



Sports minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya urges athletes to utilise opportunity as Khelo India Winter Games 2026 set to begin in Leh

Figure skating, an Olympic discipline, has been added to the ice skating programme; Hosts UT Ladakh aim to finish on top of the medal tally like last season

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More than 1000 men and women, including athletes, coaches and technical officials, will take part in the Ladakh leg of the 2026 Khelo India Winter Games starting in Leh on Tuesday. The Nawang Dorjan Stobdan (NDS) Stadium, the Army rink and the frozen Gupukh's Pond will be centres of attraction till the Games end on January 26. The opening ceremony of KIWG 2026 will take place Tuesday afternoon.

Four hundred and seventy-two athletes will take part in two ice sports – skating and hockey. The new attraction this year has been the introduction of figure skating, an Olympic event. In the Ladakh leg of KIWG last year, the hosts ended on top of the medal tally with four gold medals out of 13 at stake. Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra finished second and third.

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DTsHbANE0jb/?igsh=MTZrbTA1YWNyYmxvYg==>

The first leg of Khelo India Winter Games 2026 is organised by the Youth Services and Sports department of the Union Territory of Ladakh under the supervision of the Sports Authority of India. The technical expertise for the conduct of the Games are provided by the national sports promotional bodies/federations managing ice sports.

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DTr0Ut2gaZr/?igsh=MTM3MH05MGV5MjFmYw==>

KIWG 2026 is the second event this year in the Khelo India calendar. The first event was the Khelo India Beach Games held in Diu from January 5-10. For all athletes and their support staff, the Leh Games will see how athletes perform under challenging high altitude climatic conditions like minus degree temperature and low oxygen.



“The year has begun with strong momentum for Indian sport, with two Khelo India Games being conducted in the opening month, including the recently concluded Khelo India Beach Games 2026 in Diu. The Khelo India Winter Games now add another important dimension, creating avenues for athletes to compete and excel in winter sports, an area that has historically seen limited competitive exposure in India. It is only due to the Modi Government’s sustained and focused efforts that India today hosts a national-level, multi-sport Winter Games, firmly embedding winter sports within the country’s domestic competition framework”, said Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Hon’ble Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports.

While ice hockey remains the showpiece sport in KIWG Ladakh, figure skating is being seen as a welcome addition. In the Asian Winter Games held in Harbin, China in February last year, India sent 23 ice skaters and a total of 59 athletes, the largest team ever for the Games. US-based Tara Prasad finished eighth overall, India’s best figure skating finish in an Asian Games. Manjesh Tiwari finished 15th among men.

“In Harbin, we may not have won medals but we have shown that we can compete. More competition means more opportunities and that’s why this edition of Khelo India Winter Games is a milestone,” said Mohammad Abbas Nordak, a senior national coach from Ladakh.



Dr. Mandaviya added, “In the months ahead, the Khelo India will continue to expand with multiple formats, beginning with the Khelo India Tribal Games next month and followed by other variants across the country. The Khelo India calendar has now been finalised and institutionalised, and this fixed competition cycle will be a game changer, strengthening the domestic sporting ecosystem and providing multiple opportunities for deserving athletes to compete, progress, and achieve excellence.”

Haryana (62), Himachal Pradesh (55) and hosts Ladakh (52) have the biggest representation in terms of athletes among the 21 states and UTs taking part. There will be 17 gold medals at stake in KIWG 2026 Ladakh leg. Of these, 15 will be for ice skating.

For more on KIWG: please click www.Winter.kheloindia.gov.in

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