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**A LEGEND'S EXIT
AND A DUBIOUS GOAL
IN DOHA**

**DELHI END A 59-YEAR
TITLE DROUGHT**

- Kalyan Chaubey
President, AIFF



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President's Note

A legend's exit and a dubious goal in Doha

Kalyan Chaubey

We all had an emotional 90-minute journey on the night of June 6 at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan in Kolkata when India played Kuwait in the World Cup qualifiers. We knew it was the last time Sunil Chhetri played in the blue jersey and were eager to get soaked in the passion it generated in the jam-packed stadium.

As I watched Sunil play in the middle, I remembered what Pele once said about achieving success in football. He said: "Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice, and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do."

I do realise how true Pele's words are when we talk about Sunil Chhetri. Since I have followed his career from the beginning, I know how much hard work Sunil has put in over the years that could stretch his international career for 19 long years.

In June, Indian football was faced with two situations that anyone attached to the game in the country would have liked to avoid. But as fate turned out to be, both became inevitable. Sunil Chhetri's retirement from international football is one of them.

Chhetri is not all about cold statistics that leave one dazed with figures like that he played 151 international matches, scored 94 goals, or captained the nation 88 times. In the Indian football scenario, he was much more than that. He was an invaluable brand ambassador who remained unmatched in recent times.

It has been proven historically that to take a sport to a bigger stage, to make its appeal wider, and to turn it into a sport of the masses, the game needs the presence of a huge star, who can take it to the next



level, almost single-handedly. In films, we have witnessed the influence of big stars like Amitabh Bachchan or Shahrukh Khan, Mohammed Rafi and Lata Mangeshkar in the world of music, and Kapil Dev and Sachin Tendulkar in the cricket field. To talk of Sunil in the same breath in the context of Indian football won't be an exaggeration. Sunil Chhetri calling it a day has certainly created a void.

At the same time, I must say that when a void is created, it also gets filled by the passage of time. That's the beauty of nature. In the Indian team, we have strikers like Manvir Singh and Lallianzuala Chhangte on whom we can rest our hopes. Manvir's goal against Kuwait in the away match was a stunning strike; the goal scored by Chhangte, again in an away match, against mighty Qatar, left us thrilled. I am sure the day is not far when they will carry the burden of the National Team on their broad shoulders.



The other unfortunate moment in Indian football came five days after Sunil played his last match for the country. One of India's finest displays in recent times was reduced to a 1-2 defeat against Qatar in Doha. In a must-win match, India led by a goal when the referee allowed a highly-controversial goal against India, thus destroying our chances of reaching the Round 3 of the World Cup qualifiers. It was truly heartbreaking for every football-loving Indian.

The blow was so huge and painful that it would take all of us a considerable time to recover. After all, we were in the process of making a comeback in international football. And I dare say, we were on the right track. We have missed the bus on more than one occasion. Had India not missed two spot kicks in the 1-2 defeat against France in the first round of the 1948 London Olympics, it could have been a different story altogether. Indian football's roadmap could have been far more divergent had India not shied away from participation in the 1950 World Cup final rounds despite being drawn in Group 3 with Sweden, Italy and Paraguay.

Indian football had a golden period in the 1950s and 1960s. Twice, in 1951 and 1962, they were the Asian Games champions. But somehow, the World Cup remained out of Indian football's radar for a long time, and they never competed in the World Cup qualifiers before 1985. Interest in the World Cup grew only after Diego Maradona's fantastic deeds in the 1986 Mexico World Cup.



The stress was always on the Olympics and the Asian Games. But this, too, backfired. India could never qualify for the Olympics after 1960 and the Government stopped the football team from going to the Asian Games on more than one occasion. Finally, when both tournaments were converted into U23 meets, Indian football found a roadblock in developing the senior teams.

However, the situation is definitely not hopeless. We are very much in the process of course correction and the results are showing. The fact that we were on the verge of qualifying for Round 3 of the World Cup qualifiers for the first time was no mean achievement. Unfortunately, we were done in by a supervising decision that was simply shocking.

India are down, but certainly not out. All we need to do is follow the right process. Since we are doing so, nothing can hinder our progress.



Delhi crowned inaugural Swami Vivekananda U-20 Men's NFC champions on penalties

Delhi won their first Men's National title in nearly six decades after defeating Karnataka in a cliffhanger that went to penalties after an absorbing 3-3 draw in the regulation period.

Delhi were crowned the inaugural champions of the Swami Vivekananda U-20 Men's National Football Championship, beating Karnataka 4-3 on penalties following a thrilling 3-3 draw after extra time, at the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama Ground in Narainpur, Chhattisgarh, on Wednesday, May 22, 2024.

After 40 days of non-stop action in Narainpur involving 32 teams, Delhi came out on top after a memorable final, where they came from behind three times to take the game to penalties. Karnataka's Ishaan Raghunanda and Delhi's Sankhil Darpol Tuishang struck a brace each for their sides before the latter struck the winning penalty to crown Delhi the champions. Delhi won their last National title in 1965 when they lifted the U19 BC Roy Trophy.

Delhi had the first real chance to take the lead in the third minute when captain Lamlallian ST won possession in the final third, ran into the box but dragged his effort wide.

Karnataka opened the scoring soon after in the 12th minute with Ishaan Raghunanda's delicate finish. It started with a perfect long ball from Gautam Rajesh, which Raghunanda controlled with a great first touch. He made a couple of yards for himself, beating defender Kamginsei Touthang before tucking the ball into the far post with the outside of his boot.

Delhi responded with zeal, going all out in attack in search of the equaliser. In the 18th minute, Karnataka goalkeeper Sam George came to his side's rescue as he made himself big to deny Ramesh Chhetri in a one-on-one situation from close range. But the Karnataka custodian couldn't do anything about Delhi's equalising goal which came in the 43rd minute via captain Lamlallian, leaving the second half nicely poised.

The intensity of the match remained high after the restart as both sides put bodies forward in a desperate hunt for the second goal. Karnataka were the ones who got it, and it took something special from Nithin Paul to help them regain the lead. Running out of options in the box, M Nihaar passed the ball back to Paul, who lashed a first-time shot with his left foot from 30 yards out. Even at full stretch, Delhi goalkeeper Karan Makkar was still miles away from the ball which landed into the top corner.

Unlike in the first half when Karnataka eased up after taking the lead, this time they started to assert their dominance. They would've doubled their advantage in the 67th minute had Makkar not pulled off a great double save in quick succession to deny Paul and Saikhom Borish Singh.

But one mistake in the Karnataka backline led to parity again in the 71st minute. As Arjun Gouda failed to clear a loose ball in the box, Delhi substitute Sankhil Darpol Tuishang pounced on it and squeezed it past George, who got a hand on the ball but not enough to keep it out.

