



**GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA
DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS AND YOUTH AFFAIRS**

Press Release

Meghalaya Hosts Historic Durand Cup, announces Initiatives for Football Development

Shillong, 2nd August: The Jawaharlal Nehru (J.N.) Stadium in Shillong hosted the first match in the Group F category of the prestigious 133rd Indian Oil Durand Cup. **Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shri Conrad K. Sangma**, graced the inaugural event of the Durand Cup, joined by **Hon'ble Deputy Chief Ministers Shri Prestone Tynsong** and **Shri Sniawbhalang Dhar**, **Hon'ble Sports Minister Shri Shakliar Warjri**, and **Chief Secretary, Shri D P Wahlang, IAS**.

The inauguration was also attended by, Air Marshal SP Dharkar, Air Officer Commanding in Chief Eastern Air Command, Lieutenant General Sanjay Malik, General Officer Commanding 101 Area, Maj Gen Rajesh A Moghe, VSM Vice Chairman Durand Cup Organising Committee and a number of senior military and civil officials.

The afternoon kicked off with a match between Shillong Lajong FC and Tribhuvan Army Football Club (TAFC) as part of the schedule for Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium to host Group F matches, in which Shillong Lajong FC clinched victory over Tribhuvan Army Football Club (TAFC) with a single goal, placing them at the top of the group table.

In the upcoming days the teams - Shillong Lajong FC, Indian Super League sides FC Goa, Hyderabad FC, and Nepal's Tribhuvan Army Football Club will play matches in the now revamped stadium.

The event is the first of this scale hosted at the J.N. Stadium since 2016, a significant moment for the State. The Stadium Development was accelerated ahead of its scheduled construction to ensure that compliances were met for the hosting of the Durand Cup. This included the construction of the North and South Stand, the fitting of seats in all stands to comply with International Event guidelines under AFC, and the renovation of the West Stand VIP area. Further, the natural turf was re-laid entirely with natural grass conducive to the Shillong climate. The Stadium's Floodlights were also replaced to reach the lighting levels required for international matches and Television broadcast standards. The Player's Dressing Areas and Official's rooms were also upgraded as per international standards.

The Government of Meghalaya, the representatives of the All India Football Federation (AIFF), and the Indian Armed Forces jointly expressed their joy at being able to bring the Tournament to Meghalaya for this season and have been satisfied with the stadium facilities for football.

The Stadium shall also continue its upgradation after the event, which shall include the final touches of the structure and the laying of a synthetic Athletic track, which shall be completed soon.

Since the launch of the State Sports Policy in 2018, the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs has made significant strides. This includes the construction of sports infrastructure across the state, launch of talent identification and nurturing schemes like the STAR Program, as well as the hosting of state, national, and international events. This is most evident in the initiatives made for the development of football in the State.

Mission Football, the State's Marquee Scheme for Football Development, has ensured the construction of 111 Grassroots Centres across the State, where nearly 8000 children receive training each year. Further, over 25,000 children participate each year in the U-12 Football Tournament and the Subroto Cup State Qualifiers. Associations with the Meghalaya Football Association have enabled the Meghalaya State League and the Meghalaya Youth League. Further, through Meghalaya Tourism, Support of North-East United FC and Shillong Lajong FC has already been explored in the last two years, totalling almost Rs. 10 Cr. in financial sponsorship.

This remarkable investment in the Sports Ecosystem, with football in particular, has yielded noteworthy results. The Meghalaya State Team were the Runners-Up in the Santosh Trophy, 2023, surpassing many strong teams from India in the process. The U-17 Football Team have consistently won medals in football at the Khelo India Games, winning gold in 2024 in Tamil Nadu.

The Government, through the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs, looks forward to continuing their efforts to build on the success of Mission Football and other schemes. With this in mind, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Meghalaya (HCM) announced that Mission Football shall be revamped and an updated scheme shall be announced soon, highlighting new ways to promote football in the state, and develop the culture of football in Meghalaya.

As an extension of the Scheme, HCM also announced a Local Football Club Support Scheme, where Elite Clubs participating in I-League 2 and above can apply for grants up to Rs. 3 Crore, and Grassroots/Intermediate Clubs of the State can apply for grants up to Rs. 15 Lakh.

HCM, Shri Conrad K. Sangma addressed the press today after the match, saying, *"We urge the citizens of Shillong to come out in large numbers to watch the matches of the Durand Cup. Further, we are happy to use the occasion to share the initiatives the Government has begun for football and other sports in the state. Such spends on infrastructure, events, and grants are not an expenditure, but an investment in our youth"*

With Mission Football 2.0 the government intends to improve upon the infrastructure of more football. It was also highlighted that the government in collaboration with North East United Football Club (NEUFC) will soon have a one of its kind residential academy at Mawkhanu, New Shillong Township.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister was also informed by the Eastern Army Commander, Lt. Gen. Ram Chander Tiwari, that the quality of the grass is better in comparison to Kolkata Stadium. More Announcements of the developments and other initiatives shall be announced on the notification of the Scheme.

Sd/

Commissioner and Secretary
Sports and Youth Affairs
Government of Meghalaya