fan interaction platforms, and audience engagement tools, including in broadcast
- **Core Sports Technology:** Featuring advanced systems like Hawk-Eye, Decision Review System (DRS), and Video Assistant Referee (VAR)
- **Sports Science and Personal Technology Usage:** Encompassing wearable devices, performance monitoring, and health tracking
- **Data Analytics:** Serving as the foundational underpinning for all other technology applications

MARKET DOMINANCE AND GROWTH CHALLENGES

A significant challenge identified was India's heavy cricket dominance, with 85% of sports revenues generated from cricket alone. This concentration limits diversification opportunities and investment in other sports technologies, as well as limited budgets for other sports federations.



Only 5% of India's population actively engages in sports compared to 20% in the United States, if we get it to 20% (USA standards), healthcare budgets can go down significantly.

Prasanth Shanthakumaran,
Partner & Head, Digital Engineering and Quality & Sports Sector Leader, KPMG

PANEL 1: ——— TECHNOLOGY AS THE LEVER FOR TRANSFORMING INDIAN SPORTS

HEALTHCARE AND SPORTS PARTICIPATION CONNECTION

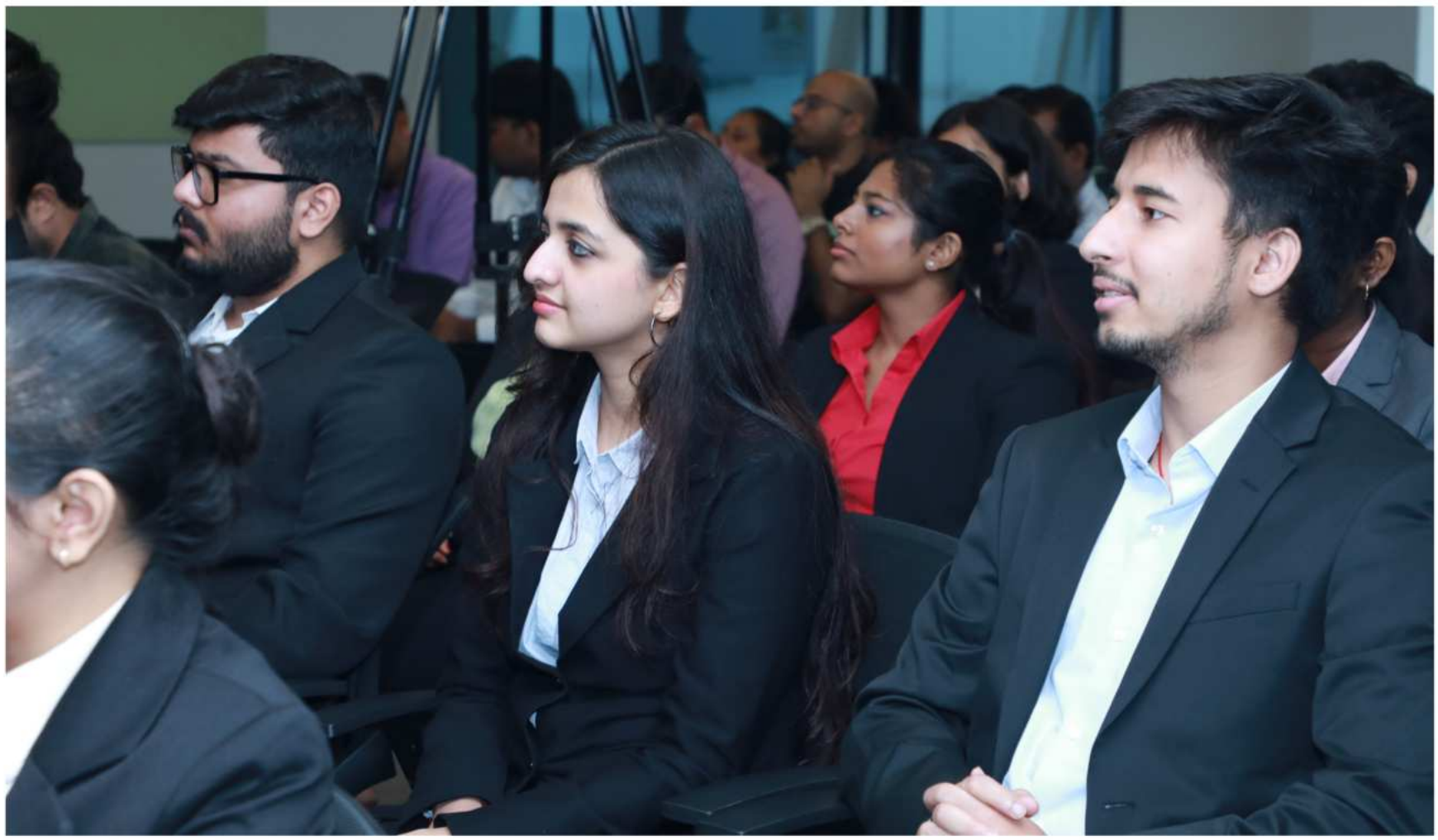
Mr. Prasanth made a compelling economic argument, noting that *"only 5% of India's population actively engages in sports compared to 20% in the United States, if we get it to 20% (USA standards), healthcare budgets can go down significantly."* This demonstrates the broader societal benefits of sports technology investment beyond direct athletic performance improvements.

CORPORATE ENGAGEMENT

Mr. Prasanth emphasized the need for corporate involvement beyond traditional CSR funding, advocating for deeper engagement in promoting sports development through technology partnerships and investment.

GOVERNANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES

The discussion revealed that most sports associations suffer from poor management, and since Indian sports is a state subject, there's a need for central government intervention to ensure uniformity and drive systematic development, at least for some years, especially given India's aspirations tohost the 2036 Olympics. Currently, technology usage represents the last lever organizations consider, though states like Tamil Nadu and Odisha, which lead in infrastructure development, are now ideating to lead in technology adoption as well.



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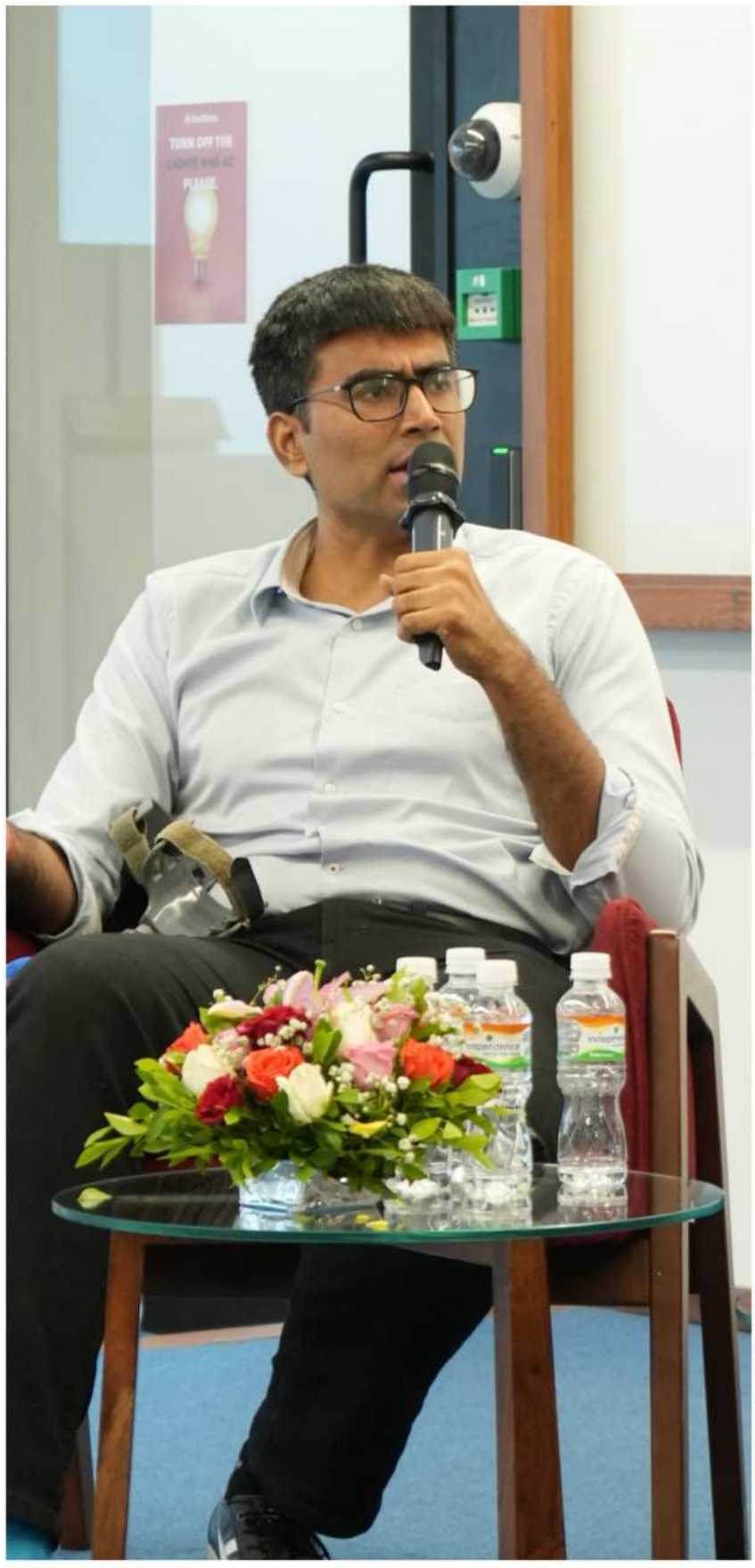