Karnataka had the best chance of winning the match in normal time but the woodwork came to Delhi's rescue. In the sixth minute of added time, Borish, from the edge of the box, side-footed a first-time shot straight onto the crossbar.

However, in the very first minute of extra time, Karnataka took the lead for the third time in the match. Raghunanda set up the pitch on fire again, as he did numerous times during the entire tournament. He spurted forward from the half-line, leaving several Delhi shirts in his wake with his fine dribbling skills, and just upon entering the box, he pulled the trigger with his left foot and lodged the ball into the far corner to make it 3-2.

Delhi had been matching Karnataka every step of the way in normal time and the script continued in extra time. They got their third equaliser in the 98th minute thanks to Tuishang again. Touthang whipped in a delightful curling cross from the left and the substitute forward leapt the highest and headed it in, leaving George rooted to his spot.

Karnataka got the early advantage in the penalty shoot-out too as Raghunanda converted and Lalmallian's shot was saved by George. However, Delhi went on to score all four of their remaining penalties via Touthang, Akshay Raj Singh, Jajo Prashan and final hero Tuishang, while Karnataka fumbled with Gautam Rajesh hitting the crossbar and M Nihaar seeing his low shot saved by the fingertips of Makkar.





AIFF holds Executive Committee meeting at NCE, Kolkata

The Executive Committee of the All India Football Federation, chaired by AIFF President Mr. Kalyan Chaubey, was held at the National Centre of Excellence in Kolkata on Thursday, June 6, 2024.

The meeting was attended by Treasurer Mr. Kipa Ajay, Mr. Menla Ethenpa, Ms. Valanka Alemao, Ms Thongam Tababi Devi, Mr. GP Palguna, Mr. Vijay Bali, Mr. Syed Husnain Ali Naqvi, Mr. K Neibou Sekhose, Mr. Avijit Paul, Mr. Anilkumar P, Mr. Mohan Lal, Mr. Syed Imtiaz Husain, Mr. Arif Ali, Mr. IM Vijayan, Mr. Shabbir Ali, Mr. Climax Lawrence and the AIFF Acting Secretary General M. Satyanarayan.

In his opening remarks, the AIFF President said: "This is for the first time, we are hosting the Executive Committee meeting in the National Centre of Excellence. This facility holds huge importance in Indian football. The Senior Indian National Team, which will play against Kuwait today, trained here for the last week. We expect more national teams to use this facility in the future."

Mr. Chaubey commended the Chhattisgarh Football Association on the successful conduct of the Swami Vivekananda U20 National Football Championship, the inaugural edition of which was held in Narainpur, earlier this year.

While thanking the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama in Narainpur for hosting the U20 tournament, the President pointed out that 572 players took part in the U20 Championship, which lasted for 40 days. He said, "In the last one season, the AIFF organised 18 championships in Senior and different age groups. All of them went off successfully. We are now in the process of preparing data on players across all age groups in both men's and women's football who played in these tournaments.

“We have been making strides at the youth level. Our mission is to not let any player go unnoticed,” he said.

Mr. Chaubey complimented the Kerala Football Association for their elaborate plan to host the Super League Kerala in September and the Gujarat Football Association for the successful conduct of professional Super League. He said that the Sikkim Football Association did a fine job of holding two coaching programme and one referees’ clinic. The President congratulated the Punjab Football Association for organising multiple tournaments of the AIFF.

The Executive Committee deliberated on the relegation of two Imphal Clubs, TRAU FC and NEROCA FC, who requested the AIFF to consider their plea in light of the prevailing situation in Manipur, which has affected performances of the both clubs. Considering the fact that it was an unusual situation in the state, the Committee felt a final decision should only be taken after carefully weighing all options.

The Committee discussed the proposal to set up a goalkeepers’ academy for producing quality custodians in good numbers, who could be assets for all future national teams. Former India goalkeeper Subrata Paul has been requested to be associated with the project.

The Executive Committee condoled the demise of Anil Kamat, Assistant General Secretary and Director of Competitions of the All India Football Federation and observed a minute’s silence in his memory.





A captivating campaign with a dismaying end

Blue Tigers' dream remains unfulfilled, after an unsavoury defeat against Qatar marked their exit from the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers.

On paper, it was a campaign for the FIFA 2026 and AFC Asian Cup 2027 Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 2. The reality was different; it was about converting the dream into a reality. Ironically, the dream turned into a nightmare.

Just when one felt the Blue Tigers would rise like a Phoenix from the ashes with their feather dazzling in gold and scarlet, they were pushed back into the fire with an unexpected development on the night of June 11 in Doha. A highly disputable goal in the 1-2 defeat against Qatar did them in and rudely shut them out from Round 2 with Qatar and Kuwait joining the group of elite 18.

Looking back, Igor Stimac and his boys would definitely ponder about what exactly went wrong. Not on the fateful night of despair on June 11, but their entire campaign that lasted nearly eight months. Why from being the dream merchants, the Indian Senior Men's National Team were suddenly reduced to a bunch of ordinary souls?

But then, there is no point blaming the brave boys, who kept the hopes alive till the last day of Round 2 encounters. Unlike the previous editions, barring 2002, all of India's other World Cup campaigns since 1985 ended in near disaster, and earlier than expected. This time they raised hopes in a manner that was rarely seen before.

If the Blue Tigers were labelled as dream merchants, then the credit would go to them. Sunil Chhetri and his men began with a bang, winning an away match against Kuwait in their first game with Manvir Singh scoring the all-important goal in the crucial 1-0 victory. Expectations grew as were the stocks of the Indian team.

Consistency deserted India after this. The defeat against Asian champions Qatar in Bhubaneswar wasn't surprising, but one point from two matches against Afghanistan didn't help the cause. Yet, they were down, but not out. They kept their hopes alive after the goalless draw against Kuwait in Kolkata, only to suffer a huge setback in the concluding and crucial tie against Qatar at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium in Doha.

Stimac wasn't wrong when he said, "I would say that there is nothing to complain about my boys' display today. They were fantastic. All Indian fans can be proud of their team today. We controlled the game for a major part, with a high press against a good Qatari team. You could say that the chances India had were better than Qatar's.

"Qatar were lucky tonight (Tuesday), especially because they came back from 0-1 with an irregular goal. I can confirm that now because I have seen the replay. The whole ball was out of play and the goal was given. It shouldn't be happening in today's football because that goal changed everything in this game. It could've happened to Qatar today and I would say the same. I'm not looking for an excuse. I feel sad that when you have 23 boys working really hard and living the dream, to achieve something, and that dream is killed because we didn't stop such things from happening," said Stimac.

