NAGALAND HOST ATHLETICS FEDERATION OF INDIA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2026

Addressing at the inaugural session of the Annual General Meeting of the Athletic Federation of India held at Hotel Vivor, Kohima on April 14, 2026, Nagaland Chief Minister, Dr. Neiphiu Rio, described the event as a privilege for the State to host such a significant national-level meeting for the first time. He extended gratitude to the Federation leadership, particularly acknowledging their vision and initiative in bringing together representatives from across the country.

Highlighting the importance of the event, Dr. Rio expressed hope that meaningful deliberations would be held for the advancement of sports alongside cultural exchange and national integration. He also provided a brief account of Naga history, noting the resilience and unique traditions of the Naga people. He spoke about the colonial period, the introduction of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act, 1873, and the continued protection of Naga customary practices under Article 371A of the Indian Constitution.

Dr. Rio also touched upon the political history of Nagaland, stating that the State continues to work towards resolving long-standing issues through dialogue, while maintaining peace and unity among Naga communities across regions.

On sports development, the Chief Minister stated that Nagaland is making steady progress despite infrastructural challenges. He noted that the State was affiliated with the Indian Olympic Association after many years and is now focusing on nurturing young talent.

Dr. Rio emphasized the need for improved infrastructure, professional coaching, and greater exposure for athletes. He also called for support through cooperation and initiatives to boost sports facilities in the State and expressed confidence that the deliberations of the Federation would contribute positively to the growth of sports in the country.

President, Nagaland Athletics & Vice President, AFI, Abu Metha described the occasion as historic, noting that for the first time in over six decades of statehood, Nagaland is hosting the AGM of a national sports federation. He stated that the event is not only

symbolic but also significant in promoting national unity, integration, and inclusiveness through sports.

He expressed gratitude to the President of the South Asian Athletics Federation, Lalit K. Bhanot, for his leadership and vision in bringing the AGM to Kohima. He also acknowledged the continued support and guidance of Chief Minister, Dr. Neiphiu Rio, stating that his encouragement has enabled the State to take bold steps in promoting sports and youth development.

Highlighting the objectives of the Federation, Metha said that hosting such meetings across different parts of the country helps generate greater interest in athletics and integrates remote regions into the national sports mainstream. He emphasized that sports play a crucial role in nation-building by harnessing the talent and potential of youth.

Referring to the historical significance of Kohima, Metha mentioned the Battle of Kohima during World War II, describing it as one of the fiercest battles that shaped the course of history and halted the advance of Japanese forces into the Indian subcontinent. He further highlighted the achievements of the Athletic Federation of India, noting that it has emerged as one of the top-performing sports federations in Asia and globally. He said Indian athletes have been consistently performing well at international events, including the Olympic Games, Asian Games, and Commonwealth Games. He also informed that the AGM will deliberate on key strategies and policy decisions aimed at strengthening Indian athletics, improving infrastructure, nurturing talent from remote regions, and preparing athletes for upcoming international competitions.

While acknowledging the infrastructural limitations in the State, Metha assured that Nagaland offers genuine hospitality and a warm welcome to all visitors. He expressed hope that delegates would have a memorable experience and encouraged them to act as ambassadors for Nagaland.

President of the South Asian Athletics Federation, Lalit K. Bhanot, expressed appreciation to the Government of Nagaland for hosting the Federation’s Annual General Body Meeting and lauded the State’s efforts in promoting athletics. Addressing the gathering, Dr. Bhanot conveyed his pleasure at visiting Kohima for the second time

and recalled the successful conduct of the international cross-country event held in 2022, which saw participation from six South Asian countries. He noted that the participating teams continue to remember the hospitality and excellent organisation extended by the State.

Dr. Bhanot expressed gratitude to Chief Minister, Dr. Neiphiu Rio for his continued support towards sports development and acknowledged the efforts of officials of the Athletic Federation of India. He also appreciated the contribution of President, Nagaland Athletics & Vice President, AFI, Abu Metha, stating that his leadership and organisational skills had set a high standard in hosting the meeting. He commended the meticulous planning and coordination that ensured the smooth conduct of the event.

Highlighting the objective of holding such meetings in different States, Dr. Bhanot said it is aimed at generating greater interest and participation in athletics at the grassroots level. He expressed optimism that Nagaland has strong potential to produce talented athletes in the future. He also informed that India is currently running one of the largest grassroots athletics programmes through district-level competitions, covering over 650 districts across the country. Talented athletes are identified through these competitions and provided further training and support.

Dr. Bhanot further stated that several national-level competitions are being conducted across the country, including in the Northeast, to provide better exposure and reduce travel constraints for athletes from the region. Assuring full cooperation, he said that the Federation is ready to extend technical support and assistance to Nagaland for developing athletics infrastructure and training programmes. He encouraged the State Government to establish athletics academies, adding that athletes from Nagaland have strong potential, particularly in endurance-based events such as middle and long-distance running and race walking. He expressed confidence that under the leadership of the State Government, athletics in Nagaland would grow steadily and produce promising sportspersons in the coming years.

(Kazuhito & Mainodi, IA)