



**"Lilima Minz & Namita Toppo's exceptional journey gives me confidence",  
says Odisha's Mariana Kujur**

*~ Having grown up idolizing the two pros, the 21-year-old youngster is  
determined to learn from them and excel in her career ~*

**Mumbai, 30 July 2020:** One of Odisha's brightest young talents who has been shining for the Indian Junior Women's Hockey Team, Midfielder Mariana Kujur says she idolizes her fellow Odia stalwarts Lilima Minz and Namita Toppo, and has always looked up to them since her initial days in hockey.

Speaking from her Railways' office in Mumbai, the 21-year-old spoke about her fondness for the two Senior pros. "When I had begun my hockey career at the Panposh Sports Hostel, both Lilima *di* and Namita *di* were in their early years with the national side, and I would just be so happy to see them train at our academy whenever they would come home from national duty. They have been inspirational in my career and I've also been very fortunate that they have been there to guide me along the way. When I see the journey that they have made, I feel really excited and confident because that means I can do such things as well," said Mariana.

The young Midfielder hails from a small village of Timna, which lies in the Sundargarh district, a hockey hotbed of the country. Growing up, Mariana was always inclined towards the sport because of the hockey culture in her locality. Reminiscing her early days, Mariana said, "I come from an area where hockey is played in every village with the use of whichever piece of wood we can find. I was fortunate to have my elder brother who was always very passionate about the sport, and I would end up playing with him and my friends in my village. It was in 2010 at the age of 11 when I finally gave trials and got selected for the Panposh hostel. It was at the academy that I realized my true potential, and here I am targeting a place in the Indian Women's Hockey Team in the future," said the 21-year-old who was part of the Indian Junior Women's Team which

won the Silver Medal at the 6-Nations Invitational Tournament 2018 in Belgium.

With both her parents' occupation being farming in her native village, Mariana says it her dream to make them see her on TV one day. "When there is live hockey on television, my parents are often asking me why I am not playing at the Kalinga Stadium, like our Senior teams do. They do not realize that I am in the Junior team, but it is my dream to make them very proud, and for them, that would happen if they are able to see me on television," expressed the youngster.

Having established herself at the Junior level, Mariana says her eventual dream is to play at the Olympics, but wants to also become the best Midfielder in the world. "I am a Midfielder and it gives me huge joy to be able to play my part both in attack and defense. My overall aim, like any other hockey player, is to make it to the Olympics and win medals for my country. But I also think about being the best Midfielder in the world. I have so many great players to watch in our Senior team, and I believe if I can pick up the good qualities of all of those players, I can become a complete player, and help my team also become the best in the world," said the assertive Midfielder.

Please find attached pictures of Mariana Kujur.

*Disclaimer: Please note the attached file photos were taken prior to March 2020.*

For images of the Indian Hockey Teams,  
click: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bDB03H2nf6Ctdue8HHEMTCYYII2-ufiC>

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### **About HOCKEY INDIA**

HOCKEY INDIA (HI) is the governing body with exclusive mandate to direct and conduct all activities for both men and women's hockey in India. It is recognized by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Govt. of India as the sole body responsible towards promoting Hockey in India.

Headquartered in New Delhi, Hockey India was established on 20th May, 2009 and is affiliated to the International Hockey Federation (FIH), the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and Asian Hockey Federation (AHF).

Committed to the development of Hockey in the country, Hockey India with the assistance of Sports Authority of India and Department of Sports, Government of India, trains players at sub-junior, junior and senior level. The governing body engages in Coaching the coaches with International Standard certification programs, educates and equips technical officials and umpires to find a foothold in international arena, provides world-class infrastructure and International exposure for the players besides regular international competition. Hockey India has also pioneered in bringing top International hockey events to India such as the FIH Men's World Cup in 2010 and 2018, FIH Champions Trophy in 2014, FIH Junior Men's World Cup in 2016, FIH Hockey World League Final in 2017. With its vision to popularize the game and constantly promote it, Hockey India is dedicated to getting our national team(both men and women) into the top three in the world.

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**About ODISHA**

Odisha - the Eastern State of India - is known for its love for Hockey. The State successfully hosted the Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018 and hosted the FIH Men's Series Finals Bhubaneswar Odisha 2019 in June. Odisha has previously hosted the Champions Trophy 2014 and the Odisha Men's Hockey World League Final Bhubaneswar 2017. Kalinga Lancers, the team owned by the State, is the winners in the Hockey India League 2017. Taking a step further towards realising the dream of restoring the glory of Indian Hockey at the global level, the State is sponsoring the Indian Hockey Teams till 2023

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