

Commonwealth Secretary General hails Fit India Movement on global Ministerial Forum; Kiren Rijiju says fitness awareness has helped Indians build immunity during pandemic

New Delhi, July 24, 2020: Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Shri. Kiren Rijiju attended the Ministerial Forum of Commonwealth countries to share India's road to resumption of sport, post Covid 19, and also to contribute to the creation of a collaborative sports policy in the post pandemic era. Speaking at the global forum, which saw participation from all Commonwealth countries, Shri. Rijiju said, "As members of Commonwealth nations we need to stand in solidarity on all issues, especially at a time like this. I am glad to be on this forum with all other Commonwealth nations to collaborate on the way forward. Most of the points raised here by Ministers from other countries are similar to that of India's. However, there are some significant learnings and achievements that we have had during this period, which I would like to share."

Pointing to the importance of citizens staying fit during the pandemic, the Sports Minister said, "I would like to inform all ministers on this forum that a very important programme, the Fit India Movement, was launched by our Honourable Prime Minister last year, and it has been very useful in fighting the pandemic since building fitness and immunity is crucial during these Covid times. India has successfully created awareness about the importance of staying fit through a series of dedicated online programmes for citizens on fitness and well-being, all through the pandemic. Experts have shared their advice on health, nutrition, exercises that citizens of all age groups has used successfully." Ms. Patricia Scotland QC, Secretary General of the Commonwealth lauded this step by India as a unique initiative to fight the pandemic.

Sh. Rijiju also spoke of diversification of sports delivery models and shared how India is successfully running online training programmes for athletes and skill upgradation courses for coaches. "We have seen participation from thousands of athletes of various levels and coaches who have been hugely benefitted by these knowledge enhancement programmes," he said.

However, in the second phase of lockdown, on-ground training and conducting sporting activities will be the focus of the Indian government, he reiterated. "The government has allowed some sporting activities with certain restrictions while following a stringent SOP, the guidelines that must be followed by every sporting organisation. I am happy to inform that the training of our elite, Olympic-bound athletes has begun in specialised camps, recently. I have also spoken to the sports ministers of all states and union territories, as well as the National Sports Federations and asked them to slowly resume some sporting events. We need that to boost the confidence of people. I am hopeful India will have sporting events from September or October, even the big leagues in various sports are considering resumption," the Sports Minister said.

Sh. Rijiju also shared the contribution of the youth volunteers of the Youth Affairs Ministry in the fight against Covid. "As Youth Affairs Minister, I have 6 million youth volunteers who have worked relentlessly to help civil bodies and citizens during Covid. Now, they are creating awareness about the new schemes that have been launched by the government to aid the poor in the unlock phase. The government has decided to give free ration to the poor of the country till November, and our volunteers are creating awareness in towns and remote villages about these schemes of the government that they can benefit from."

While hailing the collaborative spirit of the commonwealth nations, Shri. Rijju said, “I must thank the Commonwealth Games Committee for agreeing to add the disciplines of shooting and archery to the 2022 Commonwealth Games. Though, these competitions will be held in India and not in the UK, but I still thank the committee for heeding India’s request and feel that this kind of accommodative attitude can strengthen the bond of the Commonwealth Nations.”

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