



GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE SPORTS IN INDIA: A STUDY OF POLICY, PROGRAMMES, INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS AND EMERGING CHALLENGES

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Abstract:

Sports policy in India has moved from a predominantly event- and elite-performance oriented approach towards a broader ecosystem model that combines grassroots participation, talent identification, high-performance support, fitness, inclusion, sports education and governance. This paper intends to examine major initiatives taken by the Government of India in order to promote sports and evaluates how these measures contribute to the development of a sustainable sporting ecosystem. Particular attention is given to Khelo India, the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), the Fit India Movement, the National Sports Development Fund (NSDF), the Sports Authority of India (SAI), the National Sports University, support to National Sports Federations, and the policy and governance changes represented by Khelo Bharat Niti-2025 and the National Sports Governance Act, 2025.

The paper adopts a qualitative, secondary-research methodology based primarily on official publications of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Sports Authority of India, Fit India Mission and National Sports University. The analysis finds that government policy has increasingly addressed the sports value chain: participation at the grassroots, infrastructure, competitions, coaching, sports science, elite athlete preparation, education and governance. At the same time, persistent concerns remain regarding uneven infrastructure, quality of coaching, access outside major sporting centres, coordination between institutions, utilisation of facilities, athlete welfare, governance capacity and the translation of sporting success into a broad-based sports culture. The paper argues that future policy should focus on measurable outcomes, stronger local implementation, professional sports administration, evidence-based talent development, inclusion and closer integration between education, health and sports. The study concludes that India's sports-development strategy is becoming more systemic, but its long-term success will depend on the quality of implementation and the ability to convert government schemes into sustained participation and competitive excellence.

Key words: Sports Development; Government of India; Khelo India; TOPS; Fit India; National Sports Development Fund; Sports Authority of India; National Sports University; Sports Governance; Sports Infrastructure; Athlete Development.

1. Introduction:

Sport is increasingly recognized as more than a source of entertainment or international prestige. Participation in sport can contribute to physical fitness, psychological well-being, social interaction, discipline, teamwork and community identity. At the national level, a mature sports ecosystem can also support employment, coaching, sports science, event management, tourism, media, equipment manufacturing and other economic activities. For a country with a large young population, sports policy therefore has implications for both human development and economic opportunity. India's public policy approach has evolved gradually. Earlier interventions often concentrated on infrastructure, national competitions, institutional training centres and support for elite athletes. More recent policy has sought to connect grassroots participation with talent identification and high-performance pathways. The Khelo India framework explicitly combines sports infrastructure, competitions and talent development, Khelo India Centres and academies, fitness promotion and inclusion. The Ministry describes the programme as a mechanism to use sport for holistic youth development, community development, social integration, gender equality, healthy lifestyles and economic opportunities.

The high-performance side of the sports ecosystem has also received greater attention. The Target Olympic Podium Scheme, launched in September 2014, was designed to provide focused assistance to athletes capable of winning medals at the Olympic and Paralympic levels. Its support can include international training, competitions, equipment, coaching and other athlete-specific requirements. At the mass-participation level, the Fit India Movement, launched in 2019, seeks to make fitness part of everyday life and to encourage physical activity across schools, colleges, universities, villages and communities. The policy environment has further developed through Khelo Bharat Niti-2025, notified in July 2025, which positions sport as an instrument for excellence, economic growth, social progress and overall well-being, while seeking a pathway from grassroots participation to the Olympic podium. The National Sports Governance Act, 2025 adds a governance dimension by establishing a statutory framework concerning development and promotion of sports, welfare of sportspersons, ethical practices, good governance and resolution of sports grievances and disputes.

2. Literature Review:

The development of sports policy in India has attracted increasing academic attention as government intervention has expanded beyond elite competition to include grassroots participation, infrastructure, talent development, fitness and sports

governance. The literature broadly indicates that India's sports system has become more structured over time, but it also points to continuing differences between policy intentions and implementation on the ground.

