

IIM-R brings global hockey experience to city through interactive session

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Ranchi

IIM Ranchi hosted an engaging interactive session with renowned international hockey players on January 9, 2026, as part of its elective course on Sports Analytics. The session brought together accomplished players and sports professionals who shared first-hand insights into the world of professional hockey, blending on-field experiences with data-driven sports management perspectives.

The distinguished panel featured Neha Goyal, midfielder of the Indian Women's Hockey Team; Tom Boon, star player from the Belgian Men's Hockey Team; Poonam Toppo, former Indian women's team player and current coach of Ranchi Royals; and Netesh Baa, Head of Operations, Ranchi Royals. The discussion was moderated by IIM Ranchi faculty members Professor Ambuj Anand and Professor R Vivekananda.



The speakers reflected on their personal journeys, early challenges, and the changing dynamics of modern sports. Neha Goyal shared her inspiring story of starting hockey at the age of eight under difficult circumstances, driven initially by basic necessities. Her perseverance and discipline

eventually led her to represent India at the international level. She noted that while India's sports culture is evolving, hockey needs renewed attention among the younger generation.

Tom Boon offered a global perspective, highlighting Belgium's strong

sports ecosystem where physical activity is integral to education. Beginning hockey at four, he rose to international prominence by 18 and has represented Belgium in multiple Olympic Games and World Championships, emphasizing his enduring passion for the sport.

Poonam Toppo spoke about her grassroots beginnings through local tournaments in Odisha and her transition into coaching after an injury curtailed her playing career. Netesh Baa provided insights into the operational side of professional hockey, explaining how the Hockey India League has opened new avenues for building competitive teams like the Ranchi Royals.

The interaction also explored the role of technology in sports, including performance-tracking tools and analytics. The session concluded with a strong message encouraging students to actively participate in sports for holistic personal and professional development.