



Sports Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya announces dates for Gulmarg leg, says ‘perfect time for Khelo India Winter Games’

The Gulmarg leg of KIWG 2026 will be held from Feb 23-26

The first leg of KIWG 2026 was held in Ladakh from Jan 20-26

Army to defend overall championship title in Jammu & Kashmir

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The Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, on Wednesday announced the dates for the Gulmarg leg of the Khelo India Winter Games 2026, which will be held from February 23 to 26 in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir. This will be the sixth edition of the Khelo India Winter Games.

The first leg of KIWG 2026, featuring ice sports, was successfully held in Ladakh from January 20 to 26, while Gulmarg will host the snow sports competitions. The Indian Army will defend its overall championship title in Jammu & Kashmir.

“The Gulmarg leg is coming at the back of the Winter Olympics and this is the perfect time to host the Khelo India Winter Games. We had a very successful first phase in Leh (Ladakh) and surely, we will see the same excitement in Jammu & Kashmir as athletes will once again battle with nature and challenging conditions,” said Dr. Mandaviya.

“Every season of the Khelo India Winter Games has seen exciting performances and rising competition. In Leh, the addition of figure skating enhanced the competitive intensity, and in Gulmarg, we are expecting some impressive timings on the Kongdoori slopes,” he added.

Until the introduction of the Khelo India Winter Games, winter sports in India had very limited visibility, awareness, or structured competition. Ice and snow disciplines largely remained niche pursuits with negligible public engagement and sporadic athlete participation at the international level.

The Khelo India Winter Games have fundamentally transformed India’s winter sports ecosystem by creating a national competitive platform for both ice sports and snow sports, significantly expanding participation, performance standards, and public awareness. What was once a marginal sporting segment is now steadily evolving into a structured talent pipeline.

This transformation is already reflecting in international outcomes. Indian winter athletes are beginning to register podium finishes and competitive performances abroad, signalling the emergence of a new generation of talent. Notably, Indian figure skater Tara Prasad has delivered medal-winning performances

at international competitions, while the Indian women's ice hockey team won a historic bronze medal at the 2025 IIHF Women's Asia Cup, marking India's first-ever podium finish in an international ice hockey championship. The team also recorded landmark victories during the tournament, underlining the rapid progress being made in ice sports at the global level.

These achievements highlight how Khelo India Winter Games are laying the foundational bedrock for sustained international participation, moving India beyond an earlier phase where participation in the Winter Olympics was often limited to one or no athletes. With regular domestic competition, exposure to high-pressure environments, and increasing depth across disciplines, this trajectory is expected to strengthen further in the coming years.

The timing of the Gulmarg leg of KIWG 2026 is also strategically significant, as it follows soon after the conclusion of the Winter Olympics Milano Cortina 2026, where India is represented by alpine skier Arif Khan and cross-country skier Stanzin Lundup, helping to carry forward global momentum, enthusiasm, and competitive energy into the domestic winter sports calendar, and ensuring continuity in athlete motivation, public interest, and national focus on winter sports development.

Gulmarg will feature four medal disciplines, namely Ski Mountaineering, Alpine Skiing, Nordic Skiing (Cross-Country), and Snowboarding, with around 400 athletes expected to compete, and Alpine Skiing drawing the highest participation.

At the conclusion of the KIWG 2025 season, the Indian Army topped the team standings with 18 medals, while Himachal Pradesh finished second, followed by Ladakh, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu. At the end of the KIWG 2026 Ladakh leg, Haryana led the medal tally with four gold medals, all won by its figure and ice skaters, followed by Ladakh, Maharashtra, and Telangana.

For medal tally: <https://www.winter.kheloindia.gov.in/medal-tally>

For more on KIWG 2026: please click www.winter.kheloindia.gov.in.

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