Clarke and Mondal (2022) provide a broad assessment of India's sports-policy environment, examining participation, elite performance, financing, governance and the wider institutional structure of sport. Their analysis is useful for understanding the multiple actors involved in Indian sport and the difficulties associated with developing both mass participation and high-performance pathways. The study also highlights the importance of considering sport as a wider policy issue rather than viewing it only through international competitive results.

Implementation is a recurring concern in the literature on Indian sports policy. A 2021 study of Indian Olympic sport argues that the effectiveness of policy depends not only on the formulation of objectives but also on the availability of financial resources, institutional knowledge and mechanisms for implementation. This perspective is particularly relevant in India because sports development involves central government institutions, state authorities, federations, educational institutions and other organisations whose capacities can differ considerably (Khasnis et al., 2021).

More recent work has examined the Khelo India programme as an important development in India's sports-policy architecture. Khatri (2025) traces the movement from earlier sports policies towards a more integrated framework involving grassroots participation, infrastructure, talent identification and athlete development. The study also identifies continuing concerns relating to coaching, funding, geographical inclusion and institutional coordination. These observations suggest that the significance of Khelo India lies not simply in the scale of the programme, but in its attempt to connect different stages of sports development.

Recent policy-oriented research also reinforces the importance of implementation at the programme level. Studies of Indian sports policy increasingly emphasise that the practical value of schemes depends on how infrastructure, coaching, competition structures, funding and institutional responsibilities operate together. This is consistent with the broader implementation concerns identified by Khasnis et al. (2021) and the historical policy review provided by Khatri (2025). For a national programme, therefore, policy design needs to be considered alongside the organisational capacity required for delivery.

Another body of research considers sport and physical activity from a broader public-health perspective. The India Report Card on Physical Activity among Children and Adolescents draws attention to the importance of creating opportunities for regular physical activity and recognises the role of government strategies in addressing inactivity. This perspective complements research on elite sport by emphasising that the value of sports policy extends to the wider population and should include participation, fitness and active lifestyles (Bhawra et al., 2022).

The literature also suggests that national policy cannot be assessed without considering differences in local institutional capacity and access. Clarke and Mondal (2022) identify participation, governance and the organisation of sport as interconnected policy concerns, while Khasnis et al. (2021) show why implementation capacity matters when translating policy objectives into sporting outcomes. These observations support a regional lens in evaluating infrastructure, coaching, competition opportunities and athlete pathways.

Taken together, the literature provides a useful foundation for understanding India's sports-policy development. It covers the evolution of government policy, implementation problems, Khelo India, elite athlete support, physical activity and regional disparities. However, these areas are frequently examined separately. There is less emphasis on analysing the government sports ecosystem as a connected system in which participation, infrastructure, talent identification, coaching, competition, elite preparation, inclusion and governance influence one another.

The present paper builds on this literature by bringing these dimensions together within a single policy-review framework. It examines the major government initiatives across the sports-development pathway and considers not only their stated objectives but also the implementation conditions that influence their effectiveness. The approach also incorporates recent policy developments so that the discussion reflects the current direction of India's sports policy.

3. Research Gap:

Although previous studies have made important contributions to the understanding of sports policy in India, a clear gap remains in the integrated assessment of the country's government-led sports ecosystem. Much of the existing research concentrates on a particular programme, a specific stage of athlete development, or a particular implementation setting. This provides useful detail, but it can make it difficult to understand how different government interventions fit together across the full pathway from participation to elite performance.

A second gap concerns the distinction between policy expansion and policy effectiveness. Increased expenditure, new infrastructure and additional schemes demonstrate policy commitment, but they do not by themselves establish whether athletes and participants are receiving sustained benefits. Issues such as facility utilisation, coaching quality, competition exposure, athlete retention, sports science, welfare and institutional coordination can determine whether public investment produces lasting outcomes. These implementation dimensions deserve greater attention in an integrated review of Indian sports policy.

A further gap has emerged from the rapid changes in the policy environment. Developments such as the expansion of Khelo India, greater emphasis on sports science and technology, stronger attention to inclusion and recent changes in sports governance have altered the context in which earlier programmes were designed and evaluated. There is therefore a need for an updated review that connects these developments with the broader evolution of government intervention in sport.

