

The Making of a Sporting Nation

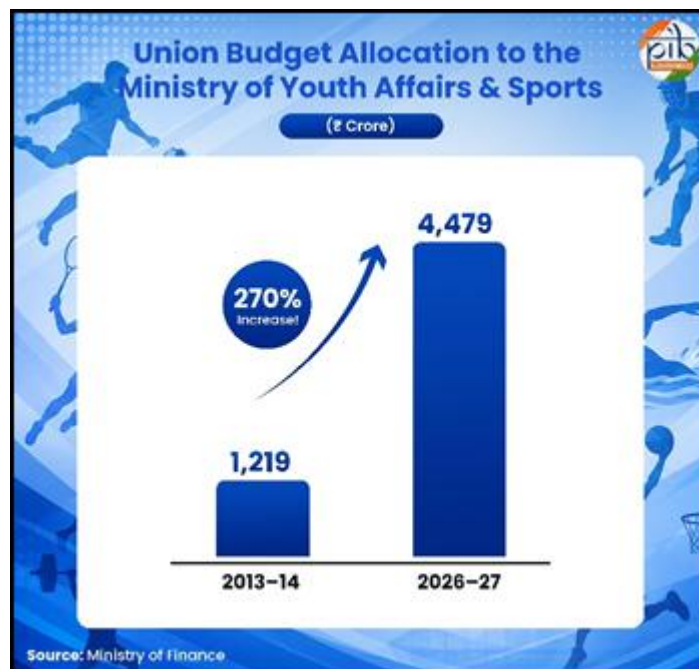
Khelo India and the Road to International Excellence

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The Union Cabinet's approval of the revamped Khelo India Scheme marks a major step in India's sporting journey. This features an enhanced Assistance to National Sports Federations, with a combined outlay of **₹36,441 crore** for the period **2026–27 to 2030–31**. Through stronger talent identification, wider opportunities and sustained athlete support, the programme seeks to create a clear pathway from grassroots participation to global podiums. Together with other initiatives, it is nurturing talent and preparing the champions of tomorrow.

The Spirit of a Sporting India

Sports carry immense power to transform a nation, shaping individuals and elevating countries onto the world stage. It builds character and confidence in citizens, while announcing a nation's arrival as a sporting superpower. Victory on the field brings immense national pride, uniting people beyond caste, creed and religion. This shared pride helps build a happier, healthier and more cohesive society.



India's greatest sporting asset is its youth. Around 65 per cent of the population is below 35 years of age. Recognising this immense potential, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports continues to strengthen youth development and promote sporting excellence across the country. The Union Budget 2026–27 allocated a record ₹4,479.88 crore to the Ministry, up from ₹1,219 crore in 2013–14.

At the heart of this transformation stands the Khelo India programme, which has now entered a significantly expanded phase. The **Union Cabinet** has approved an expanded scheme that takes its vision far beyond competitions and infrastructure.

From school playgrounds and village fields, young athletes will now have a clearer path forward. Early identification will be followed by quality coaching, scientific support and regular competition. Stronger institutions and wider partnerships will help promising athletes move steadily towards international excellence. Complemented by several other key initiatives, Khelo India promotes mass participation and sporting excellence across rural and urban India. Together, these efforts provide infrastructure, scientific training and financial support to identify and nurture talent at every level. It seeks to ensure that talent is not held back by geography, limited resources or lack of opportunity.

This vision builds on the sporting foundation India has created in recent years. The country's fourth-place finish at the Commonwealth Games 2026 offered another glimpse of that growing strength. Such moments capture something larger than medals alone.

The Khelo India Vision



Launched in 2017 to create a strong foundation for Indian sport, the Khelo India Scheme brought together three existing programmes. It merged the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Abhiyan, Urban Sports Infrastructure Scheme and National Sports Talent Search Scheme into a unified framework for sports development.

The scheme follows a comprehensive approach to strengthen every stage of the sporting ecosystem. Its five key pillars are:

- Establishing training centres at different levels to identify talented athletes and guide them towards professional excellence.
- Building the capacity of coaches and support staff through dedicated development programmes.
- Expanding the use of sports science and advanced technology to improve athlete performance.
- Organising competitions and leagues to promote a vibrant sporting culture and provide competitive opportunities.
- Developing sports infrastructure to support both training and competitive events.

