

## Press Release

### **PM sends inspiring message as Maharashtra CM, Mr. Fadnavis and Sports Minister, Col Rathore declare KIYG 2019 open**

**Pune, Jan 9:** Pune, the cultural and technology capital of Maharashtra, said “Suswagatam” in a traditional manner to the Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG) 2019 with a ceremony that was splashed with the pulsating rhythms of the state, its gripping culture and famously colourful outlook to life.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Union Minister of State for Sports Col Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore received the virtual torch before the latter joined athletes in taking the pledge as the Games were declared open at the Shiv Chatrapati Sports Complex here on Wednesday evening.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s message, exhorting participants to take the Games theme of “Paanch Minute Aur” (#5MinuteAur) for sports to heart in making a healthy and wholesome lifestyle their own. “Kheloge toh aur khiloge,” said the PM’s message.

The ceremony reflected Maharashtra’s culture and featured the State’s iconic hero Shivaji Maharaj, a majestic statue of whom can be seen right in the centre of the Balewadi.

Ms Neelam Kapoor, DG, Sports Authority of India and Mr. Navin Agarwal, DG, NADA were present at the Opening.

A host of eminent sportspersons and coaches of note including two-time Olympic wrestling medallist Sushil Kumar, Olympian hockey winners Gurbux Singh and Ajit Pal Singh, badminton legend P Gopichand, shooter Gagan Narang, athletes Sriram Singh and Shiny Wilson, gymnasts Dipa Karmakar and Ashish Kumar and legendary woman footballer Bem Bem Devi were present.

Over 400 youth and children helped make the occasion memorable, presenting acts that included a skit on Shivaji’s childhood, demonstrations of yoga and the indigenous sport malkhamb.

The event officially kicked off the 12-day extravaganza for the 6,000-plus Under-17 and Under-21 athletes gathered here on the day. Eighteen disciplines are being contested including athletics, badminton, boxing, hockey, football and wrestling, among which competition in hockey, gymnastics, wrestling and weightlifting are already under way with Maharashtra, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh having opened their gold medal accounts.

Pune, which has in the past staged the National Games, the Junior Asian Wrestling Championship, the Junior World Volleyball Championship, the World School Badminton Championship and the Commonwealth Youth Games at the sprawling and well-appointed Shree Shivaji Sports Complex, can now add the Khelo India Youth Games 2019.

**DAY 2: G-4; S-4; B-4. Total-12**