



**Sports Ministry gives go-ahead to open 36 Khelo India Centres across 30 districts in Maharashtra; Dhanraj Pillai lauds the move**

**Mumbai:** The Sports Ministry has approved to open up 36 Khelo India Centres (KICs) across 30 districts in Maharashtra, at a cost of Rs 3.60 crores. Setting up of KICs in Maharashtra 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 36 centers in Maharashtra 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 and Maharashtra in particular, hockey legend Dhanraj Pillay said, “The Sports Ministry has done a great job through the Khelo India initiative by giving a platform to sporting talent by organising annual games like the Youth Games and University Games. Now, with the creation of these centres the sports ecosystem will definitely become better.” The Khel Ratna Awardee added, “I am very happy that the younger generation will be benefited by this.”

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 Maharashtra government will have to hire past ‘Champion Athletes’ as coaches and mentors for young trainees at these centers.

The financial assistance will be used for remuneration of the past champion athletes as coach, support staff, purchase of equipments, sports kits, consumables, participation in competition and events.

**EOM**