Overall, it was a long-drawn campaign from which India learned their lessons. There are always too many hurdles; crossing one doesn't necessarily ensure one will reach the destination. Consistency is the key, without that even a highly determined side like the Blue Tigers could lose their way after an impressive beginning.

GROUP A		P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
	QATAR	6	5	1	0	15	16
	KUWAIT	6	2	1	3	0	7
	INDIA	6	1	2	3	-4	5
	AFGHANISTAN	6	1	2	3	-11	5



Sunil Chhetri felicitated by AIFF President after Kuwait game

The show didn't go the way it was expected, at least for the huge number of Indian fans present at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan on Thursday, June 6, 2024, but it didn't stop them from showering love and appreciation on Sunil Chhetri, who played his 151st and last international match in the goalless draw against Kuwait.

There were big cheers from the crowd as India's all-time highest scorer in international football walked up on the dais on the pitch to receive a plaque that was handed over to him by the All India Football President Kalyan Chaubey.

The plaque that Mr. Chaubey presented to Chhetri on behalf of the Indian Football fraternity, said:

Dear Sunil,

You have been a gem in the crown of Indian football and a pride of the nation. Your achievement on the field, complemented by your demeanour off it, holds us spellbound. You have been a star on the Indian Football horizon since the momentous day you stepped onto the field in the Blue jersey. The star never stopped shining and like a luminous point in the night sky, it dazzled brighter for nearly two decades to accomplish amplified altitudes. We watched in awe as you guided Indian Football past many impediments and inspired generations to embrace the Beautiful Game.

Now, 19 years and 151 International caps later, as you have decided to enter a new life post-international football today, we remain firmly gripped by nostalgia. You have filled our hearts with extraordinary emotions that we will share with our family and friends until our last days. With your millions of fans, we will miss your great deeds on the field. Rest assured, your stunning skills, your exhilarating leadership, and your humility will forever be part of Indian Football's folklore.

Thank you for everything you have accomplished and good luck with everything you will do in the future.

*On behalf of the Indian Football fraternity
Kalyan Chaubey
President, All India Football Federation*

Chhetri spoke briefly, saying: "To all my supporters, I thank all of you. These 19 years would not have been possible without each one of you. I genuinely mean it. All of you who are here, thank you so much. I will speak from my heart, all of you have been great. Stay happy, and thank you again."

The Indian captain was also felicitated by the Indian Football Association, Mohun Bagan, East Bengal, Mohammedan Sporting, the Indian Army and senior ministers of the Government of West Bengal.





Chhetri a friend, brother, mentor to all of us, says Rahul Bheke

A defender, who watched his senior partner scoring important goals with unfailing regularity for the club and the National Team, shares his fascinating experience

AKHIL RAWAT

Rahul Bheke is the senior most player in the Blue Tigers camp after Sunil Chhetri's departure. The 33-year-old made his India debut five years ago and has since been a regular member of the national team camp, converting into one of the leaders in the squad. He is one of those names who've gotten better with experience, ageing like fine wine and winning titles for club and country.

The versatile defender spoke to the-aiff.com about his half-a-decade-long national team journey until now. "Getting my first opportunity in 2019 was a dream come true for me. Ever since I joined the national team, I have learned so many things from my colleagues, teammates, and coaches and I still do every day. It's been a learning experience, and training every day and playing international games has helped me to grow as a player," said Bheke.

While he couldn't zero in on one particular moment as his best in the India jersey, Bheke revealed a few special games. "My best moments have been when I got my first call-up for the King's Cup (in Thailand) and made my debut against Curacao, and when I scored my first goal against Bahrain. I can also add the AFC Asian Cup experience. I played all three games, so it was a big thing for me."

Bheke has built a special relationship with Chhetri, which also spanned at the club level after spending four years at Bengaluru FC between 2017 and 2021. Opening up about his bond with the Indian captain, Bheke said, "I still remember the first day I met him. We were in Mumbai I think back in 2016-17, and played a five-a-side game. From that day till today, it's been a great journey for us. We have shared countless victories and unforgettable memories. He's been an inspiration to all of us. He was the first person to give me a call when I got called for the national camp for the first time. I'm so happy to have shared the pitch with him and I just want to thank him for all the memories and the lessons he has given to all the players and for being an inspiration to the whole nation."

And it's not just inside the green pitch where the bond blooms. Chhetri has been a friend, brother, and mentor for not just Bheke but everyone who is part of the national camp.

"Yes, we share a lot of things off the field," revealed Bheke. "We spend a lot of time together. Sometimes, we go out together. He talks to not just me but all the players about off-the-pitch stuff, things about life, what mistakes he's done and what he's learned. He guides players about their football careers. His relationship with me has always been very good. Whether in the national camp or in the club. So he is, you know, like a big brother."

In this brotherhood, Bheke has also inculcated Chhetri's leadership skills. It's fair to say that now that Chhetri has hung up his India boots, new youngsters would look up to leaders like Bheke in the national team. As the former captain of Mumbai City FC, Bheke is no stranger to leading the lines and taking the reins for his team. Last month, he lifted the Indian Super League Cup title for his former club in Kolkata.



The Mumbai-born defender also shared what it meant for him to lift the ISL trophy wearing the captain's armband. "Winning the ISL Cup this time was a totally different feeling as a captain. I won it with Bengaluru FC in 2019, but I was not a senior player or a leader of the team. We had many leaders and captains in that squad.

"This time, I was the captain of my home team. And lifting the trophy for my hometown club was a proud moment for me, for my family, for my friends who were there in Mumbai. I lifted the trophy for my people. It was a very emotional moment for me. I felt good that I gave my home team something in return."





India play goalless draw against Kuwait as Chhetri bids adieu to international football

Watched by a crowd of 60,000, who rooted for Sunil Chhetri throughout and gave him a memorable farewell, India and Kuwait remained locked in a fierce battle

India's hopes for qualifying for the third round of the FIFA World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup 2027 Preliminary Joint Qualification took a hit as they were held 0-0 by Kuwait in their penultimate Group A game at the Salt Lake Stadium on Thursday, June 6, 2024.

In what was Sunil Chhetri's 151st and last dance in Indian colours, victory may have eluded him at the full-time whistle, but emotions couldn't. After a lap around the 58,921 fans at the Salt Lake Stadium, the captain, leader, legend, let out his farewell tears when the Indian players and team officials gave him a guard of honour to the tunnel. In a warm gesture, each one of Kuwait's players and officials also paid their respects with handshakes and hugs with the Indian skipper.

