Odisha T20 League: Our aim is to establish Keonjhar Miners as a strong sporting identity, says Manish Khemmka

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Discover the vision behind the Keonjhar Miners franchise in the Odisha T20 League - CM Trophy, focusing on creating a strong regional identity and providing opportunities for young talent.

Cuttack: The Odisha T20 League – CM Trophy is all set to kick off on Sunday at the iconic Barabati Stadium in Cuttack. Six teams, Keonjhar Miners, Bhubaneswar Tigers, Kataka Panthers, Puri Titans, Rourkela Superstars and Sambalpur Warriors will battle it out for the ultimate glory.

The Keonjhar Miners franchise sees its entry into the Odisha T20 League as an opportunity to build more than just a cricket team, with a focus on creating a strong regional identity and providing a platform for young talent from Keonjhar and across Odisha.

Speaking about the vision behind the franchise, owner Manish Khemmka said, “For us, the Keonjhar Miners is about much more than cricket. Keonjhar has a very strong connection with OCL and with our broader journey in Odisha, and we felt that a sporting franchise was a natural way to deepen that relationship with the region.”

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“Cricket has a unique ability to bring people together, create aspirations and give young people a platform to express themselves. Our vision is to build the Keonjhar Miners into a team that the people of Keonjhar and Odisha can genuinely identify with and feel proud of,” he further said.

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“Over time, we would like the Miners to represent three things — talent, opportunity and a strong regional identity. We are looking at this as a long-term association, not simply as participation in one tournament,” he further added.

The franchise also believes the Odisha T20 League can play an important role in widening the pathway for young cricketers from districts outside the traditional cricketing centres.



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"I think it is extremely important. One of the biggest strengths of a state-level league is that it creates a structured platform where young cricketers can compete in a professional environment and demonstrate their ability."

"Odisha has considerable cricketing talent beyond the traditional centres, and leagues like this can help widen the pathway for players from different districts. The OCA has also articulated the objective of creating opportunities for Odisha's players and providing a pathway for them to progress to the next level."

"For us, the opportunity is particularly meaningful because the Keonjhar identity gives us a natural platform to connect with young talent from the region. We want aspiring cricketers to believe that they don't necessarily have to come from one of the traditional cricketing centres to get noticed. If they have the talent, dedication and discipline, there should be a pathway for them," he said.

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Looking beyond the tournament, the franchise is also keen to develop grassroots programmes and strengthen its engagement with the local community.

"Our ambition is to build something that lasts beyond the ten days of the tournament. The first step is to establish the Keonjhar Miners as a strong sporting identity and build a genuine connection with our supporters. Over the longer term, we would like to explore grassroots cricket programmes, talent

identification camps, coaching initiatives and engagement with schools and local communities in Keonjhar and across Odisha. The objective would be to identify promising young players early and give them access to better coaching, competition and exposure," Khemmka noted.

"At the same time, we want the fans to feel that this is their team. That means taking the Miners beyond the cricket ground, engaging with communities, involving young people and creating experiences around the team. Ultimately, if a young boy or girl in Keonjhar starts dreaming of playing professional cricket because they saw the Keonjhar Miners, and if the community starts seeing the team as a source of pride for the region, then we would feel that we have achieved something much bigger than winning matches. That is the legacy we would like to build," he concluded.