



President Murmu unveils Durand Cup trophies for the 135th edition



NEW DELHI, JULY 7: President Droupadi Murmu unveiled the coveted Durand Cup trophies at a ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre (RBCC) in New Delhi on Tuesday.

The Trophy Unveiling and Flag Off Ceremony marked the official commencement of the 135th Durand Cup's build-up towards its July 25th kick-off at Kolkata's iconic Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan (VYBK), according to a press release.

Continuing a cherished tradition associated with the Highest Office of the country and the century-old Durand Cup, the President once again graced Asia's oldest football tournament, a legacy that can be traced back to the tenure of India's first President, Dr Rajendra Prasad. The President's Cup, one of the three unique Trophies awarded to the winners, was instituted at the pleasure of Dr Rajendra Prasad and was first awarded by him, the release said.

Addressing the gathering on the august occasion, President Murmu said, "The Durand Cup has provided a platform to numerous football talents. I have been informed that this year, some new teams will also compete to become the winners of the Durand Cup, the President's Cup and the Shimla Trophy. I am pleased to know that a team from Sri Lanka is also participating in the tournament this year. I am confident that the inclusion of new teams will make this historic competition even more popular."

"Football brings people together. Good performances by players inspire and excite sports enthusiasts everywhere. The importance of sporting spirit is not limited to sports alone. It is an important value in life that teaches us equality, cooperation and the ability to remain resilient even in adverse circumstances", she

said on the spirit of football and sport.

"I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the former and present officials and players associated with this tournament. I extend my best wishes to all the teams and players participating in the competition for their performances. May you perform with excellence and true sporting spirit and enhance the prestige of the game", President Murmu said.

The ceremony was also attended among others by General N S Raja Subramani, PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Chairman Chief of Staff Committee and President, Durand Football Tournament Society; General Dhiraj Sethi, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, Chief of the Army Staff; Admiral Krishna Swaminathan PVSM, AVSM, VSM, Chief of the Naval Staff; Air Marshal S. Sivakumar, VSM, Air Officer in Charge Administration; Lieutenant General V M Bhuvana Krishnan, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command and Patron, Durand Cup Organising Committee and Lieutenant General Rajesh Sethi, AVSM, SM, VSM, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Delhi Area and Member and Chairman, Standing Working Committee, Durand Football Tournament Society along with other senior officials of the three armed forces.

Among others who graced the occasion were Indian National Team star Lalianzuala Chhangte and the All India Football Federation President Kalyan Chaubey, as well as representatives of all the 24 participating teams, sponsors, partners and other distinguished guests, who joined in celebrating the beginning of another edition of one of the world's longest-running football cup competitions.

Sharing his thoughts on the occasion, General NS

Raja Subramani, PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Chairman Chief of Staff Committee and President, Durand Football Tournament Society said, "The Durand Cup has continued to gain popularity across the years and in this edition the popularity of football along with the popularity of the teams participating will increase with the enthusiasm of the players and the fans. The FIFA World Cup is being celebrated with great enthusiasm across the world. I hope that the Durand Cup, too, will bring together the spirit of the world's most prestigious football competitions, as well as the sentiments of unity and sporting excellence, and will inspire the upcoming generations. I am grateful for the Hon. President of India for her presence and enhancing our enthusiasm and providing us with encouragement. I wish all the players, sponsors and everyone involved the best for a successful conduct of the Durand Cup"

Lieutenant General Rajesh Sethi, AVSM, SM, VSM, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Delhi Area, Member and Chairman, Standing Working Committee, Durand Football Tournament Society, while delivering the opening address, said, "The Durand Cup is not merely a football tournament; it is a powerful symbol of cooperation and unity that resonates not only across our nation but also beyond our borders. At the national level, the tournament brings together teams from different parts of the country. This year, 23 Indian teams are participating, including the Indian Defence Forces—Army, Navy and Air Force—as well as the Central Armed Police Forces, alongside several renowned and emerging football clubs. The coming together of these teams reflects the strength of our national unity, mutual respect, and the spirit of healthy

competition. For the first time in this year's Durand Cup, Sri Lanka's Defender FC is participating in the tournament, exemplifying the spirit of friendship and cooperation between the two nations. The trophies being unveiled today are not merely symbols of victory; they also represent excellence, teamwork, discipline, and our collective commitment to coordination. Beyond the boundaries of sport, the Durand Cup plays a significant role in strengthening national unity and fostering international relations."

