

It was a heady mix of pride and prestige for the sportspersons as they received the Rani Laxmi Bai and Laxman awards from UP chief minister Aditya Nath Yogi on National Sports Day on Tuesday.

As 14 proud players received the prestigious state award at the residence of the chief minister, there was joy and jubilation in the air. It was a memorable moment for them as they received recognition for all the grit, grime and hard work put on the sports arenas.

SPORTS DAY

On his part, Aditya Nath promised all the help to the players so that they can reach greater heights in the future. He also reiterated that the state will provide Rs six crore for any state sportsperson who brings a gold medal in the Olympics. The amount will be Rs four crore and two crore for silver and bronze medals respectively.

Speaking on the occasion, he exhorted them to aim for the medals so that the promised money doesn't remain unspent. "I will be happy if the money is utilized."

He also exuded confidence that the sports ministry under the guidance of sports minister Chetan Chauhan is capable of producing world-beating sportspersons from the state. "Sports department is making concerted effort to promote talent properly."

Deputy chief minister Dinesh Sharma, who was also present advocated the need of promoting select games for fetching medals



UP chief minister Aditya Nath Yogi with the Rani Laxmi Bai and Laxman Award winners at his residence on Tuesday

UPOA for National Games in 2020

Uttar Pradesh Olympic Association (UPOA) desires to bid for the 2020 National Games in the state. A proposal letter on this effect was given by the general secretary of UPOA Anandeshwar Pandey to chief minister Aditya Nath Yogi, during the National Sports Day functions at his residence.

He said that Meghalaya, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh are keen to host the Games in 2020, and UP can also bid for the same.

"We have the infrastructure to host the Games in Lucknow, while the water sports events can be organized in Gorakhpur," he added.

at Olympics, Commonwealth Games and Asian Games.

"We should shortlist some priority events and focus on them, so

Saifai Sports College to be named after Major Dhyan Chand. Aditya Nath Yogi made the announcement on the 114th birth centenary of the hockey wizard, celebrated as the National Sports Day all over the country

that we can have a realistic chance of grabbing medals in premier world events."

Chauhan himself focused on

fair selections in various sports colleges and hostels. "Coaches will have to be as serious as the players themselves to get good results."

Himself a former international cricketer, Chauhan said he knows the problems faced by the sportspersons. But, he is happy that sports can be a career now unlike the time when they played. "I have been a sportsman and I know the type of pressures and tribulations they have to overcome during their playing days."

Hence, his office is always open to sort out those difficulties so that a player can remain focused for bigger achievements.

All the players received Rs 3.11 lakh in cash, along with a bronze statue and a citation.

Enjoying their new found limelight

For Deepti Sharma and Punam Yadav life changed after they returned from England. Part of the women's cricket World Cup runner's up team there, the Agra duo are now celebrities in their own way.

"Now people ask for my autograph and request for selfies with me," said Sharma with a chuckle during the felicitation ceremony at chief minister Aditya Nath Yogi's residence on Tuesday.

Taking to cricket wasn't easy for them. They had to fight their way through in a game which till few years' ago was a male bastion. Yadav says that even getting a leg-guard was a luxury when she started playing the game. "It was difficult as the bats and the kit were quite costly. But, the support from my parents and seniors saw us through during those days."

She isn't disappointed that India couldn't finish off the game in the final against England in the closing stages. "In fact, it's an achievement. The way we adapted to the alien conditions."

Deepti Sharma (L) and Punam Yadav



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