



India at Paris Olympics 2024

For Prelims: [Paris Olympics 2024](#), [Target Olympic Podium Scheme](#), [National Sports Development Fund](#), [Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna](#), [Arjuna Awards](#), [Dhyanchand Awards](#)

For Mains: Sports Governance and Issues, Sports & Affairs, Challenges and Issues in Indian Olympic Sports

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

The [Paris Olympics 2024](#) have concluded with **India finishing 71st in the medal tally**, a decline from its **48th place in Tokyo 2020**. Despite winning six medals, including one silver and five bronze, the nation experienced several near misses and disheartening outcomes that have sparked discussions about the future of Indian sports.

What were the Highlights of India's Performance at Paris Olympics 2024?

Indian Medal Winners at Paris Olympics 2024		
Indian athletes	Medal	Event
Manu Bhaker	Bronze	Women's 10m air pistol event
Manu Bhaker and Sarabjot Singh	Bronze	10m air pistol mixed team event
Swapnil Kusale	Bronze	Men's 50m rifle 3 positions
Indian hockey team	Bronze	Men's hockey
Neeraj Chopra	Silver	Men's Javelin Throw
Aman Sehrawat	Bronze	Wrestling Men's 57kg freestyle event

Note

- **Neeraj Chopra** secured a **silver medal in javelin** with a throw of 89.45m. This was his second Olympic medal, making him **India's fifth two-time Olympic medallist**.
- Manu Bhaker became the **first Indian woman to win an Olympic shooting medal**. She also became the **first athlete from independent India to win two medals** in a single Games by clinching a medal in both individual and mixed team events.
- **India won three shooting medals**, including the first-ever Olympic medal in the 50m rifle 3 positions, achieved by Swapnil Kusale. This was the **highest tally for India in shooting at the Olympics**.
- Indian athletes competed in 69 medal events across 16 sports, such as archery, athletics, badminton, boxing, equestrian, golf, hockey, judo, rowing, sailing, shooting, swimming, table tennis, and tennis.
- **Lakshya Sen** became the **first Indian to reach the semi-finals** in men's badminton at the Olympics, finishing fourth.

- **Wrestler Vinesh Phogat after reaching the final** in the women's 50 kg category, Phogat was [disqualified for being overweight](#) by 100 grams.
- To date, **India has won a total of 41 Olympic medals**. Notable milestones include **Norman Pritchard's Silver Medals (1900 Paris)**, KD Jadhav's Bronze (1952 Helsinki), Karnam Malleswari's Bronze (2000 Sydney), Abhinav Bindra's Gold (2008 Beijing), and Neeraj Chopra's Gold (2020 Tokyo).
 - **Men's Hockey has won 13 medals, including eight golds, and Wrestling has won eight medals**. India's best-ever Olympic performance was at Tokyo 2020, with seven medals, including one gold. India's second-best performance was in the **2012 London Olympics** when it won six medals (two silver and four bronze).

Why India Struggles to Secure Olympic Medals?

- **Talent Identification:** In India, talent identification often occurs on an ad-hoc basis, with **limited reach and effectiveness**.
 - There are systemic issues in **scouting and identifying young athletes**, particularly in remote areas.
- **Infrastructure and Resources:** Many regions in India lack the necessary infrastructure and resources to train athletes effectively.
 - Limited access to **training facilities, coaching expertise, and financial support** can hinder the development of potential talent.
 - Many athletes struggle due to insufficient financial backing from the government. For instance, **Shiva Keshavan, India's top Winter Olympian, had to resort to crowdfunding to finance** his training and participation.
 - Despite the growing number of billionaires and private wealth in India, there is still a **significant gap in sponsorship and investment in sports other than cricket**.
- **Cricket's Dominance:** Cricket's overwhelming popularity in India has created an imbalance in the sports landscape, with **87% of sports capital allocated to cricket and only 13% for all other sports**. This disproportionate allocation has hindered the development of Olympic sports.
 - The lack of a **robust sports culture and media promotion outside cricket has been a barrier**.
 - A more balanced approach to sports investment and promotion is necessary to support Olympic sports adequately and create a more inclusive and competitive sports culture in India.
- **Insufficient Sports Policies:** India's sports policies have historically been fragmented and underfunded.
 - There have been efforts to improve sports infrastructure and support athletes, such as the [Target Olympic Podium Scheme \(TOPS\)](#). However, these initiatives are relatively recent and have yet to yield significant results.
- **Long-term Development:** India's sports programs often focus on **short-term successes rather than long-term athlete development**.
 - Developing world-class athletes requires **sustained investment and planning over many years**.
 - **Examples:** Successful Olympic countries have long-term development plans that include scouting young talent, providing them with early training, and supporting them through their careers.
- **Corruption and Politics in Sports Administration:** Sports administration in India is often dominated by **politicians and bureaucrats**, leading to the **politicization of sports governance**.
 - **Corruption and bureaucratic hurdles** frequently impede the development of athletes, with sportspersons' interests often taking a backseat.
 - Indian sport organizations, especially governing bodies, have not adapted to the challenges of a professional and commercialised sector, **relying on volunteers instead of hiring skilled professionals**.
 - The recent conflicts within the [Wrestling Federation](#) are indicative of the broader issues plaguing Indian sports administration.

