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## Government Initiatives for Sports Promotion in India

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### Abstract

Over the last decade India has placed sport and physical fitness high on its national agenda. From large-scale talent-search and grassroots infrastructure to elite-performance funding and mass fitness drives, the Government of India now runs a portfolio of programmes intended to increase participation, improve performance at international events, and build a culture of fitness. This paper reviews major government initiatives (policy frameworks, flagship schemes, institutional mechanisms), assesses their achievements and challenges, and suggests policy and operational reforms to make sports promotion more equitable, evidence-driven, and sustainable. The analysis draws on government sources and programme descriptions (Khelo India, Fit India, TOPS, SAI schemes), implementation examples, and published evaluations to present a comprehensive picture of how public policy shapes sport in contemporary India.

**Keywords:** Statutory bodies, major government initiative, sports promotion

### Introduction

Sport plays multiple roles in a modern society: public health and fitness, youth development, national pride, local economic activity, and international soft power. Recognising these multiple returns, the Government of India (central government and state governments together) has expanded its efforts to make sport accessible, competitive, and sustainable. Historically, Indian sports policy relied on line-item grants, a handful of top academies, and sectoral programmes run by central ministries and the Sports Authority of India (SAI). Since the late 2000s and especially after 2014–2018, policy-makers introduced a set of more integrated instruments: talent identification at school and district levels, competitive national events to encourage participation, funding and technical support for elite athletes, and nation-wide behaviour-change campaigns to improve fitness.

### The Three Pillars that now Characterise Public Sports Policy in India are:

- Grassroots participation and infrastructure (massification),
- Talent development and elite performance (high performance), and
- Population fitness and awareness (public health/behaviour).

The flagship programmes examined in this paper-Khelo India (National Programme for Development of Sports), the Fit

India Movement, and the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)-exemplify these pillars and will be discussed in detail alongside SAI promotional schemes and institutional reforms. Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports+1

### Policy & Institutional Framework

#### Ministry and Statutory Bodies

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) is the nodal central ministry responsible for formulating national policy, funding major programmes, and coordinating with states and national federations. Two key implementing organisations under the ministry are the Sports Authority of India (SAI), which runs training centres and talent programmes, and National Sports Federations (NSFs), responsible for the governance of individual sports. The Ministry also uses special-purpose vehicles and public-private partnership (PPP) frameworks for infrastructure projects and high-performance initiatives. Sports Authority of India

#### Strategic Shift: from Access to Outcomes

Earlier approaches emphasised building facilities and ad-hoc support for athletes. More recent policy articulations emphasise measurable outcomes: medals, talent pipelines, and population fitness metrics. Programmes today are structured with verticals and performance indicators (for instance, Khelo India's multiple verticals and TOPS' athlete performance targets) so that investments can be tracked against concrete goals. This outcome orientation has shaped where funds go

(talent centres, NCOEs, athlete grants) and how success is measured (medal counts, fitness protocol uptake). [kheloindia.gov.in](http://kheloindia.gov.in)

## Major Government Initiatives

### 1. Khelo India-National Programme for Development of Sports

**Overview and Objectives:** Launched as a comprehensive programme to revive the sports culture at the grassroots, Khelo India seeks to: identify talent, provide structured training and competition pathways, upgrade sports infrastructure across districts and schools, and promote inclusiveness (women, persons with disabilities). It is organised through multiple verticals such as annual competitions (Khelo India Youth Games), State/ District Khelo India centres, National Centres of Excellence (NCOEs), talent search, and support for national and regional academies. [kheloindia.gov.in](http://kheloindia.gov.in)

#### Key Features

- **Talent identification & competitions:** Annual Khelo India events provide competitive exposure to youth (U-17/U-21) and act as talent pipelines to higher tiers.
- **Khelo India Centres:** Utilise existing infrastructure (schools, stadiums) to create State Level and District Level centres for coaching and training.
- **Support verticals:** Scholarships for identified athletes, infrastructure grant assistance, and NCOEs for high-performance coaching.
- **Inclusivity:** Dedicated support for sports for women and persons with disabilities, and promotion of indigenous sports. [kheloindia.gov.in](http://kheloindia.gov.in)

**Achievements and Scope:** Since inception Khelo India has catalysed the creation or upgradation of several thousand local centres, distributed athlete scholarships, and institutionalised school-to-elite pathways. It has also encouraged states to leverage public assets and PPPs to expand training capacity. However, implementation quality varies across states and districts; monitoring and maintenance of created assets remain persistent challenges. Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports+1

