Basketball for underprivileged children

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Hoops4Hope, a community basketball initiative led by the 17-year-old basketball enthusiast Viraj Lohchab, hosted an invitational full-day tournament at Matunga. The event brought together over 100 government-run middle school students, who have been part of the Hoops4Hope training programme.

More than 20 matches were played through the afternoon with all participants receiving an appreciation certificate apart from trophies, medals and gifts for the winners and runners-up. The event was attended by the Secretary of Maharashtra State Basketball Association, Mr. Govind Krishnan Muthukamar.

In the lead-up to the tournament, Hoops4Hope also organised a sports equipment donation drive, mobilising support to ensure that participating children had access to essential gear.

Viraj Lohchab is a dedicated basketball player, who has represented his school in several Mumbai Inter-school and All-India International Schools competitions over the past four years. In 2024, Viraj launched Hoops4Hope with a focus on accessibility, inclusion and consistency. He roped in his earlier coach, Prabhu Maspog of Bayciti Sports, to help him out in this cause. Starting out with five government schools in Mumbai, he began conducting free weekend coaching sessions for children who had never experienced structured basketball training.

The initiative drew support from Spolto, who came in as an enabler, helping expand outreach and strengthen programme structure. Nivia supported by enabling access to quality basketball gear.

Viraj Lohchab says, "Through Hoops4Hope, I wanted to create a space where any child, regardless of background, can step onto the court, learn and feel like they belong. The problem is not that children don't want to play – it's that many simply don't get the opportunity. If we can create even a few more spaces where they can show up and play freely, that's a meaningful start."