As far as the match is concerned, it was far from a drab affair, with a host of chances at both ends, particularly in the first half. But some top-notch defending and fine saves reduced the contest to a goalless one.

Igor Stimac handed out a full India debut to left-back Jay Gupta, while Edmund Lalrindika came on in the last seven minutes in Gupta's place to make his debut too.



Kuwait made the earliest inroad in the fifth minute when left-winger Mohammad Abdullah shouldered his way into the box and came one-on-one with Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, but the Indian custodian stood strong, sticking his leg out to make a vital save early on.

India also responded with frantic pace on the left courtesy of Liston Colaco, who raced his way past the Kuwait right-back and put in a low cross, but Hasan Alanezi stabbed the ball clear for the visitors. India had their first shot from the resulting Anirudh Thapa corner, with an unmarked Anwar Ali heading it inches over the bar.

In the 25th minute, both teams had their heart-in-the-mouth moments in the space of a few seconds. First, it was Eid Alrashidi breaking the offside trap to stray clear on goal before dinking the ball over an onrushing Gurpreet. It landed just wide of the goal net. Immediately after, Jay Gupta burst forward and put an inviting low cross from the left. But Alanezi was on hand again to clear the danger for Kuwait at full stretch.

Slowly and steadily, India grew in confidence and began stringing attacks patiently, mostly utilising the speed of their wingers. Lallianzuala Chhangte got the better of left-back Meshari Alanezi on a couple of occasions and swung in dangerous crosses from the right, but Kuwait actively hacked them clear. Stimac's men were quicker to the second balls as well, winning the ball in the final third and making Kuwait sweat at the back.

On a couple of occasions, Liston also tried his luck from distance, first smashing the side-netting, before skying it wayward from an audacious 40-yard attempt.

At half-time, Stimac made two changes, sacrificing midfielder Thapa to bring on striker Rahim Ali, while Brandon Fernandes replaced Sahal Abdul Samad in the middle.

The start to the second half was as wild as the first. Both goalkeepers were tested to the fullest in and came out on top. Faisal Alharbi's stinging volley from barely six yards out was met with a stunning reflex save from Gurpreet, who dipped his entire 196-centimetre figure to palm it out. A few minutes later, he had to stretch to the top corner to push out Yousef Alsulaiman's effort.

Sandwiched between Gurpreet's heroics was Sulaiman Abdulghafoor's one-on-one save for Kuwait. He made himself big to deny Rahim, who had latched on to a great through ball.

India struggled to maintain their first-half intensity and the tempo shifted towards Kuwait for a while. Substitute Ali Matar got plenty of space near the edge of the box, but he hesitated to shoot early and by the time he did, Rahul Bheke had thrown his body to make a solid block.

For those in blue, time seemed to pass quicker as they were left frustrated by Kuwait slowing down the tempo of the game.

The Blue Tigers sprang to some life in injury time, but it was not enough. Brandon Fernandes flashed a low ball across the face of the goal, but it was Alenezi once again to clear the danger for Kuwait for the umpteenth time on the night. Seconds later, Chhangte picked out Manvir with an inch-perfect cross but the latter nodded it wide of the near post.

Gurpreet Singh Sandhu was named the player of the match.





Edmund Lalrindika: The new greenhorn in National Camp with sinuous poise

A surprise choice for the National Team from the I-League stable, the Mizoram boy was all at ease with his celebrated teammates as he spoke about his aims and aspirations

AKHIL RAWAT

Edmund Lalrindika burst forward on the left, shook off a stern challenge from Anirudh Thapa and laced a fierce left-footed shot past Gurpreet Singh Sandhu's near post as if it's no big deal and he does that every evening. It's his first senior national team camp but feels like he has been part of the team for years already. Not often do you see no nerves, full focus and such confidence oozing out of a first-timer.

"It's been really great. I enjoy training a lot with the top players in the country," said the 25-year-old after a week of rubbing shoulders with India's best in Bhubaneswar. On June 6, he made his senior India debut against Kuwait.

It might be Lalrindika's first outing with the senior team, but he's no stranger to the India jersey. He first wore it at the 2013 SAFF U16 Championship, winning the title in Nepal. The forward was later part of the 2014 AFC U16 Championship Qualifiers, the 2017 SAFF U18 Championship and the 2018 SAFF U19 Championship Qualifiers. As such, there are a few players who he has played alongside for more than a decade, making him feel at home in the camp. But he understands the enormous difference between playing for your country at the youth level and the senior level.

"Yeah, it's really different comparing the youth and senior teams, but as I grew up playing for the youth team, I know most of the players and the coaching staff. That helps me a lot as a player to adapt and I'm looking forward to working with them."

The reason Lalrindika finds himself in the Odisha capital and not at his home in Lunglei in Mizoram at this time of the year is his spectacular performance with Inter Kashi this season. He registered six goals and nine assists in all competitions for the newly-formed club, playing every single match and helping them to a solid fourth-place finish in the I-League.

"It's been the best season of my career so far. I want to thank the club and the management for their support and trust in me. It was one of the reasons that I got called for the national team, so I'm grateful for that and I will give my everything to not let them down," thanked Lalrindika.

Revealing the moment he received the news of his call-up, Lalrindika said, "I got a phone call from my team Inter Kashi and they told me I'm selected in the probables squad list and congratulated me. The first thing I did was pray to God and thank him for the opportunity. All I can do is work hard and give my very best.

India head coach Igor Stimac stated that he and assistant coach Mahesh Gawali had been keeping an eye on Lalrindika for the last few months and he impressed them enough to earn a call-up.



"He (Stimac) came to watch one of our (Inter Kashi's) games, and after the match, he was kind enough to meet me and told me to keep working hard and keep pushing myself. I'm really grateful to the coach for his appreciation of my efforts and I want to thank him for this opportunity," said Lalrindika.

"He is a really great guy, talks to everyone and makes them feel very comfortable. As a newcomer, it helps a lot and I'm happy, honoured, excited and ready to make an impact if my name is called for the final squad."

A versatile forward, Lalrindika can and has played in multiple positions in attack, but his preferred spot is the left-wing - a position that has always seen plenty of competition under Stimac's reign.

"Left-wing is my favourite position and I think my strongest attribute is my creativity. I like to dribble, take on defenders, lots of 1v1s, and create chances. But my mentality is always to put the team first, think how I can help the team, so I'm ready to do my part."

Lalrindika has plenty of big things to look forward to as well, not just in national colours, but on international soil too. In April, his club Inter Kashi announced that he is set to train with Canadian Premier League side Atlético Ottawa in preparation for the upcoming season.