### 2. Fit India Movement/Fit India Mission

**Overview and Objectives:** Launched in 2019, the Fit India Movement is a national public-awareness campaign to incentivise everyday physical activity among citizens and to mainstream fitness in schools, workplaces, and communities. Objectives include behaviour change toward 30–60 minutes of daily activity, adoption of fitness protocols, and institutional commitments (schools and workplaces signing up to Fit India pledges). The government published age-appropriate fitness protocols and promotes community events, fitness ambassadors, and digital tools to track participation. [MyGov.in](http://MyGov.in)

#### Key features

- **Public Mobilisation:** National campaigns, awareness drives, and flagship events to raise visibility and social acceptance of regular exercise.
- **Institutional Adoption:** Schools, colleges, companies and local bodies encouraged to join the Fit India framework and implement fitness routines and campaigns.

- **Protocols & Tools:** Standardised fitness testing protocols for different age groups and resources for fitness educators and trainers. Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports

**Achievements and Scope:** Fit India has succeeded in making physical activity a visible policy priority and engaging large audiences through media and digital platforms. However, converting short-term enthusiasm into sustained behaviour change requires local infrastructure, trained staff, and long-term incentives-areas where state and local governments must invest more. [MyGov.in](http://MyGov.in)

### 3. Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)-High-Performance Support

**Overview and Objectives:** TOPS is the Ministry's flagship high-performance initiative to identify and financially/technically support elite athletes with realistic medal prospects at Olympics, Paralympics and other major international events. TOPS provides direct athlete funding, access to world-class coaching, sports science, medical support, dieticians, international exposure, and performance monitoring. Initially launched in 2014 it was restructured and strengthened in subsequent years to include junior athletes and comprehensive support services. Sports Authority of India+1

#### Key Features

- **Direct athlete support:** Monthly grants and contingency funds to cover training, competition, equipment, and living expenses.
- **Technical support team:** Coaches, physiotherapists, sports scientists and psychologists backed by a TOPS management unit to coordinate athlete needs.
- **Selection & monitoring:** An elite athlete identification committee and performance monitoring to ensure accountability of resource use. Sports Authority of India

**Achievements and Scope:** TOPS is widely credited with enabling a generation of Indian athletes to access professional support previously unavailable domestically. Several TOPS athletes have achieved international medals and higher rankings. Still, questions remain on selection transparency, coverage of non-mainstream sports, and sustainability of long-term support beyond major event cycles. [Wikipedia](http://Wikipedia)+1

### 4. Sports Authority of India (SAI) Promotional Schemes and Capacity Building

**Key SAI Schemes:** SAI implements multiple schemes such as the National Sports Talent Contest (NSTC), the Army/School Sports Collaboration, Extension centres, SAI Training Centres (STC), and National Centres of Excellence (NCOE). These schemes focus on early identification (8–14 years), residential coaching, and regional capacity building. SAI also partners with state sports departments and NSFs to operate coaching programmes and maintain stadium infrastructure. Sports Authority of India+1

**Achievements and Scope:** The SAI network provides crucial training and coaching at regional and national levels. When well-resourced, STCs and NCOEs produce athletes who transition to national teams. Yet SAI facilities are unevenly distributed and often concentrated in certain geographies; the scale-up to district-level centres under Khelo India seeks to bridge this gap. Sports Authority of India+1

## 5. Other important initiatives and mechanisms

- National Sports Development Fund (NSDF) and targeted funds for infrastructure and scholarships.
- State-level programmes that mirror or complement central initiatives (state Khelo India centres, state scholarship schemes).
- Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for building and operating stadia, coaching facilities and academies.
- School sport policies and physical education curricula reforms that integrate sports into everyday school life.
- Incentives and employment schemes (e.g., special leaves for athletes, sports quotas in public employment) to stabilise athlete livelihoods, often implemented via other ministries and agencies. The Times of India

## Impacts: What the Initiatives Have Delivered Grassroots Participation and Infrastructure

The combined push of Khelo India and state programmes has visibly increased the number of organised competitions, district training centres, and school sporting activities. More youth athletes are getting exposure to structured coaching and inter-district competitions, improving the talent pipeline. However, data from implementation reviews highlights that many created assets (playing fields, gym equipment) require ongoing maintenance budgets and local governance to remain functional.

