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Glasgow Commonwealth Games 2026 Highlights

India's Sporting Journey and Global Commonwealth Legacy

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Recent Developments and Background:

- The **23rd edition of the Commonwealth Games (CWG) 2026** is being organised in **Glasgow, Scotland** from **23 July to 2 August 2026**, bringing together athletes from Commonwealth nations and territories for a major international multi-sport competition.
- The 2026 edition marks the return of the Commonwealth Games to Scotland after the successful hosting of the **2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow**.
- The Games are being conducted under the supervision of the **Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF)** and aim to promote:
 - **Sporting excellence.**
 - International cooperation.
 - Cultural exchange.
 - Inclusivity through participation of both able-bodied and para-athletes.
- The 2026 Games have adopted a more compact sporting model, with fewer disciplines compared to previous editions, focusing on sustainability and operational efficiency.

Commonwealth Games 2026: Key Features and Indian Participation:

Host City and Schedule:

- **Glasgow, Scotland** is hosting the **Commonwealth Games 2026** for a period of 10 days from **23 July to 2 August 2026**.
- The event brings together teams representing around **74 nations and territories**, highlighting the continuing sporting relationship among Commonwealth members.
- The Games represent one of the largest international sporting gatherings after the **Olympic Games**.

Sports Included in Glasgow 2026:

- The 2026 edition features only **10 sports**, which is significantly lower than the **19 sports featured at Birmingham 2022**.
- The scheduled sports include:
 - **Athletics.**
 - **Swimming.**
 - **3×3 Basketball.**
 - **Track Cycling.**
 - **Weightlifting.**
 - **Bowls.**
 - **Artistic Gymnastics.**

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- **Netball.**
- **Boxing.**
- **Judo.**
- The reduced sports programme reflects the organisers' focus on:
- Lower operational costs.
- Existing sporting infrastructure.
- Sustainable event management.

India's Participation in Commonwealth Games 2026:

- India is participating with a **125-member contingent**, including para-athletes.
- Indian athletes will compete in:
- **Athletics.**
- **Boxing.**
- **Weightlifting.**
- **Judo.**
- **Artistic Gymnastics.**
- **Track Cycling.**
- **Bowls.**
- **Swimming.**
- Para-sports.
- India will not send teams for:
- **3×3 Basketball.**
- **Netball.**
- India's participation reflects its expanding presence in international multi-sport competitions and its focus on improving performance across traditional and emerging sporting disciplines.

India's Commonwealth Games Journey and Performance:

Historical Participation:

- India first participated in the **Commonwealth Games in 1934**, when the event was known as the **British Empire Games**.
- Since then, India has emerged as one of the most successful Asian nations in Commonwealth sporting history.
- India has performed strongly in disciplines such as:
- **Shooting.**
- **Wrestling.**
- **Weightlifting.**
- **Boxing.**
- **Badminton.**
- **Athletics.**

Best Performance by India:

- India achieved its best-ever Commonwealth Games performance during the **2010 Commonwealth Games held in New Delhi**.
- India won a total of **101 medals** in the 2010 edition, including:
- Gold medals.
- Silver medals.
- Bronze medals.
- The 2010 Games were significant because they:
- Increased India's international sporting visibility.

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- Improved sports infrastructure.
- Strengthened India's ambition to host major global sporting events.

About Commonwealth Games:

Meaning and Nature of the Event:

- The **Commonwealth Games** are a **quadrennial international multi-sport competition** in which athletes represent Commonwealth nations and territories.
- The Games are organised by the **Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF)**, headquartered in **London, United Kingdom**.
- The event was created to strengthen sporting relationships among Commonwealth members and promote cooperation through sports.
- Over time, the Games have evolved from a colonial-era sporting event into an inclusive international competition featuring:
 - Able-bodied athletes.
 - Para-athletes.
 - Diverse sporting communities.

Position Among Global Sporting Events:

- The Commonwealth Games are considered the world's second-largest multi-sport event after the **Olympic Games**.
- The Games involve participation from Commonwealth nations and territories, many of which have historical connections with the former British Empire.
- The event provides a platform for athletes to compete internationally and develop sporting excellence.

Origin and Evolution of Commonwealth Games:

Early Idea and Development:

- The idea of a Commonwealth-level sporting festival emerged from efforts to strengthen relationships among countries connected through the British Empire.
- Canadian sportswriter **Melville Marks Robinson** is credited with developing the concept of the Commonwealth Games.
- Australian-born **Astley Cooper** had earlier proposed the idea of an imperial sporting festival in **1891**.
- The concept gained practical shape through the **1911 Inter-Empire Championships** held in London during the **Festival of Empire** to celebrate the coronation of **King George V**.