This study addresses these gaps by examining major government initiatives as interconnected components of a wider sports ecosystem. It considers grassroots participation, infrastructure, talent identification, coaching, competition, high-performance preparation, fitness, inclusion and governance within the same analytical framework. The study therefore seeks to move beyond a description of individual schemes and assess how the different elements of government intervention collectively shape the development of sports in India.

4. Objectives of the Paper:

- To examine the major initiatives taken by the Government of India intended to promote sports participation and sporting excellence.

- To understand how these initiatives address different stages of the sports-development pipeline, from grassroots participation to elite performance.
- To assess the contribution of government institutions such as the Sports Authority of India and National Sports University.
- To analyse the potential social, economic, health and competitive benefits of public investment in sports.
- To identify implementation challenges and propose policy measures for strengthening India's sports ecosystem.

5. Research Methodology:

This paper uses a qualitative descriptive and analytical research design based on secondary data and documentary evidence. The review was conducted through a structured reading of Government of India policy documents, scheme guidelines, institutional publications and selected peer-reviewed studies on Indian sports policy and participation. Priority was given to official sources for factual descriptions of schemes and to peer-reviewed literature for interpretation of policy evolution, implementation and participation. The material was then organised thematically around participation, infrastructure, talent identification, coaching, competition, elite performance, human capital, inclusion, financing and governance.

The study is conceptual. It does not attempt to estimate a causal effect of an individual scheme on medal counts or participation rates. Instead, it maps the policy architecture and evaluates likely mechanisms through which government intervention can affect sports development. This approach is appropriate for a policy-review paper because sports outcomes are influenced simultaneously by infrastructure, coaching, socioeconomic conditions, education, nutrition, competition exposure, governance, private investment and international sporting conditions.

Source selection was guided by relevance to the research objectives, institutional authority and recency. Recent policy documents were included where they materially changed the policy environment, while earlier documents and studies were retained where they were necessary to explain the evolution of Indian sports policy. The review does not constitute a systematic review or meta-analysis because the objective is to map and interpret the government sports ecosystem rather than estimate pooled effects. Accordingly, the findings should be read as an analytical synthesis of documented policy provisions and implementation issues rather than as a causal evaluation of programme impact.

6. Evolution of Sports Policy in India:

The development of sports policy in India can be viewed as a movement through four overlapping stages. First, public intervention focused on creating basic infrastructure and institutional structures. Second, attention expanded towards systematic training, national camps and international competitions. Third, programmes such as Khelo India and Fit India sought to broaden participation and connect sport with health and youth development. Fourth, the current policy phase places greater emphasis on an integrated ecosystem covering grassroots development, high performance, sports science, education, governance and the sports economy.

This evolution matters because elite medals are rarely produced by elite funding alone. A sustainable high-performance system requires a wide base of participants, reliable talent identification, age-appropriate coaching, competition opportunities, injury prevention, nutrition, sports psychology, data analysis and pathways for progression. Khelo India and SAI programmes attempt to address several of these layers, while TOPS concentrates resources on athletes who are already close to international excellence.

7. Major Government Initiatives:

7.1 Khelo India - National Programme for Development of Sports:

Khelo India is the central flagship programme for broad-based sports development. The revised scheme for 2021-22 to 2025-26 contains five broad components: creation and upgradation of sports infrastructure; sports competitions and talent development; Khelo India Centres and Sports Academies; the Fit India Movement; and promotion of inclusiveness through sports. Its significance lies in its attempt to link mass participation with competitive pathways. The scheme supports playfield development, community coaching, school and university competitions, rural and indigenous sports, sports for women and persons with disabilities, talent identification and sports academies. This makes Khelo India broader than a conventional athlete-support programme: it treats sport as a community and development activity as well as a route to competitive excellence. A major strength of the Khelo India model is its emphasis on convergence. The operational guidelines envisage cooperation among district administrations, state departments and other sources of finance, including CSR, public-private partnerships and community or corporate sponsorship. This is important because sports facilities often require local ownership and maintenance after their initial construction.

