

Press Release

Finding talent for the future is the key component of SAI's plans at Khelo India

Pune, January 15: Ever since the Khelo India Youth Games were flagged off a little over a week ago, teams of talent spotters have been at work at the various venues. They have been brought in by the Sports Authority of India in relays to track performances in their assigned events and present a short list of those found worthy of following on a long terms basis.

One of the stated aims of the Khelo India programme is to use the Youth Games as a resource base. With the government having set up the Target Olympics scheme, the Youth Games are being looked at as a feeder for the larger pool that is looking at the Tokyo Games and beyond.

Says A.K. Bansal, head of the Sports Authority of India's talent identification programme and the man in charge of the spotters at work here, "Our target is to find 495 prospects from these Games. Towards that, we will be bringing in about 150 scouts as and when their particular sport is being played.

"The work is being done at two levels, first through the Talent Screening Committee (TSC) and thereafter through the Talent Identification and Development Committee (TIDC). Each and every member of these two committees are either eminent former players or coaches, many of them Arjuna or Dronacharya Award winners. There was no other criteria to pick them."

"In all, 20 sports have been shortlisted of which 17 are being played here and as per need, we have been bringing in spotters. In cases of measurable disciplines like athletics, shooting, swimming etc, criteria have been set for the number of inductees to our Khelo India talent pool, of course subject to age and medical verification."

"For team events, our spotters are drawing up shortlists on the basis of which we will call the athletes for assessment camps over five to seven days as per the need and nature of the sport where a final selection will be made."

"So far though, what we have seen is that a large number of winners and runners up in the individual events are already in the talent pool which we created after the Khelo India School Games last year in Delhi. In such cases, we are looking beyond the first two, which was our primary criteria, of the athlete really has potential."

"We also have six performance managers, all highly qualified coaches, who will monitor the process."

Those short-listed at KIYG are immediately eligible to a government grant worth Rs 10,000 per month and are enrolled at one of the 80-odd academies that are supported under Khelo India.

Most of these are SAI units but also include state government academies and increasingly, private institutions such as the Prakash Padukone and Pullela Gopichand badminton academies, Gagan Narang's shooting school for example. More are in the pipeline.

Adds Bansal, "Schemes are being drawn up to monitor progress of the inductees and there will be a weeding out process as well to add or remove those who are not meeting performance criteria. The Games here are just the first step. The follow-up and monitoring process is equally, if not more important. That is why such detailed schemes have been put in place."