Shedding more light on the development, he said, "After the national team camp, hopefully, my visa will come and I'll go to Canada. The duration of my stay and contract will depend on my visa once I reach there. The people from Atlético Madrid (owners of Atlético Ottawa) were very helpful and motivating. They shared their complete plan with me and I am really looking forward to it. I would really like to thank my club Inter Kashi, the coach, the management, and my fellow players for their support and belief in me. Without them, it would not have been possible."





David Lalhlansanga: The I-League star hopes to emit light in Blue Tigers' galaxy

A prolific scorer in the domestic competitions, the striker from Mohammedan Sporting is keen to hone his skills further and make himself an integral part of the National Team

AKHIL RAWAT

David Lalhlansanga is the newest face in the Indian senior men's national camp. Out of the 27 players named by Igor Stimac for the FIFA World Cup Qualifier against Kuwait, he was the only first-timer in the camp. Edmund Lalrindika, who happened to be his roommate in the camp, was also in his first senior camp but has played youth internationals before. For David, this is an uncharted territory and an opportunity he is keen to grab with both hands.

"The most important things I've experienced in the camp are discipline and punctuality. The coach and the coaching staff are good with us and try to motivate us in every possible way. I have a great bond with my teammates," said Lalhlansanga.

The 22-year-old striker had a sensational 2023-24 season with Mohammedan Sporting Club, winning the I-League and the Calcutta Football League. He was the CFL's top scorer with a whopping 21 goals, nine more than the nearest competitor, and also won the Durand Cup Golden Boot with six goals, including four in a single game against Jamshedpur FC. In Mohammedan Sporting's glorious I-League campaign, Lalhlansanga contributed five goals.

"Mohammedan Sporting is a good club. Everyone is very united and supportive, and that helped us to win the league," he said.

Stimac and assistant coach Mahesh Gawali already had an eye on Lalhansanga since he made a blistering start to the season. The Croatian was in attendance in Naihati for Mohammedan Sporting's 3-1 win over Namdhari FC in March.

"I've had a good season and I'm very happy. The team manager at the club told me that the Indian coach would watch the game. I was excited and tried my best to play well," said Lalhansanga, who impressed Stimac enough during the course of the season to make the probables list, and then in the Bhubaneswar camp as well to make the final list of 27.

"At first, it was kind of hard for me to adjust to a different place with different weather and with different people. But luckily, I could adjust quickly because my teammates helped me a lot. I never imagined myself playing with the best players in India. It's been great fun," shared Lalhansanga, who prefers to operate as an out-and-out centre forward, but has also played more withdrawn roles with his club.

Lalhansanga was born in the Cachar district of Assam and a year later, his family moved to Mizoram where they continue to live. "My family consists of my mother, two siblings and my nephew. The main source of my family's income is through farming and poultry."





The 22-year-old started playing football at the age of 10. He was part of the Aizawl FC academy for two years before being promoted to the first team and made his senior debut against his current club Mohammedan Sporting in February 2021. He wore the captain's armband and scored his first goal for Aizawl in a 3-0 win over Chennai City FC a month later. After spending two more seasons with the Mizoram capital side, Mohammedan Sporting came calling and handed him his big break. And now, he finds himself in the Blue Tigers camp, breaking sweat every day with the best in the country.

"I received a call from AIFF and they told me that I was selected to join the senior national camp. At that time, I was so happy and didn't know how to react," he revealed.

It wasn't just the ecstasy of joining the national camp, but also sharing the training pitch with an idol like Sunil Chhetri. Being part of the captain's last-ever camp felt extra special for Lalhansanga.

"I'm so happy to be able to train with Sunil Chhetri. We play in the same position and I've learned a lot from him. He has taught me many things like passing and positioning in the box. He's someone I've admired since I was a child," said Lalhansanga.







Yet another step towards achieving greater goals

Indian women's senior national team's tour of Uzbekistan unfolded the progress they have made with frequent international exposure against quality opponents

SRUTI CHAKRABORTY

The Indian women's senior national football team recently played a two-match friendly series against Uzbekistan in Tashkent. These friendlies were part of the FIFA window, allowing the Blue Tigresses to gain valuable international experience. This comes on the heels of their participation in the Turkish Women's Cup 2024 in Alanya, held in February, where they put up an impressive performance and finished as runners-up to Kosovo.

The team's encounter with Uzbekistan wasn't their first in the recent past; they also faced Uzbekistan in November 2023 during the AFC Women's Olympic Qualifiers Round 2, which took place in Tashkent.

Before this, the Indian women's team had a packed schedule. They participated in the Asian Games in September 2023 and the AFC Women's Olympic qualifying tournament in October 2023. In a span of six months, the team played six matches this year which did not happen earlier.

This varied international provided the Indian players with diverse challenges and learning experiences. It also highlights a significant increase in their game time and opportunities. This boost in match frequency is a positive development for the team's growth and the overall progress of women's football in India.

Following these high-stakes competitions, the focus shifted to the domestic front as the Indian Women's League ran from December 2023 to March 2024. The league not only helped in maintaining the players' competitive edge but also in honing their skills through regular match practice.

This year, the Indian Women's League adopted a new format, the home-and-away structure, spanning over three months. Odisha FC coach Crispin Chettri regards this format as the most beneficial change and said, "I think this is the best way to move forward in women's football. "It gives time for coaches to plan accordingly for each match and also gives players proper recovery time. Most importantly, in this system, players pick up the ability to adapt to different playing conditions quickly. It helps to shape the mentality of players when they go on National team duty."

India and Uzbekistan, ranked 67th and 47th, respectively, in the current FIFA rankings, have faced each other 11 times previously. India could manage a victory only once, a massive 6-0 win during the 2003 AFC Asia Cup. The most recent clash between the two sides happened during the AFC Olympic Qualifiers Round 2, in November 2023, where India suffered a 0-3 defeat.

Starting with an initial list of 30 probables, the Blue Tigresses underwent an intensive training camp at Sreenidi Deccan FC's home ground, Deccan Arena. This two-week session culminated in head coach Langam Chaoba Devi making the final selection of the 23 players who travelled to Tashkent for the scheduled friendly matches. The chosen squad comprised a blend of senior and promising newcomers, reflecting a strategic mix of experience and fresh talent.

When asked about the possibility of trying fresh faces in the upcoming fixtures, the coach said, "Yes, surely, with the future of Indian football in mind, we are planning to introduce some new players in some positions."





In the first match on May 31, 2024, at Bunyodkor Stadium, the Blue Tigresses fell to a 0-3 defeat. Despite a disciplined and strong defensive performance in the first half, the game turned in favour of the hosts early in the second half. A handball by Sanju resulted in a penalty, which Uzbek striker Diyora Khabibulaeva converted. Khabibulaeva continued her fine form, adding two more goals to complete a hat-trick, securing a comfortable victory for Uzbekistan. Despite the loss, the Indian defence, led by Ashalata Devi, showed significant determination, particularly in the first half, restricting the Uzbeks to limited opportunities.

