

Sports Minister Kiren Rijju and sports legend Gagan Narang discuss importance of fitness in webinar organised by Fit India and Institute of Company Secretaries in India

New Delhi, 29th May: Union Sports and Youth Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju was part of an hour-long webinar along with Indian sports legend and bronze medallist, 2012 London Olympics Gagan Narang in a discussion titled "Fitness! A Way of life". The discussion was moderated by renowned sports commentator Manish Batavia and was organised by Institute of Company Secretaries in India in association with Fit India. In the webinar, Rijju and Narang spoke on a wide range of issues that included the importance of fitness, getting children to play, Yoga, indigenous sports, Olympics and how to take the positives away from the lockdown imposed by coronavirus.

Speaking on fitness, Rijju said that the citizens of India have a big role to play in India becoming a sporting powerhouse. Adding that children must receive opportunities to play, he spoke of the role that Khelo India has played to this end.

Rijju said, "We have tradition of sports in our country but have unfortunately not become a big sporting nation because sport has not become a culture. We need to draw inspiration from the past. Khelo India is a great initiative, we are reaching out to every nook and corner of the country. It can't be that children want to play, but they need the opportunity. Once we have sports culture, we can create excellence. We need to move children away from electronic gadgets. We need to have an active culture. Natural growth of human beings should be allowed to take place at own pace." The minister added that more than 1.6 lakh schools have got registered under the Fit India Movement.

2012 London Olympics bronze medallist in 10m Air Rifle, Gagan Narang emphasised on the importance of mental fitness and why physical and mental fitness must complement each other. Narang who started shooting at the age of 14, had earlier dabbled in cricket, tennis and football and said he zeroed in on shooting because it challenged his mental abilities.

Narang said, "Shooting is 98% mental, 2% physical. In this current lockdown scenario, the role of being mentally fit is very important. If you aren't mentally fit to make decisions it reflects poorly. Physical and mental fitness complement each other. If you aren't mentally fit, you don't get the thought. Shooting is a tough sport to play, and it takes a lot of physical and mental fitness to play it. Demand of shooting is such nowadays with the kind of competition there is, that you can't compete at the highest level without being physically fit."

The Minister and Narang also spoke on the upcoming Yoga day and said that not only is it a great form of fitness but has considerably improved India's image on the world stage. Rijju said, "After Buddhism, Yoga is the biggest soft power that has gone out of India. I am very happy about the way Yoga has transformed the image of India. Major cities of the world, smaller towns and villages are doing Yoga. It is one of the best ways of remaining fit."

Narang also spoke of his experience at the 2016 Olympics where international athletes met him and others in their India kit and asked them about Yoga. Narang said that in his academies, they make sure that Yoga and other physical fitness activities complement shooting.

Rijju also spoke about reactivating indigenous sports and activities and while they may not be a part of the Olympics and Asian Games as yet, he will be looking at integrating them into competition from next year.

Narang spoke about the lockdown and how not just athletes but others must take the positives away from the entire experience, he said, "Lockdown has given us self-realisation. What we used to think is valuable, is not valuable anymore. Eating right and at the right time is very important. Because of the lockdown, people are taking care of their health. The lockdown has been a boon for some. We must

take the lessons of this lockdown. Take care of our mind, body, families and become a positive human being.”

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