

HRD Minister Dr RP Nishank, Sports Minister Kiren Rijju, badminton star PV Sindhu and Indian football skipper Sunil Chhetri bat for kids' fitness and sports

July 3, New Delhi: The first session of the Fit India Talks remained intriguing in several ways in the presence of Union Minister of Human Resource Development Dr. RP Nishank, Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijju as well as badminton star PV Sindhu and Indian football team skipper Sunil Chhetri.

The speakers, in this interactive and motivational session, spoke on the need for fitness and the stunning benefits of playing sports.

"India has given a leadership and vision to the world in the form of yoga and we have always been a powerhouse. We have been proficient in everything we have done so far and have to keep reaching new heights. In the next 25 years, I am sure the Young India will help us in achieving that dream. The Sports Ministry is doing very well under the leadership of Kiren Rijju ji. I requested him to talk to our 33 crore-strong school children and he duly obliged. For Fit India, several campaigns have been launched under his leadership and Kiren ji makes me run all the time in these different campaigns as well as for general fitness. We assure you Kiren ji that we will keep on increasing the reach of the Fit India movement. Sports and Education go hand in hand. If a body is not fit, where will the fit wisdom come from?" mentioned Dr. RP Nishank.

Sports Minister Kiren Rijju also heaped laurels on the positive effect the Fit India movement has had in less than a year. "Fit India is becoming people's movement in the truest sense. Majority of our 1.3 billion population consist of school children. In the last 8-9 months, 2.5 lakh schools have registered under Fit India. Without the help of Dr. Nishank, this wouldn't have happened. Together, we attended functions in launching the Fit India School Week. Our Prime Minister's vision is to create a fit nation and the movement is growing very well. We have a committed team in our ministry and multiple sports stars are taking forward this movement. On August 29 this year, we will complete one year of Fit India's launch. In this one year, we can show where we have reached. It has been a complete people's movement," said the Sports Minister.

"If you are not physically fit, everything else becomes futile. Therefore, it is very necessary to do yoga or normal exercise and play sports. Those who can't play sports can stay fit. India has a rich tradition of sports but unfortunately we couldn't create a culture. Our campaigns like the plog run have become big successes and going forward, there are more coming. After 8-9 years, we can see ourselves become a complete fit nation. There is lots of enthusiasm among youth to stay fit and I am happy everyone has accepted the Fit India movement as a universal campaign," Kiren Rijju added.

The Sports Minister also revealed that the Government is doing its best to ensure India is among the top 10 countries at the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

"Olympics is the biggest event on the planet. When India doesn't win a medal or figure in the rankings, it really hurts. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi set up the Olympic task force, I closely studied it and after becoming a sports minister, I set a target that by 2028 India must be in the top 10 and it is achievable. There is a series of planning programs going behind it from scouting, talent identification, customized training, exposure trips, all the possible facilities, getting the top coaches in the world. We have made a big base through Khelo India and through many other processes we have started the

talent identification. We are going to start a Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) Junior besides the already existing TOPS senior. We are going to start for the juniors as well for the 10-12 year olds. If we can identify the potential, Govt will take full care of them in grooming, so that they are ready by the time for 2024 Paris and 2028 Los Angeles. If the Govt takes them under their tutelage, then their parents will not have any worries. This is a dream for India to be in top 10. We have all the potential, support, aspirations of the people and we have to be united. PM created the task force with this vision and recommendations have come and we are in the process of implementation. I am very confident that India will be in top 10 in 2028 Los Angeles. I am saying this with full commitment and preparation and after great thought,” said the Sports Minister.

2016 Olympics silver medallist PV Sindhu stressed the importance of sports for school children. “You have to enjoy sports instead of thinking about winning and losing. From grassroots to schools, getting into some kind of sport is really important. If you cannot train for hours, even half an hour or 45 mins is good enough for any age. Studies will go a lot more in your mind. Fitness is very important for every sport and I must say endurance, agility and weight training is important along with mental and physical exercise,” Sindhu said.

Sunil Chhetri, the Indian football team skipper, meanwhile requested the parents to support their children if they want to choose sports as a career. “My request to parents is please support your child in whichever sport he or she wants to play. My parents supported me so that’s why I could express myself. Play, enjoy and think about your body. The moment you start playing, you start being disciplined. The moment you start being disciplined, you start being better. The moment you think better, you will be good in everything that you do. When you play sports, you can do anything better. There is nothing that can teach you more than sports. We have become better persons because of sports. So don’t neglect it. If you play, you’re going to be better in every way. Also, eat more what you need and less what you enjoy. Everyone can play but nobody can follow monotonous food habits. A very important thing is food and sleep in our industry. If you want to be a top athlete, good sleep and food is utmost necessary. Going to the gym and playing sports is easy but being disciplined in what you eat and sleep makes you the best,” Chhetri said.

The session was moderated by sports commentator Manish Batavia. The Fit India Talks sessions are being organized in association with the Sports Authority of India and the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD).