

## Press Release

Kiren Rijju assures elite athletes training will be resumed, says concrete decision possible only after consultation with MHA and drawing up SOP of on-field norms

New Delhi, May 12, 2020: Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports sought suggestions from elite athletes of athletics housed in Sports Authority of India's National Center of Excellence in Patiala and Bangalore to understand their requirement to resume training once the nation-wide lockdown is lifted. Sports Minister spoke to more than 40 athletes from various disciplines, among them Hima Das, Neeraj Chopra, Tajinder Toor, Kt Irfan, Shivpal Singh, Poovamma, Jinson Johnson, Md. Anas.

Every athlete shared their concern about losing out on real time training owing to the global Corona pandemic and requested for on-ground training to be started within the SAI campuses in Bangalore and Patiala. The meeting was attended by Ravi Mital, Secretary Sports, Sandip Pradhan, Director General, Sports Authority of India, Adille Sumariwalla, President, Athletics Federation of India, Volker Hermann, High Performance Director, Athletics Federation of India and several senior coaches and SAI officials.

Speaking at the interaction Adille Summeriwala said, "Athletes want to resume training but we have made it clear to them that they will have to strictly adhere to the guidelines of social distancing and health protocols which will be decided in the Standard Operating Procedures being prepared by SAI and Ministry. Also, they have been told that even when the lockdown is lifted they cannot venture out of the camps since they have been living in a protected environment since March and are more prone to getting infected. If any athlete leaves the camp after the lockdown is lifted, we will not allow him or her to come back and train."

Volker Hermann, who is currently in Patiala feels that the presence of two athletic tracks and two gyms at NCEO Patiala makes it possible for athletes to start their training in batches without the risk of compromising on social distancing norms. "We have already laid out a plan which allows minimum numbers of athletes to train at a particular time, yet the daily schedule allows for everyone to train."

Speaking about the need to get back to the ground again, race-walker KT Irfan, who has already qualified for the Tokyo Olympics and is in NCEO Bangalore, told the Sports Minister, "I am already doing core training and other fitness training inside the room and in the stretch of greens outside my room. However, I need to clock a minimum mileage every week and that is only possible if I get back to regular training. If I can train on the tracks or on the road inside the campus, it will be good enough for me."

"I am ready to follow all rules and train at any time of the day or night that is assigned to me as per the schedule made by our coaches. I don't mind training even at night," said javelin thrower Shivpal Singh, who has already qualified for Tokyo Olympics.

“Since there are two athletic tracks in Patiala and we don’t need to train in groups, we can easily maintain social distancing,” said sprinter Hima Das

Addressing the athletes, Sports Minister assured them that the decision to begin training will be taken soon. “We have already made the committee to set up the Standard Operating Procedures to be followed by athletes, coaches and other staff during training. Your suggestions will help us frame the rules better. I am hopeful that we will be able to come up with a concrete decision soon. However, this is a national emergency and no ministry can work in isolation. We will have to consult the Ministry of Home Affairs as well as the health ministry and take their directions. I am happy that all of you are in a positive frame of mind and are keen to start training. Even we are keen that you get back on the field, but it has to be done in a planned manner so that none of you are exposed to any health hazard.”

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