First Commonwealth Games:

- The first official Commonwealth Games were held in **1930** at **Hamilton, Canada**.
- At that time, the event was known as the **British Empire Games**.
- The inaugural edition featured:
 - **11 participating countries**.
 - Around **400 athletes**.
- Canadian athlete **Gordon Smallacombe** won the first gold medal in Commonwealth Games history in the **triple jump event**.

Evolution of Commonwealth Games Through Different Eras:

Transformation of the Games' Identity:

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- Since its beginning in **1930**, the Commonwealth Games have undergone significant changes in their identity, structure and participation pattern.
- The event was initially organised as the **British Empire Games**, reflecting the political structure of that period.
- Over time, the Games transformed into a modern international sporting event representing equality, diversity and cooperation among Commonwealth nations.
- The official name of the Games changed through different phases:
 - **British Empire Games** from 1930.
 - **British Empire and Commonwealth Games** from 1954.
 - **British Commonwealth Games** from 1970.
 - **Commonwealth Games** from 1978.

Frequency and Continuity of the Games:

- The Commonwealth Games are generally organised every **4 years**.
- The Games were not conducted in:
 - **1942**, due to the disruptions caused by the Second World War.
 - **1946**, due to continued post-war challenges.
- Since the first edition, the Games have maintained their position as an important international sporting platform.

Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF): Governing Institution:

Role and Responsibilities:

- The **Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF)** is the governing body responsible for the direction, regulation and management of the Commonwealth Games.
- The CGF performs the following functions:
 - Determines the framework and policies of the Games.
 - Coordinates with host nations and sporting organisations.
 - Promotes values of fairness, equality and inclusion.
 - Ensures smooth conduct of competitions.
- The headquarters of the CGF is located in **London, United Kingdom**.

Importance of CGF:

- The CGF plays an important role in maintaining the global identity of the Games.
- It ensures that the Commonwealth Games continue to represent:
 - International sporting cooperation.
 - Cultural exchange.
 - Equal participation opportunities.
- The organisation also promotes the participation of **para-athletes**, strengthening the inclusive nature of the event.

Glasgow Commonwealth Games 2026: Important Features:

Return of the Games to Scotland:

- The **Commonwealth Games 2026** mark the return of the event to Scotland after Glasgow previously hosted the Games in **2014**.
- Glasgow 2026 follows a compact and sustainable model by using:
 - Existing sporting infrastructure.
 - Limited competition venues.

- Efficient event management systems.
- This approach aims to reduce:
- Financial burden.
- Infrastructure-related expenditure.
- Long-term maintenance challenges.

Participating Nations and Territories:

- A total of **72 Commonwealth nations and territories** are participating in Glasgow 2026.
- The participation reflects the continuing relevance of the Commonwealth sporting network.
- The Games provide opportunities for athletes from smaller nations and territories to compete at an international level.

Mascot of Glasgow 2026:

- **Finnie** is the official mascot of the Commonwealth Games 2026.
- Finnie is inspired by Scotland's national animal, the **unicorn**.
- The mascot features a distinctive traffic cone horn and follows **Clyde**, the mascot of the **Glasgow Commonwealth Games 2014**.
- Mascots are used to:
- Promote the cultural identity of host cities.
- Connect audiences with sporting events.
- Encourage public participation.

Major Traditions Associated with Commonwealth Games:

Opening Ceremony:

- The opening ceremony officially marks the beginning of the Commonwealth Games.
- It includes:
- Display of the host nation's culture.
- Parade of athletes.
- Artistic performances.
- Arrival of the **Queen's Baton**.
- The ceremony represents unity among participating nations and territories.

Queen's Baton Relay:

- The **Queen's Baton Relay** is one of the most recognised traditions of the Commonwealth Games.
- It was introduced during the **1958 Cardiff Commonwealth Games**.
- The relay symbolises:
- Unity among Commonwealth members.
- Friendship through sports.
- Shared values of cooperation.
- The baton travels across participating nations before reaching the host city, where it concludes during the opening ceremony.

Closing Ceremony:

- The closing ceremony marks the formal conclusion of the Games.
- During the ceremony:
- Athletes enter the stadium together without distinction based on nationality.
- The Commonwealth Games flag is handed over to representatives of the next host city.

- The ceremony symbolises continuity and transfer of responsibility between host nations.