The second encounter on June 4, 2024, saw a marked improvement in the Blue Tigresse's performance. They earned a hard-fought goalless draw, reflecting their ability to adapt and overcome previous shortcomings. In this match, India was proactive, especially in the first quarter, creating multiple set-piece opportunities. Soumya Guguloth came close to scoring twice, but her efforts went unrewarded. Goalkeeper Shreya Hooda also played a crucial role, making several important saves to keep the hosts at bay.

India's improved performance in the second game highlighted their resilience and ability to learn from mistakes. They dominated possession and were the aggressors for large parts of the match. However, the team's struggle with the final pass and finishing was evident, as they failed to convert their dominance into goals which head coach Chaoba Devi said, "Our primary focus is our passing, which needs improvement in some areas. Additionally, we have to strengthen our defensive line and improve our finishing to ensure a more effective performance in the upcoming games."

Overall, the friendly series against Uzbekistan provided valuable experience and insights for the Blue Tigresses, underscoring their potential and areas needing improvement ahead of future international fixtures. The team's defensive solidity and newfound attacking intent are promising signs for their development on the international stage.



Sreebhumi FC, Nita Football Academy earn promotion to IWL

Sreebhumi FC and Nita Football Academy earned promotion to the Indian Women's League after finishing first and second, respectively, in IWL 2 on a dramatic final day of the league. The former sealed the IWL 2 title with a 2-0 victory over Pudhuvai Unicorns at the Duler Stadium, Mapusa, on Tuesday, May 28, 2024.

Five teams – Sreebhumi FC, Nita Football Academy, Garhwal United FC, Pudhuvai Unicorns, and FC Tuem were in contention to win the league on the final day.

Both Sreebhumi and Nita FA finished the Final Round of the league with 10 points from five matches, after defeating Pudhuvai Unicorns and SAG Football Academy, respectively, on the final day. However, the former were crowned champions due to a superior head-to-head record.

Shruti Kumari of Garhwal United FC was the top scorer of the league, as she scored 10 goals from nine appearances, while Mousumi Murmu and Sikha Malik were the key scorers for Sreebhumi and Nita FA, netting seven goals each.

Sreebhumi have been near perfect in their IWL 2 campaign, having lost only one match (1-4 against Garhwal United) in the Final Round. They scored 34 goals in their nine matches across the Group Stage and the Final Round. Meanwhile, Nita FA scored 21 goals.

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Sukla Dutta, the Sreebhumi head coach, who earlier this year, won the SAFF U19 Women's Championship with the Young Tigresses in Bangladesh, credits her players at Sreebhumi for the IWL 2 title.

"The aim was to make the team champions. I must admit that the girls played with the right motivation and performed according to our plans. They dished out outstanding performances throughout the tournament and I am truly proud and happy for them," said Dutta. "Once I came here, I closely watched all the teams in the fray. My target was to reach the final."





Reliance Foundation Young Champs are AIFF Junior League 2023-24 champs

Reliance Foundation Young Champs (RYFC) defeated Football 4 Change Academy 4-2 on penalties to become the champions of the AIFF Junior League 2023-24 at the Guru Nanak stadium in Amritsar on Saturday, May 25, 2024.

The regulation time ended goalless, leading to the tie-breaker. RFYC goalkeeper Abhinand PB emerged as the hero of the evening, saving two penalties in the shootout.

In the semi-finals, while Football for Change Academy (F4C) defeated Alchemy International FA 2-2 (4-2), Reliance Foundation Young Champs showcased their dominance by routing FC, Madras, 4-0.

The match began on a promising note, as Arjun Devendra Singh of RFYC took a powerful shot in the 15th minute. The effort was credible, but goalkeeper Thanggoumang Haokip made an impressive full-length dive to his right, making a crucial save to keep the score level.

In the 23rd minute, Kamgouhao DOUNGEL from Football for Change Academy took a fine header from inside the box. However, despite his excellent efforts, the ball went wide of the target. Two minutes later, RFYC's Atul B Pulipra stepped up to take a free kick, but his effort lacked precision and sailed over the bar.

In the 27th minute, F4C's Thangboimang Singsit took a free kick. This time the shot was right on target, but RFYC goalkeeper Abhinand PB was alert and managed to block it.

As the first half progressed, RFYC's Rajkumar Sharungbam made a decisive move in the 37th minute. He skillfully passed the ball to Shadhil EK, who found some space inside the box. Shadhil took the shot, but it was straight at the keeper, who made a comfortable save.

In the closest chance of the match in the 74th minute, Football for Change Academy's Satlenchung Kipgen made a brilliant run down the left flank. He manoeuvred past two defenders and set up Shadhil for a shot. Shadhil took his position and fired at the goal from inside the box, but the shot narrowly missed the target.

In the 81st minute, Football for Change Academy coach Hangkhanlian Suantak received marching orders.

In the tie-breaker, while Arjun Devendra Singh, Pritom Brahma, Faris A and Atul B Pulipra scored for Reliance Foundation Young Champs, Football 4 Change could score only twice through Chonminngam Khongsai and Thangboimang Singsit. Abhinand saved the shots from Seiginhao Khongsai and Jangginlen Vaiphei to give his team the title.



Minerva Academy FC emerge AIFF Sub-Junior League 2023-24 champions

Minerva Academy FC staged a stunning second-half comeback to bag the AIFF Sub-Junior League 2023-24 title at the Capital Football Arena on Friday, May 24, 2024.

Trailing 0-2 in the first session against Bengaluru Football Club in a match of 50- minutes duration, Minerva stormed the rivals in the next 25 minutes to win 7-4 in the end. Minerva's victory was studded with two hat-tricks by Konthoujam Denamoni and Mohammed Azam Khan, while Wankheirakpam Punshiba Meetei scored the other goal from a spot kick.

For Bengaluru FC, Mohammad Sohil Khan, CH Sakip, Yajas Nilesh Bafna and Akash Mondal were the marksmen. They began on a promising note, taking the lead in the 12th minute when Mohammed Sohil Khan's cleverly taken free kick from the right found the target. In the 21st minute, CH Sakip sent the ball to the far corner of the Minerva net with a quick turn inside the box.

Minerva FC made a vigorous return after the change of ends and reduced the margin within 30 seconds when Konthoujam Denamoni received a cross in the box and scored with a deft touch. But the story looked all over when Yajas Nilesh Bafna made it 3-1 for Bengaluru in the 34th minute.

