

The Times of India

Mah U find a toehold in Europe

Stanislaus D'Souza | TNN

Mumbai: Monday turned out to be a red letter day in Indian football. Tech Mahindra, which is an arm of the Mahindra and Mahindra group that also owns the nation's leading football club - Mahindra United, staged a coup of sorts when they inked a three-year contract with UEFA, the chief European football body.

Though the partnership is business related - Tech Mahindra, a leading Indian provider for IT solutions to telecom companies, will provide the UEFA services for mobile content hosting and delivery platform - it will also be looking at promoting football in India.

"This service will help football fans worldwide to not just receive text messaging but also video, music and pictures of European football on your mobiles. In fact, it will provide access to all content from its European competitions wherever and whenever they wish to," said Alexandre Fourtoy, the UEFA CEO, during a chat with TOI.

But more than the business angle, Mahindra is looking at UEFA's professional assistance in helping National Football League

champions Mahindra United grow bigger. "Football is the largest followed sport in the world and we are looking at putting Indian football on the world map. If we can put Indian business on the world map even when it comes to sports, then I do believe India can play in the World Cup finals one day. There are abundant opportunities. It requires a movement and we aim to do our bit," said Anand Mahindra, vice-chairman and managing director of Mahindra and Mahindra, after the agreement was signed on Monday.

Vineet Nayyar, CEO of Tech Mahindra, said the tie-up could eventually lead to a gateway for Indian football to grow internationally. Nayyar said Tech Mahindra also plans to venture into cricket and other sports in the near future.

Alan Durante, president of Mahindra United, said, "In the long run we will be looking at UEFA to help us arranging football tours for the team to European countries. This will give our players the much-needed international exposure and training. This is a beginning of a new era that could change the history of Indian football for the better, forever."

Rs 20 lakh for schools football

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Mahindra United have decided to pump in Rs 20 lakhs into their youth development programme. Said club president Alan Durante: "We plan to conduct an Inter-Schools Football Tournament for all 12 MSSA under-16 Div-I teams in October this year. Four talent spotters from Mahindra United will then pick the 20 best players and take them under our wing. They will be kitted, trained and paid a stipend and fielded in the NFL clubs u-19 tournament next season."

Durante pointed out that the best from the 20 would then be inducted into the Mahindra senior team.

Consider moving out of city

Mahindra United have confirmed that they are looking at options to move out of Mumbai if they are unable to secure a football ground of international standards in the city. TOI had reported this on Sunday.

"It pains us to think of taking such drastic measures. But it is true that we did make a trip to Goa to survey few grounds, including the Bandodkar ground at Panjim. We hope to build our own stadium," said club president Alan Durante. "Mumbai is our first choice but if we continue hosting our international matches in Goa, it makes sense to shift there."