7.2 Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS):

TOPS was launched in September 2014 to improve India's performance at the Olympics and Paralympics. The scheme provides targeted assistance to athletes identified as capable of achieving international success. The Sports Authority of India describes support areas including foreign training, international competitions, equipment, coaching camps and athlete-specific requirements. TOPS represents a shift towards high-performance management. Instead of distributing limited resources uniformly, the programme permits customised support based on an athlete's needs and competitive pathway. Its Mission Olympic Cell reviews proposals and athlete progress, allowing support to be adjusted as requirements change. The principal policy advantage is resource concentration. Elite sport is expensive because athletes may need specialist coaching, international exposure, advanced equipment, sports medicine and competition-specific preparation. However, TOPS should be viewed as the upper end of the sports pipeline rather than a substitute for grassroots development.

7.3 Sports Authority of India (SAI):

The Sports Authority of India is a major implementation institution in the national sports system. Its stated objectives include broad-basing sports, identifying and nurturing talent, implementing programmes for international sporting excellence, and providing infrastructure, coaching and sports-science support. SAI operates different categories of training and excellence programmes. Its sports-promotion framework includes National Centres of Excellence and SAI Training Centres for developing

athletes at different stages. The organisation also maintains sports-science capabilities and academic institutions, including the National Institute of Sports at Patiala and other regional facilities. The institutional importance of SAI is that it provides continuity between government policy and actual athlete preparation. Schemes can only generate outcomes when facilities, coaches, support staff, competitions and monitoring systems work together.

7.4 Fit India Movement:

The Fit India Movement was launched on 29 August 2019 with the objective of making fitness an integral part of daily life. Its stated mission emphasises behavioural change towards more physically active lifestyles and promotes fitness as accessible and practical. The movement seeks to reach schools, colleges, universities, panchayats and villages, and also promotes indigenous sports. Fit India broadens the meaning of sports policy. A country can increase its medal tally without necessarily becoming a physically active society. Public policy therefore needs a mass-participation pillar alongside elite-performance programmes. Fitness initiatives can also complement public-health goals by encouraging routine physical activity.

7.5 National Sports Development Fund (NSDF):

The National Sports Development Fund was established in 1998 to mobilise government and non-government resources for sports promotion. It provides a mechanism for supporting sportspersons and specific projects, including international-level coaching, technical, scientific and psychological assistance and exposure to international competitions. NSDF is important because government budgets alone cannot meet every specialised requirement of elite sport. A structured fund can bring together public resources, private contributions and project-specific assistance. The model therefore provides a potential bridge between government support and philanthropic or corporate participation.

7.6 National Sports University:

The National Sports University in Manipur was established in 2018 as a specialised institution devoted to sports education, sports sciences, sports technology, sports management, coaching and related research. Its stated academic and research functions include undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral programmes, collaboration with researchers, athlete training and community extension (National Sports University, n.d.). The university addresses an often-underappreciated requirement of sports development: human capital. A sporting ecosystem requires not only athletes but also qualified coaches, referees, sports scientists, physiotherapists, psychologists, managers, administrators, analysts and teachers. The National Sports University can contribute to professionalising these roles. Its international collaborations with institutions such as the Universities of Canberra and Victoria, as well as Japanese sports universities, illustrate an effort to connect Indian sports education with global practices.

7.7 Support to National Sports Federations:

National Sports Federations are critical to the organisation of discipline-specific competitions, athlete selection, coaching systems and international participation. Government assistance to federations can therefore influence the quality of the competitive pathway. The Ministry continues to issue norms and administrative directions concerning assistance to federations, governance and participation in major events. The effectiveness of federation support depends on governance quality. Financial assistance alone cannot guarantee sporting excellence if selection systems, coaching structures, competition calendars and athlete welfare mechanisms are weak. The policy emphasis therefore increasingly needs to combine funding with measurable governance and performance standards.