## Elite Performance

TOPS and NCOEs have demonstrably improved the preparation environment for elite athletes: access to sports science, foreign coaching, and competition exposure have translated into better international performances in certain sports (boxing, wrestling, shooting, badminton). Yet this success is concentrated in a subset of sports and elite athletes; broader diffusion to other sports is uneven. Sports Authority of India

## Public Awareness and Fitness Behaviour

Fit India has raised awareness and created a normative shift—fitness is now a mainstream conversation. Urban workplaces and many schools have adopted Fit India pledges and fitness events. The challenge remains converting awareness into sustained daily activity particularly in semi-urban and rural communities where physical activity opportunities are limited by infrastructure and safe public spaces. MyGov.in

## Implementation Challenges & Critiques

1. **Inequitable Distribution of Resources:** Many initiatives are urban-centric or skewed toward states with stronger administrative capacities. Rural districts still lack consistent access to trained coaches and facilities. Khelo India's district centres help but need careful, sustained local management. Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
2. **Maintenance & Recurring Costs:** Physical infrastructure projects often lack long-term maintenance plans and budgets. Equipment breaks or fields fall into disrepair without local ownership and funding. Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
3. **Coordination across Agencies:** Multiple schemes are run by different bodies (MYAS, SAI, NSFs, state departments) which can create duplication or gaps. Better inter-agency data sharing and joint planning are needed. Sports Authority of India.

4. **Talent Leakage and Athlete Livelihood Insecurity:** Promising athletes sometimes drop out due to financial insecurity, lack of educational continuity, or employment uncertainties. More robust scholarship-to-career linkages and career counselling are required. Sports Authority of India
5. **Data, Monitoring and Evaluation:** A systemic lack of disaggregated outcome data (by gender, region, socio-economic status) hinders accurate evaluation and evidence-based course correction. Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
6. **Behaviour Change Sustainability:** Awareness campaigns like Fit India are necessary but insufficient without enabling infrastructures such as public parks, safe footpaths, and school sports time. MyGov.in

## Recommendations for Strengthening Government Initiatives

1. **Adopt a Tiered Funding & Maintenance Model:** Combine capital grants with ring-fenced maintenance and capacity-building funds for district and state Khelo India centres. PPP arrangements should include long-term operations clauses and community engagement provisions so facilities remain functional.
2. **Institutionalise Multi-Level Governance and Data Systems:** Create a national sports management information system (MIS) that integrates athlete records, centre performance, coaching accreditation, and facility status. Regular public dashboards would improve transparency and allow states to learn from each other.
3. **Expand and Professionalise the Coaching Workforce:** Scale up coach education (certification pathways), incentivise deployment to under-served districts, and launch 'coach cadres' with career progression to make coaching a viable profession.
4. **Strengthen School-Sports Linkages:** Mandate minimum hours of physical education, fund school sports equipment, and create school-college transition pathways so talented students can combine studies with training. Integrate Fit India protocols into school annual plans.
5. **Provide Athlete Welfare & Dual-Career Supports:** Design scholarships that include academic continuation clauses, career counselling, and guaranteed return-to-education options for athletes. Work with ministries of railways, defence and public sector enterprises to expand employment schemes for athletes (with clear leave/reskilling provisions). The Times of India
6. **Invest in Research, Sport Science and evaluation:** Fund independent evaluations of programmes (Khelo India, TOPS, Fit India) and set aside funds for sport-science partnerships with universities to institutionalise performance improvements beyond event cycles.

## Conclusion

India's government initiatives over the last decade reflect a more ambitious and coherent approach to sports promotion than earlier eras. Khelo India, TOPS, SAI schemes, and the Fit India movement together cover mass participation, elite support, capacity building, and public health. These programmes have produced measurable advances: more organised competitions, a professionalised set of supports for elite athletes, and higher public awareness of fitness. Yet structural problems—maintenance funding, equity of outreach, governance coordination, and evidence systems—limit the full potential of public investment. Sustaining momentum will

require shifting from one-time capital investments to long-term, locally embedded operational models; from fragmented data to integrated MIS; and from short-term campaigns to systemic, cross-sectoral investments in schools, parks, and coach education. With these corrections, India can better translate its demographic advantage into both a healthier population and a stronger cadre of world-class athletes. [kheloindia.gov.in](http://kheloindia.gov.in)+2Sports Authority of India+2

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