

ASMITA Leagues offer a rare platform to shine; Khelo India North-East Games will be an ‘excellent initiative’, says footballer Manisha Kalyan

Manisha, the two-time All India Football Federation Player of the Year, shared tips with under-13 girls taking part in the ASMITA League in Guwahati

Over 53000 women athletes participated in 550 ASMITA leagues conducted across 27 sports disciplines in 2024-25

Posted On: 08 AUG 2025 4:49PM by PIB Delhi

India’s star footballer Manisha Kalyan was the cynosure of all eyes at the Achieving Sports Milestone by Inspiring Women (ASMITA) under-13 league for girls here at Nehru Stadium on Friday. Manisha, the only Indian footballer to have played in the UEFA Champions League for women, said ASMITA is a “rare platform for young girls to realize their football dreams.”



“I am still dreaming of playing in the FIFA World Cup and the Olympics and after we qualified for the AFC Women’s Asian Cup in Australia next year, our belief has been bolstered. You now have a platform like

ASMITA and the more quality matches you play, the better you will get,” the 23-year-old Manisha told the eight teams taking part in the Guwahati leg of ASMITA, aimed at scouting talent at the grassroots level across India.

Manisha, from Punjab, was present alongside two emerging talents from Assam – Rekha Kataki and Dosomi Rowtia. Both Rekha and Dosomi are products of the ASMITA league and are making their presence felt in Assam football in a major way. While Dosomi has made it to the national camp, Rekha has captained North East United Football Club in the Indian Women’s League Division 2.



“Football is in the genes of the people of the North-East. I grew up watching Bala Devi and now 11 of my colleagues in the senior national team are from this region. This only shows how much talent is present here. Maybe, five years from now, one of these kids will play for Assam and then India. Just work hard and only think about football. The ecosystem is surely developing and with the government’s support, we can only do better,” said Manisha.

ASMITA’s sports activities are growing each year. In the North-East alone, football leagues have increased five-fold since the 2022-23 season. In 2024-25, 25 different football leagues were played under the Sports Ministry’s ‘Sports for Women’ scheme with 1615 girls taking part. This financial year 2025-26, 852 ASMITA leagues have been planned in 15 sports disciplines, targeting more than 70,000 women athletes in all States/ UTs of the country.



Sports in North-east India is a focus area for the Sports Ministry. The Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, has already announced that a North-East-specific Games will be added to the Khelo India calendar.

“That will be a great addition. This region is contributing not only to football, but to all sports, and to give them more exposure is the right way to go,” said Manisha, who has played professionally in Cyprus and Greece. She is the only Indian woman to have scored a goal against Brazil in an international football tournament in November 2021.



ASMITA (Achieving Sports Milestone by Inspiring Women) is part of Khelo India’s gender-neutral mission to promote sports among women through leagues and competitions. As such, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) supports National Sports Federations in conducting Khelo India women’s leagues across multiple age groups at both zonal and national levels. Started in 2021, ASMITA leagues not only aim to increase the participation of women in sports but also to utilize the leagues as a platform for the identification of new talent across the length and breadth of India. The financial year 2024–25 saw significant expansion in the reach of ASMITA and deepened its impact across the country. A total of 550 leagues were conducted across 27 sports disciplines, reaching women athletes in 34 States and Union Territories, and over 450 cities. This extensive outreach enabled participation of 53,101 athletes, further reinforcing ASMITA’s objective of inclusive and grassroots-driven sports development. This financial year 2025-26, 852 ASMITA leagues have been planned in 15 sports disciplines, targeting more than 70,000 women athletes in all States/ UTs of the country.

Rini Choudhury

(Release ID: 2154163)