

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
ON THE OCCASION OF INAUGURATION OF MEGHALAYA
GAMES**

Tura, January 15, 2024

I am delighted to attend the inauguration ceremony of the multisport event - Meghalaya Games. I extend my best wishes to all the participating sportspersons. I am confident that they will put up a remarkable show in this edition of the Meghalaya Games.

I am happy to note that this opening ceremony of Meghalaya Games is being held in the P A Sangma football stadium which is said to be the country's largest pre-engineered composite football stadium. I pay my homage to late Shri P A Sangma, former Chief Minister of Meghalaya and former speaker of Lok Sabha. Shri Sangma was the first tribal Speaker of Lok Sabha and also the first Speaker from North East. Shri Sangma was loved by politicians cutting across party lines. He was a visionary who worked tirelessly to address north east region's unique challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

North East India traditionally has a strong sports culture. The region has a tremendous potential for development of sports and sportspersons. Further, the region has a large tribal population who are good at many sports - Archery being one of them.

Diversity is the beauty of our nation and we should utilise it to further boost India's global image in sports arena. There is an urgent need to support the talent from the tribal areas and groom them to become professional sportspersons. I am happy to note that the society of North East encourages women to play and join sports as a profession. North East region has produced many great women athletes. I would also like to underline the potential of adventure sports and adventure tourism in this region and the need to explore and leverage it on priority.

The region has produced some great sportspersons who have contributed to India's tally in prestigious international tournaments like Olympics and Commonwealth Games. Last week, I gave Arjuna award to hockey player Pukhrambam Sushila Chanu and Wushu player Naorem Roshibina Devi in a ceremony held in Rashtrapati Bhavan. I congratulate both of them for making the country proud.

I am confident that events like Meghalaya Games will encourage athletes for excellence, promote competitiveness and create a vibrant sporting ecosystem. The National Sports University provides courses on sports science, sports technology, sports management and sports coaching. I am sure it will create a rich sports ecosystem in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am told that about 3000 athletes are participating in these games. I appreciate the state government and the organisers for hosting this event. The decision of the government to hold these games in different parts of the state is a welcome step and would ensure wider reach of such events among masses. The development of sports infrastructure in the state will also get a boost when these events are held at different venues. I commend the state government and local administration for using this opportunity to engage the local residents in beautification programmes, cleanliness and plantation drives. I am confident that such Jan Bhagidari programmes and multi-cultural events will go a long way in building social harmony and creating trust among various communities of the state.

India's sporting culture has developed immensely in recent years. With Government's new initiatives and encouragement to the athletes, Indian sportspersons are now winning more medals than ever in global events. Indian contingent delivered spectacular performances in recently held World University Games and Asian Games. Programmes such as Khelo India are helping in identifying and nurturing future sports champions. Our athletes are so determined and committed that they are making a mark in Para games too. Our men and women sportspersons are keeping the Indian flag flying high.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

India has also demonstrated its ability to host large scale international sporting and other events. India has organised the Chess Olympiad, Under-17 Football Women's World Cup, the Men's Hockey World Cup, Boxing Championships and most recently, the Cricket World Cup. This year in March, for the first time, India will host the World Shooting Para Sport (WSPS) event. The organisation of various state level games and other cultural and trade events will contribute in building robust sports infrastructure and creating a strong sports legacy in the country.

I would like to urge the children and youth of the country to learn at least one sport and participate in sports activities. You may or may not adopt sports as a career but playing together will inculcate team spirit and competitiveness in your personality apart from keeping you physically and mentally fit.

In the end I extend my best wishes to all the participants and wish this event a great success.

Thank you!

Jai Hind!

Jai Bharat!