

NBA stars pitch in to professionalise Indian basketball

There cannot be a better advertisement for basketball than the National Basketball Association (NBA) stars, who are part of one of the richest professional leagues in world sport. Some well-known hoopsters are here to help India market the game.

Their way of promoting basketball is to conduct simple clinics to motivate youngsters. They conducted their first clinic as part of their three-day 'Basketball without Borders' programme. There were 53 players from 15 countries, including India, picked by NBA and International Basketball Federation (FIBA).

NBA players Kyle Korver (Utah Jazz), Ronny Turiaf (L.A. Lakers), Pat Garrity (Orlando Magic) and Linton Johnson (Phoenix Suns) along with NBA legend Dominique Wilkins and Sam Perkins were the star attraction at the camp.

Top officials of FIBA, including president Bob Elphinston, were also present during the camp at the American Embassy school.

'India is a very important country for us. It is a fascinating country and growing economic powerhouse. The game has a strong chance to grow in India and we are hopeful that in years to come India will be a world power in basketball,' Elphinston said.

NBA's 'Basketball Without Borders' is an educational, social and health-awareness programme, involving youngsters in community programmes.

Basketball Federation of India President R S Gill said the clinic would help the coaches and trainers of the country.

Dominique Wilkins said that they will have more such camps in India in future.

'This is just the start. We need to involve the youngsters of India first. We will have more camps at a larger scale,' he said.

The FIBA President Thursday laid the foundation stone of an Indoor basketball stadium at Azmal Khan Park. The proposed stadium, to be built at an estimated cost of Rs 6 crore, will have capacity to seat 2000. It is expected to be completed in 10 months.

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