SIDHHANT AGARWAL: DEMOCRATIZATION AND COMMERCIAL VIABILITY

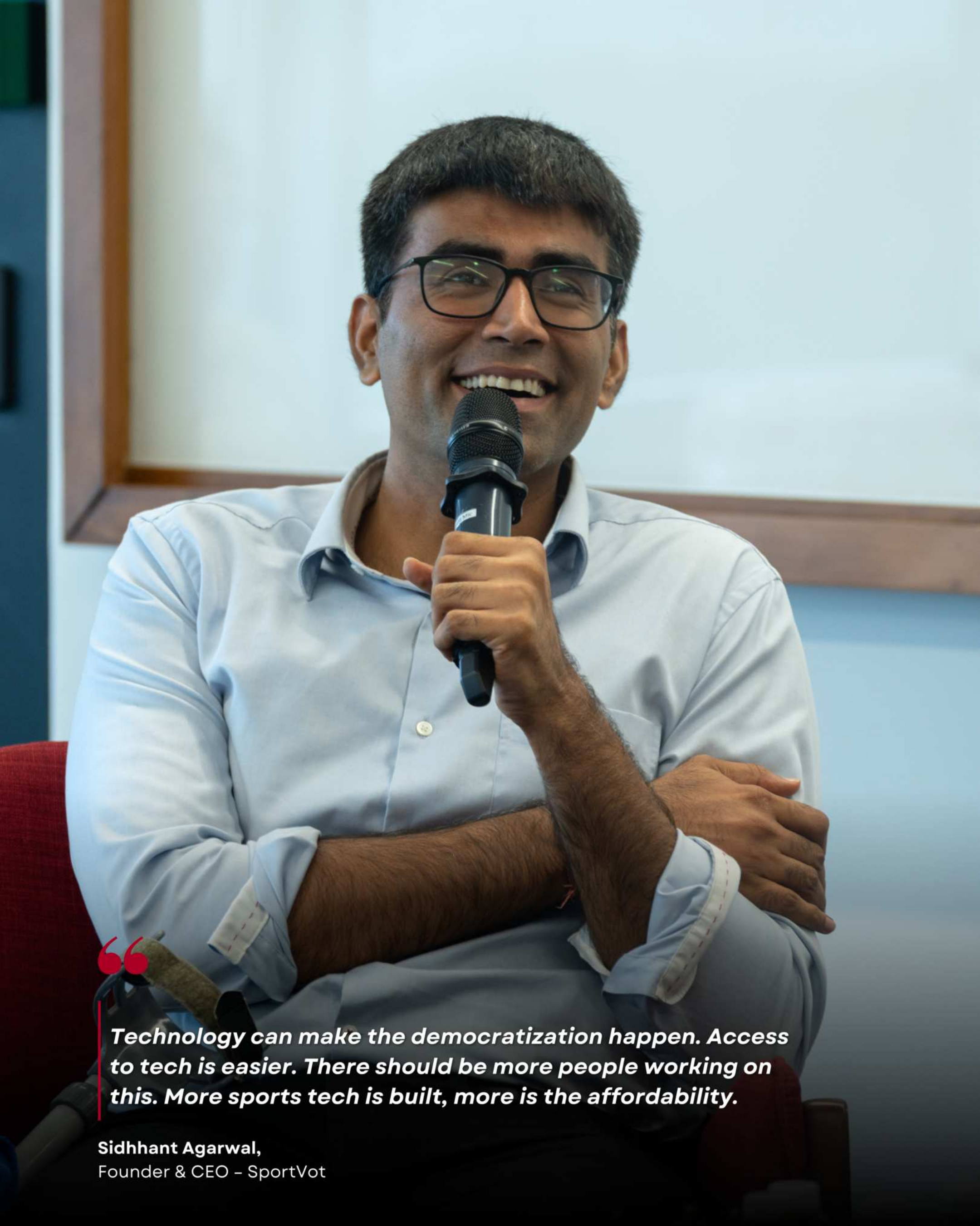
Mr. Sidhhant Agarwal addressed technology's role in sports democratization, noting that despite being a major cost center for sports bodies, technology can facilitate broader access to sports. As he observed: *"Technology can make the democratization happen. Access to tech is easier. There should be more people working on this. More sports tech is built, more is the affordability."* His platform, SportVot, demonstrates this principle by having covered **400,000** matches across five countries so far, taking sports to previously underserved locations.

COST AND ACCESSIBILITY BALANCE

Mr. Sidhhant emphasized that as more sports technology platforms are built, affordability increases, creating a positive cycle of accessibility. He noted that rules in contact sports in Australia require every match to be recorded, which creates demand for uptake of his company's offerings.

REVENUE AND DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

Addressing commercial viability, **Mr. Sidhhant** acknowledged that while scouting capabilities represent a valuable byproduct of their broadcasting technology, they don't yet generate direct revenue. However, these capabilities address critical gaps in India's sports development pipeline, as demonstrated by the story of a talented Kabaddi player who couldn't be selected at the district level but later became a franchise captain in the Pro Kabaddi League after being discovered by an Air India scout.



Technology can make the democratization happen. Access to tech is easier. There should be more people working on this. More sports tech is built, more is the affordability.

