



# VISION 2047

T A R G E T 2 0 2 6



**BEGINNING OF A NEW  
ERA FOR INDIAN FUTSAL**

- Kalyan Chaubey  
President, AIFF

**ROBI HELPS  
BENGAL SUN  
RISE AGAIN**



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# President's Note

## *Beginning of a new era for Indian futsal*

**KALYAN CHAUBEY**

It was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, famously said a legendary English writer more than 150 years ago. As I sit down to pen this column immediately after the completion of India's campaign in the AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup 2025 qualifiers in Indonesia, I am suddenly reminded of the line.

To many people, the show put on by the Indian girls was below the mark as they lost all three matches in their group. But to me, it wasn't a winter of despair, but a spring of hope.

In India, futsal hasn't yet reached the level of popularity; the sport is still to spread its wings like football. It is at the beginners' stage. After this committee took over the reins of the All India Football Federation in September 2022, we have been in constant dialogue on how to spread the game.

In between, two men's club championships have been organised, one in Delhi in February 2023 and then in Vadodara in June-July 2024. However, no women's championship has been held so far. After all, it is never easy to introduce a new discipline and to take its popularity to a level that would attract a considerable number of participants from all over the country.

The Asmita football leagues under the Khelo India programme have done a world of good in women's football. Currently in progress, hundreds of young players are participating in it from across the country. In women's futsal, since no domestic tournament has been held so far, the opportunities are limited and it would take some time before the sport picks up.

The women's futsal squad was raised after all the Member Associations were asked to send good and capable players from their respective states. The first of the two-phased camp that began in Bhavnagar, Gujarat, from November 5, 2024, saw a total of 121



players from 15 states being closely monitored. After careful selection, the second camp started at the same venue from December 15, 2024, with 18 players and then, the final squad of 14 was selected.

The initial aim is not the results, but to take futsal to a level where the game would be regularly played and spread all over. I am confident that futsal has immense possibilities - there are so many indoor stadiums all over India, which can easily be the venues for it. Like it happened in the National Football Championships for the Santosh Trophy and the Women's NFC for the Rajmata Jijabai Trophy, the federation and the state governments can also join hands to promote the sport.

Coming back to the results, I must say the Indian girls have done a commendable job. They lost against Hong Kong and Indonesia, but both were experienced teams in futsal. But the girls made us proud in the last match against Kyrgyz Republic. Coming from 1-3 down, India fought back tremendously to make it 3-3, and it was again the lack of experience that forced them to concede a last-minute goal. It was only the beginning and I am sure this effort would help women's futsal in India to go ahead.



# Robi Hansda brings smiles back to Bengal in Santosh Trophy after seven years

**SOU MO GHOSH**

A goal booted in from almost a kissing distance by Robi Hansda deep into the add-on time made all the difference as West Bengal players hugged and kissed the coveted Santosh Trophy they retained after seven years defeating Kerala 1-0 in the final at the Gachibowli Stadium in Hyderabad on Tuesday, December 31, 2024.

This was West Bengal's 33rd title in the National Football Championship, but the emotional fillip the victory generated was not to be missed.

Hansda, a prolific striker, who scored his 12th goal in the 78th edition of the tournament and brought a dramatic change in the final, went wild with joy after scoring the match-winner and took off his shirt to celebrate that immediately called for a yellow card.

But it didn't stop Hansda from running away with two top individual awards of the tournament – the Tulsidas Balaram Player of the Match award and the Peter Thangaraj Player of the Tournament Award. Given the way Hansda carried his team's responsibilities on his shoulders right from Day One of the tournament, it was perhaps impossible to think of another contender for the awards.

As the match was slowly moving towards a contest to be decided in the extra-time or through the penalty shootout, Kerala defence found itself completely off-guard when striker Manotos Maji headed forward a ball in the box in the 90+4th minute after receiving a lob from the left.

Kerala defender Adil Amal was wrong footed when Hansda, who was camping himself well inside the area, a few yards away from the goalkeeper Hajmal S, put the ball in to trigger off massive celebration in the West Bengal bench.

