

## Press Release

### **KIYG shows Delhi are a cut above the rest, but judo is gaining in popularity**

**Pune, January 16:** Delhi judokas proved to be a cut above the rest and ended up in the numero uno position. It was as if the script was written in advance, as Delhi from the first day consistently picked up three gold medals on all four days.

Ending up with a whopping 12 gold, 3 silver and 6 bronze, Delhi remained only state to have a double-digit gold tally in judo. The closest was Punjab with 4 gold, while Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and hosts Maharashtra had three each.

Delhi's dominance primarily came in the Under-17 and Under-21 girls' section, handing them eight out of 12 gold, which included international medallists Tulika Maan (Above 78kgs), Jakarta Asian Games silver medallist Pinky Balhara (Below 52 kgs).

A shot in the arm for the sport is that 22 of the 29 participating states won medals. That indicates a growing interest in judo.

Coach Sheelak Ram Bhardwaj, explains, "Overall Delhi has a good culture and many parents encourage their daughters purely for self-defence. This in turn has continuity with regular competitions that are held throughout the year."

"The coaches are to be credited equally and are quite competitive as well to get results. To coaches the results matter as it also translates into popularity of the academy."

While Bhardwaj touched upon the fact that more centres of excellence in Delhi need to come up, he added, "Our dominance here in Pune should be an eye opener."

Adding that a Delhite generally has a good diet in place which works in advantage, he explains, "The trainees want to push themselves and utilise even the holidays for serious practice."

"We came here to win," he adds. Delhi, this year, for the record did well in the SGFI Nationals across all age groups.

Another factor that Delhi had in their arsenal was the presence of a host of internationals who many looked up to in competition.

In the corresponding boy's event, Punjab and Haryana gave Delhi a tough fight winning 2 golds each. In the Under-17 section, Punjab steered clear on the silver count as compared to Delhi, while in the Under-21 section Haryana topped edging Punjab and Delhi in the silver and bronze medal count.

The boys section had a fair degree of competition and included Jakarta Asian Games member Harshdeep Singh Brar (Punjab) and Sachin Malik (Delhi).

The fact, however is that the sport continues to be dominated states from the North. Consider this; between nine states won a huge chunk of 22 gold, 17 silver and 24 bronze.

In comparison, states from the South could not muster a gold. However, the surprise was the athletic and football loving state of Kerala who cornered eight medals (2 silver & 6 bronze).

From the East, Manipur remained the flagbearer with Youth Olympics silver medallist and Asian Championship gold winner Tababi Devi Thangjam (Below-52kgs) and Maibam Indubala Devi (Below78 kgs) leading from the front.

Interestingly, the surprise packet was Arunachal Pradesh, who as a wild card entry won two silver medals via the individual effort of Kabin Doyom (Under 17 & Under-21 girls, Below-48kg) category respectively. They also had 2 bronze to their credit.

Arunachal Pradesh came through the wild card entry system handed to those states who had lesser participation during inaugural KIYG an initiative powered by the Govt/ GTCC. Arunachal's haul via this system has proved to be a gateway for talent scouting.

Hosts Maharashtra led the challenge from the West. In picking up 3 golds they along with Gujarat (2 gold) and Rajasthan (1 gold) remained the only zone that had all medal-winning state contribute gold.

The three gold that Maharashtra won were; in the Under-17 section; Dev Thapa (Boys; Below 66kgs), Apoorva Patil (Girls, Above 63kgs) and Tanvin Tamboli (Under-21 Girls Below 70kgs), which earned them fifth position.

With the state government's Krida Prabodhini, located in Pune, shortlisted as an affiliate of the Khelo India Talent Development programme this year, there is certainly a brighter future for Maharashtra in the time to come.