Sidhhant Agarwal,
Founder & CEO - SportVot

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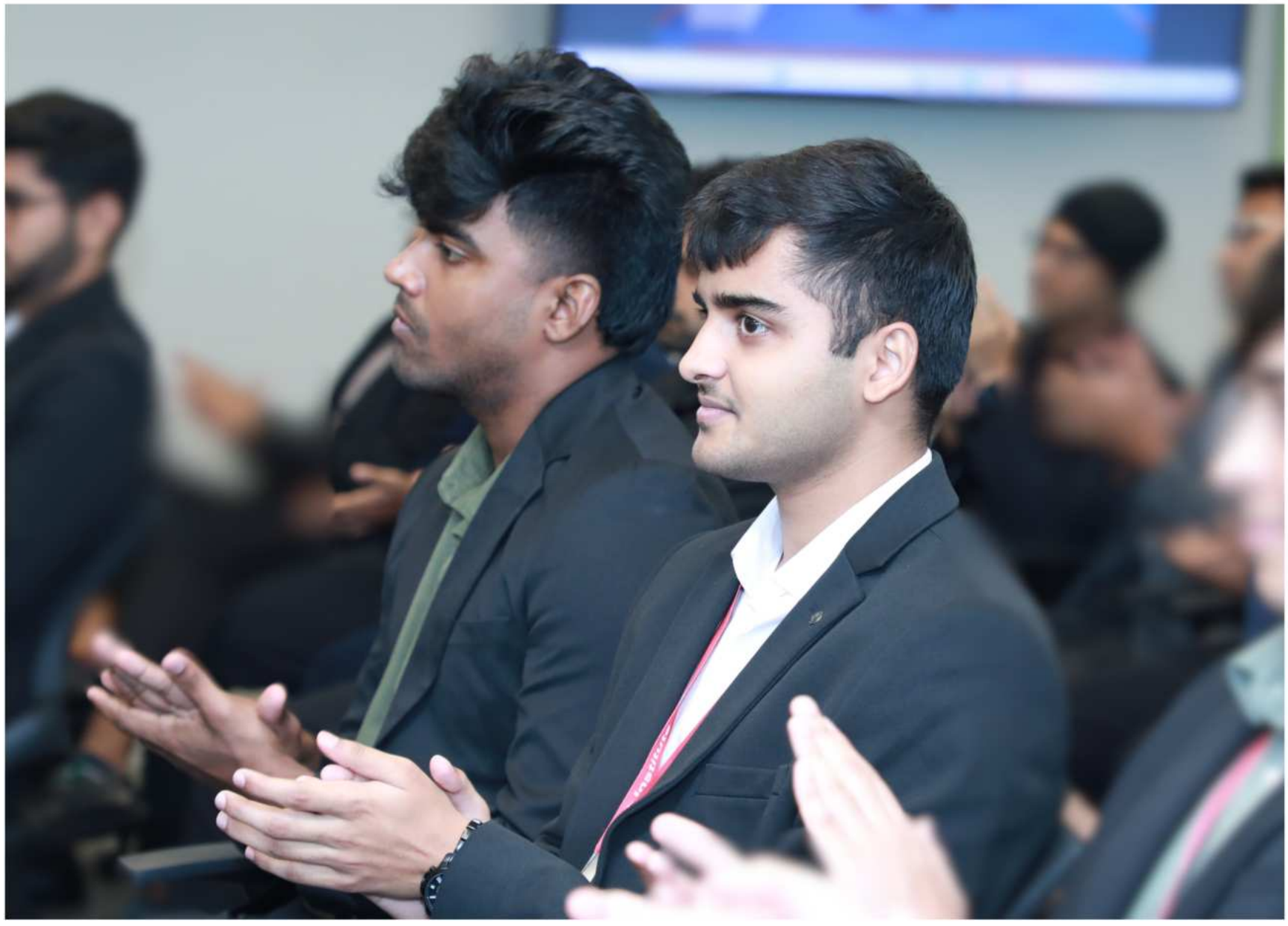


DATA INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Sidhhant emphasized the critical importance of building comprehensive historical databases for athlete performance comparison, noting that this represents a significant struggle for Indian platforms compared to their international counterparts. He advocated: "Go aggressive in building those databases" to enable more effective talent identification and development.

Panel Discussion:
Key Themes and Insights

TECHNOLOGY PRIORITY VS. FUNDAMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The panel reached consensus that while federations would rate technology adoption priority at 11 on a scale of 1-10, most federations beyond cricket haven't cemented fundamental ecosystem elements. These include basic infrastructure, systematic scouting, nutritionist support, conditioning programs, psychological support, and physiological monitoring.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

The discussion identified public-private partnerships as essential for sports growth, particularly in utilizing government facilities that currently operate at low capacity. Increasing capacity utilization to 80% could unlock significant opportunities for citizen sports enrollment and revenue generation.

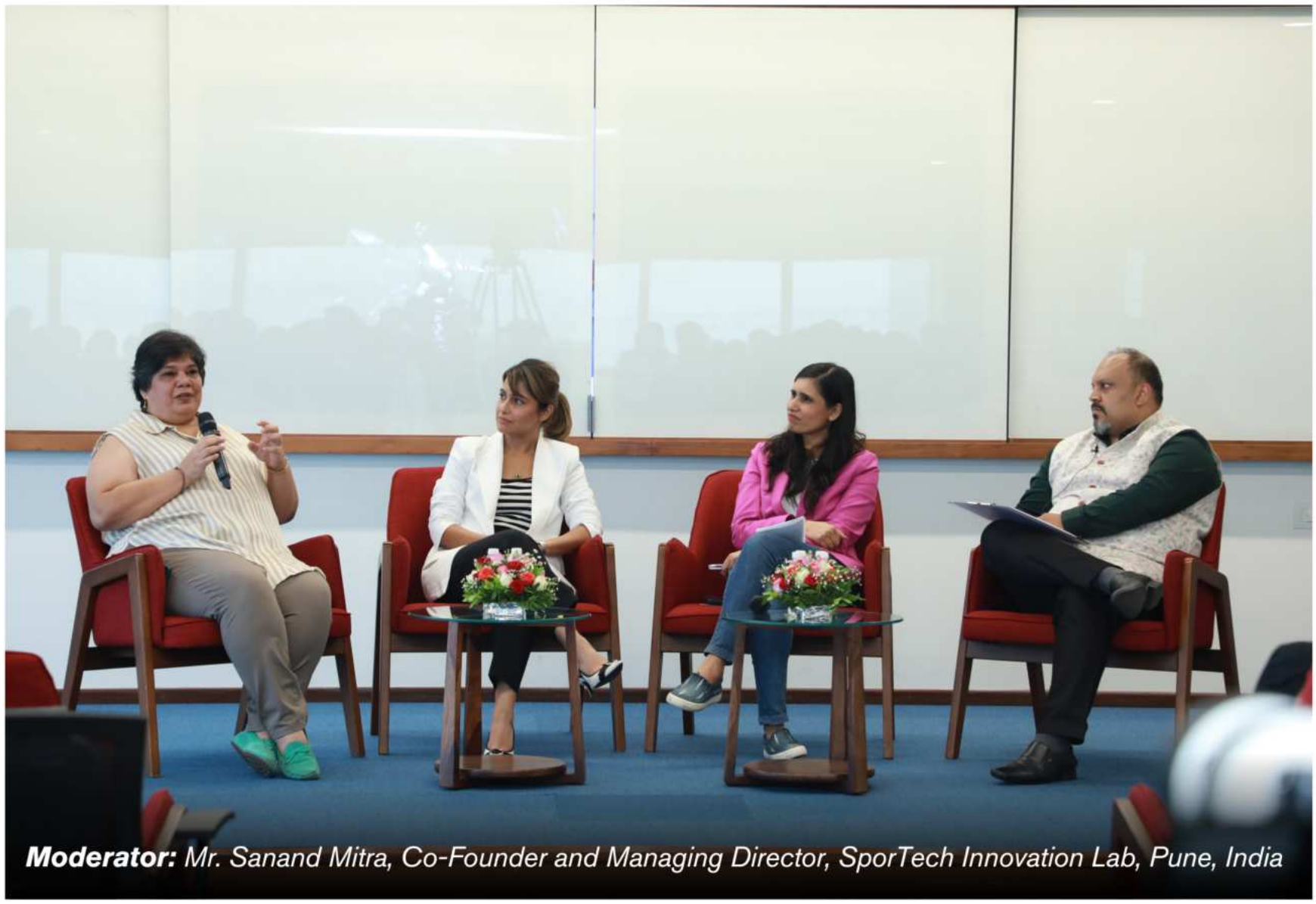
DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

Mr. Prasanth Shanthakumaran raised an important concern about data potentially making athletes feel their performance is being overly governed by metrics. Mr. Viren Rasquinha countered that effective coaching teaches athletes to make independent decisions, emphasizing creativity and intuition in sports performance. He advocated for using data to create more creative and intuitive athletes rather than constraining them.

THE ROMANCE OF SPORTS

Mr. Anirudh Kalia concluded the panel with the observation that ***"the romance of sport cannot be completely replaced by AI,"*** emphasizing that while technology enhances sports, the fundamental human elements of creativity, emotion, and unpredictability remain irreplaceable.

PANEL 2: ——— FROM SPORTS FIELD TO FUTURE CAREER – IS TECH THE ANSWER?



