

# "THEY (WORKERS) KNOW THAT I WILL LISTEN TO THEM"

Amit Baba Kalyani, MD of BHARAT FC & Executive Director, Kalyani Group tells The Free Press Journal why sports and more so Football is on the top of his agenda.



Amit Kalyani

**FPJ:** Kalyani Group recently established a football team. What attracted you to football?

**ABK:** I experienced the magic of football in school, where it was the sport. I was a tennis player and not a footballer. But I reconnected with football because of my 11-year-old son. He goes for football coaching and is into it.

Football is the world's most watched sport and India is one of the World Cup's largest TV viewership. Also, the sport is cheap to play. The last factor that pushed me over the edge was the closure of the Pune IPL team. It was a loss for the city because it gave a fantastic outlet for people to rally behind their team. We are entering our 50th year this year and we thought we should do something for Pune. I didn't want to buy an IPL team. So, we decided to build a football club and start creating a legacy that's non-industrial. It's also a great way for the Kalyani Group to connect with people. Being a B2B business, it was a great way to make our brand more tangible for the common person. We are looking at a 20-year horizon by when we believe India will qualify for the World Cup. Our Group has been associated with sports in India and we felt Pune as a city needed a larger representation in sports as it is a young city. The decision to buy a team in

the league was partly rational and partly emotional.

**FPJ:** Kalyani Group has been actively supporting individual sportspersons and this is the first time you have ventured into a team sport. Will this lead to your involvement in other team sports as well?

**ABK:** We have been supporting individuals training in Olympic sports and we felt the need to do more. We live in a country with a population of 1.2 crores and sports definitely needs more support to earn more laurels for the nation. But as of now there are no such plans. We want to focus on the commitments we have made and fulfil them.

**FPJ:** Will the expense of owning a football team affect the funding of individual sport athletes?

**ABK:** The football team's funds won't be mixed-up or brought in from any other commitments that we have already given to other sportspersons. This team is a totally different venture.

**FPJ:** One of your core responsibilities in Kalyani Group is managing talent. How do you ensure talent is nurtured?

**ABK:** I like working with people on the shop floor. I personally meet them once a month and ask them to note down the hours of non-value added work (repetitive tasks) they

did that week or month. If someone says he's doing 20 hours of non-value added work in a week, he needs a job change. He's stagnating there. I give such people new work to do. This improves our productivity. People were reserved initially. Now, they come to me regularly and ask for new challenges. These are people who don't report to me directly. There would be five levels between me and them. But they know that I will listen to them. I feel that the charisma of a leader will only take you so far. You also need to create mini-leaders. Jack Welch created a leadership factory; so when he retired, there were



Amit Kalyani receiving The Machinist Super Next Generation Leader 2015 award

five guys in the running for his job. When one was picked, the others became CEOs of Fortune 50 companies within a week.

**FPJ:** On a personal note, what do you like to do when you are free, what are your hobbies?

**ABK:** I love cooking; I learnt to cook as a kid.

I make eggs, pasta and so on for my kids. I have three children. I spend time with them. I love reading... popcorn fiction, magazines. I love Matthew Reilly, David Baldacci. I love western classical, mainly jazz. My mother plays the sitar. I enjoy Indian classical instrumental music.

(Interviewed by: Kartiki Nitin Lawate)



Amit Kalyani with family