

## Press Release

### Maharashtra shuttlers in hunt for three gold at Khelo India Youth Games

**Pune, January 12:** Hosts Maharashtra lined up a shot at three gold medals from the Khelo India Youth Games badminton court with impressive performances in the semi-finals here on Saturday.

Nagpur's Malvika Bansod produced a dominant performance to beat Tamil Nadu's Nivetha Muthukumar 21-12, 21-13 and reach the girls U-21 singles final. She will meet top seed Aakarshi Kashyap of Chhatisgarh in the gold medal clash, a repeat of the 2018 Khelo India School Games final in Delhi that Malvika had won.

In the boys event, it will be a clash for top honours between Maharashtra's Aman Farogh Sanjay the number one seed, and Rahul Bhardwaj of Karnataka.

In a third success for the host state on the day, Arya Deshpande and Ananya Phadke defeated Navdha Mangalam and Sonali Singh of UP and take on Rajasthan's Sakshi Asrani and Ankushka Mehta in the girls doubles final.

Nivetha opted for attack but the left-handed Malvika had enough strokes in her arsenal to counter her rival. In the other semi-final, Aakarshi did not have to work unduly hard to get past Unnati Bisht of Uttarakhand 21-19,21-14.

"There was no drift today which helped my game. I've played against Nivetha several times before, so I was confident of victory before the match. My strategy was to keep it simple, make less unforced errors and stick to the basics. I'm very happy to reach the final for the second consecutive year," Malvika said later.

"Last year in Delhi, I got the better of Aakarshi in the final. This year only the age group has changed but the opponent remains the same. Although I won gold last year, that is history now, Aakarshi is the top seed here and I'm excited to play the final again."

In the boys semis, Aman had to battle to get past Priyanshu Rajwat of Madhya Pradesh. The Maharashtra lad won the first set 21-13 comprehensively, but was error-prone in the second to lose it 10-21. Aman though was alert to the danger and recovered quickly in the decider to shut out Priyanshu 21-14 and go through to the title match against Bhardwaj, who upset third seed Dhruv Rawat of Uttarakhand 21-9, 21-10 in just 22 minutes.

In the girls U-17 singles semis, fourth seed Mir Tasnim Ali of Gujarat came from behind to beat top seed Aditi Bhatt of Uttar Pradesh 17-21, 21-17, 21-12 and will meet second seed Mansi Singh of Uttar Pradesh in the final after the latter ousted Delhi's Aashi Rawat 21-19, 21-19.

The match of the day was in the boys U-17 semi-finals as top seed Gandham Pranav Rao from Telangana got the better of Arunachal Pradesh's Tukum Laa.

Both players gave it their all for every point but in the end, it was the left handed Gandham who prevailed 21-19, 12-21, 21-12 in the hour-long encounter.

Gandham, who trains at the Pulella Gopichand Academy, faces Ravi of Haryana for the gold medal. Ravi beat Ishaan Bhatnagar of Chhattisgarh 21-19, 15-21, 21-6.

**Bronze medal match results:**

U-21 Girls singles, Nivetha Muthukumar (Tamil Naidu) defeated Unnati Bisht(Uttarkhand) 16-21,21-18,21-18

U-21 Boys singles, Dhruv Rawat(Uttarkhand) defeated Priyanshu Rajawat (Madhya Pradesh) 21-17,14-21,21-12

U-17 Girls singles, Aashi Rawat(Delhi) defeated Aditi Bhatt(UP) 21-8,21-13

U-17 Boys singles, Ishaan Bhatnagar (Chattisgarh) defeated Tukum Laa (Arunachal Pradesh) 21-17,18-21,21-12

U-17 Girls doubles, Navdha Mangalam & Sonali Singh(UP) defeated Nadella Haasini & Jahnvi Nammi(Andhra Pradesh) 21-10,21-16

U-17 Boys doubles, Atharv Aras & Sasmit Patil (Maharashtra) defeated Rahul Kumar & Tushar setu (Bihar) 16-21,21-18,21-16