

Wrestling Press Release

Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju felicitates Indian wrestlers for best ever medal haul at World Championships

New Delhi, 24th September: Union Sports Minister Shri Kiren Rijiju felicitated the Indian wrestling team that came back from the World Wrestling Championships in Kazakhstan with their best ever haul of five medals. With one silver and four bronze, this was better than India's previous best performance at a World Championship which came in 2013, when the country won one silver and two bronze.

The Minister rewarded Deepak Punia, silver medalist in men's 86 kg with a cash reward of Rs.7 lakhs while the four bronze winners Bajrang Punia (Men's 65 kg freestyle), Vinesh Phogat (Women's 53 kg), Rahul Aware (Men's 61 kg) and Ravi Dahiya (Men's 57 kg) were given Rs.4 lakhs each.

Four of the five medal winners Deepak Punia, Bajrang Punia, Vinesh Phogat and Ravi Dahiya have earned Olympic quotas on account of winning medals at the Championships, they had to reach the medal matches to win the quota. The four quotas won at this Championships were the highest ever, 4 years ago at the 2015 World Championships, the corresponding number of earned Olympic quotas was one. The men's 61 kg where Rahul Aware won a bronze is not an Olympic event.

Vinesh Phogat won her maiden World Championship medal as she beat World Number 1 Sarah Hildebrandt and 2016 Olympic medalist Sofia Mattson. She added this medal to her gold medals at the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games and her medals at the Asian Championships. Bajrang Punia won his third World Championship medal, having previously won silver in 2018 and bronze in 2013. Ravi Dahiya a former World Junior and World U-23 medalist, added a senior world medal on his debut appearance. Deepak Punia, who in August had become the 1st Indian in 18 years to win a Junior World medal, continued his superb run by winning a senior medal. Rahul Aware also won his first ever World Championship medal.

There are 18 Wrestling events at the Tokyo Olympics and thus 14 more Indians (one in each event) can still qualify. Indian wrestlers will get two more qualifying opportunities, first at the Asian Wrestling Championships in March 2020 followed by the World Qualification Tournament in April 2020.

Kiren Rijiju: "I am very proud of this historic performance by the Indian wrestling team where they won five medals and four Olympic quotas. This function and the rewards are a way of congratulating them and appreciating them for the honour they have brought for the country. The government will help in any which way possible so that there is no shortfall in preparation for the Olympics."