



THE SPIRIT THAT RUNS BEYOND THE FINISH LINE

A Tribute to Mr. Canagasabai Kunalan

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Introduction

This tribute is not a biography. It is a reflection aimed at honouring the quiet values, strong presence, and human spirit of Mr. Kunalan. While records may capture his speed, medals, and achievements, this piece seeks to highlight the grace with which he lived his life and the legacy he leaves in the hearts of those he inspired.

The Runner Who Never Stopped Running

In the public's mind, Mr. Kunalan is remembered as Singapore's sprinting legend. He was an Olympian whose feet carried the hopes of a young nation. But beyond the track, he kept running through classrooms, conversations, and communities. His pace was no longer measured in seconds but in sincerity. He ran towards people, purpose, and the belief that every interaction could uplift.

Educator, Mentor, Presence

As a teacher and known as Mr. K by his students, he did not merely instruct; he invited students to see themselves as capable and worthy of effort and excellence. His voice was steady, his gaze encouraging, and his presence a quiet anchor in the lives of many. He taught not just with words but by example. Discipline without harshness. Pride without ego. Achievement without arrogance.

Legacy Beyond Records

Mr. Kunalan's legacy is not limited to the Sports Hall of Fame or the cast of his hand and foot at the Singapore Sports Museum. It lives in the way he made others feel valued. He showed that greatness could be gentle, that speed could coexist with stillness, and that a life well-lived is not measured solely by awards but by the values one carries forward.

Ceremonial Reflection by Mr C Kunalan

When asked, "If someone were to carry a piece of your spirit into their own journey, what would you want that piece to be?" Mr C Kunalan responded with quiet conviction: "racial harmony."

It was not a rhetorical flourish, but a distilled truth drawn from the canvas of his married life with Mdm Chong Yoong Ying - a union that quietly embodied the values he championed. Through decades of service, he lived this principle with grace and resolve, weaving it into his roles as athlete, educator, and citizen. In choosing racial harmony as the legacy, he wished others to carry forward, Mr Kunalan offered more than a value - he extended an invitation. An invitation to walk with empathy, to lead with dignity, and to build communities where diversity is not merely respected but cherished. His words now stand as a ceremonial compass for future generations, pointing toward a more inclusive and compassionate Singapore.

Conclusion

This tribute is offered with deep respect and gratitude. It honours not just what Mr. Kunalan did, but how he did it with humility, humanity, and heart. May future generations find in his story not only inspiration but also a model for living with purpose and grace.