Moderator: *Mr. Sanand Mitra, Co-Founder and Managing Director, SporTech Innovation Lab, Pune, India*

PANELISTS:

1. **Ms. Aarushi Jain**
   Partner TMT, Head-Media, Education & Gaming, Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas

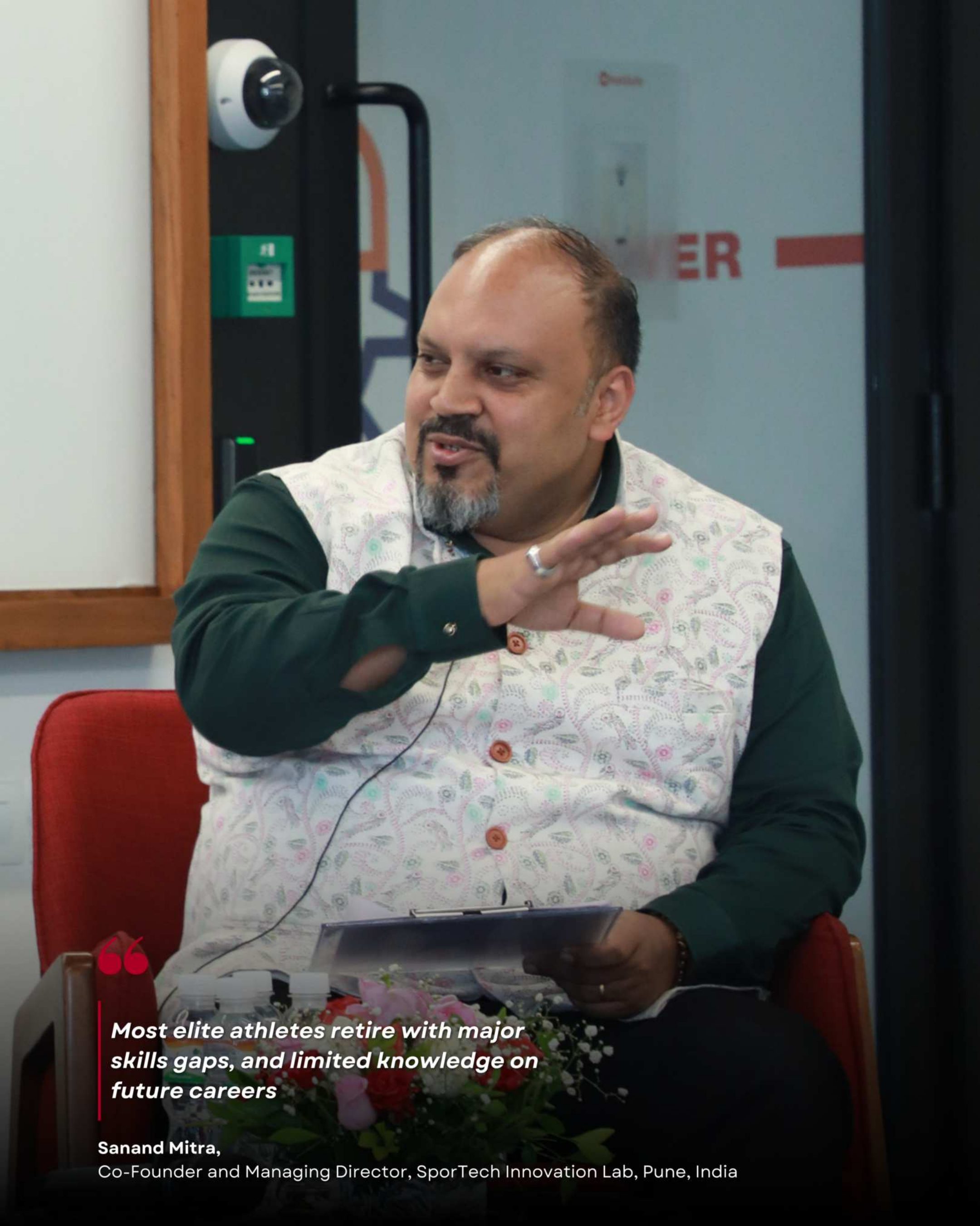
2. **Ms. Heena Sidhu**
   Two-time Olympian | Arjuna Awardee | Former World No. 1 – Pistol Shooting

3. **Ms. Preeti Pariat Mehta**
   Tournament Director, Reliance Foundation Youth Sports

PANEL CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Mr. Sanand Mitra opened the discussion by highlighting a critical challenge facing elite athletes: *"Most elite athletes retire with major skills gaps, and limited knowledge on future careers."* He noted that academic interest typically declines around Grade 5 as sports interest intensifies, with athletes peaking between ages 23-27, making post-performance career transition particularly challenging.

The context included recent policy developments, with National Sports Federations receiving an additional **INR 400 crores** in funding, with **10%** allocated to coaches and **10%** to athlete training. The Khelo India program currently supports **2,781 athletes, 30%** of whom come from rural backgrounds with **limited networks** and **language proficiency** challenges.



Most elite athletes retire with major skills gaps, and limited knowledge on future careers

Sanand Mitra,
Co-Founder and Managing Director, SporTech Innovation Lab, Pune, India

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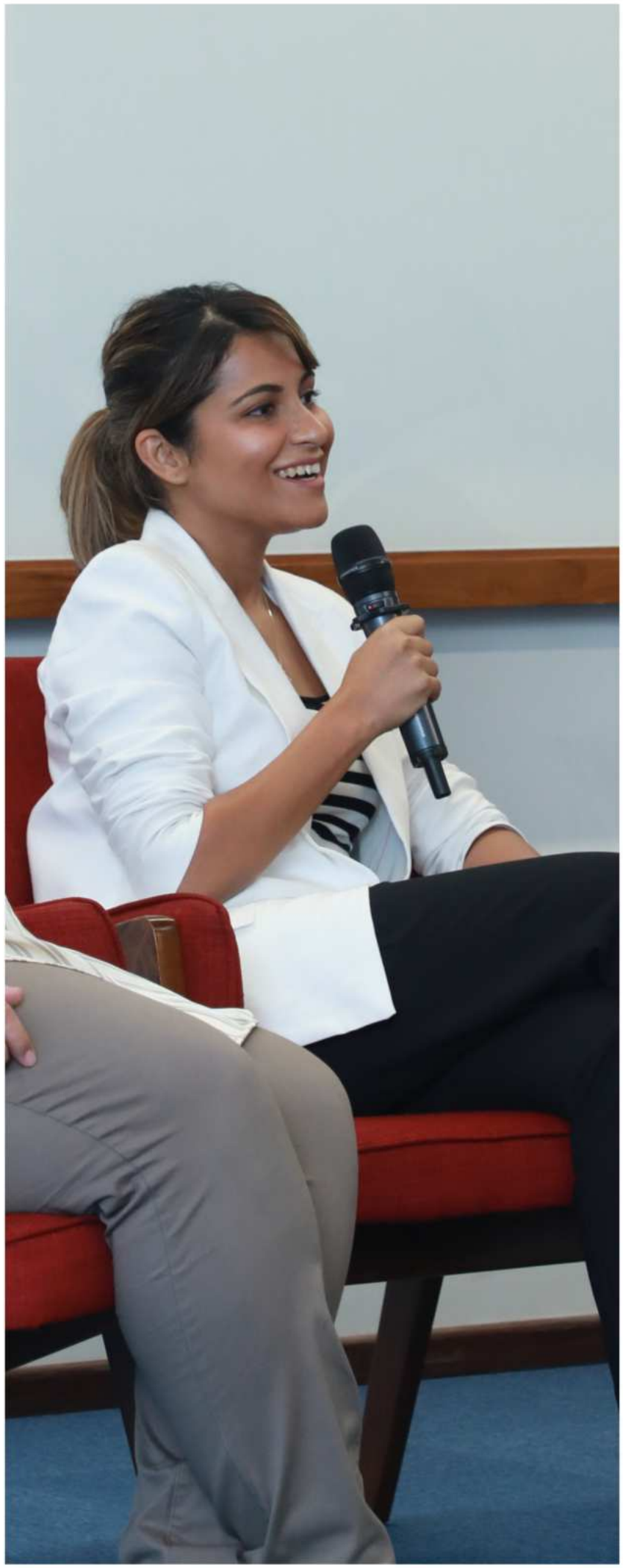


HEENA SIDHU: INFRASTRUCTURE AND COACHING CHALLENGES

Ms. Heena Sidhu, drawing from her experience as a two-time Olympian and Arjuna Awardee, and former World No. 1 in 'Women's 10m air pistol', addressed fundamental infrastructure challenges affecting athlete development and career transitions.