7.8 Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar and Private Participation:

The Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar recognises organisations for activities including identification and nurturing of young talent, promotion of sports through corporate social responsibility, employment and welfare of sportspersons, and sports for development. This initiative reflects the principle that sports development is not solely a government responsibility. Corporate investment, sponsorship, CSR, professional leagues, foundations and educational institutions can expand the resource base available to athletes and communities. The public sector can play the role of facilitator, regulator and anchor investor while encouraging responsible private participation.

7.9 Khelo Bharat Niti - 2025:

Khelo Bharat Niti-2025, notified on 10 July 2025, represents a major policy-level development. It seeks to use sports for national development, excellence, economic growth, social progress and citizen well-being. The policy builds on earlier initiatives including the National Sports Policy 2001, Khelo India and TOPS, and envisages a sporting ecosystem that develops talent from the grassroots towards the Olympic podium. The significance of the policy is strategic rather than merely programmatic. Individual schemes can address particular gaps, but a national policy can establish common directions across participation, excellence, infrastructure, education, sports science, governance and the sports economy.

7.10 National Sports Governance Act, 2025:

The National Sports Governance Act, 2025 received presidential assent on 18 August 2025. The Act addresses development and promotion of sports, welfare of sportspersons, ethical practices, good governance, fair play and mechanisms for sports grievances and disputes. Governance is a fundamental part of sports development because athlete performance depends on the institutions around athletes. Transparent selection, accountable federation administration, grievance redressal, ethical conduct and clear dispute-resolution mechanisms can improve trust in the sporting system. The Act therefore complements investment-oriented schemes by strengthening the institutional environment in which those investments operate.

8. Analytical Framework - How Government Initiatives Work Together:

Stage	Major Intervention	Primary Function	Expected Outcome
Participation	Fit India; Khelo India	Encourage physical activity and access	Larger sporting base
Grassroots	Khelo India Centres; playfields	Identify and nurture young talent	More athletes entering pathways
Competition	Khelo India competitions; federations	Provide regular competitive exposure	Improved competitive readiness

High performance	TOPS; SAI centres	Customised elite preparation	International medals and rankings
Human capital	National Sports University; SAI institutes	Develop coaches and sports professionals	Professional sports ecosystem
Finance	NSDF; CSR; sponsorship	Mobilise additional resources	Greater capacity and sustainability
Governance	National Sports Governance Act, 2025	Transparency, ethics and dispute resolution	Greater institutional trust

The table illustrates that no single initiative can deliver the full sports-development objective. The ecosystem works best when participation feeds talent identification, talent receives structured competition and coaching, promising athletes receive high-performance support, and institutions are governed professionally. This systems perspective is one of the central lessons from India's recent sports-policy trajectory.

9. Contribution to National Development:

9.1 Health and Fitness:

Mass sports and fitness programmes can contribute to healthier lifestyles by making physical activity more visible and socially normal. Fit India explicitly seeks behavioural change towards more active living. The public-health value is particularly relevant where sedentary lifestyles are increasing among children, adolescents and adults.

9.2 Youth Development and Social Integration:

Sports can provide structured environments in which young people learn teamwork, discipline, leadership and resilience. Khelo India's stated objectives include community development, social integration and national pride. Sports programmes can also bring together participants across socioeconomic and regional boundaries.

9.3 Women and Inclusion:

The Khelo India framework specifically includes women, persons with disabilities, rural and indigenous sports and inclusive participation. Such targeting is important because access to facilities, coaching, competition and social support is not equally distributed. Inclusive policy can enlarge the talent pool while advancing social objectives.

9.4 Economic Opportunities:

A growing sports ecosystem creates demand for coaches, sports managers, fitness professionals, physiotherapists, analysts, event organisers, broadcasters, equipment manufacturers, venue operators and digital platforms. Khelo Bharat Niti-2025 explicitly recognises the economic potential of sports.

9.5 International Image and Soft Power:

International sporting success can strengthen national visibility and collective identity. However, policy should avoid reducing sports development to medal counts alone. A strong sporting nation should also demonstrate broad participation, athlete welfare, good governance and professional institutions.

