

## **Odisha gears up for football extravaganza with the Blue Tigers set to roar against Qatar at the Kalinga Stadium**

Bhubaneswar, 19 November 2023: Football fever is all set to envelope Odisha as the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar gears up to host India's second game in Round 2 of the FIFA World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027 joint qualification campaign. Following their emphatic 1-0 victory against Kuwait, the Blue Tigers have descended upon Odisha to take on Qatar in a highly anticipated clash. With the Qatar Football Team also arriving in Bhubaneswar on Sunday night, the atmosphere is electric as fans await the outcome of the high-stakes encounter, hoping for another historic performance from the Indian Football Team.

Sports Secretary Shri Vineel Krishna conducted a comprehensive review of the preparations at the Kalinga Stadium to ensure the smooth functioning of match day operations and a spectacular experience for all players and fans alike at the sold-out event.

The review encompassed a detailed assessment of crucial facets such as security measures, hospitality provisions, transportation logistics, and various other pivotal aspects essential for the successful hosting of such an esteemed sporting event.

In addition, to overseeing the meticulous arrangements at the Kalinga Stadium, the Sports Secretary also examined the AIFF FIFA talent academy, set to be inaugurated at the Battalion ground in the esteemed presence of Arsen Wenger. This academy promises to be a beacon for nurturing football talent, further bolstering India's footballing prospects on the international stage.

Sports Secretary Shri Vineel Krishna said, "we warmly welcome both teams to Odisha and extend our best wishes to them. Odisha has always tried to set a benchmark as a host state and this time too efforts are underway to ensure seamless operations on matchday. The passionate football fans of Odisha have consistently showcased their love for the sport, and I am confident that this event will be no exception. We are thrilled with the overwhelming response from the football fraternity and look forward to a spectacular match."

Adding to the excitement surrounding the historic clash, the AIFF-FIFA academy is also set to be launched in Bhubaneswar under the FIFA Talent Development Scheme and will be inaugurated by the legendary manager and the Chief of Global Football Development, FIFA, Mr. Arsene Wenger.

Beyond hosting the crucial clash, this historic initiative also reiterates Odisha's commitment to nurturing football talent in the region, marking a significant milestone in the development of football in India. Recently, the state also hosted India's triumphant campaign at the Hero Intercontinental Cup.