The Mission envisions one Khelo India Training Centre in every district through State and Union Territory plans. It also promotes structured athlete pathways supported by sports science, psychology and nutrition. Data driven platforms enable real time athlete tracking. This integrated approach aims to position India among the world's leading sporting nations by 2036.

Growing Investment in Khelo India

2017–18 to 2019–20: ₹1,756 crore approved for three years to revamp the scheme.

2020–21: Allocation of ₹328.77 crore for one year.

2021–22 to 2025–26: Financial outlay increased to ₹3,790.50 crore for five years, expanding activities and strengthening sports infrastructure.

2026–27: Allocation of ₹924.35 crore, reinforcing continued support as the scheme enters a new phase of outcome-oriented implementation.



Key achievements of the Khelo India Scheme include (As of July 2026):

- **349** new sports infrastructure projects approved, with a total investment of ₹3,176 crore.
- **1,067 Khelo India Centres (KICs)** established to strengthen grassroots training and athlete support.
- **267 academies** supported to nurture sporting talent across disciplines.
- **2,745 Khelo India Athletes (KIAs)** supported with coaching, equipment, medical care and a monthly out of pocket allowance.

Through sustained investment and a clear long-term vision, Khelo India is creating a strong pipeline of champions for India.

Revamped Khelo India Scheme: A Pathway from Grassroots to Global Excellence

The Khelo India Scheme has entered a significantly expanded phase for the period **2026–27 to 2030–31**. Together with enhanced Assistance to National Sports Federations, it has a combined outlay of ₹36,441 crore.

A Comprehensive Athlete Development Pathway

For the first time, young sportspersons will receive structured support at every stage—from talent identification and scientific training to international exposure and Olympic preparation. The nationwide ecosystem will bring together:

- National Centres of Excellence
- Khelo India Centres of Excellence
- SAI Training Centres
- Khelo India Accredited Academies
- Khelo India Centres
- Youth Sports Companies of the Armed Forces

Together, these institutions will provide modern infrastructure, professional coaching and sports science support across the country.

The scheme also introduces **Khelo India Feeder Schools** and **Khelo India Utkrishta Vidyalayas**. These initiatives will integrate sports with mainstream education and enable the early identification and systematic development of talented children.

Expanding India's Athlete Pool

The new Emerging Khelo India Athletes category will expand the structured athlete pool nearly ten-fold. A stronger talent identification system and a clear pathway from grassroots competitions to Khelo India and TOPS will support athletes from early identification to international excellence.

More Competitions and Wider Opportunities

School, university, regional and sport-specific leagues will provide regular competitive exposure. Greater opportunities will be created for women, para-athletes and indigenous sports, along with support for the National Games and major international events.

Fitness, Coaching and Technology

The expanded Fit India Movement will promote active lifestyles and wider participation. A National Coach Accreditation Board will strengthen coaching standards, while a unified digital platform will integrate athlete data, infrastructure, competitions, assessments and funding.

Partnerships for Sporting Excellence

Partnerships with private academies and corporate institutions will bring investment and expertise into sports development. Enhanced support to National Sports Federations will strengthen coaching, sports science, equipment, training and international exposure.

Advancing India's Global Sporting Ambitions

Aligned with Khelo Bharat Niti 2025 and the National Education Policy 2020, the scheme integrates sports with education, fitness, technology and high-performance training. It will support preparations for the 2030 Commonwealth Games, India's Olympic and Paralympic hosting ambitions, and the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047.

Khelo India Games: A Stage for Future Champions

The Khelo India movement entered a new phase with the launch of the Khelo India School Games in 2018. Held in New Delhi, the event brought young sporting talent from across the country onto one platform.

Later that year, the Indian Olympic Association joined the initiative. From 2019, the event was renamed the **Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG)**. It continues to serve as the flagship competition under the Khelo India umbrella.



The Khelo India Games have steadily expanded to create more opportunities for athletes across disciplines. Annual competitions now bring together participants representing their States and universities, helping them compete, excel and prepare for higher levels. **Since 2018, more than 63,000 athletes have participated in the Khelo India Games.**

The **Khelo India University Games (KIUG)** and the **Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG)** were introduced in 2020. The **Khelo India Para Games (KIPG)** followed in 2023. The expansion continued in 2025 with the launch of the **Khelo India Beach Games (KIBG)** and the **Khelo India Water Sports Festival**. The **Khelo India Tribal Games (KITG)** made their debut in 2026.

