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Evolution of Sports Governance and Policy in India

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[in linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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Evolution of Sports Governance and Policy in India

 **Kurukshetra** Chapter 2 · 2 min read ·

Historical Timeline

YEAR	MILESTONE
1951	India hosted the first Asian Games (New Delhi)
1954	All-India Council of Sports (AICS) established
1982	Department of Sports created during IX Asian Games, New Delhi
1984	First National Sports Policy — focus on infrastructure, mass participation, elite excellence
1985	Renamed Department of Youth Affairs & Sports
1986	Sports Authority of India (SAI) established
1991	Economic liberalisation → cable television → commercialisation of cricket and sports broadcasting
1997	Draft Sports Policy proposed (not fully implemented)
2000	Elevated to Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (MYAS) — full ministry status
2011	National Sports Policy 2011 (revised)
2025	Khelo Bharat Niti 2025 + National Sports Governance Act 2025

Notable Athletes in India's Sports History

- **Milkha Singh** — “Flying Sikh”, 400m (1960 Olympics)
- **Gurbachan Singh** — 110m hurdles (1964 Olympics)
- **Praveen Kumar Sobti** — discus throw (1966 Asian Games gold)
- **Kamaljeet Sandhu** — first Indian woman Asian Games gold medalist (1970, 400m)
- **Indian men’s hockey team** — dominated Olympics from 1920s to 1980s (8 Olympic golds)

Contemporary Challenges — Key Data Points

1. Governance Deficits:

- **Wrestling Federation of India controversy (2023):** Sexual harassment allegations against then-president; athletes protested at Jantar Mantar

- **IOA suspended by IOC (2022):** Due to governance failures; suspension lifted after elections
- **Vinesh Phogat** disqualified at Paris 2024 Olympics — missed weight by 100 grams after reaching wrestling final

2. Athlete Base — India vs World (Paris 2024 Olympics):

COUNTRY	ATHLETES SENT
USA	594
France	572
Australia	460
India	117

3. Gender Disparity in Sports:

- **49% of girls drop out of sports** — 6x higher dropout rate than boys
- **21% of women athletes** report childhood abuse (UNESCO 2024 study)
- Insufficient women coaches, lack of safe training facilities, cultural barriers

4. Sports Market Imbalance:

- **Cricket:** 87% of India's sports market revenue (2023)
- **All other sports combined:** Just 13%
- This distortion starves non-cricket sports of sponsorship, viewership, and investment

UPSC Angle

- **GS2:** Sports governance, institutional reforms, autonomy vs accountability of sports bodies
- **GS1:** Gender disparity in sports participation; society and sports
- **Interview:** “Why does India underperform at the Olympics despite having the world's largest youth population?”

Source: [NextIAS Kurukshetra February 2026 Summary](#)



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