Lieutenant General V M Bhuvana Krishnan, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command and President, Durand Cup Organising Committee also addressed the gathering and said, "Over the years, the Eastern Command has been proud to play a vital role in nurturing this legacy. Our region, rich in footballing culture, from Kolkata's historic clubs to emerging centres across the East and Northeast has become a vibrant hub for players and fans alike. The Eastern Command have supported infrastructure, youth outreach, and competitive platforms that have helped local talent rise to national prominence. Grassroots programmes and military-civilian partnerships have brought football to thousands of children in towns and districts that once had limited access to structured training."

He further added, "The Durand Cup has continually evolved while preserving its rich heritage and providing generations of players with a prestigious platform to showcase their talent and compete at the highest level. As we embark on the 135th edition, we remain committed to carrying forward this legacy and ensuring that the Durand Cup continues to serve as a cornerstone of India's footballing ecosystem for many years to come."

The Trophy Tour marks the ceremonial inauguration of the 135th Indian Oil Durand Cup, which will be played from July 25 to August 23, 2026, across five host cities, namely Kolkata, Ranchi, Imphal, Shillong and Guwahati. Ranchi will make a historic debut as a host venue in the tournament's 138-year history.

Sharing his association with the Durand Cup, Lalianzuala Chhangte said, "The Durand Cup holds a very special place in my heart.

IOA gives send-off to Team India for Commonwealth Games 2026 in Glasgow



CHANDIGARH, JULY 07: The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on Tuesday accorded send-off to India's contingent for the Commonwealth Games 2026 while unveiling the official ceremonial and competition kit that Team India will wear at the Games in Glasgow from July 23 to August 2.

The ceremony brought together athletes, coaches, support staff, dignitaries, and partners as Team India embarks on its journey to Scotland with hopes of another successful Commonwealth Games campaign.

The event was attended by Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports; Dr PT Usha, President, Indian Olympic Association; Lindy Cameron, British High Commissioner to India; Giriraj Singh, Union Minister of Textiles; Hari Ranjan Rao, Secretary, Department of Sports; Rohit Rajpal, Chief de Mission; and Ravi Bengani, Deputy Chief de Mission, alongside athletes, coaches, and corporate partners.

Speaking on the occasion, Mandaviya, Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports, said, "Under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, India is building a world-class sporting ecosystem that empowers our athletes to realise their full potential. Our athletes are the ambassadors of New India's sport-

ing excellence, determination and aspirations. As Team India embarks on its journey to the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, I urge every athlete to compete fearlessly, uphold the highest spirit of sportsmanship, and give their very best. The Government of India stands firmly behind each one of you and remains committed to providing every possible support to help you bring glory to the nation."

Dr PT Usha, President, Indian Olympic Association, added, "Today marks the beginning of another proud chapter for Indian sport. Every athlete wearing the India jersey has earned this opportunity through years of hard work, discipline, and sacrifice. As they leave for Glasgow, they carry with them the hopes of a billion Indians and the values that define our sporting culture. On behalf of the Indian Olympic Association, I wish every member of Team India the very best."

Lindy, British High Commissioner to India added, "I was delighted to be able to extend my best wishes to Team India in person as they head to Glasgow. These Games will showcase not only athletic excellence but also the unity, diversity and enduring spirit of the Commonwealth. Sport is a hugely important part of the ties between the people of the UK and India. I know India is already preparing to

welcome the Commonwealth sporting community to Ahmedabad for the centenary Games in 2030. We look forward to welcoming India's star athletes to the UK and wish them every success."

The send-off ceremony featured the official unveiling of the kit, a ramp walk by athletes showcasing both the ceremonial and competition attire, interactions with current and former Commonwealth Games medalists, and addresses by senior dignitaries.

Designed by acclaimed designer Aaquib Wani and developed by JSW Sports, the official Commonwealth Games 2026 kit is inspired by the concept of 'Invisible Trajectories'. Drawing from the rhythm, precision, and flow of athletic movement, the design transforms the unseen paths traced by athletes into intricate visual patterns inspired by spiographs. Every line and curve on the jersey reflects the geometry of effort and excellence, symbolising Team India's relentless pursuit of greatness.

"Rukna Nahin Hai" is more than a slogan — it is JSW's commitment to Indian sport. We've always worked to develop athletes and take pride in their global successes. Partnering with IOA strengthens our mission to nurture talent nationwide. I see the jersey as our armour, designed with the athlete at the core. I

urge every Indian to buy one and wear it with pride as we stand united behind Team India at the Commonwealth Games," said Parth Jindal, Founder, JSW Sports.