The Khelo India Games continue to strengthen India's sporting culture by giving young athletes a national stage to pursue excellence.

Enabling India's Sporting Success

India's sporting rise extends beyond infrastructure and competitions. Several focused initiatives strengthen athlete development, identify emerging talent and build long term sporting capacity. Collectively, these efforts are creating a stronger pathway from grassroots participation to global success.

Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports launched the **Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)** in September 2014 to improve India's performance at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The scheme was revamped in April 2018 with a dedicated technical support team to provide holistic assistance to athletes.

TOPS supports athletes through foreign training, international competitions, coaching camps, specialised equipment and a monthly stipend of ₹50,000. A Development Group was also introduced to support junior athletes with a monthly stipend of ₹25,000.

As of April 2026, the scheme currently supports **51 Core Athletes**, **52 Para Core Athletes** and **130 Development Athletes**. TOPS played an important role in India's medal winning performances at the Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

KIRTI

The **Khelo India Rising Talent Identification (KIRTI)** initiative identifies and nurtures sporting talent among children between 9 and 18 years of age. It uses Talent Assessment Centres, standardised assessment protocols and advanced IT tools, including Artificial Intelligence and data analytics, to ensure transparent and merit-based selection.

At present, **174 Talent Assessment Centres** operate across **3 States and Union Territories**, with **1,87,921 assessments** completed. KIRTI aims to build a sustainable talent pipeline to help India become a top 10 sporting nation by 2036 and a top 5 sporting nation by 2047.

Sports Goods Manufacturing

The Union Budget 2026–27 announced a dedicated initiative for sports goods manufacturing with an allocation of **₹500 crore**. The initiative seeks to strengthen India's position as a global hub for high quality and affordable sports goods.

Its key objectives include expanding domestic manufacturing capacity, promoting research and innovation in equipment design, advancing material sciences, strengthening India's presence in global sports supply chains and generating employment across manufacturing and allied sectors.

These initiatives are strengthening India's sporting ecosystem and preparing athletes to compete with confidence on the global stage.

India's Rise on the Global Sporting Stage

The investments made in India's sporting ecosystem are delivering results on the global stage. India's performances at major international sporting events reflect the country's growing strength across Olympic, Paralympic and multi-sport disciplines. Stronger athlete development, better training support and sustained investment have translated into consistent improvements on the world stage. The steady rise in participation and medal tallies highlights India's emergence as an increasingly competitive sporting nation.

Olympic Games

India's Olympic journey witnessed a remarkable transformation between 2016 and 2024. The country progressed from two medals at Rio 2016 to seven at Tokyo 2020. India maintained this momentum with six medals at Paris 2024. Neeraj Chopra became India's first Olympic athletics gold medallist at Tokyo 2020. Mirabai Chanu also emerged as one of India's most consistent Olympic medallists.

Year	Host City	Indian Athletes	Medals Won
2016	Rio de Janeiro	117	2
2020	Tokyo	119	7
2024	Paris	117	6

Paralympic Games

India's Paralympic performances have witnessed exceptional growth over the last three editions. The medal tally increased from four at Rio 2016 to 19 at Tokyo 2020. Paris 2024 marked India's best ever Paralympic campaign with 29 medals. Avani Lekhara, Sumit Antil and Pramod Bhagat have been among the country's standout performers. Programmes such as TOPS and the Khelo India Para Games have strengthened support for para-athletes.

Year	Host City	Indian Athletes	Medals Won	Gold	Silver	Bronze
2016	Rio de Janeiro	19	4	2	1	1
2020	Tokyo	54	19	5	8	6
2024	Paris	84	29	7	9	13

Asian Games

India has consistently raised its performance at the Asian Games through larger contingents and stronger medal winning displays. The country won 57 medals at Incheon 2014 and improved to 69 at Jakarta 2018. Hangzhou 2023 became a landmark edition as India recorded its highest ever medal tally of 107. Neeraj Chopra, Lovlina Borgohain, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty were among the leading contributors.

