

Sports Minister bats for 'atmanirbhar' sporting ecosystem

June 12: The Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday emphasised the importance of being 'atmanirbhar' in the sporting ecosystem and felt we need to develop a successful league culture to make sport as a sustainable career opportunity.

"You have to be empowered to take care of yourself. The country has to be self-reliant. Whenever there are challenges, disasters or catastrophe, we need to ensure we emerge stronger. I have to ensure our athletes and coaches become stronger after lockdown," Rijiju said during Indian table tennis player Mudit Dani's online lockdown chat series 'In The Spotlight' on Friday.

"Sports stars motivate people immensely. In achieving the government's efforts, our sports stars have played a very critical role," he added.

The Minister further said we have to make leagues successful in order to ensure viable and fruitful sporting careers for our athletes at all levels.

"First of all, sport is a way of life but that is not enough. Sport has to be a career also. Sport has to give you respect, position, earning, comfort and recognition. So for that when you have a flourishing league system in the country - whether it is national or state level, it has to be successful. And to make the leagues successful, it has to be commercially viable and successful too. That is why I am encouraging lots of leagues like our Indian Super League (Football), Indian Premier League (Cricket). Ultimate Table Tennis is also growing very well. I see great prospects for UTT. We now have a boxing league and wrestling league too (among others)," he said.

Rijiju also expressed his dream of making India a top country in the Olympic medals tally. Stressing on the great cooperation from various stakeholders including IOA and National Sports Federations, the Sports Minister wants to make India one of the top-10 medal winning nations by 2028 Olympics.

"Although we have achieved some success in hockey and a few individual sports, we have not been able to make any successful impact in Olympic history. I am talking about creating a sporting culture in India. In days to come I want to ensure that not only our participation but our success rate also soars," Rijiju concluded.

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