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Launches National Sports Talent Search Portal

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that Sport empowers individuals, transform communities and inspire populations for positive change. He was addressing the gathering at the launch of the National Sports Talent Search Portal, an initiative of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, here today. The Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports (I/C), Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Shri Vijay Goel and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that sports play an important role in improving physical and mental health, and fostering active citizenship and social inclusion. He further said that it also inculcates leadership skills, team spirit and enables a person to develop a sense of equanimity during a win or a loss. There is evidence that sport and play enhance child development, learning and encourage better academic performance, he added.

The Vice President said that we need to create good infrastructure for sports in all states and nurture sporting talent from an early age. He further said that across the length and breadth of the country we need more training academies and coaching centres to turn our young men and women into sports stars and role models for succeeding generations. The platform of National Sports Talent Search Portal will be a game changer and enable the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and Sports Authority of India select the best, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am happy to inaugurate National Sports Talent Search Portal, an initiative of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. This kind of initiative will not only help in identifying the best talent, but will also provide a level playing field to all the applicants and create a competitive environment.

Sport is an integral part of nation-building process, as it plays an important role in terms of individual development, community development, social inclusiveness and economic development. One of the most important factors that enable a nation to become a sporting power is the identification and development of right talent. As one-seventh of humanity, there is no dearth of talent in our country, especially with more than 450 million youth. In fact, we are overflowing with talent, but in order to harness it we have to put in place a robust system to spot and nurture talent, and develop world champions.

The platform of National Sports Talent Search Portal will be a game changer and enable the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and Sports Authority of India select the best. I would like to congratulate Shri Vijay Goel for this major initiative, which will go a long way in attracting the best

available sporting talent in the country. This platform will be fast, transparent and provide a mechanism for fair selection. Only meritorious and talented young sportspersons will be selected.

The portal is also available as a Mobile App, which can be downloaded on the smartphones. It gives me lot of satisfaction to know that the talent search portal and App have been developed by IRIS, a highly reputed software and data analytics company, under corporate social responsibility (CSR) support. I congratulate IRIS and the team which developed this valuable platform in close consultation with Sports Authority of India.

Sport empowers individuals, transform communities and inspire populations for positive change. It has become a tool of transformation, weaning villagers away from addiction, breaking caste barriers within the community, bringing women out of the home and empowering them, and reviving spirit and pride in individuals and the village as a whole.

The games foster friendships, unity and a healthy vibrant community. This simple but powerfully uplifting intervention renews the joy and spirit of community kinship. For women, the blossoming of their self-confidence and spirit of initiative in this space is the bedrock for societal change tomorrow.

Sport plays an important role in improving physical and mental health, and fostering active citizenship and social inclusion. It also inculcates leadership skills, team spirit and enables a person to develop a sense of equanimity during a win or a loss.

Sport is a good entry-point for the promotion of life skills-based education and healthy lifestyles, including the values of physical fitness, proper nutrition and how to make choices that positively impact health. There is evidence that sport and play enhance child development, learning and encourage better academic performance. Sport is a powerful social tool, bringing together people from different ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds.

Sports should be an integral part of our everyday life. Some people think that sports is important only for physical well-being, I feel sports is important for overall development of an individual. We are a large and diverse nation. Sports can be a great means of national integration. From sports, we learn sportsman spirit and that acts as a lubricant in our social life. More than winning, sports helps you learn to deal with defeats. Sports helps you become a fighter.

Sport increases self-esteem among adolescent girls and provides opportunities for the advancement of girls in the face of gender-related barriers. Sport can be used to promote a safe and protective environment for children and to teach young people how to solve conflict in a non-violent manner. Sport activities can be low-cost and utilize locally-available resources. Sports help children develop physical skills, get exercise, learn to play as a member of a team, learn to play fair, and improve self-esteem.

Healthy people make a healthy nation. If everybody is active and healthy, they can lead a happy life besides being more productive economically. The importance of health in our country is acknowledged over the ages through the saying 'Aarogyame Maha Bhagyam' which translates to 'Health is Wealth'. That being the case, things are different today. Our country is fast emerging as the 'diabetic capital' of the world. It is because of modern life styles, food habits and declining physical activity. This is a serious socio-economic challenge for our country.

Our country has always been rich in culture and tradition, and games have been an important part of Indian culture from times in memorial. Gradually the time changed and so did our sports.

Traditional Games were not just games; they were designed in such a way that one can develop lot of skills like logical thinking, building strategy, concentration, basic mathematics, aiming, and lot more. During the era of the Rig - Veda, Ramayana and Mahabharata, men of a certain stature

were expected to be well - versed in chariot - racing, archery, military stratagems, swimming, wrestling, horse riding and hunting. While the present-day archers are struggling to hit fixed targets, ages ago, Arjuna hit the 'rotating Fish that is Matsya Yantra' to defeat his fellow contenders and win over Draupadi.

We have come a long way from ancient times and have a huge population of young people whose talent needs to be harnessed. Barring cricket and hockey earlier as team sports, our success in sports events is sporadic and more on account of individual effort and excellence, rather than any State patronage and encouragement. That must change. Be it Sania Mirza, P.V.Sindhu, Saina Nehwal, P. T. Usha, Milkha Singh or Abhinav Bhindra, all of them did themselves and the nation proud through perseverance and tenacity.

As I said, we need to create good infrastructure for sports in all states and nurture sporting talent from an early age. Across the length and breadth of the country we need more training academies and coaching centres to turn our young men and women into sports stars and role models for succeeding generations.

It is my dream, a dream I share with millions of my countrymen, to see India emerge as a major sporting nation in the world. India stands poised on the curve of a major leap in all fields and I am certain that this is true of sports as well, of a time when India will figure prominently in the list of medal-winning nations in Olympics and other sports competitions.

Jai hind.”

KSD/BK

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