Overall, it wasn't a match to be remembered for long. Both teams were cautious in their approaches from the beginning and never could really test the rival custodians. Bengal were heavily handicapped by the absence of their key striker Naro Hari Shrestha because of injury and it blunted their attacks to a great extent. They mainly had to depend on crosses from the wings that didn't cut much ice in the Kerala defence.

Kerala, on the other hand, was cautious but time and again accelerated in counter attacks. But then, they took fancy shots at the rival goal, tried a few quick dribbles and even sent low crosses which didn't carry the necessary stings.

West Bengal coach Sanjoy Sen said he felt honoured to take the trophy back to Kolkata after seven years. "In Bengal, it is all about winning the Santosh Trophy. To finish runners-up would be considered a failure.

"So, I was aware of the pressure, but took up the challenge. We had a completely young team, but they performed in the most incredible way throughout the tournament. Kudos to my boys for doing such a great job."

Hansda, who emerged the top scorer with a dozen goals in his pocket, said he was happy to win the trophy for the state. "That I could score the match-winner is a huge bonus for me. I dedicate this victory to my father."

## Award winners

**Winners** - West Bengal (INR 5,00,000/-) **Runners Up** - Kerala (INR 3,00,000/-)

**Peter Thangaraj Player of the Championship** - Robi Hansda (West Bengal) (INR 1,00,000/-)

**Tulsidas Balaram Player of the Final Match** - Robi Hansda (West Bengal) (INR 1,00,000/-)





## STATE OF AFFAIRS

# Chasing greener pastures through Asmita: From Tripura tea gardens to football pitch

Mousumi Oraon is no fiery political personality or a raving film star. She doesn't attract the inquisitive attention of the thousands when she walks on the road. A daughter of poor parents from north Tripura, Mousumi is a simple girl who plays football.

Yet, Mousumi, whose mother is working as a daily wage labourer in one of the many tea gardens in Tripura, has brought in a reticent rebellion that has injected a new life into the sporting scenario of the area.

Four years ago, Mousumi was selected to play for Tripura in an age-group National Championship of the AIFF. Overnight, she became a sensation, and hundreds of girls from the area decided to follow Mousumi's path and started playing football.

"Previously, we had only Mousumi and maybe a few other girls. Today, our Phulo Jhano Athletic Club have more than 150 girls pursuing football. We have four teams—three in the age group playing in the Asmita League under the Khelo India programme and one participating in the official women's league of the Tripura Football Association," said Joydip Roy, a tireless social worker and the backbone of the club.

Pranab Roy, the President of the Baikuntha Nath Memorial Trust, which plays a major role in keeping the fire burning of the club's ever-dwindling funds, said an unbelievable social change has come into the tea gardens of north Tripura ever since the young girls took to football.

"This is an area where there are several tea gardens. The labours there are poor. Naturally, the girls suffer from malnutrition, early dropouts from school, and child marriage.



“We were involved there for some years in social work on several fronts and found things are not easy to change. Lack of education, health care, and poverty are major hindrances. But when football was introduced by the Phulo Jhano Athletic Club, the girls in the entire region lapped it up with huge enthusiasm and approached us in numbers to join football,” said Pranab.

Football is like the gateway to freedom and the bigger world for the girls from these tea estates, who have lived their lives confined to small hutments, fighting to earn their next meal.

The change is evident and magical. Today, these girls are serious contenders to represent the state teams. Mousumi has graduated to play for the Tripura senior women’s team. Players like Kunti Oraon, Sabamani Oraon and Anita Gaur have donned the state colours in age groups.

“The Khelo India Leagues have come as a boon,” said Mr. Amit Chaudhuri, the honorary secretary of the Tripura Football Association. “The Phulo Jhano Athletic Club have three teams in the U13, U15 and U17 women’s leagues and a team in our senior league, too. They always perform well in the leagues,” he added.

People like Pranab Roy and Joydip Roy are working overtime to make this project a success.

“Money is the biggest issue,” admits Joydip. “We have a good coach in Anjan Pal now, himself an ex-footballer. We take care of the girls’ outfits, equipment, training time refreshments, travel, stay, food during tournaments, and everything else. The growing cost of living leaves us drained regularly.