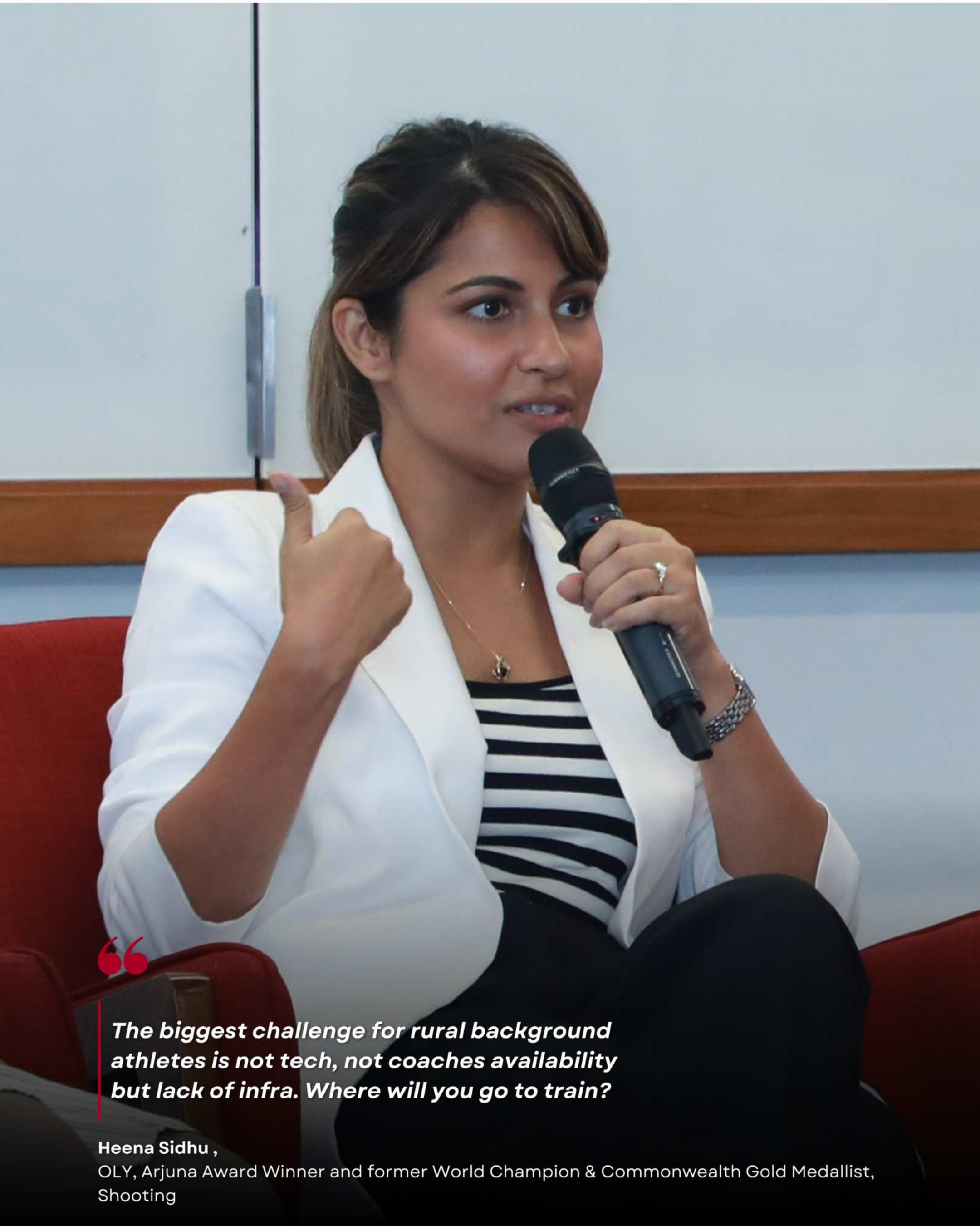
RURAL VS. URBAN CHALLENGES

Infrastructure as the Primary Barrier: Ms. Heena emphasized that *"the biggest challenge for rural background athletes is not tech, not coaches availability but lack of infra. Where will you go to train?"* This scarcity drives athletes toward sports requiring minimal equipment, such as wrestling, boxing, and weightlifting, which explains why these sports see greater participation from rural areas.

Urban Coaching Quality Crisis: In contrast, urban India faces a critical shortage of quality coaches. The lack of formal training courses for sport-specific coaching and absence of degree programs or formal education for coaches creates a systemic problem. This educational gap prevents coaches from commanding competitive salaries and undermines the overall coaching ecosystem.

SYSTEMIC ECOSYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Heena advocated for a comprehensive approach focusing not just on athletes but on the entire ecosystem surrounding them. Her philosophy centers on ***"making everybody healthy so they produce healthy athletes around us,"*** emphasizing the interconnected nature of sports development.



The biggest challenge for rural background athletes is not tech, not coaches availability but lack of infra. Where will you go to train?

Heena Sidhu ,
OLY, Arjuna Award Winner and former World Champion & Commonwealth Gold Medallist, Shooting

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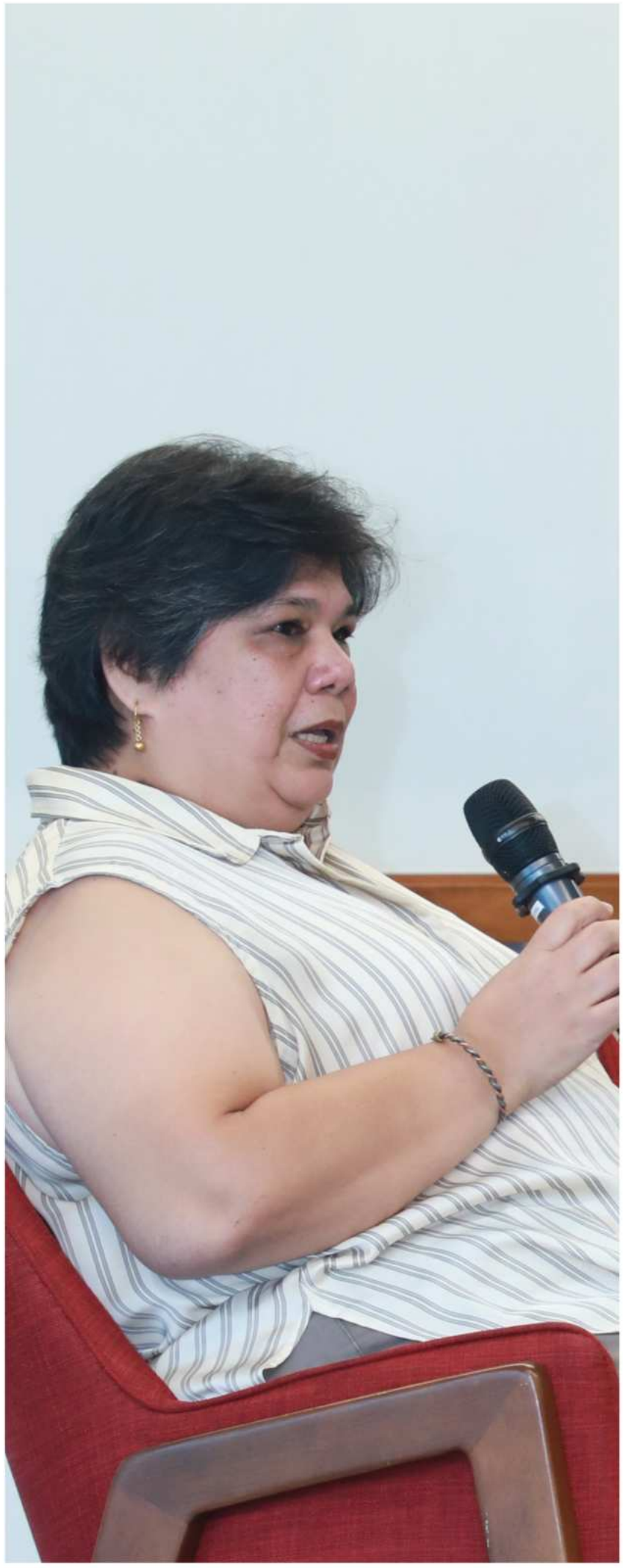


