

Bhubaneswar, 24 June 2026: The "65th National Inter-State Senior Athletics Championship 2026" commenced today at the Kalinga Stadium, jointly organized by the Athletics Federation of India and the Department of Sports and Youth Services, Government of Odisha. Shri Suryabanshi Suraj, Minister of Sports and Youth Services, Government of Odisha, attended as the chief guest and officially inaugurated the competition.



On this occasion, Minister Shri Suraj encouraged the competitors and praised Odisha's sports infrastructure. Welcoming the country's top athletes, he wished them success and expressed confidence that this championship would add another golden chapter to the state's sporting history. Other prominent dignitaries present at the inaugural event included Dr. Lalit Kumar Bhanot, President of the South Asian Athletics Federation; Shri Bhupendra Singh Poonia, Commissioner-cum-Secretary of the Sports and Youth Services Department; Dr. Yeddula Vijay, Sports Director; and Shri Abhijit Paul, President of the Odisha Olympic Association.

This championship is a crucial qualification round for the upcoming 'Asian Games 2026', which will be held in Japan from September 19 to October 4 later this year. Around 630 top athletes, comprising 342 men and 288 women from 27 states and Union Territories across India, are participating in this 5-day event. The tournament features a total of 45 medal events across various track and field disciplines, including running, high jump, long jump, hurdles, and javelin throw. While Haryana has sent the largest contingent with 70 athletes, the host state of Odisha is being represented by 28 athletes, including 12 women.

Odisha's star athletes, such as javelin ace Kishore Jena, sprinters Sravani Nanda, Animesh Kujur, Lalu Prasad Bhoi, Pragyan Prasanti Sahu, and Sabita Toppo, are actively competing in this premier event. Jointly organized by the Athletics Federation of India and the Government of Odisha's Department of Sports and Youth Services, this prestigious championship will continue until June 28.