9.6 Recent Expansion of the Khelo India Framework:

A significant development after the earlier phase of the Khelo India Scheme was the Union Cabinet's July 2026 approval of a revamped Khelo India Scheme together with enhanced Assistance to National Sports Federations, with a combined outlay of ₹36,441 crore for 2026-27 to 2030-31. The announced framework places greater emphasis on district-level talent identification, infrastructure, coaching, sports science and technology, athlete support and a more continuous pathway from grassroots participation to high-performance sport (Press Information Bureau, 2026a, 2026b). This development is important for the present review because it extends the ecosystem approach identified in earlier policy documents. At the same time, the scale of the allocation should be treated as an input rather than an outcome. Its effectiveness will ultimately depend on implementation, facility utilisation, coaching quality, athlete progression and transparent monitoring.

10. Major Challenges:

10.1 Uneven Infrastructure:

The availability and quality of sports infrastructure can vary substantially across regions. Building a facility is only the first step; maintenance, utilisation, coaching and access determine its real value. Future evaluation should therefore focus on usage rates and sporting outcomes rather than construction numbers alone.

10.2 Coaching and Sports Science Capacity:

Elite performance increasingly depends on integrated sports science. Coaches must work alongside physiologists, nutritionists, psychologists, physiotherapists, strength-and-conditioning specialists and data analysts. India has expanded such support, but capacity is not uniform across sports and regions.

10.3 School-Sport Coordination:

Young athletes often face a tension between academic requirements and intensive training. Stronger school and university competition structures, flexible academic pathways and athlete-friendly education policies are needed so that talented students do not have to choose prematurely between education and sport.

10.4 Governance and Accountability:

The creation of a statutory sports-governance framework in 2025 indicates recognition that governance is a central policy issue. Implementation will matter: rules concerning transparency, ethics, elections, grievance handling and athlete welfare must be translated into everyday institutional practice.

10.5 Rural and Regional Access:

Talent is distributed widely, but opportunity is not. Effective decentralisation requires local coaches, accessible playfields, competition opportunities and transparent talent-identification mechanisms. Otherwise, talent from smaller towns and rural communities may remain underdeveloped.

10.6 Monitoring and Outcome Measurement:

Public schemes require outcome-based evaluation. Measures such as facility utilisation, number of active participants,

retention of young athletes, coaching quality, injury rates, competition exposure, progression to national teams and athlete welfare can provide more meaningful evidence than expenditure alone.

11. Policy Recommendations:

- Develop a unified national sports-data system linking participation, facilities, athlete progression, coaching qualifications, competitions and outcomes while protecting personal data.
- Shift from infrastructure creation alone towards infrastructure utilisation, maintenance and measurable community access.
- Strengthen district-level talent identification using schools, universities, local clubs and community competitions.
- Professionalise coaching and sports administration through competency standards, continuing education and performance evaluation.
- Expand sports-science support beyond elite centres so that developing athletes can access nutrition, injury prevention, psychology and performance analysis.
- Create stronger academic pathways for athletes through flexible schooling, university credits and blended learning.
- Strengthen women's sport and disability sport through targeted infrastructure, coaching, competition and safeguarding measures.
- Use CSR and private sponsorship to supplement not replace public responsibility, with transparent reporting of social and sporting outcomes.
- Implement the National Sports Governance Act with clear accountability, athlete representation, ethical safeguards and accessible grievance mechanisms.
- Evaluate schemes using longitudinal outcomes rather than short-term event results; medal performance should be one indicator within a wider sports-development scorecard.

12. Discussion:

The central policy shift in India is from isolated sports interventions towards an ecosystem approach. Khelo India addresses participation and talent development; TOPS targets the elite end; Fit India addresses mass fitness; SAI supplies implementation capacity and training infrastructure; NSDF provides a mechanism for additional financial support; National Sports University builds specialised human capital; and the newer policy and governance framework provides strategic and institutional direction. However, policy multiplication does not automatically produce better outcomes. The key issue is coordination. If a district has a facility without coaches, a school competition without talent pathways, or an elite athlete programme without adequate sports science, the individual intervention produces less value than it could within a coordinated system. The next phase of sports policy should therefore emphasise integration, data, professional management and local implementation.