- **Absence of a Sports Culture:** In India, there is a **societal preference for education over sports**. Families often prioritise careers in fields like medicine or accounting, viewing sports as less viable for financial security.
 - India's complex **social stratification, with strong ties to caste and regional identity, further hinders the development of a unified sports culture**. Many communities discourage pursuing sports at an elite level, focusing instead on traditional roles.

What can India do to Improve its Olympic Performance?

- **Grassroots Development:** There needs to be a stronger emphasis on developing sports at the grassroots level. Identifying and **nurturing talent** from a young age across various sports disciplines can help build a strong foundation.
- **Investment in Infrastructure:** Building world-class training facilities and providing athletes with access to **the best coaching and support systems** are crucial. This includes psychological support, nutrition, and injury management.
 - **Small Nations like Jamaica and Grenada, with much smaller populations, regularly outperform India at the Olympics**. Their **focused investment in specific sports**, like sprinting, shows the importance of targeted development.
- **Empowering Athletes:** Athletes are the primary stakeholders in sports, and their **involvement in decision-making can bring much-needed accountability and transparency to sports organizations**.
- **Collegiate Sports System:** India can develop a collegiate sports system that mirrors the **National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) in the United States**.
 - The NCAA has produced a staggering number of Olympic champions, not just for the US but for countries around the world. If the NCAA were a country, it would have topped the medal tally with **60 gold medals in Paris Olympics 2024**.
 - **Many athletes from small and large nations owe their Olympic success to training and competing in the NCAA**, making the American college sports system a key player in global sports.
 - India's collegiate sports system should strike a **balance between academics and athletics by offering scholarships and academic support** to attract talented athletes who might otherwise drop out of sports.
 - By fostering **regular inter-college and inter-university competitions** across various sports, young athletes will **gain more exposure to high-pressure situations**, preparing them for international events like the Olympics.
- **Cultural Shift:** Changing societal attitudes towards sports is essential. Encouraging families to support children in pursuing sports careers and integrating sports into the education system can help.
 - **China, which shares some socio-economic similarities with India, has excelled by systematically identifying and nurturing talent from a young age**.
 - The government's deliberate and sustained investment in sports has resulted in a significant Olympic medal haul.
- **Increased Government Support:** The government should provide more consistent and substantial funding for Olympic sports. This includes direct support to athletes, as well as investments in coaching and international exposure.
- **Focusing on Growth:** India must **aim to triple its athlete count for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, increasing from 117** to better compete against the US and Japan, which have over 600 and 400 athletes, respectively.
 - This increase should naturally lead to more medals. **India Instead of solely focusing on hosting the 2036 Games, the priority should be on improving medal tallies in the Los Angeles 2028 Summer Olympics** and beyond to establish **India as an Olympic sporting nation**. Paris serves as a moment for serious introspection and learning.

What are the Initiatives Related to Sports Development in India?

- [Khelo India](#)
- [National Sports Development Fund \(NSDF\)](#)
- **Sports Authority of India (SAI):** It was set up as a **Society registered under the Societies Act, 1860** in 1984 to promote sports and games.

- SAI manages several schemes aimed at youth and senior sports promotion, including the **National Sports Academy (NSA) Scheme, Center of Excellence Scheme, National Sports Talent Contest Scheme (NSTC), Army Boys Sports Company Scheme, Special Area Games Scheme, and COME and PLAY Scheme.**
- **National Sports Awards:** [Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, Arjuna Awards, Dhyanchand Awards, and Dronacharya Awards.](#)
 - These awards are the highest sporting honours in India, celebrating excellence and inspiring future generations.
- **Scheme for Sports & Games for People with Disabilities:** Introduced as a **Central Sector Scheme in 2009-10**, the program provides specialised training and support to athletes with disabilities, encouraging their participation in sports and enhancing their skills.
- **Rajiv Gandhi Khel Abhiyan:** Launched in 2014, this federally funded program aims to build sports complexes at the block level, providing infrastructure for both indoor and outdoor sports.
- [Fit India Movement](#)

Drishti Mains Question:

Analyze India's performance at the Olympics. What strategies and reforms can be implemented to enhance India's performance in future Olympic Games?"

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following statements in respect of the Laureus World Sports Award which was instituted in the year 2000: (2021)

1. American golfer Tiger Woods was the first winner of this award.
2. The award was received mostly by 'Formula One' players so far.
3. Roger Federer received this award maximum number of times compared to others.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (c)