“Pranab-da does a lot for us. The Tripura Football Association is kind enough to lend us a helping hand. The Khelo India leagues are also of some help. Some well-wishers chip in regularly. Despite all the drawbacks, it is not a losing battle... it is a big victory at every stage,” he said.

Mousumi’s elder sister, Prabasini, was also a budding footballer. But she sacrificed her career to see Mousumi progress. Phulo Jano Athletic Club, tucked in the remote corner of north Tripura, is now engaged in a grim but enthusiastic battle to see many more Mousumis lighten up the pitch on the football ground.



# Blue Tigresses rain goals in Bengaluru FIFA Friendlies against Maldives



## AKHIL RAWAT

The Indian senior women's team netted a staggering 25 goals in the two friendly matches against Maldives on December 30, 2024 and January 2, 2025 at the Padukone - Dravid Centre for Sports Excellence in Bengaluru. The first game finished 14-0, while the second one, with India fielding much younger players, resulted 11-1.

In total, Swedish coach Joakim Andersson handed India debuts to 16 players, eight in each game. Debutants Lynda Kom Serto and Lhingdeikim stole the headlines, scoring four goals in the first and second games, respectively.

In the first one, seasoned campaigner Pyari Xaxa scored a hat-trick, Neha and Kajol Dsouza netted two each, while Sangita Basfore, Sorokhaibam Ranjana Chanu and Rimpa Haldar accounted for one goal each. For Neha, Kajol and Rimpa, it were their first India goals. The pick of the bunch was Ranjana Chanu's right-footed curler from the top of the box after cutting inside from the left in the 54th minute.

It was one of the Blue Tigresses' biggest-ever victory margins in international football. In 2010, India defeated Bhutan 18-0 in the SAFF Championship in Bangladesh.

For Maldives, the final whistle couldn't come soon enough, and to the Blue Tigresses credit, they took their foot off the scoring pedal in the final quarter of the game, choosing instead to control the possession and try new patterns of play in midfield.

For Alexandersson, the experiments with the team couldn't have gone better and provided a perfect end of the year for the team.

The experiments continued in the second game on January 2 after a few senior players were released and the Swede opted for a largely inexperienced line-up.

Lhingdeikim, who scored two in each half, along with Nongmeikapam Sibani Devi, were the two debutants in India's starting XI. Meanwhile, Ribansi Jamu, Thingbaijam Sanjita Devi, Juhi Singh, Monisha Singha, Khumukcham Bhumika Devi and Simran Gurung made their debuts off the bench. The latter scored a debut brace. Goalkeeper Maibam Linthoingambi Devi, defender Aruna Bag, and midfielder and captain Sangita Basfore were the only players to retain their respective spots in the starting XI from the first match.

The Indian onslaught saw them lead by four after just 17 minutes. Maldives did compose themselves for a brief period and managed to score their only goal from the two friendlies, as Mariyam Rifa (27) capitalised on a defensive error near the half-hour mark, the only blemish on an otherwise seamless couple of friendlies for the Blue Tigresses.

Maldives were down to 10 players in the last 20 minutes, when Maeesha Abdul Hannan was sent off for a deliberate hand-ball inside the penalty box. Bhumika Devi converted the resulting penalty to complete the rout.





# Accepting challenges is my passion always, says Dronacharya coach Armando Colaco

Former National Coach Armando Colaco said the Dronacharya award 2024 for Lifetime achievements he was conferred with on Thursday, January 2, 2025, should go a long way in producing more quality Indian coaches.

Colaco, who comes from Goa, is the third Indian football coach after Syed Nayeemuddin and Bimal Ghosh to be conferred with the prestigious award.

Undoubtedly one of the country's most successful coaches in the new century, Colaco, during his coaching career of nearly four decades, holds the distinction of excelling in both the national and international arenas.

"First and most important is that our coaches are going to realise that all your hard work is going to communicate, and I could be an inspiration to all these coaches because I'm like a bridge between the old generation and the new generation. This could be a sort of motivation for all Indian coaches since foreign coaches are currently playing a dominant role in Indian football," said Colaco, who coached the National team in 2011.

