THOUSANDS THRO'G ISHA'S GRAMOTSAMVAM IN COIMBATORE

PURINA SAIH/DC
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Thousands of people at the overflowing Cotisias grounds here joined the grand finale of the rural sport tournament, the 12th edition of the Isha Gramotsavam. The women's Devanampuran throwball team and men's Vellore Latheri volleyball team emerged winners at the grand finale and the women's Gobi Murugugapur throwball team and men's Cuddalore Karuiguzi volleyball team were runners up. A total of 10,000 players forming 880 teams participated in Gramotsavam this year. To date, the Gramotsavam has reached over 42 lakh people from 4,600 villages.

Rajayavardhan Singh Rathore, Union minister of state for Information & Broadcasting along with D. Kiran Bedi, Governor of Puducherry and P. Nagaratna, MP, were guests of honour. They served the first ball to inaugurate the final match. Sadguru Jaggi Vasudev, founder, Isha Foundation said, "These 12 years of Gramotsavam have been an evolution. It has changed people's attitudes towards caste, creed, religion and gender. The joy in playing sport is something that every human being should know. We as a nation should become a truly happy nation. The only reason why India has lost playfulness is because we brought poverty from one generation to another."

He said, "the Andhra Pradesh Government has invited us to take Gramotsavam there. Soon we will set Puducherry also on fire," added Sadguru.

Minister Rathore said, "Gramotsavam is an example of how communities can come together." Speaking about his sports career, Rathore, the first sports person of India to win an individual silver at the Olympics, said that sports was a great lesson for his life, "I had very few resources, I didn't have coaches, finance, tracks and sponsors. But after I started winning, I got sponsors and resources to help me do better. Interestingly when I had all the resources I began to lose. Coaches can only show the path." During a media interaction session, when he was asked for his views on Abhinav Bindra, India's lone individual Olympic gold medallist who officially announced his retirement today. Rathore said, "Abhinav has sacrificed a lot in his life to come this far. I wish him all the best." Dr. Kiran Bedi will take the cultural programme from Koval to Puducherry. "Right now we are cleaning Puducherry, but what do we do after this? We will play. It is time to move from Swach Bharat to Swasth Bharat. This Saturday when you go to a village in Puducherry, I will take a volleyball and a football along to play with people there."

To revive the dying folk arts, 20 ancient folk art forms involving around 200 artists from across Tamil Nadu performed at the Gramotsavam.

Isha Vidya student Karthikshy who bagged a gold medal in archery in the Indo-Nepal youth rural games was also felicitated. For the first time in the tournament's history a volleyball game for the disabled, in association with the Paralympics Association of Coimbatore was organised.

Centre to increase FM radio coverage in 2 yrs

DC CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE, SEPT 4

The Central government has planned to increase FM radio broadcasting coverage up to 60 per cent in the country over the next two years, said Rajayavardhan Rathore, Union minister of state for Information and Broadcasting.

Addressing media persons at the airport on Sunday, he said, "I came here to participate in the Isha yoga foundation's rural sports festival, which brings rural people's talents into the limelight. I also belong to a rural area. So I know how useful these sport events are to the rural people." Stating that information technology (IT) was growing fast though the urban population mostly used it, Mr. Rathore said the Central government was therefore encouraging initiatives to make IT available in the rural areas.

"Now, FM radio broadcasting is covering 45 per cent of the country. As part of the Central government's mission, it is planned to increase the broadcasting coverage area up to 60 per cent in the next couple of years. Even though Prasar Bharati, as a public broadcasting company, was not operated with a profit motive, it had taken several steps to increase the government's revenue," said Mr. Rathore. The public broadcasting firm was created with the aim of fulfilling the information needs of the public. Now, the Central government is working towards the goal of information reaching the farthest corners of the country," he added.

Rajayavardhan Rathore