

Sports Minister Kiren Rijju interacts with corporates, says that all stakeholders need to move in same direction to take India forward.

New Delhi, July 8: Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijju spoke on the importance of promoting fitness and sport and the need for corporate-government partnership in achieving these goals, during an online webinar titled "Role of Corporate India for Fit India". The webinar which was organised by the Associated Chambers of Commerce in India (ASSOCHAM) in association with Fit India, saw Rijju interact with members from the corporate world as he encouraged them to get more involved in sports and promoting fitness.

The Sports Minister complimented ASSOCHAM for taking a lead in promoting the Fit India Movement which was launched by the Prime Minister in August 2019. He also said that it is important that fitness be made a way of life as it helps in developing a great sporting culture for the country. He mentioned that 2.5 lakh schools have registered under the Fit India Movement as of last week and to achieve such a thing in just 6-7 months is a big achievement. "Sports has to be seen as a career option in India and viewed as something offering dignity and respect. There is no shortage of human resources in our country. It is important that at the grassroots level that we promote sports culture and we will be encouraging schools to adopt all kinds of activities to encourage sports and fitness," said the minister.

He also added that every district in the country will have a centre of excellence. Moreover he also mentioned that he is in discussion with the Union HRD Minister that sports will not just be an extra-curricular activity but a part of education.

In his interaction with members from the industry, the Minister said the role of corporates in sports is much more now than what it used to be, "It is heartening to see the corporate world come forward to support sports, those top athletes who are identified by the federations, they can use facilities developed by the corporates. Sports federation, government and corporates all have to come together and move in the same direction."

Rijju reiterated his desire to see India in the top 10 of the 2028 Olympics medal standings and outlined how he expects it to be accomplished, "Winning 10-12 gold medals is usually good enough to get into the top 10 of the Olympics medal tally. We have identified 14 disciplines as priority sports, these include archery, boxing, wrestling, shooting, hockey, fencing. If we see some other sports, we will add them into priority sports."

He added, "It's critical that we start the process of talent scouting and identification as early as possible. If we spot a 10 year-old boy now, he will be 18 when the 2028 Olympics will take place. Our Khelo India Games are becoming very popular, if we spot potential, we will pick them up even if they have not won a medal at the Khelo India Games. We will have a talent identification scout in every region and in every sport."

The minister added that the reason he started a TOPS scheme for junior athletes is keeping in mind his long-term goal of the 2028 Olympics and that India as a country cannot be satisfied by winning one or two medals at the Olympics and should aim higher. "What other thing than an Olympic gold medal gives the country so much satisfaction? If you win a World Cup or an Olympic gold, it boosts the entire country's morale," he said.

Others present during the webinar were Rajesh Kharabanda (MD of Nivia Sports), Karan Ahluwalia (Yes Bank), Sanjeeva Singh (Tata), Monjit Sharma (COO, IOS Sports), Vineet Agarwal (Senior VP, Assocham), Manisha Malhotra (Former Tennis player and Head of Sports Excellence and Scouting at JSW Sports) and VM Prabhu Desai.

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