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Khelo India Tribal Games 2026 – First National Sports Platform for Tribal Athletes

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▼ On this Page

- **Event Overview**
- Why Chhattisgarh?
- Organisational Framework
- The Mascot — Morveer
- Khelo India Programme — Background
- Tribal Welfare — Constitutional and Policy Framework
- Significance for UPSC

WHY IN NEWS

The first-ever Khelo India Tribal Games (KITG) 2026 was inaugurated on March 25 in Chhattisgarh, bringing together over 2,300 tribal athletes from across India in a dedicated national-level sporting event.

Event Overview

DETAIL	INFORMATION
Event	Khelo India Tribal Games (KITG) 2026 – 1st Edition
Dates	March 25 – April 6, 2026
Host State	Chhattisgarh
Venues	Raipur, Jagdalpur, Sarguja
Athletes	2,300+
Total Participants	6,000+
Medal Sports	7 – Athletics, Football, Hockey, Weightlifting, Archery, Swimming, Wrestling
Demonstration Sports	2 – Mallakhamb, Kabaddi
Mascot	“Morveer”
Sports Minister	Dr Mansukh Mandaviya

Why Chhattisgarh?

Chhattisgarh has one of the highest tribal population proportions in India — **30.6% of the state’s population** belongs to Scheduled Tribes (Census 2011). The state is home to major tribal groups including the **Gond, Baiga, Abhuj Maria, Halba, Kamar, and Birhor**. The choice of three diverse venues — Raipur (capital), Jagdalpur (Bastar division), and Sarguja (northern tribal belt) — ensures participation from all tribal sub-regions.

Organisational Framework

The KITG is jointly managed by:

- **Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports**
- **Sports Authority of India (SAI)**
- **Indian Olympic Association (IOA)**
- **National Sports Federations**
- **Chhattisgarh State Organising Committee**

Technical standards are benchmarked against **international competitions**, ensuring that talented tribal athletes can be scouted for national and international events.

The Mascot — Morveer

The name combines two elements from the Chhattisgarhi language: “**Mor**” (meaning “mine” or “our own”) and “**Veer**” (meaning bravery and courage). The mascot symbolises the courage and pride of India’s tribal communities.

Khelo India Programme — Background

The **Khelo India programme** was launched in **2018** by merging three existing schemes:

- ❶ Rajiv Gandhi Khel Abhiyan
- ❷ Urban Sports Infrastructure Scheme
- ❸ National Sports Talent Contest

The programme focuses on **grassroots sports development** through:

- Annual Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG)
- Khelo India University Games (KIUG)
- Khelo India Winter Games
- Khelo India Para Games
- **Now: Khelo India Tribal Games** (2026 addition)

Tribal Welfare — Constitutional and Policy Framework

PROVISION	DETAIL
Fifth Schedule	Administration of tribal areas in 10 states
Sixth Schedule	Autonomous district councils in NE states
Article 244	Administration of Scheduled Areas and Tribal Areas
Article 275(1)	Grants-in-aid for tribal welfare
PESA Act, 1996	Self-governance for tribals in Fifth Schedule areas
Forest Rights Act, 2006	Recognition of forest-dwelling tribal rights
PM-JANMAN	PM Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (2023) for PVTGs

Significance for UPSC

The KITG represents the intersection of multiple governance themes — sports governance, tribal welfare, inclusive development, and federalism (Centre-State coordination for event management). It also provides a national platform for traditional tribal sports like Mallakhamb and Kabaddi.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Khelo India programme (launched 2018), Fifth Schedule states, PESA Act 1996, tribal population statistics, SAI

Government policies for tribal development; sports governance and grassroots infrastructure

Tribal demographics and regional distribution; cultural significance of indigenous sports

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KHELO INDIA TRIBAL GAMES 2026:

First edition: March 25 – April 6, 2026

Host: Chhattisgarh (3 cities)

Athletes: 2,300+; participants: 6,000+

7 medal sports + 2 demonstration sports

Mascot: “Morveer” (Chhattisgarhi for “our brave one”)

KHELO INDIA PROGRAMME:

Launched: 2018

Ministry: Youth Affairs & Sports

Components: KIYG, KIUG, Winter Games, Para Games, Tribal Games

Budget 2026-27 allocation: Rs 3,000+ crore (Sports Ministry total)

TRIBAL STATISTICS (CENSUS 2011):

Total ST population: 10.43 crore (8.6% of India)

Highest ST population: Madhya Pradesh (1.53 crore)

Highest ST proportion: Mizoram (94.4%)

Chhattisgarh ST proportion: 30.6%

Total recognised STs: 705 communities

PVTGs (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups): 75

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

SAI headquarters: New Delhi (established 1984)

IOA affiliated to International Olympic Committee (IOC)

National Sports Day: August 29 (birthday of Major Dhyhan Chand)

Mallakhamb declared national sport heritage of Maharashtra

Fifth Schedule covers tribal areas in 10 states including Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, MP

Sources: [PIB](#), [Drishti IAS](#), [GKToday](#), [The Tribune](#)

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