The Indian Olympic Association also thanked its corporate partners for their crucial support. Team India's campaign in Glasgow is backed by Reliance Foundation Sports, Yes Bank, JSW Inspire, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Adani Sportline as Principal Sponsors, alongside Amul as the Associate Sponsor. This strong backing highlights a shared commitment to providing India's athletes with the best possible resources to succeed on the global stage.

The Indian contingent will be led by Chef de Mission Rohit Rajpal, who will oversee Team India's campaign in Glasgow alongside Deputy Chief de Mission Ravi Bengani, ensuring athletes receive comprehensive support throughout the Games.

For the Glasgow Games, India is sending a strong contingent of 124 competitors, featuring both able-bodied and para-athletes. The team will compete across 10 disciplines, which include athletics, boxing, weightlifting, judo, gymnastics, cycling, lawn bowls, and swimming, alongside para-athletics, para-wheelchair basketball, para-powerlifting, para-swimming, and para-track cycling.

Air India's Maharaja Club partners with DP World PGTI, Kapil Dev hails tie-up to boost Indian golf



NEW DELHI, JULY 07: Air India on Tuesday announced a partnership between its frequent flyer programme, Maharaja Club, and the DP World Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI), with former Indian cricket team captain and PGTI President Kapil Dev, saying, the collaboration would strengthen professional golf in the country by ensuring seamless travel for players and officials.

Under the partnership, Maharaja Club will be the Official Travel Partner for all DP World PGTI tournaments across India from August 2026 to April 2027.

The collaboration brings together Air India's expanding loyalty programme and India's premier professional golf tour, with the airline looking to strengthen Maharaja Club's positioning as a travel and lifestyle rewards platform while supporting the growth of golf in India.

As the Official Travel Partner, Maharaja Club will provide travel support for players, officials and tournament stakeholders throughout the season, enabling them to focus on performance and competition.

The partnership will also offer Maharaja Club mem-

bers exclusive experiences at select tournaments, including hospitality access, privileged entry and curated engagement opportunities.

Kapil Dev said the tour was delighted to welcome Air India as its Official Travel Partner at a time when professional golf in India was expanding its footprint. He said the association would ensure seamless travel for players, officials and stakeholders, allowing them to focus entirely on their performances.

Air India's Chief Commercial Officer, Nipun Ag-

garwal, said the airline was committed to supporting sporting excellence through reliable travel while contributing to the development of golf in India. He added that the partnership would also create unique experiences for Maharaja Club members.

Air India said the partnership would be activated across the DP World PGTI calendar through fan engagement initiatives. Leveraging its domestic and international network, the airline will also support the tour's ambition of expanding the reach of Indian golf in India and globally.

FIFA World Cup 2026: "Disappointing way to end," says Pulisic after USA's World Cup exit

WASHINGTON [US], JULY 7: USA forward Christian Pulisic described the co-hosts' FIFA World Cup 2026 exit after a 4-1 Round of 16 defeat to Belgium as "disappointing," as per the FIFA website.<

Pulisic said the team was proud of its performance in the FIFA World Cup 2026 but was disappointed with the way the campaign ended. He acknowledged Belgium's clinical performance and said the USA fell short in key moments of the match.

"Up until today, we are very proud and I thought we did a lot of good things, but for sure [it was] just a disappointing way to end. We played against a very good team [that was] very clinical in both ends of the pitch, and we weren't exactly so... that's where the game is won in the boxes, so it was not quite enough from us today," Christ-

ian Pulisic told FIFA.

Pulisic said the team gave its best effort and hoped fans recognised their commitment, despite falling short of their goals.

"We did the best that we can. I hope that people can see that and believed in us and there's more than what we wanted to accomplish," Pulisic noted.

Sergino Dest echoed Pulisic's sentiments, saying the team was proud of its efforts but disappointed with the result, adding that they believed they could have done more in the match.

"I don't have a lot of words, we're really disappointed. It just wasn't our day.

We are proud but we felt that we could have done more than what we did, so at the moment we're just disappointed," said Sergino Dest.

Chris Richards said the team hopes

the World Cup run marks the beginning of greater success, adding that reaching the quarter-finals should become the standard for the group and the federation moving forward.

"Hopefully this is just the [beginning] of what's to come for this group and this federation. I think it should be the normal, at least the quarter-finals. Hopefully we've drawn a line in the sand for the future," Chris Richards.

In their World Cup campaign, the USA defeated Paraguay 4-1, Australia 2-0, and Bosnia and Herzegovina 2-0 in the Round of 32, while suffering a 3-2 defeat to Turkey before being knocked out by Belgium.

Coming to the match, Belgium stormed into the quarter-finals of the FIFA World Cup 2026 with a commanding 4-1 victory over the hosts, the United States, at Seattle Stadium.