There was, however, lots of drama in store in the last 12 minutes. Seven goals were scored during this period, with Minerva slamming six of them. Two goals in as many minutes by Mohammed Azam Khan made it 3-3 and Konthoujam Denamoni pumped in two more in the 41st and 45th minutes to put Minerva FC in the lead for the first time in the match.

In between, Akash Mondal's last-ditch attempt to save the day for Bengaluru FC with a left-footer from inside the box didn't yield the required result as Minerva, coached by Vineet Kumar Kantiwal, stormed the rival citadel to score two more in the last two minutes of the match.

Among the spectators was Indian senior men's team coach Igor Stimac.

Classic Football Academy bag AIFF U17 Elite Youth League 2023-24 title



Classic Football Academy made the best use of the set piece moves to retain the AIFF U17 Elite Youth League 2023-24 title, defeating Sudeva Delhi FC 2-1 at the Nagoa Panchayat Ground, Goa, on Saturday, May 25, 2024. All the goals came in the second half.

Played on the well-maintained turf of Nagoa in Goa, the two teams dished out a lively display of attacking football, much to the delight of the sparse crowd. Classic Football Academy were definitely the better side and were the deserving winners in the end. On the other hand, Sudeva were no easy losers and created more than one opportunity that could have altered the result of the game.

But then, Classic, the team from Manipur, were more forthright in their approach and it made the difference. After a barren first half, Classic opened the scoring in the 49th minute when they converted off a corner kick from the left. The ball came floating inside the six-yard box and Ningthoukhongjam Rishi jumped in the air to head home.

Given the Classic's approach to set pieces, the Delhi side should have been more careful, but they didn't learn from the mistake. Seven minutes later, they once again committed the error of allowing Ahongshangbam Samson enough space with another corner kick. This time the ball came from the right and Samson evaded his marker to find the target with a simple header.

Sudeva were not ready to take things lying down and pulled one back in the 60th minute. A combined move from the right saw Ginminhao Khongsai cross inside the area for substitute Gaurav Kumar to head in.

The game turned interesting thereafter, with Sudeva making all efforts to restore parity. But Classic, with a strong defence and a bit of luck here and there, held on to their lead till the end. In between, they, too, had their chances, but Sudeva custodian Junaid Hamid played with lots of confidence to defy the Classic attackers.



AIFF President congratulates Brazil for winning FIFA Women's World Cup 2027 bid

The All India Football Federation President, Mr. Kalyan Chaubey on Friday, May 17, 2024, met Brazil Football Association (CBF) President, Mr. Ednaldo Rodrigues, and extended his heartfelt congratulations for Brazil being allotted to host the FIFA Women's World Cup 2027.

The AIFF President is currently in Thailand to attend the 74th FIFA Congress. On the sidelines of Congress, Mr. Chaubey held meetings with senior FIFA officials, including FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

Brazil will host the FIFA Women's World Cup 2027, the 10th edition of the championship, thus becoming the first South American nation to host the Women's World Cup.

While congratulating Brazil, Mr. Chaubey said, "It is great news that a great footballing nation like Brazil will host the FIFA Women's World Cup 2027. We have special reasons to feel excited about it, as India are currently making rapid progress in Women's football.

"In the last two years, women's football in India have made tremendous progress. The Indian Women's League (IWL), which was a single-venue tournament, has become a hugely successful championship played on a home-and-away basis across the country. The second tier of IWL has already been introduced, which has attracted considerable participation. The fact that we saw a 138 percent growth in terms of the number of women players registered on the AIFF CMS (Competition Management System), speaks a lot about how far women's football has come in just the last two years."

The AIFF President said, "In 2027, in Brazil, the best women's teams in the world will assemble to fight for the glittering Women's World Cup. We cannot, at the moment, predict whether India will be there. But what I can predict with confidence is that the day is not far off when the Indian women's team will be seen in action in the world's top tournaments."



FIFA Football Agent License Examination conducted in New Delhi

The All India Football Federation, on Wednesday, May 22, 2024, successfully conducted the FIFA Football Agent License Examination at the Football House, in New Delhi.

The hour-long examination was taken by 37 candidates, including two overseas aspirants.

The next exam will be tentatively conducted in September 2024. Details about the same will be shared on [the-aiff.com](https://aiff.com) and on the AIFF's official social media platforms in due course of time.



AIFF launches Blue Cubs Development Centre programme

The All India Football Federation, earlier this month, marked a significant milestone in the advancement of Blue Cubs with the launch of the Blue Cubs Development Centre programme.

The launch of the Blue Cubs Development Centre programme was done as a part of the celebrations of the AFC Grassroots Day, on May 15.

All academies across the nation can also apply for the same through the [Blue Cubs app](#). For further information, please reach out to grassroots@the-aiff.com.

This initiative aims to bridge the gap between grassroots and youth football, fostering a robust system that will help manage all entities involved in developing the game at the grassroots levels.

Blue Cubs is an elite grassroots programme to broadbase football across the nation, while also aiming to develop technical skills amongst the youth players. The elite youth players that come through the Blue cubs programme then proceed to play at the various age group leagues.



AIFF Futsal Club Championship will start from June 22

The AIFF Futsal Club Championship 2023-24 draw was conducted at the Football House in New Delhi on Wednesday, May 29, 2024.

In total, 19 teams will participate in the AIFF Futsal Club Championship which will be held at Swarnim Gujarat Sports University from June 22- July 5, 2024 in Gujarat.

Fifteen teams have been nominated by their respective state associations, while four semi-finalist teams (Delhi Football Club, Mohammedan Sporting Club, Minerva Academy FC, Electric Veng Futsal Club), of last season's Hero Futsal Club Championship have been given direct entry.

The tournament will be played on a league cum knock-out round format where group winners of all four groups will make the Semi-finals.

The Groups are as follows:

Group A: Millat FC, Sports Odisha, Classic Football Academy, Corbett FC, Mohammedan SC

Group B: Electric Veng Futsal Club, Bangalore Arrows FC, Satvir Football Club, Goal Hunterz FC, Minerva Academy FC

Group C: Baroda Football Academy, FC Thrystior, Speed Force FC, Guwahati City FC, Ambelim Sports Club

Group D: JCT Football Academy, Golazo Football Club, Casa Berwani Soccer, Delhi FC



SAFF U17, U20, Women's championships draws conducted in Dhaka

Draw for the SAFF U17 Championship 2024, SAFF U20 Championship 2024 and SAFF Women's Championship was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Saturday, June 8, 2024.

In the U17 event, holders India were placed in Group A alongside Maldives and Bangladesh. Hosts Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were drawn in Group B. The SAFF U17 Championship will be played in Bhutan from September 18- 28, 2024.

