

## Press Release

### **Maharashtra's gymnastics coach, Babhulkar, says SAI facilities and financial support have played a big role**

**Pune, January 12:** Having the backing of a home crowd is something players look forward to, but having the constant backing of a coach is what they thrive on. Maharashtra's gymnastics coach Mahendra Babhulkar has been successful in providing that support to his trainees.

Reflecting upon his team's impressive start to the Khelo India Youth Games, Babhulkar said, "I have observed that a major part of the credit for success in gymnastics goes to the coach. But I believe execution on the big day is crucial, and I'm glad that my athletes have delivered so far."

Maharashtra bagged as many as 23 medals in the under-17 gymnastics category.

Babhulkar and his team got the opportunity to practice at the Balewadi Sports Complex a few days before the Games began. He recognized the fact that the preparatory camp prior to the event helped them as they practiced with the same equipment and apparatus that would be used at the event.

Many of his young gymnasts have been training at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) training centre in Aurangabad, Maharashtra. Speaking about the same, Babhulkar added that having a SAI training centre in the state makes a huge difference to the way his gymnasts train as the facilities and equipment provided there are very good and add efficiency in training.

Maharashtra were buoyed by fantastic performances from Shreyas Mandlik, Krishna Chheda, and twin sisters Riddhi and Siddhi Hattekar who bagged a major share of the medals in the under-17 category.

Shreyas Mandlik missed out on a medal in the men's artistic all-round category but made a perfect comeback, clinching medals in all of the four individual apparatus events he played in.

The 15-year old who hails from Thane, thanked his coach for his victory. "I wasn't feeling very confident initially, but words of inspiration from my coach turned things around. I still cannot believe I won four medals, and I am grateful to my coach and my family who have always believed in me," said Mandlik who won a gold and earned two silver along with a bronze.

A strong support from parents and family is very vital to a sportsperson, and Babhulkar stressed on the importance of the same. "I am proud of the fact that the parents of these gymnasts have been equally passionate. There have been many talented athletes in the past who stopped pursuing sport due to family pressure, and I am glad there are no signs of that in my team. The support from parents is as crucial as my support to the players," he added.

He also lauded the move by the government that provides financial support to the athletes at the Khelo India Games. "Such financial incentives add to the players' motivation while also giving a bit of relief to the parents, as those funds can be utilized for further training," said Babhulkar, signing off, as he turned his focus back to his young gymnasts.