



## **Sports Ministry gives go-ahead to open up two Khelo India Centres in Mizoram; Jeje Lalpekhlua lauds the move**

**Aizawl:** The Sports Ministry has approved two Khelo India Centres (KICs) in the state of Mizoram, at a cost of Rs 10 lakh. Setting up of KICs in Mizoram 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 two centers in Mizoram 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 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 Centers, 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 especially Mizoram, Indian professional footballer Jeje Lalpekhlua says “I think this is a great initiative. If every sport can be encouraged in every region of India it will have multiple benefits for India. First, it will produce better sports facilities for the youth and more talent development, second more and more children can play multiple sports and you never know which child can have a talent in which sport, third and most importantly it will encourage our population to be healthy, play sports, learns to be good people, and stay away from unhealthy activity and social evils. Thus, the more the centres the better. There is no doubt about this. I welcome all investment in sports in Mizoram and India.”

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 Mizoram 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 a coach, support staff, purchase of equipments, sports kits, consumables, participation in competition and events.