In the U20 championship, India, the defending champions, have been drawn with Maldives and Bhutan in Group B, while hosts Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka made up Group A. The SAFF U20 Championship 2024, will be held in Kathmandu, Nepal from August 16-28, 2024.

In the SAFF Women's Championship 2024, the Indian Senior Women's National team were drawn with Bangladesh and Pakistan in Group A, while hosts Nepal were drawn in Group B with Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan.

This year, seven teams will participate in the three competitions. The format of all the competitions remains the same. All three championships will be played on the League-cum-knockout basis, where seven teams are divided into two groups (four teams in one group and three in the other). The top two teams from both groups will qualify for the semi-finals.

India emerged as champions of both SAFF youth tournaments held in 2022 for the U20 and U17 age groups. In the last edition of the SAFF Women's Championship 2022, India lost to Nepal 1-0 in the semi-finals.



SAFF U17 MEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP 2024, BHUTAN: SEPTEMBER 18- 28, 2024

Group A: India, Maldives, Bangladesh

Group B: Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

SAFF U20 MEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP 2024, NEPAL: AUGUST 16-28, 2024

Group A: Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

Group B: India, Maldives, Bhutan

SAFF U20 MEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP 2024 FIXTURES

14:45 IST, August 17: Bhutan vs India (Group B)

14:45 IST, August 23: India vs Maldives (Group B)

13:45 IST, August 26: Semi Final 1 (Group A winners vs Group B runners-up)

17:45 IST, August 26: Semi Final 2 (Group B winners vs Group A runners-up)

17:45 IST, August 28: Final

SAFF WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP 2024, NEPAL: OCTOBER 17 TO 30, 2024

Group A: India, Bangladesh, Pakistan

Group B: Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bhutan



Groups decided for AFC U17 and U20 Asian Cup 2025 Qualifiers

The draws for the AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2025 Qualifiers and AFC U20 Asian Cup China PR 2025 Qualifiers were held at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Thursday, June 13, 2024.

In the AFC U17 Asian Cup 2025 Qualifiers, India were drawn alongside Thailand, Brunei Darussalam and Turkmenistan in Group D, which will be hosted by Thailand between October 19-27, 2024. In total, 43 teams were divided into 10 groups - seven of four each and three of five. The 10 group winners and five best second-placed teams among all groups will advance to the Finals, with Saudi Arabia scheduled to host the tournament between April 3-20, 2025.

India will aim to qualify for the AFC U17 Asian Cup for the fourth successive time. In their last finals appearance in 2023 in Thailand, the Blue Colts were eliminated in the group stage. India have twice reached the quarter-finals at the AFC U17 Asian Cup - in 2002 and 2018, their best showing.

Before the AFC U17 Asian Cup 2025 Qualifiers, India will participate in the SAFF U17 Championship, to be held in Bhutan between September 18-28, 2024.

In the AFC U20 Asian Cup 2025 Qualifiers, India were drawn alongside IR Iran, Mongolia and Laos in Group G, which will be hosted by Laos between September 21-29, 2024. In total, 45 teams were divided into 10 groups - five groups of four each and five groups of five. The 10 group winners and five best second-placed teams among all groups will advance to the Finals, with China PR scheduled to host the tournament between February 6-23, 2025.

India will aim to qualify for the AFC U20 Asian Cup for the first time since hosting the tournament in 2006. Their best result at the tournament was joint champions alongside Iran in 1974.

Before the AFC U20 Asian Cup 2025 Qualifiers, India will participate in the SAFF U20 Championship, to be held in Nepal between August 16-28, 2024.



AFC U17 ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS 2025 DRAW RESULT:

Group A: IR Iran, Jordan (H), Syria, Hong Kong, China, DPR Korea

Group B: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia (H), Philippines, Macau

Group C: Korea Republic, China PR (H), Bahrain, Bhutan, Maldives

Group D: Thailand (H), India, Brunei Darussalam, Turkmenistan

Group E: Uzbekistan, Iraq, Chinese Taipei (H), Palestine

Group F: Japan, Qatar (H), Mongolia, Nepal

Group G: Australia, Indonesia, Kuwait (H), Northern Mariana Islands

Group H: Malaysia, Laos (H), United Arab Emirates, Lebanon

Group I: Yemen, Vietnam (H), Kyrgyz Republic, Myanmar

Group J: Tajikistan, Oman, Singapore (H), Guam

AFC U20 ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS 2025 DRAW RESULT:

Group A: Vietnam (H), Syria, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Guam

Group B: Uzbekistan, Bahrain, Chinese Taipei (H), Cambodia, Nepal

Group C: Korea Republic, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait (H), Northern Mariana Islands

Group D: Australia, Saudi Arabia (H), Palestine, Afghanistan, Macau

Group E: Tajikistan (H), Oman, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, DPR Korea

Group F: Indonesia (H), Yemen, Timor-Leste, Maldives

Group G: IR Iran, Mongolia, India, Laos (H)

Group H: Iraq, Thailand (H), Philippines, Brunei Darussalam

Group I: Japan, Kyrgyz Republic (H), Myanmar, Turkmenistan

Group J: Jordan, Qatar (H), Singapore, Hong Kong, China



Senior AIFF official Anil Kamat passes away

Anil Kamat, Assistant General Secretary and Director of Competitions, All India Football Federation, passed away in New Delhi on Tuesday, June 4, 2024, after a brief illness. He was 70.

An authority of competition organisation and match operations, Kamat, who was from Goa, was associated with the AIFF for nearly 25 years.

Condoling his death, AIFF President Mr Kalyan Chaubey said, "I am truly saddened by Anil Kamat's demise. In Anil ji's death, Indian Football's structure has lost a pillar that will be hard to replace. His deep knowledge of football and its management was an asset for Indian football at both domestic and international level. My heart goes out to his family at this hour of grief. Om Shanti."

AIFF Acting Secretary General Mr M Satyanarayan said, "The passing away of Anil Kamat has come as a huge shock for the AIFF and everyone in the Indian football family. Personally, I have lost a great friend and a person who always guided me with finer points of competition organisation and match operations, which was his forte. May his soul rest in peace. He was truly one of the most loved and most respected persons in the Football House." Kamat, who was a bachelor, was originally from Chinchinim village in Goa, famous for producing many top footballers over the years.

He was associated with football from his earlier days and was an official with CRC Chinchinim and Salcete Football Club. He was also a former Executive Committee Member and Joint-Secretary of the Goa Football Association. The Indian senior men's team, who are currently training in Kolkata, for the June 6th qualifier against Kuwait, observed a minute of silence in memory of Kamat during Tuesday evening's session of practice.



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