



Sports Ministry gives go-ahead to open 16 Khelo India Centres in Manipur, Kunjarani Devi and Sarita Devi hail the move saying it will benefit state's youth

Imphal: The Sports Ministry has approved 16 Khelo India Centres (KICs) in districts across Manipur, at a cost of Rs 1.60 crores. Setting up of KICs in Manipur is part of the larger plan of the Sports Ministry to open 1000 new KICs in all states and UTs, with at least one KIC in each district of the country. The decision was taken in June 2020.

The 16 centres in Manipur are part of 143 new centers approved in 7 states last week. With this, the total number of KICs in the country stands at 360. The KICs have been launched by the Sports Ministry in partnership with the state governments to ensure the availability of grassroots-level sports infrastructure across the country. Speaking about the decision, Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Kiren Rijiju says, "It is our endeavour to make India one among the top 10 countries in the 2028 Olympics. To fulfill this goal we need to identify and nurture a large number of talented sportspersons from an early age. With the availability of good coaches and equipment facilities at the district-level Khelo India Centres, I am confident that we will be able to find the right children for the right sport and at the right time."

Lauding this initiative taken by the Sports Ministry to further strengthen the sports ecosystem across the country and Manipur in particular, Padma Shri and Khel Ratna awardee weightlifter Kunjarani Devi says it will be a big boost for the youth of the state, "The Indian government has done a very good thing with this decision to open these new Khelo India centres. The Sports University has already opened in Manipur. With the opening of these KICs, it will be a big advantage for both Manipur and India. Those children who are financially weak will advance with this. It is a great future plan for Indian sports."

Three-time world championship medalist in boxing L Sarita Devi has also hailed the move saying that it will help the youth of the state find purpose in their lives, "This is a very happy news. Many new players will emerge after this. In Manipur, there has always been a sports culture. With these facilities coming up, the talent will be harnessed now. Since the time I started in 2001-02, many more youngsters are now beginning to be involved with sport. Sports will keep youngsters away from bad habits and they will find a new road for themselves. Sports is also something which will allow children to feel the love of the country."

While providing good quality infrastructure to the sporting talent in the state, the KICs will also act as an employment generator for sportspersons from the state who are not in an active playing career any longer. As part of the partnership with the centre and to be eligible for the grant from the Sports Ministry, the Manipur government will have to hire past 'Champion Athletes' as coaches and mentors for young trainees at these centers.



A one-time initial grant of Rs 5 lakh each will be provided for the preparation and upgradation of sports fields, purchase of sports equipment, sports kits, and so on. The annual recurring grant for every centre is also Rs 5 lakh each for a period of four years, which can be extended further for remuneration of the past champion athlete as coach, support staff, purchase of equipments, sports kits, consumables, participation in competition and events.

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