



## **Sreeshankar confident that he can nail a 8.35m leap in Tokyo2020**

**New Delhi, May 22:** Long jumper M Sreeshankar is confident about his chances at the Tokyo Olympic Games, believing that an 8.35m jump will earn him a medal. The 22 year-old, now training in the Government Medical College in Palakkad, Kerala said his realistic aim would be to jump between 8.35m and 8.40m as his father and coach Muralidaran has envisaged.

“I am figuring out my performance parameters every day. I am getting closer to that big target. There is good enough time left to sharpen the skills. I have some experience of the big events and I am confident in my abilities, I have to be strong in the mental aspect to be at my best in Tokyo,” he told a media interaction facilitated by the Sports Authority of India today.

Having spent much of the last two years away from competitive action with a heel injury and then the suspension of competitions because of the pandemic, Sreeshankar made a victorious return with an 8.07m at the Indian Grand Prix-2 and then with a jump of 8.26m in the Federation Cup to rewrite his own national record and book a ticket to the Tokyo Games.

“When I jumped 8.26m, I took off 10 cm behind the line. With the runway in Tokyo being better, I can jump more than 8.26m if the other parameters are in my favour,” he said. “Besides, I felt I was in better rhythm back in 2018 when I jumped 8.20m than in Patiala in March this year. The conditions in Tokyo will enable me achieve my goals.”

He is aware that he will be up against high quality competitors in Tokyo, but is focusing on giving his best “The fact that competitors who have jumped past 8.50m acts as a motivation but, in the Olympics, it matters what you do on that day. I need to focus on myself and on giving my best. I am sure if I jump around 8.35m I will land a medal.”

Despite the pandemic, Sreeshankar is in a positive frame of mind and says that his training has remained unaffected. “I know my responsibility to the country as a sportsman, as an Olympic hopeful so I am 100 per cent committed towards fulfilling that responsibility towards my nation. So nothing comes in my mind when I think about an Olympic medal,” he said.

A final year B. Sc. Math student in the Government Victoria College in Pallakad, he is happy with the balance that maintains between academics and sport despite the tough daily schedule over the last five or six years. Both his parents have been athletes with his father being a triple jumper and mother an 800m runner.

Sreeshankar has already received his first Covid-19 vaccine dose and is hopeful of competing in competitions in Kazakhstan and Kyrgystan but if travel restrictions prevent that, he will compete in India. “Hopefully, the Federation will be able to bring in some good competition from overseas in the National Inter-State Championships,” he said.

Sreeshankar is a part of the Target Olympic Podium Scheme and has so far received Rs. 19.76 lakhs as financial support in the Olympic cycle. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has supported Athletics Federation of India through the Annual Calendar for Training and Competition (ACTC) by



sanctioning Rs. 32.52 crore in 2020-21.

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