The other important issue is the definition of success. International medals are visible and politically attractive, but they represent only one part of the social return from sports. A successful sports policy should also increase the proportion of children and adults engaging in physical activity, improve access for women and persons with disabilities, create professional careers, support indigenous sports, strengthen athlete welfare and improve governance. Khelo Bharat Niti-2025 provides a useful policy direction because it connects sporting excellence with broader social and economic objectives.

A further implication is that the different programmes should be assessed over different time horizons. Participation and fitness initiatives may generate benefits gradually through changes in behaviour, while talent-development programmes require several years before their contribution to elite performance becomes visible. Similarly, infrastructure investment may initially be measured through access and utilisation, whereas its sporting value may emerge later through improved training and competition opportunities. Treating all programmes as if they should produce immediate medal outcomes can therefore lead to an incomplete assessment of public policy. A more appropriate evaluation framework would combine short-term implementation indicators with medium-term athlete progression and long-term participation, health, inclusion and performance outcomes.

The literature also indicates that implementation is not simply an administrative issue. Policy outcomes are shaped by institutional knowledge, financial resources, coordination and the feasibility of programme design (Khasnis et al., 2021). Clarke and Mondal (2022) similarly show that India's sporting ecosystem includes government institutions, commercial and non-profit actors and different levels of participation. The implication is that coordination across these actors is itself a policy capacity. Khelo India, SAI, National Sports Federations, educational institutions and state-level agencies therefore need complementary responsibilities and reliable information flows rather than parallel programmes operating independently. The public-health dimension reinforces the need for this broader approach. The 2022 India Report Card found that government strategies and overall physical activity had improved relative to earlier assessments, but sedentary behaviour remained a concern and several participation indicators lacked sufficient evidence for grading (Bhawra et al., 2022). This suggests that sports policy should continue to invest in measurement as well as programmes. Reliable participation data, disaggregated by age, gender, disability, location and socioeconomic background, would make it easier to determine whether national initiatives are reaching the populations they are intended to serve.

Finally, the 2025 policy and governance developments provide a framework within which future implementation can be evaluated. Khelo Bharat Niti-2025 explicitly connects participation, talent development, infrastructure, athlete support, sports science, governance, economic development and inclusion. The National Sports Governance Act, 2025 adds statutory provisions concerning good governance, athlete welfare, ethical practices and sports grievance mechanisms. These developments broaden the policy agenda, but their practical significance will depend on how consistently the principles are implemented across sporting institutions.

13. Conclusion:

Government initiatives have played a major role in transforming India's sports-development architecture. The policy environment now contains programmes for mass fitness, grassroots participation, infrastructure, competitions, talent identification, elite preparation, sports science, education, financing and governance. Khelo India provides the broadest

development platform; TOPS concentrates support on elite athletes; Fit India promotes a culture of everyday physical activity; SAI supplies institutional capacity; NSDF helps mobilise resources; National Sports University develops specialised human capital; and recent policy and legislation seek to strengthen strategic direction and governance.

The main challenge is no longer the absence of programmes but the quality, coordination and equity of implementation. India needs a sports system in which a child can enter through a local school or community programme, access safe infrastructure and qualified coaching, compete regularly, progress through transparent talent pathways and, where appropriate, receive high-performance support without sacrificing education or welfare. Achieving this requires sustained investment, professional management, reliable data, accountable institutions and meaningful partnerships among government, schools, universities, federations, communities and the private sector.

In conclusion, the Government of India's sports initiatives represent an important transition towards a more comprehensive sports ecosystem. Their long-term impact will depend on whether policy is implemented consistently across regions and whether success is measured not only by medals but also by participation, inclusion, athlete welfare, professional capacity and the contribution of sport to healthier and more socially connected communities.

14. Limitations:

The study is based on secondary and documentary evidence and therefore does not provide primary measurements of participant behaviour, athlete progression or programme-level causal effects. The analysis should consequently be understood as a policy review rather than an impact evaluation. Future research can complement this review through longitudinal datasets, state-level comparisons, athlete surveys and facility-utilisation studies.

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