PREETI PARIAT MEHTA: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

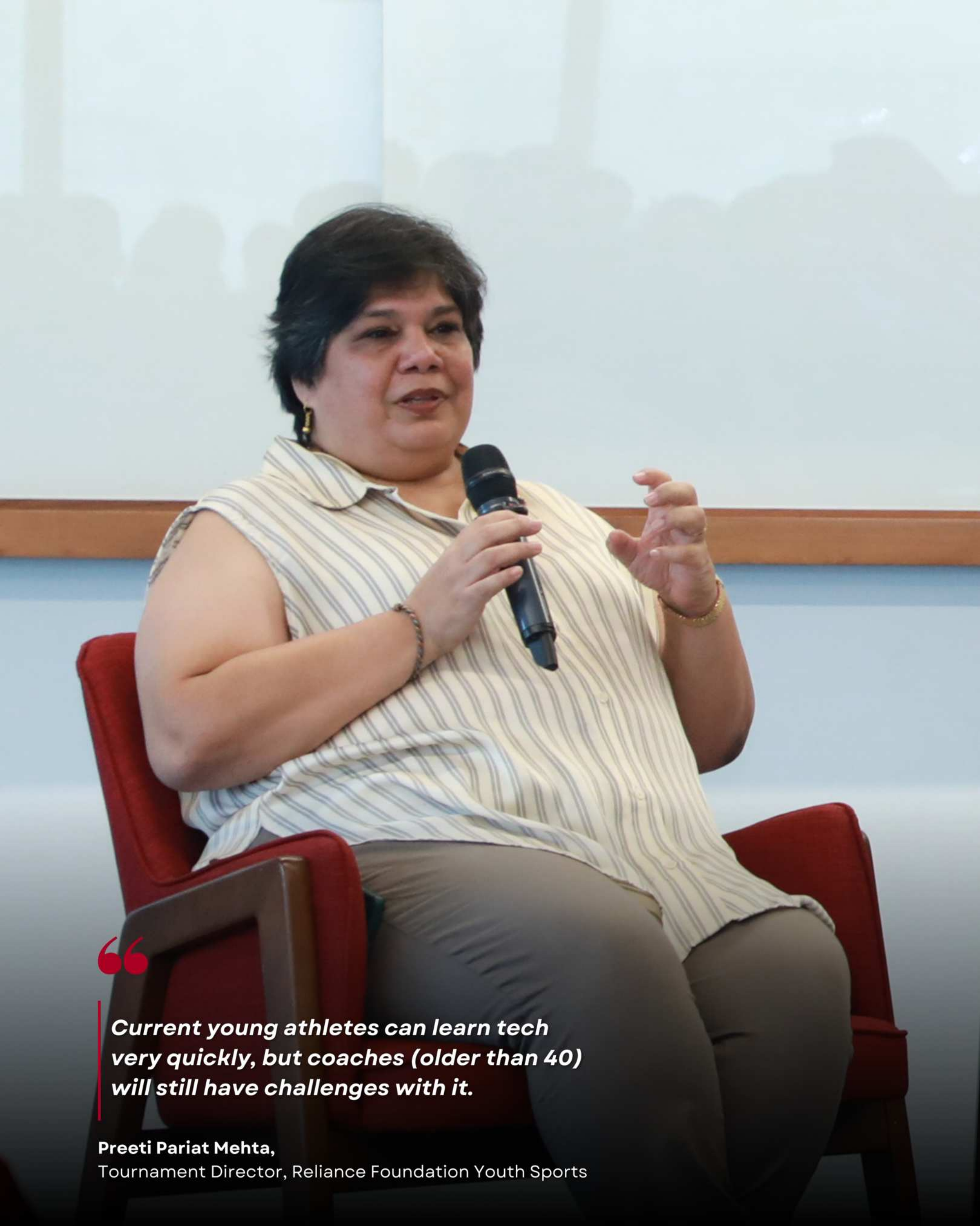
Ms. Preeti Pariat Mehta provided insights from Reliance Foundation's extensive work with physical education teachers and coaches, particularly highlighting how the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital adoption in sports education.

COVID-19 AS A DIGITAL CATALYST

When schools removed physical education teachers first during COVID-19 lockdowns, Reliance Foundation successfully pivoted to online education, reaching coaches, PT teachers, athletes, and even referees through digital platforms. This transition demonstrated technology's potential to maintain sports education continuity during challenging circumstances.

GENERATIONAL TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION

Ms. Preeti observed significant generational differences in technology adoption, noting: *"Current young athletes can learn tech very quickly, but coaches (older than 40) will still have challenges with it."* Despite its limitations, the Khelo India program has created a valuable common platform for sports development.



Current young athletes can learn tech very quickly, but coaches (older than 40) will still have challenges with it.

Preeti Pariat Mehta,
Tournament Director, Reliance Foundation Youth Sports

PANEL 2: ——— FROM SPORTS FIELD TO FUTURE CAREER – IS TECH THE ANSWER?

INFRASTRUCTURE DESIGN AND SUSTAINABILITY

Ms. Preeti shared practical insights about sports infrastructure design, using the example of Balewadi stadium, where inadequate water supply planning required bringing external tankers. By the time indoor facilities were operational, only one tank served all three areas: football and indoor facilities. This highlighted the critical importance of involving sports-knowledgeable professionals in infrastructure planning and design.

PROFESSIONAL TOURNAMENT STANDARDS

Reliance Foundation runs all tournaments with the same professional standards as major leagues like ISL or PKL, emphasizing three key principles:

1. **Learning Platforms:** Creating opportunities for skill development beyond traditional education
2. **Sustainable Facilities:** Building infrastructure that remains usable by local communities after major events
3. **Ecosystem Growth:** Fostering collaboration between government, private sector, citizens, and sports enthusiasts

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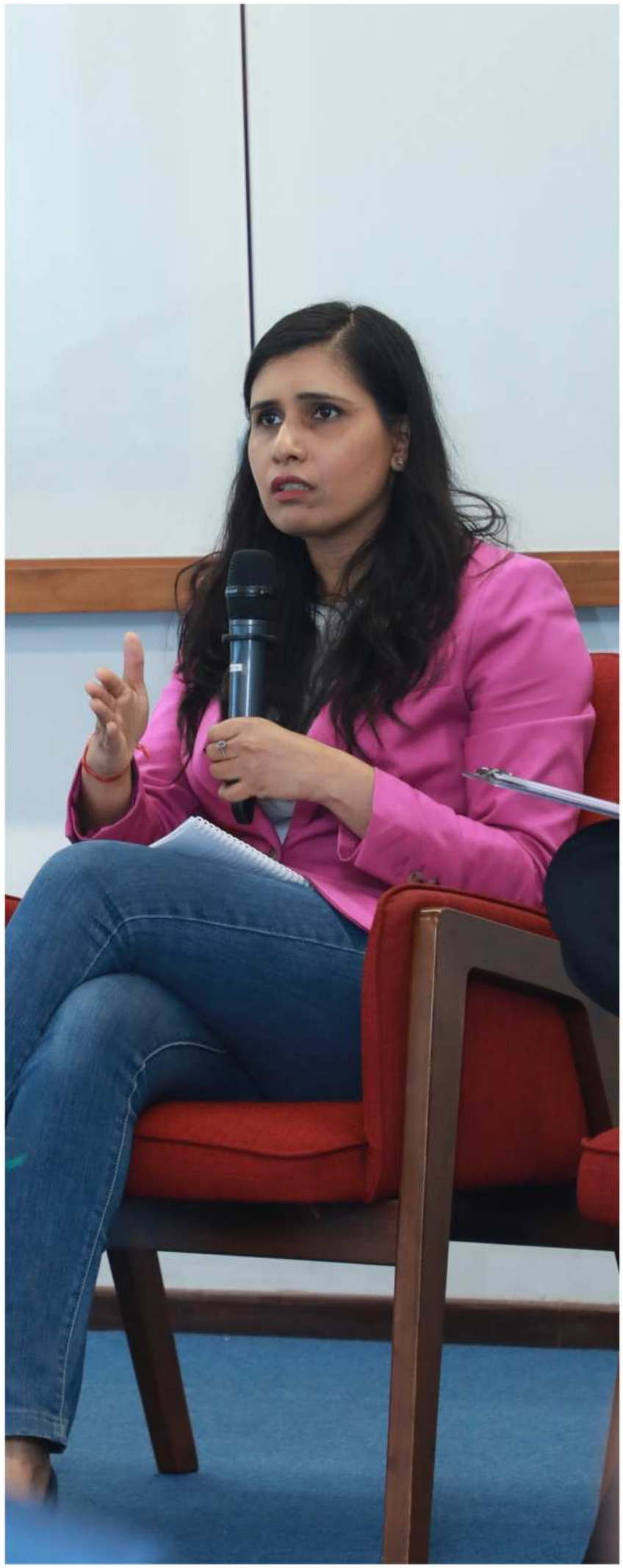


AARUSHI JAIN:
LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND CAREER DIVERSIFICATION

Ms. Aarushi Jain brought a legal and policy perspective to the discussion, emphasizing the inherent resilience of sports personalities and the expanding career opportunities within the sports ecosystem.