During his short stint as the National Coach, Colaco had some impressive results under his belt, including a 2-1 victory over Qatar in a friendly played at Doha. The same year, Colaco guided India to a creditable 2-2 draw against mighty United Arab Emirates in a World Cup qualifying match at the Ambedkar Stadium, Delhi.





“But etched in my memory will always be the 0-3 defeat we suffered against UAE in the away tie. “We were reduced to nine men within 25 minutes because of two red cards. I had to quickly change the tactics and shuffle the players to stay in the game,” said Colaco.

As a club coach, Colaco took Dempo Sports Club, Goa, to a new height. Under him, Dempo won the National Football League twice and the I-League three times. His wards included players like Samir Naik, Mahesh Gawali, Clifford Miranda, and Climax Lawrence, who went on to don the national colours for many years. The years between 2004-5 and 2011-12 seasons, Dempo were the dominant force in Indian domestic football under the tutelage of Armando Colaco.

“I had players who went on to play for the national team and even captain the national team. So, you know, that made me a very happy person. God has rewarded me. That’s the greatest satisfaction because I have really worked very hard all these years,” said the veteran coach.

Even at 70, Colaco remains an active coach and hasn’t lost his hunger for success. He is currently attached to the Sporting Clube de Goa. “My aim now is to take the club to the I-League, and I hope to succeed soon,” he said.

“I get immense pleasure in taking up challenges. It was like a passion. When I accepted the coaching offer from East Bengal, I was told that the match against Mohun Bagan is always considered the most crucial. I quietly accepted the challenge. During my tenure, East Bengal played six matches against Mohun Bagan and didn’t lose any,” Colaco said.

The Dronacharya coach thinks the Indian coaches should receive more opportunities. “The Indian coaches have the advantage of knowing the culture. That’s the most important factor. You know your players; you know your Mother India. It always helps,” he said.



## Project Future India Selection Trials for referees conducted in three centres

The Project Future India Selection Trials Batch 2025 under the Centre of Referees Excellence (CORE) scheme was conducted in three venues in December, 2024 by the AIFF Zonal Referees Development Officers (ZRDO).

The trials were conducted in Kalyani, West Bengal (December 15 to 17), Ahmedabad, Gujarat (December 18 to 20), and Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala (December 20 to 22).

In Kalyani, 16 women and 13 men candidates from East, Northeast and North Zones participated in the trials. While in Ahmedabad, five women and 10 men from West Zone took part, 10 women and 17 men from South Zone were present in the Thiruvananthapuram trials.

The participants were evaluated on different parameters like fitness, proficiency in the Laws of the Game, along with a practical match and viva voce assessments.

The selected candidates will be under the AIFF Referees department umbrella for two years and will undergo six modules, spanning four days each.

Each module under the project will be a part of a residential programme. Every module is to be handled by the respective Zone ZRDO and AIFF Elite Referees Instructor.

The Project Future India is an initiative to develop a cadre of referees who can excel at the highest levels of the game. The zonal refereeing development activities will be held across five centres in an effort to make the respective Member Associations self-sufficient in conducting their own referees' development activities under the ambit of AIFF's Vision 2047.

Three venues, Kalyani, Ahmedabad and Thiruvananthapuram, have been identified to host Zonal refereeing development activities round the year. Two more venues in North and North East will be finalised later for the same project



## Draw and fixtures announced for men's and women's football at 38th National Games 2025 Uttarakhand

The draw and fixtures for men's and women's football tournaments at the 38th National Games 2025, Uttarakhand, have been announced. The men's tournament will take place from January 30 to February 7, while the women's tournament will be held from January 29 to February 6. Matches will be held at the Indira Gandhi International Sports Complex and District Sports Complex in Haldwani.

Both events will feature eight teams each - hosts Uttarakhand and seven best teams from the 77th National Football Championship for Santosh Trophy 2023-24 (held in Yupia, Arunachal Pradesh) and 28th Senior Women's National Football Championship for Rajmata Jijabai Trophy 2023-24 (held in Kolkata, West Bengal).

