

Union MoS Raksha Khadse, Guest of Honour at Chhattisgarh Hockey League Opening Ceremony, Calls It a Major Step Towards Strengthening Grassroots Hockey

Following Khelo India Tribal Games, Chhattisgarh Hockey League marks another sporting milestone for the state; inaugural edition features six franchises and 132 players

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Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs & Sports Smt. Raksha Khadse was the Guest of Honour at the opening ceremony of the inaugural Chhattisgarh Hockey League (CHL) at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Hockey Stadium in Raipur on Wednesday, October 21, 2026.



On Building Sporting Momentum in Chhattisgarh

Following the Khelo India Tribal Games, the Chhattisgarh Hockey League marks another significant sporting milestone in the state's journey towards becoming a stronger sporting hub. While the Khelo India Tribal Games showcased the sporting talent of tribal communities, the league builds on this momentum by creating a dedicated platform for hockey players, strengthening grassroots competition and expanding opportunities for young athletes. Together, these initiatives reflect Chhattisgarh's growing commitment to sports development and its potential to make a greater contribution to India's sporting future.

Organised by the Department of Sports and Youth Welfare, Government of Chhattisgarh, and sanctioned by Hockey India, the league brings together six franchise-based teams representing different regions of the state. The inaugural season will run from 21 October to 1 November 2026 at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Hockey Stadium, Raipur.



On Strengthening Grassroots Hockey

Addressing the occasion, Union MoS Raksha Khadse highlighted the importance of creating structured sporting opportunities for young athletes and strengthening sports development at the grassroots. She emphasised that leagues such as the Chhattisgarh Hockey League can help bridge the gap between grassroots participation and higher levels of competition by enabling young players to compete alongside experienced national and international talent.

She underscored that developing sporting talent requires sustained efforts across the entire ecosystem, including quality coaching, competitive opportunities, sports infrastructure and institutional support. Providing young athletes with the right platforms to demonstrate their abilities is essential to building a stronger sporting culture and expanding India's talent pool.



Union MoS Raksha Khadse also highlighted the importance of strengthening sports participation among youth in tribal and rural regions. Chhattisgarh has significant potential to contribute to India's sporting future, and initiatives that connect local talent with established athletes can help young players gain experience, confidence and exposure to higher standards of competition.



On Cultural Identity and Celebrations

The league features six teams: Rajdhani Royals, Nyayadhani Knights, Sanskardhani Strikers, Chakradhar Champions, Bailadila Bulls and Mainpat Titans. Each team comprises 22 players, including 18 players from Chhattisgarh and four players from outside the state. The squads also feature former Olympians as marquee players, bringing experience and competitive quality to the tournament.

A total of 132 players will participate in the inaugural season, including 108 players from Chhattisgarh and 24 guest players. The tournament will feature 18 men's matches, followed by semi-finals and the final scheduled for 1 November. A women's exhibition match will also be organised, providing an opportunity to showcase women's hockey and encourage wider participation in the sport.



Shri Sardar Singh, Olympian and former captain of the Indian hockey team, is the league ambassador. His association with the league is expected to inspire young players and strengthen their connection with India's hockey legacy.

The league's identity is rooted in the culture and spirit of Chhattisgarh. Its mascot, Baghwa, draws inspiration from the tiger, while the tagline, "Chalo Re Sangi, Hockey Khelbo", reflects the local character of the initiative and encourages people across the state to embrace hockey.

The opening ceremony also celebrates Chhattisgarh's cultural heritage through performances showcasing the state's traditions, alongside entertainment and sporting tributes. Punjabi singers Jassi Gill and Babbal Rai are among the featured performers.



The tournament offers a total prize pool of ₹21 lakh, with ₹11 lakh for the winning team and ₹6 lakh for the runners-up. Individual awards will also recognise outstanding performances throughout the competition.

All matches will be played at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Hockey Stadium, Raipur. Entry for spectators is free, and matches will be streamed live on JioHotstar, enabling hockey fans across the country to follow the competition.

The Chhattisgarh Hockey League reflects a broader effort to build a stronger sporting ecosystem by bringing together government support, sporting institutions, experienced athletes and emerging talent. By creating more opportunities for local players to compete and learn, the league seeks to strengthen Chhattisgarh's contribution to Indian hockey and inspire the next generation of athletes.

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