CAREER PATHWAY DIVERSIFICATION

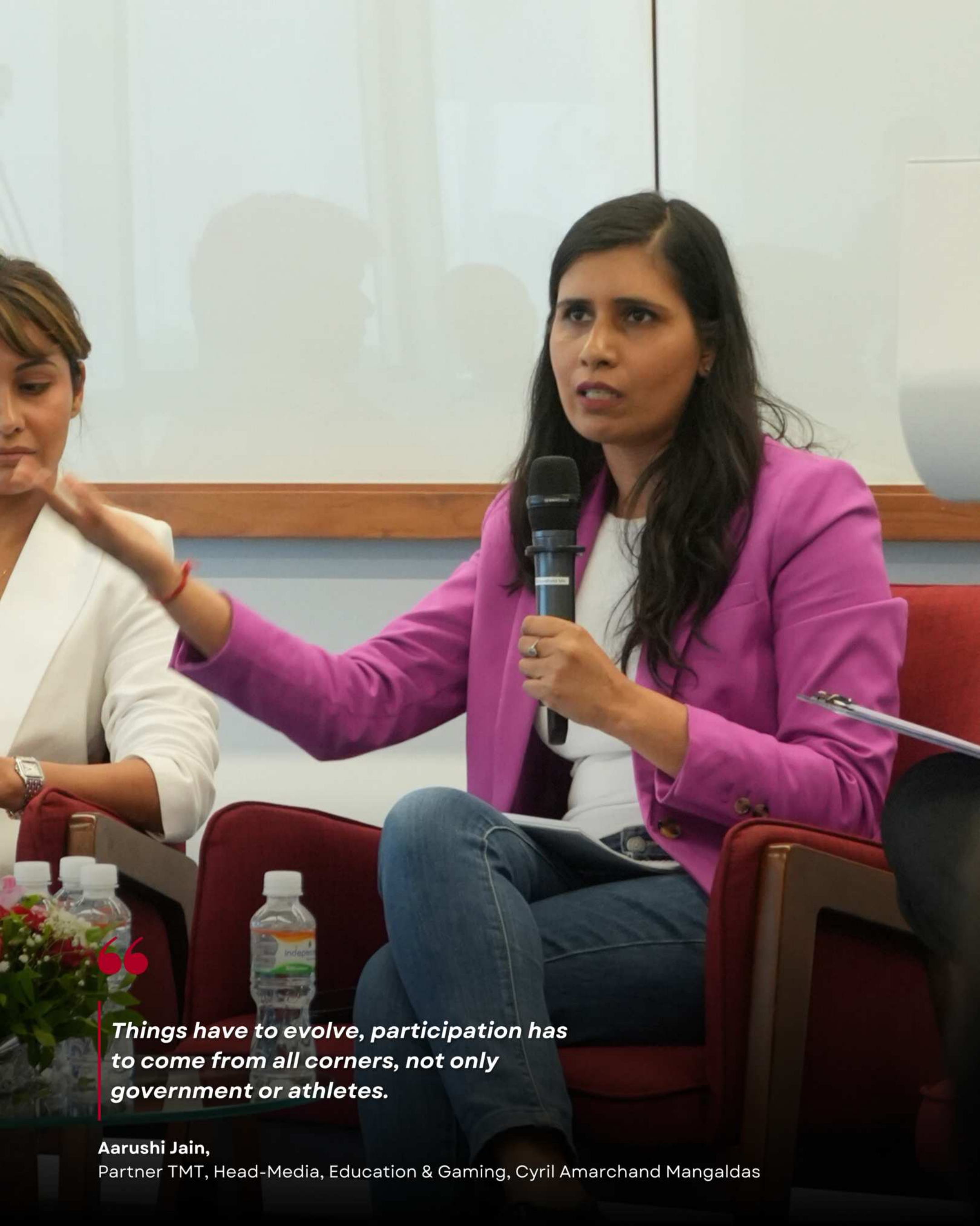
Ms. Aarushi highlighted the scale of opportunities available to former athletes, noting that the presence of legal professionals working in sports demonstrates the breadth of career possibilities. She emphasized: *"Things have to evolve, participation has to come from all corners, not only government or athletes."*

EDUCATIONAL POLICY INTEGRATION

Referencing the National Education Policy's (2020) emphasis on holistic education, Jain advocated for integrating sports into the educational system through technology. She noted that today's generation is naturally inclined to watch, play, understand, and participate in sports more enthusiastically than previous generations.

INDUSTRY GROWTH AND INVESTMENT

Ms. Aarushi observed consistent increases in sports spending across fiscal years and highlighted the rise of private partnerships extending beyond cricket to spotlight sports personalities in kabaddi, basketball, football, and rugby. This diversification includes allied industries such as infrastructure, equipment, and merchandising, all experiencing rapid growth.



Things have to evolve, participation has to come from all corners, not only government or athletes.

Aarushi Jain,
Partner TMT, Head-Media, Education & Gaming, Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas

PANEL 2: FROM SPORTS FIELD TO FUTURE CAREER – IS TECH THE ANSWER?

LEGAL AND POLICY ADVOCACY

Addressing the concept of an Indian Sports Service, Ms. Aarushi emphasized that change requires collective industry advocacy and modification of existing laws. She noted that lawmakers often lack awareness of the changes needed, making industry collaboration essential for driving policy reform.

DIGITAL RIGHTS AND ATHLETE PROTECTION

Regarding digital rights for athletes, Ms. Aarushi emphasized that while rights are integral to every person, they take different forms for famous personalities. The critical factor is how athletes understand and execute their rights, particularly in the digital age where personal branding and image management have become crucial.

Key Recommendations and Future Directions

TECHNOLOGY AS AN ENABLER, NOT A SOLUTION

The panel reached consensus that technology serves as an enabler rather than a complete answer to career transition challenges. **Ms. Preeti Pariat Mehta** emphasized that ***"tech is an enabler and not the answer,"*** stressing the need for fundamental improvements in sports infrastructure, coaching quality, and educational pathways.

CAREER PATHWAY EXPANSION

The discussion identified numerous career opportunities enabled by technology and digital platforms:

- **Online Sports Management Education:** Previously unavailable courses now accessible through digital platforms
- **Diverse Professional Roles:** Including implementation, videography, entrepreneurship, and sports stadium architecture
- **Administrative Positions:** Enhanced by digital tools and data analytics
- **Content Creation and Media:** Leveraging athletes' expertise and personality

INDIAN SPORTS SERVICE PROPOSAL

Mr. Sanand Mitra advocated for creating an **Indian Sports Service** similar to the Indian Administrative Service, specifically designed for sports administration. Ms. Heena Sidhu supported this concept, noting that trained sports professionals would be better equipped to make appropriate decisions and create enabling laws for sports ecosystem growth. She provided a practical example of rule-making challenges, describing how rifle shooters began changing in the field of play due to lack of nearby changing facilities and heavy equipment, leading to a ban by the Indian Shooting Federation. This illustrated how infrastructure planning often fails to consider sportspersons' practical needs.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND Q&A INSIGHTS

Ms. Heena Sidhu shared her experience with data analytics as an active athlete, describing how she manually collected performance data before digital tools became available. She expressed enthusiasm for current AI capabilities and advocated for allowing wearables on the field, which international shooting federations currently prohibit. Ms. Heena emphasized the robotic precision required in shooting sports, where consistency is paramount. She highlighted how AI insights on preparation time between shots and follow-up analysis would have been invaluable during her competitive career, demonstrating the potential for technology to enhance performance in precision sports.

PANEL 2: —— FROM SPORTS FIELD TO FUTURE CAREER – IS TECH THE ANSWER?

