

Press Release

Government is setting up talent scouting squads to identify potential athletes for Olympic 2028: Kiren Rijju

New Delhi, April 29: Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Shri. Kiren Rijju said on Wednesday that talent scouting for Olympic 2028 is already underway and that the government will form specialised talent scouting squads consisting of veteran players, present and retired coaches to tour every part of the country and identify potential talent at a young age. "We have set ourselves a goal of having India in the top 10 countries in the Olympic 2028 medal tally. It is an ambitious goal, but not impossible. We have already started scouting for young talent and after the Covid19 pandemic is over, the government will form specialised squads for each sporting discipline consisting of present and veteran coaches and athletes. These teams will travel to every district of the country to scout for raw talent. We still have 8 years to prepare for 2028 and I am confident with the correct policies, India can feature in the list of Top 10 countries," said the Sports Minister while addressing an online knowledge enhancement session of table tennis coaches, which was attended by celebrated Indian table tennis player Kamlesh Mehta, secretary of The Table Tennis Federation of India MP Singh, and conducted by eminent Table Tennis coach Massimo Constantini from his home in Italy.

Massimo, who has been India's national coach in two phases, is credited for India's big medal hauls in the 2018 Commonwealth Games and Asian Games. "2018 was a landmark year for table tennis in India because by winning the two bronze medals in the Asian Games we proved that our level has improved significantly. The strongest table-tennis playing countries participate in the Asian Games and if we could clinch medals there, we can even win medals in the Olympics," said the Sports Minister. He said that time is right to strengthen and popularise the game in India, especially with 27 Indian players in the top 100 and 17 of them in the top 50 in the world rankings. "Table Tennis needs very limited infrastructure and it can be played by youngsters in any part of the country. I really see a lot of potential in this sport and government policies are being framed to create more infrastructure and training facilities for table tennis at the district, state and national level. I will also personally visit some good academies and urge them to include table tennis training. Given the standard of the game in India right now, I feel that by 2028, we should be able to clinch some medals in TT at the Olympics," he said.

The Sports Minister said it is important to organise more leagues in table tennis at the district, state and national levels to popularise the game and motivate more youngsters to take it up. "I attended the Ultimate Table Tennis league last year and feel that leagues of this kind can help to make the sport popular and also commercialise it. It is important for corporates to show interest in creating such leagues in table tennis and in all sports so that with corporate funding and government patronage, the sporting ecosystem in the country becomes more robust."