Year	Host City	Indian Athletes	Medals Won	Gold	Silver	Bronze
2014	Incheon	541	57	11	9	37
2018	Jakarta	570	69	15	24	30
2023	Hangzhou	655	107	28	38	41

Commonwealth Games

India has remained one of the strongest performers at the Commonwealth Games. The country won 64 medals at Glasgow 2014 and improved to 66 at Gold Coast 2018. India followed this with 61 medals at Birmingham 2022. Wrestling, weightlifting, table tennis, badminton and athletics have consistently contributed to India's success. PV Sindhu, Vinesh Phogat and Achinta Sheuli have been among the country's notable performers.

Year	Host City	Indian Athletes	Medals Won	Gold	Silver	Bronze
2014	Glasgow	215	64	15	30	19
2018	Gold Coast	218	66	26	20	20
2022	Birmingham	210	61	22	16	23

India's growing global success reflects the strength of its sporting ecosystem and the determination of its athletes to excel on the world stage.

Commonwealth Games 2026



The Commonwealth Games 2026 were held in Glasgow from 23 July to 2 August 2026. The Games brought together athletes from 74 countries across a 10-sport programme, including six fully integrated Para Sports, hosted at four venues. India delivered a strong performance securing fourth place with 39 medals – 13 gold, 17 silver and nine bronze.

India was represented by a **124-member contingent**, comprising 78 male and 46 female athletes. The contingent reflected the country's growing depth of talent across multiple sporting disciplines.

Jhandu Kumar opened India's medal account with a bronze in para powerlifting. **Rishikanta Singh** became the first able bodied Indian medallist after winning silver in the men's 60 kg weightlifting event. He also set a new Commonwealth Games record in the snatch.

Mirabai Chanu delivered another historic moment by winning India's first gold medal in Glasgow. The victory marked her third consecutive Commonwealth Games title. **Muthupandi Raja** also added to India's medal tally with a silver in the men's 65 kg weightlifting event.

Boxing became the highlight of India's campaign. **Indian boxers** won **10 medals**, including an unprecedented seven golds, the best performance by any country in the sport at a single Commonwealth Games. **Sakshi Chaudhary** was among the gold medallists, while Olympic medallist **Lovlina Borgohain** secured silver.

Glasgow also witnessed several Indian firsts. **Asmita Dey** became the country's first Commonwealth Games gold medallist in judo, before **Harsh Tokas** added another gold in the sport. **Gulveer Singh** became the first Indian track and field athlete to win two individual medals at one edition. **Tejaswin Shankar** earned India's first decathlon medal. **Neeraj Chopra's** silver in the men's javelin throw added another memorable moment to a campaign that reflected India's growing strength across sports.

From Khelo India to Glasgow Glory

Arundhati's Golden Journey: From Khelo India to Glasgow



A gifted student with a flair for mathematics, Arundhati Choudhary chose the boxing ring over a conventional career. The Khelo India Games gave the young boxer from Kota a national platform at a defining stage of her journey. She made the opportunity count by winning three consecutive gold medals—at Delhi 2018, Pune 2019 and Guwahati 2020.

At Glasgow 2026, Arundhati completed another golden chapter by winning the women's 70 kg boxing title. Her journey shows how early opportunities can transform emerging talent into a Commonwealth champion.

Asmita Dey: From Khelo India Champion to Judo History



Asmita Dey's journey began in Belonia, Tripura, far from international sporting arenas. Her father was a bicycle mechanic. Asmita Dey quietly built a dream through judo.

The Khelo India University Games gave that dream a national stage. Multiple gold medals strengthened her belief and announced her arrival in Indian judo.

That belief travelled with her to Glasgow in 2026. In a tense final, she held her nerve and defeated Canada's Heidi Quach. The victory made her India's first Commonwealth Games judo champion.

The Pursuit of Sporting Excellence

India's sporting journey continues to gather momentum. Sustained investment, stronger support systems and focused athlete development are creating a lasting foundation for success. Rising participation and improved performances at international competitions reflect the impact of these efforts. With the Commonwealth Games 2026 still underway, Indian athletes continue to compete with determination and pride. Every performance inspires the next generation to dream bigger and aim higher. As India looks to the future, the nation remains committed to building champions and strengthening its place among the world's leading sporting nations.

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