

Press Release

Sports Minister urges states to host annual Khelo India Games to strengthen grassroots-level talent identification

New Delhi, August 4, 2020: Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Shri. Kiren Rijju chaired the 1st General Council meeting of the Khelo India Scheme today and addressed officials of state sports departments and other central ministries. Speaking at the meeting, he urged the states to organise State-level Khelo India Games annually with an effort to identify a larger number of grassroots-level talents. The meeting was attended by Sports Secretary Ravi Mital, Director General, Sports Authority of India, Sandip Pradhan and other senior officials of the sports ministry.

“The annual competitions being organized at the national level under the Khelo India Scheme, like the Khelo India Youth Games and University Games, have helped to identify sporting talent from all states. However, that is not enough. Every state can organize annual Khelo India Games to identify grassroots-level talent and to give a larger platform to sporting talent from the state. States that already conduct annual sporting competitions can align with the Khelo India Scheme and the Centre will support them in conducting these events.”

Speaking about the importance of identifying grassroots-level talent, the Sports Minister said, “To make India a sporting superpower, we need to identify talent as young as 5-10 years old and groom them to be future champions. It takes at least 8 years to groom an athlete for the Olympics, and if we identify talent at a later stage, then their chances of making it to the Olympic podium is limited. Therefore, the states must concentrate on identifying young talent and to do that organizing competitions at the state, district, block and panchayat-level is crucial.”

The Sports Minister spoke of the 5 zonal talent scouting committees that are being planned for east, west, north, south and north east India and asked for active participation of the states in assisting these committees in identifying grassroots-level talent in 24 sporting disciplines. “Identified talent can then be trained at state government or SAI centers. We need inputs from the state governments in identifying talent,” he said.

The Minister also stressed on the need for states to identify their best sporting infrastructure for the Khelo India State Centre of Excellence (KISCE), on priority. “We have already identified 8 states where KISCE will be set up. The Sports Ministry has also received proposals from 13 states, which are being finalized. The KISCE is a great opportunity for states to have a state-of-the-art infrastructure in training senior athletes from all over the country in select sports and excelling in them. The Centre is ready to fund and support the states in this, and therefore, I urge every state to urgently identify the infrastructure that they would like to earmark for KISCE.”

State representatives showed keen interest in working closely with the Sports Ministry on the executing the plans discussed by the Sports Minister, with many of them sharing details of already existing state-level annual competitions and grassroots-level talent identification schemes.

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