Services are the defending gold medalists from the men's tournament in the 37th National Games 2023 Goa, while Odisha are the defending gold medalists from the women's tournament.

### **38TH NATIONAL GAMES 2025, UTTARAKHAND (Men's Football Draw)**

**GROUP A:** GOA, UTTARAKHAND, MIZORAM, ASSAM

**GROUP B:** SERVICES, KERALA, MANIPUR, DELHI

### **38TH NATIONAL GAMES 2025, UTTARAKHAND (Women's Football Draw)**

**GROUP A:** HARYANA, TAMIL NADU, SIKKIM, ODISHA

**GROUP B:** MANIPUR, DELHI, UTTARAKHAND, WEST BENGAL

Full list of fixtures is available on [www.the-aiff.com](http://www.the-aiff.com)



## List of probables for AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup 2025 announced

The All India Football Federation, on Saturday, January 11, 2025, named 25 probables for the preparatory camp of the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup Thailand 2025. The camp will begin in Porbandar, Gujarat on February 5, 2025.

India are drawn against hosts Thailand, Kuwait and Lebanon in Group A of the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup in Pattaya, Thailand 2025, to be played from March 20 to 30, 2025.

India will participate in the tournament after 18 years, having last featured at the 2007 Asian Beach Soccer Championship in the UAE. The Indian national beach soccer team will be active for the first time since the 2008 Asian Beach Games in Indonesia.

The top two finishers from each of the four groups will move into the quarter-finals. The top three teams will fill the three berths allocated to the AFC for the 2025 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in the Seychelles.

### **The list of probables:**

**Goalkeepers:** Pratik Kankonkar, Harishnath, Raj Chauhan and Mohammed Kaif Khan.

**Defenders:** Nehal Parab, Srijith Babu, Rohith Yesudas, Ali Akbard, Mohammed Tahir, Jaypal Singh Sirsa, Latish Kunkalkar, Umarul Mukthar, Don Remedios and Mirsad BH.

**Midfielders:** Roy R, Aditya, Akramul Haque, Muhammed Unais, Musheer TKB, Prince and Manthan.

**Strikers:** Amit Godara, Basith, Satish Naik and Muhammed Akram.

### **India's schedule (all matches at the Jomtien Beach Arena, Pattaya)**

19:00 IST, March 20, 2025: Thailand vs India

15:30 IST, March 22, 2025: India vs Kuwait

15:30 IST, March 24, 2025: Lebanon vs India



24-30 Januari 2025



GELORA DELTA SIDOARJO

# India to participate in Mandiri U20 Challenge Series in Indonesia

The India U20 men's team will participate in the Mandiri U20 Challenge Series 2025, a four-nation friendly tournament, in Indonesia from January 24 to 30, 2025. Syria, Jordan and hosts Indonesia are the other teams.

Biby Thomas Muttath has been appointed as the coach, with Mileswamy Govindaraju Ramachandran as the assistant coach and Dipankar Choudhury as the goalkeeper coach. Thomas, on Monday, named a 23-member squad consisting of 17 and 18 year-olds (born 2007 and 2008), who are preparing for the SAFF U19 Championship to be held from May 8 to 18, 2025.

India will begin the tournament with a match against Syria (January 24 at 14:30 IST), followed by Jordan (January 27 at 14:30 IST) and Indonesia (January 30 at 18:00 IST). The matches will be played at the Gelora Delta Stadium in Sidoarjo. All three of India's opponents are using the tournament to prepare for February's AFC U20 Asian Cup (with players born in 2005).

India, who had been camping in Goa, will depart for Sidoarjo on Tuesday, January 21. After the tournament, the team will have a break before reassembling with more players for a longer camp to continue the preparations for the SAFF U19 Championship.

## India U20 squad for the Mandiri U20 Challenge Series, Indonesia:

**Goalkeepers:** Suraj Singh Aheibam, Alsabith Sulaiman Thekkekaramel, Karan Makkar.

**Defenders:** Yaipharemba Chingakham, Sumit Sharma Brahmacharimayum, Afinmon Baiju, Mukul Panwar, Malemngamba Singh Thokchom, Jodric Abranches.

