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Khelo India Tribal Games 2026 — Karnataka Champions in Chhattisgarh

5 April 2026 · [GS1](#) [GS2](#)

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Khelo India Tribal Games 2026 — Karnataka Champions in Chhattisgarh

5 April 2026 · 3 min read · 1 tag

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WHY IN NEWS

The **Khelo India Tribal Games 2026**, the inaugural edition of this specialised national multi-sport event focused on tribal athletes, concluded in **Chhattisgarh** on **April 3, 2026**. **Karnataka** emerged as the overall champion in the medal tally, winning **23 gold, 8 silver, and 7 bronze medals**. The games were organised by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports** in collaboration with the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** as an extension of the broader Khelo India mission.



MEDAL TALLY (TOP STATES)

RANK	STATE	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
1	Karnataka	23	8	7	38
2	Chhattisgarh (host)	—	—	—	—
3	Jharkhand	—	—	—	—

(Full tally pending official release)

ABOUT KHELO INDIA TRIBAL GAMES

The Khelo India Tribal Games is a dedicated edition within the **Khelo India** umbrella, designed specifically for tribal athletes. Unlike the Khelo India Youth Games (school-age) or University Games (college-age), the Tribal Games:

- Features **indigenous/traditional tribal sports** alongside mainstream disciplines
- Is held in states with significant tribal populations
- Aims to **identify and nurture tribal sporting talent** from grassroots level
- Provides a pathway to national and international competitions

Indigenous sports featured (illustrative):

- Teer (archery — traditional tribal form)
- Kho-Kho
- Gilli-Danda
- Traditional wrestling (various regional forms)
- Kabaddi (tribal variants)



KHELO INDIA PROGRAMME — FULL PICTURE

EDITION	FOCUS	GOVERNING MINISTRY
Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG)	School students (U-17)	Youth Affairs & Sports
Khelo India University Games (KIUG)	College students	Youth Affairs & Sports
Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG)	Winter sports, J&K/Himachal	Youth Affairs & Sports
Khelo India Tribal Games	Tribal athletes	Youth Affairs & Sports + Tribal Affairs
Khelo India Para Games	Para athletes	Youth Affairs & Sports

The Khelo India programme was launched in **2018** (rebranded from Rajiv Gandhi Khel Abhiyan) with the objective of reviving sports culture at the grassroots and identifying sporting talent from non-metro, rural, and tribal India.

TRIBAL SPORTS AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

India has over **700 scheduled tribes**, constituting approximately **8.6% of the population** (~10.4 crore people). Tribal communities have rich sporting traditions — many of which are poorly documented and rarely featured in national competitions. The Tribal Games serve as:

- 1 Cultural preservation** — indigenous sports get visibility and documentation
- 2 Economic opportunity** — talented athletes gain access to scholarships and government employment quotas through sports
- 3 Social inclusion** — tribal athletes from remote areas compete on a national platform
- 4 Scouting pipeline** — TOPS (Target Olympic Podium Scheme) identifies elite prospects from tribal Games winners

CHHATTISGARH AS HOST

Chhattisgarh was a natural choice as host — approximately **30.6%** of its population belongs to Scheduled Tribes, making it one of India's most tribal-majority states. Major tribal groups include the **Gond, Baiga, Korwa, Halba, and Muria**. The state has produced prominent tribal athletes in archery, athletics, and wrestling.

Hosting the Tribal Games aligns with the central government's focus on tribal development under the **PM Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN)** launched in November 2023.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 1 – Indian Society

- Tribal population: demographics, distribution, major groups
- Indigenous sports and intangible cultural heritage

GS Paper 2 – Polity & Governance

- Scheduled Tribes under Articles 15, 16, 46, 342
- Fifth and Sixth Schedules – tribal area administration
- PESA (Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996
- PM-JANMAN: objectives and target beneficiaries

Prelims Fast Facts:

- Khelo India Tribal Games 2026: **inaugural edition**
- Host state: **Chhattisgarh**
- Champion: **Karnataka** (23G, 8S, 7B)
- Concluded: **April 3, 2026**
- Organising ministries: **Youth Affairs & Sports + Tribal Affairs**
- Khelo India launched: **2018**

FACTS CORNER

- India's **Scheduled Tribe population**: ~10.4 crore (Census 2011) – about 8.6% of India's population
- Chhattisgarh has the **3rd highest tribal population** (by percentage) after Mizoram (~94%) and Nagaland (~86%)
- **TOPS (Target Olympic Podium Scheme)** supports elite athletes from grassroots events like Khelo India – Neeraj Chopra was an early TOPS beneficiary
- The **Sports Authority of India (SAI)** manages the Khelo India infrastructure – National Centres of Excellence (NCOEs) where identified tribal talent trains



- **Traditional Indian games** like Kho-Kho and Kabaddi are now part of the **International Kabaddi Federation (IKF)** and are played in Asian Games — tribal Games can be a feeder for these globally recognised sports

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