

Press Release

Nonagenarian Marathi scribe calls KIYG a great opportunity

Pune, January 13: Khelo India Youth Games 2019 at the Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex had a special visitor in the form of 91-year-old Hemant Jogdeo, formerly of Marathi daily Kesari and now busy with a series of books about his beloved Olympic Games.

His love for sport is unmatched and he wanted to see the KIYG, which he says is a great opportunity and platform for the youngsters.

In 1976, Jogdeo became the first vernacular journalist from Maharashtra to be accredited to the Olympics. Back then, the Indian Olympic Association would hand out the few opportunities available to a handful of select newspapers but Jogdeo's persistence ensured that he would travel to Montreal, Canada, for the Games.

The Olympics have remained a lifelong passion for the nonagenarian. As a result, he has authored 10 books, including an 800-page publication titled "Olympic Madhe Athletics" (Athletics at the Olympics). Even today, Jogdeo refuses to lay down his journalistic pen, so to say.

"What retirement?" he retorts with twinkling eyes. "I work between 10 and 12 hours a day even now, Each book takes about a year to put together and some of them are for children, in full colour and artwork."

He added, "I started in journalism in 1960 and for the next 15 years, divided my time between that and a day job. Once I retired from the state government job, I took up writing on sports full time.

"Not only was I the first Marathi language journalist at the Olympics, I was also the first to write a book in my language on the Games. I plan to write one book on each sport at the Games."

A visit to Olympia, site of the Ancient Olympics remains one of the highlights of Jogdeo's life. "The Olympics were first held in 776 BC and to visit that place was a very special feeling. I came back and wrote about that as well, a 200-page volume," Jogdeo recalls, digging into his razor-sharp memory.

The good Punekar that he is, Jogdeo is immensely proud of the Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex and the facilities it offers its athletes. "This is the first and best such complex in India," he says. "Facilities here are, may be not equal, but somewhat equal to what are available at the Olympic Games."

Make of that what you will, but Hemant Jogdeo is certain he is right.