

# St Lawrence former students to fete Pulin Sir on his 100th birthday

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**Kolkata:** It's the annual sports day at St Lawrence High School. Spectators are waiting anxiously under the pandal on the edge of the playground.

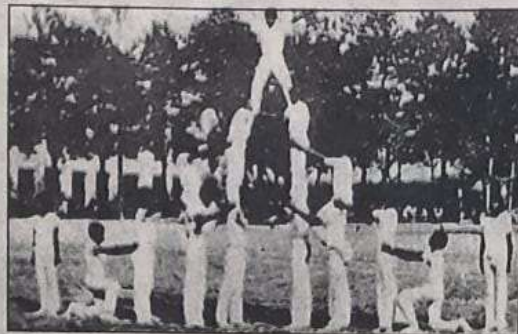


Some students start their show of human pyramid formation that one gets to witness only at a military tattoo. A large iron ring with thick

cotton wrapping soaked in kerosene is lit up, the flames lurk in the wind. There is pin-drop silence and tension is palpable. A stoutly built, middle-aged man in white trousers and white T-shirt boldly runs towards the ring of fire and dives effortlessly through it. His students follow him and complete the drill.

That is Pulin Sir, the former physical education teacher who turns 100 on December 28. He will be felicitated by his former students on December 26, at the school where he served for 43 years (1944 to 1987).

"I am overwhelmed by the invitation from former students who still stay in touch with me," said Pulin Makhil. The current principal of the school, Fr Jimmy Keppuram, is elated to be a part of the momentous occasion.



Students form a human pyramid under the guidance of Pulin Sir (left)

Given his age and frail health, bringing him to Calcutta from his home in the interiors of Magrahat in South 24 Parganas is a major challenge, acknowledges Justice Soumen Sen, one of his former students (class of 1982). While in service, he would walk to the station 8km from his house at 4am and return late at night.

Remembers Debasish Chatterjee, MD and CEO of Mindtree and a Lawrencian from the class of 1981: "I have fond memories of Pulin Sir standing quietly outside our classroom. That was a signal for us to line up and go to the playground. Those unscheduled breaks were always welcome."

Agrees Satish Pai, another student from the class of 1978 and now MD of Hindalco: "Sir was always firm and made sure

Everyone remembers Pulin Sir as our PE teacher. I remember him also as our handwriting teacher. He taught us cursive writing. We had an Orient Longman book for handwriting practice that he would call the 'haas boi' jokingly because of the big swan image on the cover

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we took the PE class properly."

Apart from the sports day, Pulin Sir would come into his own on the annual Rector's Day, celebrated through a staff versus students' football match. He would stand like a wall under the goal post and dive fearlessly to fist away volleys from students less than a quarter his age.

"I did not realize he is so much older to us," says Professor Ashok Jhunjhunwala of IIT-Chennai and a Padma Shri recipient (class of 1971). "He used to play with us as equals," he adds. Neurosurgeon Amitabha Chanda and his student from the class of 1981 couldn't agree more. "Pulin Sir was our fitness icon."