



## PRESS RELEASE

### **IBL to launch “Shuttle Express” in 6 cities**

Promoting badminton amongst 5 lakh children to identify young talent

- ‘Shuttle Express’, a school programme initiative by Indian Badminton League, is all set to promote badminton in more than 120 schools in six cities
- *Pullela Gopichand, Saina Nehwal, Jwala Gutta, Ashwini Ponnappa, P Kashyap and PV Sindhu will be ‘brand ambassadors’ for Shuttle Express and be part of badminton clinics in six cities*
- *‘Shuttle Express’ will provide an ideal stage for badminton-loving kids, offering a prize money of Rs 10 lakh and an opportunity to train at the world-class P Gopichand Academy*

**31 May 2013, New Delhi:** The \$1-million Indian Badminton League, an initiative of the Badminton Association of India (BAI) and its ‘Commercial Partner’ Sporty Solutionz sets the ball rolling by announcing the launch of Indian Badminton League School Programme (IBLSP), the biggest school championship for badminton to promote the sport across India.

Under IBLSP, badminton icons like Olympic medalist Saina Nehwal, former All-England champion Pullela Gopichand, CWG doubles gold medalist Jwala Gutta and Ashwini Ponnappa, India Grand Prix winner Parupalli Kashyap and Malaysian Grand Prix champion PV Sindhu will visit school campuses across India, to promote badminton and encourage around five lakh students from more than 120 schools in six different cities. The ‘Shuttle Express’ will offer an incentive of Rs 10 lakh in prize money to the winners in both the boys and girls singles events and the event will be held in Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Lucknow and Pune. Besides, the finalists in both the singles categories will also be given an opportunity to train at the world-class Pullela Gopichand Academy in Hyderabad.

The ‘Shuttle Express’ will be held in three phases to scout talent and will be an intra-school competition from **July 12-14, 2013**, while the National Finals will be conducted in Mumbai and beamed LIVE on TV from **August 28-31, 2013**. The championship will be held in partnership with six schools in the six respective cities as “IBL School Partners” – Genesis Global School, Expressway (Delhi NCR), Indus World School (Hyderabad), La Martiniere Boys (Lucknow), Jamnabai Narsee, Juhu Parle (Mumbai), Symbiosis Primary & Secondary School (Pune) and Jain International School (Bangalore).

The host associations for conducting the inaugural ‘Shuttle Express’ in each city will be Delhi Capital Badminton Association, Andhra Pradesh Badminton Association, UP Badminton Association, Maharashtra Badminton Association, Pune District & Metropolitan Badminton Association and Karnataka Badminton Association respectively.

Speaking on the School Program, **Dr Akhilesh Das Gupta, President, BAI and IBL Governing Council Chairman** said, “As a former player who benefitted enormously from an active school environment for badminton, I’m confident that Shuttle Express will provide a great platform and opportunity to thousands of badminton-loving children to fulfill their aspirations and motivate them to take the sport as a career.”



**Speaking on 'Shuttle Express', Indian shuttle queen Saina Nehwal** said, "It is nice to see that badminton as a sport is being promoted amongst kids. 'Shuttle Express' will not only generate huge interest amongst the young but also give them the opportunity to get their talent recognized."

**Speaking on how 'Shuttle Express' will nurture young talent P Gopichand** said, "We know that kids today are loaded with talent and Shuttle Express will help bring that out. It's a platform which will help kids recognize their inner flair. Through this initiative, Shuttle Express can become the powerhouse for badminton in the coming years."

**Doubles icon player Jwala while talking on the initiative being taken by BAI and Sporty Solutionz** said, "The Shuttle Express is an extremely good initiative which should spread all over the country in the coming years. I am all geared to go to schools and motivate the kids to win the tournament."

**India's highest-ranked men player, Parupalli Kashyap** said, "I'm glad that we are starting at the school level as it is very important for kids to understand sports. In the US, American football and other sports starts from school and it's taken seriously so that kids can make a career out of it. Likewise, it should also happen in India so that parents take sports seriously and there are other options for children instead of only focusing on becoming doctors and engineers."

**Talking about the initiative, teen sensation PV Sindhu** said, "The 'Shuttle Express' is a great initiative for the young. It will inspire them to take up the game at an early stage. I wish all the budding players participating in the Shuttle Express to work hard and become part of the main IBL in the years to come."

**Commenting on the tournament, Ashwini Ponnappa** said, "For any sport to be successful in the long run, it's important to nurture young talent and the future stars. It's nice to see the Shuttle Express will take badminton to lakhs of children in India. In every school, you will find a talented kid who can help you win with hustle, grit and good fundamentals. We need to tap such young talent at the right stage."

**Commenting on the innovative initiative Mr. Ashish Chadha, CEO, Sporty Solutionz** said, "It's an honour to be associated with such a cutting-edge programme for the young that will make badminton a household name in India and also provide a springboard for the dreams of thousands of kids. Today, we have standout schools that produce elite talent and we hope the IBL School Programme will contribute to the development of the sport in India."

The path-breaking IBL will be held in six cities from August 14-31. The richest badminton league in the world will feature almost all the top players in the world and will be played under the Sudirman Cup format and televised LIVE to more than 100 countries.

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