



Khelo India State Centre of Excellence in Srinagar to add training facilities in Kayaking and Canoeing

Srinagar: In a move that promises to strengthen the already commendable performance of athletes of Jammu and Kashmir in the disciplines of Kayaking and Canoeing, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has decided to include the two water sports disciplines at the Khelo India State Center of Excellence (KISCE) in Srinagar. The J&K Sports Council and the state government had initiated the request for these sporting disciplines to be added. The KISCE, which was launched in April 2021, after revamping facilities in the existing J&K Water Sports Academy in the state, earlier had training facilities only for rowing.

Speaking about the decision, Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Shri. Kiren Rijiju said, “The performance of athletes from the state in kayaking and canoeing have been impressive in international competitions such as the World Championships and the Asian Championship. It has been decided to equip the KISCE in Srinagar with training facilities for the two disciplines so that more sporting talent from the state have the opportunity to excel in the sport and represent India in world-class competition.”

The Sports Authority of India and the Sports Council of J&K will assess the requirements to implement training in the two disciplines, including coaching and equipment support to be added.

Speaking about the development, Lieutenant Governor of J&K, Manoj Sinha said, “We want to ensure maximum utilisation of the Khelo India State Centre of Excellence in Srinagar so that more athletes can be trained here. The addition of these two sporting disciplines will enable greater participation and also draw sporting talent from other states to train here. I am happy that the Sports Ministry and the state Government have worked together to make this possible.”

The endeavour has been welcomed by senior athletes and sports administrators alike. Speaking about the importance of this decision, Prashant Khushwaha, Secretary General, Indian Kayaking and Canoeing Association says, “We are thankful to the Centre for making this decision. Kayaking, Canoeing and Rowing together have a total of 63 medals in the Olympics. If we can provide training to youngsters in these disciplines then India’s medal haul in the Olympics can go up significantly. The equipment of these sports are very expensive and therefore support through the Khelo India Scheme will be really beneficial. Also, Kashmir is a very strategic location for the academy since the weather matches with European countries where most competitions are held. This is a great step towards improving water sports in India.”



International-level Kayak from the state, Bilquis Mir says. “The decision to have the Khelo India State Centre of Excellence in Srinagar has historic significance. I have been attached to water sports for 21 years and it is for the first time that so much has been done to provide proper training facilities in the state. In 2009 I competed in the World Cup and reached the semi-finals. If we had these kinds of facilities at that time, I am sure we could have held a place in the finals too. The launch of the KISCE and now the inclusion of kayaking and canoeing will enthuse young athletes of the sport and I am sure we will be able to attain a podium finish in the Olympics in the years to come. I thank the Centre and the state for this initiative.”

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