



DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

**INDIA'S OLYMPIC AMBITION:
INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS &
GOVERNANCE**

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Context

- The Prime Minister of India has reiterated **India's intent to host the Olympic Games (2036)**, building on the decision **to stage the Commonwealth Games (2030)** and the **expansion of domestic platforms** to broaden athlete participation and exposure.

India's Olympic Ambition

- India's Olympic Ambition aligns with the government's sustained investment in infrastructure and athlete development, building upon initiatives like **Khelo India**, **Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)**, and the **Fit India Movement**.
- According to the **Union Budget 2025–26** released by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**, India allocated **₹3,794.30 crore** to the sector, with **₹1,000 crore** for **Khelo India**, a record high.
 - ◆ It underscores the Centre's emphasis on nurturing grassroots talent and preparing for large-scale international sporting participation.
- The **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports** reports the establishment of **over 1,000 Khelo India Centres** across India, providing structured support for **nearly 3,000 athletes** through coaching, nutrition, equipment, and medical care.

Why Olympic 2036 Raises the Stakes?

- **International Scrutiny and Compliance:** The International Olympic Committee (IOC) places strong emphasis on ethical governance, athlete safeguarding, gender equity, and financial transparency.
- **Scale of Public Investment:** Hosting the Olympics involves **massive public expenditure** on infrastructure, urban development, and security.
 - ◆ Risks include cost overruns, crony contracts, and underutilised 'white elephant' stadiums without robust governance mechanisms.

Why Institutional & Governance Reforms Are Needed?

- **Fragmented & Opaque Structure:** Most **National Sports Federations (NSFs)** operate as autonomous bodies, often dominated by long-serving officials with limited athlete representation.
 - ◆ The **National Sports Development Code (2011)**, formulated to enforce age limits, tenure caps, and transparency norms, has faced persistent resistance from federations, leading to frequent litigation and administrative paralysis.
- **Politicization of Sports Bodies:** Several federations continue to be headed by political figures **rather than professionals with domain expertise**.
 - ◆ It undermines efficiency and continuity in decision-making, diluting long-term vision and accountability.
- **Absence of Structured Pathways For Athletes:** Some sportspersons are equipped for administrative duties due to limited mentoring, skilling, or exposure during their playing careers despite their invaluable experience.
 - ◆ It deprives Indian sports governance of **athlete-centric insight**, weakening the connection between policy and performance.
- **Digital and Data Deficit:** India's sports ecosystem lags in **digital adoption and data analytics**.
 - ◆ Modern sports management demands integrated athlete tracking, injury monitoring, and performance analytics, areas where most federations still rely on fragmented or manual systems.
- **Regional Variation:** Disparities in **funding and performance across states** persist.
 - ◆ Medal tallies at the **Khelo India Youth Games** remain concentrated among a few resource-rich regions, revealing uneven growth.

Lessons From India's Commonwealth Games (2010)

- The **Commonwealth Games (2010) in Delhi** exposed governance lapses and cost inefficiencies, despite India's 101-medals.
- It has prompted calls for **improved project management, transparent procurement, and professionalized administration** as prerequisites for the 2036 Olympics.

Institutional and Technological Reforms

- The **Sports Authority of India (SAI)** has initiated the **National Centres of Excellence (NCOE)** and introduced a **Digital Athlete Database System** to integrate analytics, injury tracking, and performance data.
 - ◆ These reforms aim to make sports governance more data-driven and responsive.
- Moreover, the **National Centre for Sports Science and Research (NCSSR)** is being expanded to strengthen evidence-based coaching, sports medicine, and technology integration, essential elements for Olympic readiness.
- **Task Force (2025)** led by **Abhinav Bindra** identified persistent governance lapses within **national sports federations**, poor accountability, staff shortages, and the lack of a trained administrative cadre.
 - ◆ It noted that existing **sports administration training** remains fragmented and outdated, with little emphasis on practical management or inter-institutional coordination.
 - ◆ As India's investment in sport rises, the **gap between ambition and administrative capacity** has become increasingly visible.

Way Forward: From Aspiration to Institution

- India's road to 2036 will test whether it can convert growing enthusiasm into durable institutional strength.
- **Khelo India** has widened participation and funding has improved, but **true transformation depends on four pillars**:
 - ◆ **Professionalized Sports Administration:** Creating a skilled, accountable cadre of sports managers.
 - ◆ **Governance Reform:** Reducing political control and ensuring transparent, merit-based leadership.
 - ◆ **Athlete-to-Administrator Pathways:** Building structured mentoring and transition programs.
 - ◆ **Data-Driven Decision-Making:** Integrating analytics and technology into every level of sports management.
- India's Olympic aspiration risks being built on enthusiasm rather than endurance without these reforms.
 - ◆ The **Olympic Games (2036)** can be a defining milestone but **only if institutional credibility and professional governance** rise alongside ambition.

Source: BS

Daily Mains Practice Question

[Q] To what extent can institutional reforms and governance restructuring in India's sports ecosystem transform its Olympic ambitions of 2036.

