



**The tweet from PM Sir helped me recover; the support I got from the entire country despite losing gave me the energy to move forward: Bhavani Devi**

**28<sup>th</sup> July, New Delhi:** Her run in her debut Olympics may have ended, but India's first fencer at the Olympics, C A Bhavani Devi is being hailed as a winner by the entire country. Speaking at a press conference facilitated by the Sports Authority of India, Bhavani said that the support she got from the entire nation, during her match and even after she lost, has given her the energy to move ahead. "Tokyo is my first Olympics, but it's not like you can't win a medal in your first Olympics. So, when I went to Tokyo, I went there to win a medal for my country and when I lost in the second round, I was very disappointed. So, I posted (tweet) about my feelings because I knew people were looking out for my performance. I got a lot of positive responses, which made me very happy, because a medal winner always gets a lot of encouragement, but even those who don't win need that support, and I could see that change in the country. And when I saw the response of PM Sir, I thought to myself, how can a leader post such encouraging words for an athlete who has lost the match. As an athlete, we know that winning and losing is a part of sport and we have to move forward but sometimes it is difficult to self-motivate and take that one step to move forward ...but his message encouraged and motivated me because I thought when the leader of the country is supporting you then you don't need to worry about anything else. His message helped me recover. After his tweet even more people sent me very positive messages and that really gave me the energy to move forward. This encouragement is not just important for me, but for every athlete in the country," said Bhavani.

The 27-year-old said that she sees a bright future for fencing in India because there is the right support being extended for the sport. "There are fencers in the TOPS Developmental group who are being prepared for the 2024 and 2028 Olympics. Moreover, a large number of training centres have been planned across the country which will ensure that athletes get access to proper equipment to train with since fencing is an equipment-intensive game. However, the popularity of any sport depends on the interest that people show in it and during my Olympic participation I realized that the interest in fencing is growing because of my qualification. Many people watched my match even though it was very early in the morning in India and that was very heartening to know. As long as an athlete has that mental support from people of the country, he or she can still bounce back," she adds.

**EOM**