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#PLAYFORHAPPINESS

The **PNB MetLife** Junior Badminton Championship seeks to provide a pan India platform for children to chase their dreams and display their prowess with a racquet

By Deepa Nair

India has seen an unprecedented resurgence in badminton over the last few years. Performances by India's ace shuttlers in the recent past have given the sport a shot in the arm and elevated its appeal, cutting across all age-groups and different strata. The diversity that badminton is able to bring to the sporting arena resonates deeply with PNB MetLife's brand values – that physical fitness is as important to a person's happiness as fiscal fitness.

The company understands that 'health' and 'wealth' go hand in hand and hence it works to not only help one realise one's financial goals but also attain a healthy way of living. With this in mind, PNB MetLife launched various initiatives to encourage its employees and customers to proactively build healthy and active lifestyles.

Today, an adolescent's life is as stressful as an adult's. Channelising one's energies, thoughts and time in a sport such as badminton on a routine basis helps in minimising stress levels. Research has also shown that kids who play sports like badminton are far more confident and

gregarious than their purely academic counterparts. They display self-belief in other areas of life, not just in studies – in making friends and in their relationships with adults and their peers. Ask any sportsperson and he will tell you that unlike academics, sport is both a cerebral as well as a physical exercise. Sport also involves the capacity to assess situations, to take immediate and critical decisions, to strategise, build leadership qualities and communication bridges. Take the case of Slum Soccer, an organisation based in Nagpur that offers sporting opportunities and personal development programmes to disadvantaged people. The Slum Soccer team believes that by extending their football programme to women, women will gain the confidence to tackle the gender inequality in society more effectively.

Studies by the World Health Organization (WHO) report that India will have the most lifestyle-

related disorders in the near future and that exercise could go a long way in keeping health disorders at bay. This has propelled the company to launch various schemes that encourage health and fitness among its customers and employees.

Taking the health and fitness initiative further, while also endeavouring to transform India's badminton landscape, is the PNB MetLife Junior Badminton Championship (JBC). With this, the company seeks to provide a pan India platform for children to chase their dreams and display their prowess with a racquet.

CRY as PNB MetLife JBC's CSR partner, conducts badminton camps, across various project areas in the country. These camps are meant to identify and train talented underprivileged children. The children receive training in the game thrice-a-week for 10 months. They also get equipment including badminton racquets, shoes and sportswear.

Promoting India's second most popular sport among five to 15 year-old children, PNB MetLife's JBC aims to ensure that the next generation of Sainas, Sindhus, and Srikanths is nurtured. It seeks to unearth young badminton talent

and build a strong base for future Indian badminton stars and in this mission it has earned the full-fledged support of the relevant authorities. "As a nation we are big and varied so we should have multiple academies so that people don't have to travel. For the sport to get to the next level, broadbasing is important. It is time consuming, infrastructure and funding intensive. But the sport needs to grow in a sequence... People first, projects and programmes next and then infrastructure. I think it is important to first identify the people," said badminton guru, Pullela Gopichand in an exclusive interview with *Hindustan Times* – and this is exactly what PNB MetLife's JBC is doing.

The first match of the event's fourth season, which has returned bigger and better this year, kicked off from Chandigarh's Sports Complex on May 24. To be held across 10 cities in India, top junior badminton stars from each city will finally proceed to the JBC Grand Finale where the winning team will get ₹28 lakh to be distributed among the winners.

To register: visit www.jbc4.in or call: +91-9172530523

Photo: HTES



MAKING DREAMS COME TRUE
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