Panel Discussion:
Key Themes and Insights

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS REQUIRED

Infrastructure Development:

Prioritize basic sports infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, while ensuring facilities are designed with sportspersons' practical needs in mind

Coaching Education:

Develop formal education programs and certification systems for sport-specific coaches to improve quality and professional recognition

Digital Platform Integration:

Expand online education opportunities for athletes, coaches, and sports administrators while addressing generational adoption challenges

Policy Reform:

Advocate collectively for an Indian Sports Service and supportive legislation that enables sports ecosystem growth

LONG-TERM STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Ecosystem Development:

Foster collaboration between government, private sector, educational institutions, and sports organizations to create sustainable career pathways

Technology Integration:

Balance technology adoption with fundamental infrastructure and human resource development

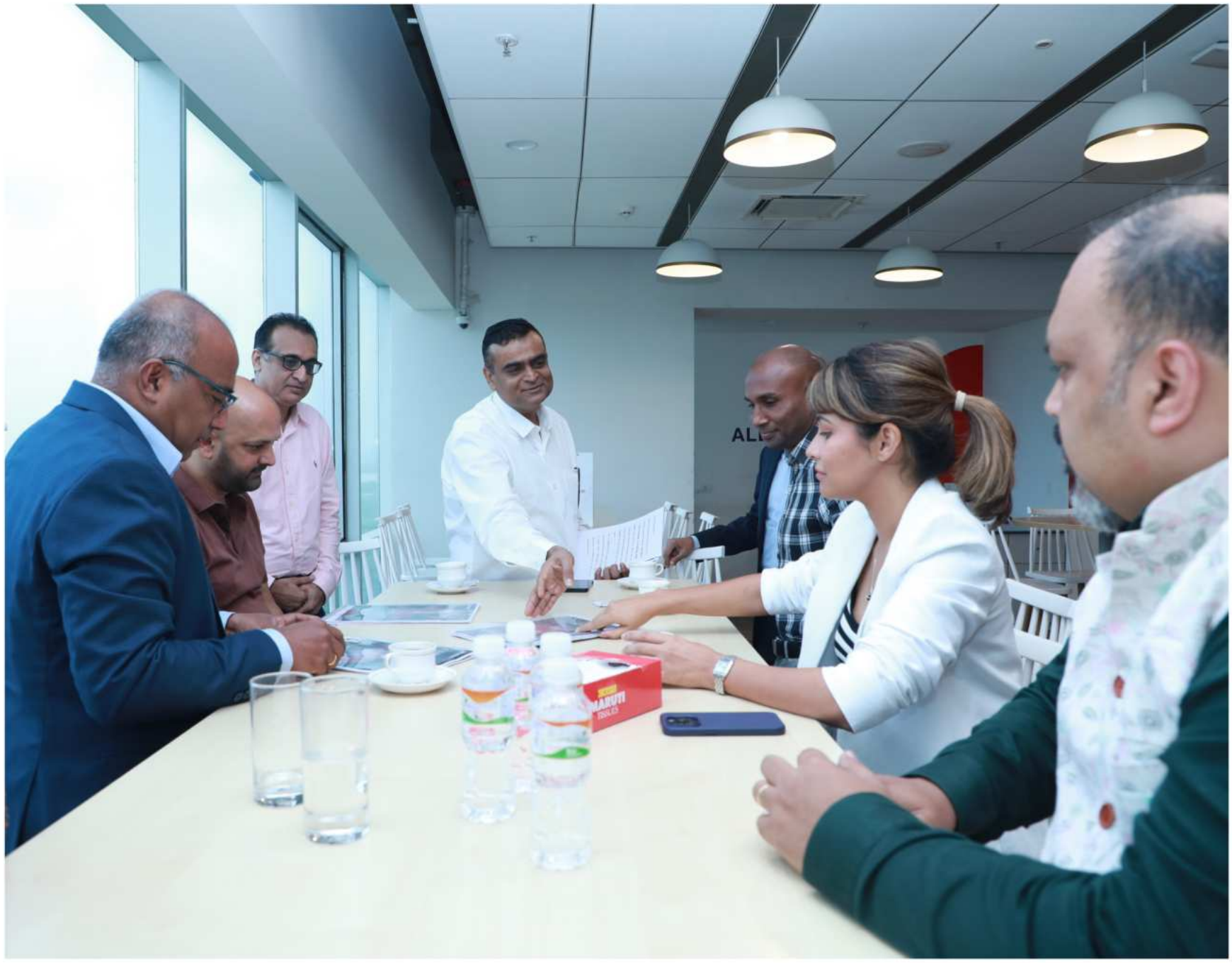
Historical Data Building:

Invest aggressively in comprehensive athlete performance databases to enable better talent identification and development

Holistic Education:

Implement NEP guidelines to integrate sports into mainstream education using technology as a facilitator

CONCLUSION

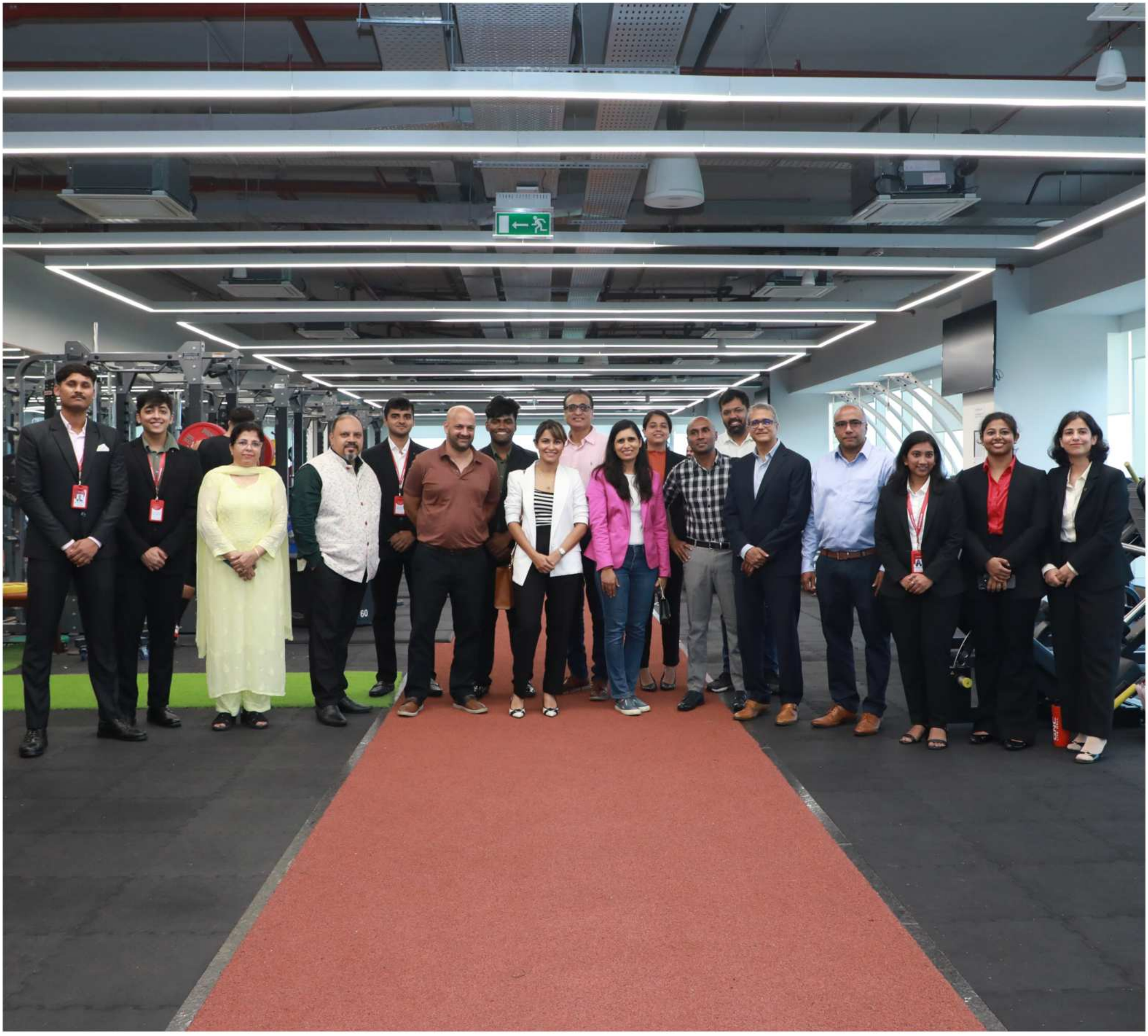


The Sports Conclave successfully highlighted the complex interplay between technology adoption and career development in Indian sports. While technology offers tremendous potential for transformation, success requires coordinated efforts addressing fundamental infrastructure, education, and policy challenges.

The discussions revealed that technology's true value lies not in replacing human elements of sports but in enhancing accessibility, improving decision-making through data analytics, and creating new career pathways for athletes.

The emphasis on ecosystem development, from grassroots infrastructure to elite performance analytics, provides a roadmap for sustainable growth in India's sports sector.

Most importantly, the conclave demonstrated industry commitment to recognizing current challenges while building collaborative solutions for future growth. The integration of technology with traditional sports values, combined with comprehensive career development support, positions India's sports ecosystem for significant advancement in the coming years.



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