



## Press Release

**New Delhi: 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

### **India's U21 hockey talent gets extra opportunity through inaugural Khelo India League**

**New Delhi, December 14:** The inaugural Khelo India U21 Women's Hockey League, designed by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to give emerging talent an additional opportunity to gain competitive exposure, will get under way at the iconic Maj. Dhyan Chand National Stadium here on Wednesday.

Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Shri Anurag Singh Thakur will inaugurate the League. Organised by the Sports Authority of India in collaboration with Hockey India, the first phase of the 14-team League will get rolling with a match between Odisha Naval Tata Hockey High Performance Centre, Bhubaneswar and Raja Karan Hockey Academy, Karnal,

The Indian Junior team, preparing for the FIH Women's Junior Hockey World Cup, will start favourites while two Sports Authority of India squads will want to steal a march on the other sides in the competition. A total of 14 teams will be vying for honours over the course of seven days here.

There is palpable excitement in the women's hockey fraternity and that is best reflected by former India captain Pritam Rani Siwach. "This is a great opportunity for players from across the country to showcase their talent against the best teams in the country," said Pritam Siwach, an Arjuna Award winner in 1998 who was bestowed the Dronacharya Award last month.

"I am sure all teams will want to put their best foot forward, even though they are aware that the India Junior team and the two Sports Authority of India sides can be formidable. The League gives the players the chance to do battle with the best sides in a competition in which each match can produce quality hockey," she said.

The second phase of the tournament will be held at the SAI Centre in Lucknow, before the teams move to the Kalinga Stadium Bhubaneswar, for the climactic stage. The League will sustain the interest in women's hockey, sparked by the fourth place finish attained by the Indian team in the Olympic Games in Tokyo earlier this year.



The teams have been divided into two groups as follows:

**Group A:**

India Juniors, Sports Authority of India B, New Delhi; Odisha Naval Tata Hockey High Performance Centre, Bhubaneswar; Khalsa Hockey Academy, Amritsar; Mumbai Schools Sports Association, Raja Karan Hockey Academy and Him Academy, Vikas Nagar (Himachal Pradesh).

**Group B:** Sports Authority of India A, New Delhi; Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy, Bhopal; Har Hockey Academy, Sonipat; Jai Bharat Hockey Academy, Delhi; Pritam Siwach Hockey Academy, Sonipat; Sports Hostel, Bhubaneswar and Delhi Hockey.

**EOM**