**Midfielders:** Md. Arbash, Mahmad Sami, Levis Zangminlun, Manbhakupar Malngiang, Ahongshangbam Samson, Ningthoukhongjam Rishi Singh, Jajo Prashan, Ngamgouhou Mate, Gurnaj Singh Grewal, Danny Meitei Laishram.

**Forwards:** Bharat Lairenjam, Lemmet Tangvah, Sujin S, Mohd. Zulkif.

**Head Coach:** Biby Thomas Muttath; **Assistant Coach:** Mileswamy Govindaraju Ramachandran; **Goalkeeping Coach:** Dipankar Choudhury; **Strength and Conditioning Coach:** Chelston Pinto

## India's schedule in Mandiri U20 Challenge Series:

January 24 (14:30 IST): India vs Syria

January 27 (14:30 IST): Jordan vs India

January 30 (18:00 IST): Indonesia vs India

Venue: Gelora Delta Stadium, Sidoarjo



# Operation Yogyakarta: Indian girls show early promise in maiden campaign

**SRUTI CHAKRABORTY**

It was a case of so near, yet so far.

Less than half a minute away from earning their first point in the international arena, India were pipped to the post at the last moment against Kyrgyz Republic in the AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup 2025 qualifiers in Yogyakarta, the island city in Java, Indonesia.

It broke the hearts of every Indian fan as the Kyrgyz Republic ran away with a 4-3 victory by scoring the match-winner moments before the final hooter. At the same time, they felt proud about the new kids on the block, especially players like Drishti Pant and Khusbhu Saroj, who found the opponents' net with their skillful display.

It was India's maiden campaign in women's futsal, never before had an Indian team left the shores of the country to take on the mighty and the powerful in the Asian circuit. There was obvious fear of losing against experienced opponents.

Yes, the girls did lose matches against Hong Kong (0-5) and favourites Indonesia (0-6), but it couldn't deter them from playing attacking futsal. Against Indonesia, who under their Portuguese coach, are seriously aiming to have a shot for the top positions in the Final Round in China later this year, it looked all over when India were left trailing by four goals at the breather.

The second half, however, saw a complete transformation from the Indian side. Exposed to the international arena for the first time, India displayed surprising resilience in the next 20 minutes to frustrate the hosts. But for the two, innumerable attempts by Indonesia to score were thwarted by India with effective defensive tactics.

True, India couldn't avoid defeat. Like in the match against Hong Kong, the inexperience of the Indian girls once again made the difference after their initial resistance with subtle defensive tactics underneath left the Indonesians baffled and somewhat unnerved.



India's head coach Joshuah Vaz did a wonderful job within a short period and having a squad, who have no experience of playing international futsal.

"We have to understand that most of these girls have not played futsal, so it's a learning experience for them. They have to now understand what it is to play futsal at the international level," he said.

"These girls are the pioneers and they can tell others about their experience of playing here. We do a lot of coach education through AIFF. Coaches need to come to these courses. I am sure this tournament has been an eye-opener for everyone and this can be a catalyst for having a fixed futsal league for women in India, which will definitely help Indian girls become better players.

"Our goal remains bigger. Even though we lack experience internationally, we are going to try our best. I am hoping to have a better target, better preparation for the next qualification the next time," Joshuah said.

#### **THE PIONEERING GIRLS OF INDIAN WOMEN'S FUTSAL - The Indian women's futsal squad:**

**Goalkeepers:** Tanvi Mavani and Pushpa Sahu.

**Defenders:** Radhika Patel, Achom Degio and Maya Rabari.

**Midfielders:** Arya More, Ritika Singh, Vaishnavi Barate, Pooja Gupta, Drishti Pant, Alphonsia M and Rebecca Zamthianmawi.

**Forwards:** Khusbu Saroj and Madhubala Alawe.

**Head coach:** Joshuah Stan Vaz

**Assistant coach:** Judon Dominic D'Souza

**Goalkeeper coach:** Veerababu Sivaneni



# SHOOTING RANGE







**ALL INDIA  
FOOTBALL  
FEDERATION**