Introduction of New Sports and Inclusivity in Commonwealth Games:

Expansion of Sporting Disciplines:

- Over the decades, the Commonwealth Games have expanded by introducing new sports and increasing athlete participation.
- Important additions include:
- **Badminton and shooting** introduced in **1966**.
- **Team sports** introduced in **1998**.
- Fully integrated **para-sports** introduced from **2002**.
- The inclusion of new disciplines has helped the Games become more representative of modern sporting interests.

Growth of Women's Participation:

- During the first Commonwealth Games in **1930**, women participated only in **swimming events**.
- Women's athletics was introduced in **1934**.
- The Games achieved equal medal opportunities for men and women during the **Gold Coast Commonwealth Games 2018**.
- This reflects the broader global movement towards:
- Gender equality in sports.
- Equal opportunities for athletes.
- Inclusive sporting governance.

Integration of Para-Sports in Commonwealth Games:

Historical Development of Para Participation:

- Before integration into the main Commonwealth Games programme, separate **Commonwealth Paraplegic Games** were organised between **1962 and 1974**.
- Para-events were introduced as demonstration sports in **1994**.
- Since **2002**, para-sports have become an official part of the Commonwealth Games programme.

Importance of Inclusive Sports:

- Integration of para-athletes reflects the principles of:
- Equality.
- Accessibility.
- Inclusion.
- The Commonwealth Games became one of the first major international sporting events to regularly include para-athletes within the main competition structure.
- This approach encourages:
- Greater recognition of athletes with disabilities.
- Development of adaptive sports.
- Social inclusion through sports.

Overall Medal Performance and India's Position in Commonwealth Games:

Historical Medal Standings:

- The **Commonwealth Games medal standings** reflect the long-term sporting strength, athlete development systems and infrastructure capabilities of participating nations.

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- Across all editions up to **2018**:
- **Australia** remains the most successful nation with the highest overall medal tally.
- **England** ranks among the top-performing nations due to its strong sporting ecosystem.
- **Canada** has maintained a significant position because of its historical association with the Games.
- **India** is among the leading nations, mainly due to consistent performances in selected medal-winning disciplines.
- The medal performance of nations depends on multiple factors:
- Quality of athlete training systems.
- Investment in sports infrastructure.
- Scientific support for athletes.
- Long-term sports development policies.

India's Major Medal-Producing Disciplines:

- India has traditionally achieved strong performances in:
- **Shooting.**
- **Wrestling.**
- **Weightlifting.**
- **Boxing.**
- **Badminton.**
- **Table Tennis.**
- These sports have significantly contributed to India's medal success at the Commonwealth Games.
- India's performance highlights the importance of:
- Grassroots talent identification.
- Professional coaching systems.
- Sports science and technology.
- Government-supported athlete development programmes.

Strategic Importance of Commonwealth Games for India:

International Exposure for Athletes:

- The Commonwealth Games provide Indian athletes with valuable international competition experience before major global events such as:
- **Olympic Games.**
- **Asian Games.**
- World championships.
- Participation in the Games helps athletes improve:
- Competitive confidence.
- International ranking.
- Performance consistency.
- The event also acts as a platform for identifying young athletes capable of representing India at future international competitions.

Sports Diplomacy and International Relations:

- International sporting events contribute to strengthening diplomatic and cultural relations among participating countries.
- The Commonwealth Games promote:
- People-to-people connections.
- Cultural exchange.
- Cooperation among Commonwealth nations.
- India's active participation in such events supports its image as an emerging global sporting nation.

India's Future Commonwealth Games Ambitions:

Hosting of Commonwealth Games 2030:

- India has secured the opportunity to host the **Centenary Commonwealth Games 2030**.
- **Ahmedabad, Gujarat** has been selected as the host city for the event.
- Hosting the centenary edition provides India an opportunity to:
- Demonstrate its sporting capabilities.
- Develop world-class sports infrastructure.
- Promote sports tourism.
- Strengthen its role in international sports governance.

Requirements for Successful Hosting:

- India needs to focus on:
- Sustainable infrastructure development.
- Transparent financial management.
- Athlete preparation systems.
- Efficient event organisation.
- Sports infrastructure created for international events should provide long-term benefits to:
- Professional athletes.
- Young sportspersons.
- Local communities.

Challenges Associated with Commonwealth Games:

Financial Sustainability Concerns:

- Large-scale sporting events require substantial expenditure on:
- Infrastructure.
- Security arrangements.
- Transportation.
- Event management.
- Recent editions of the Commonwealth Games have raised concerns regarding:
- Increasing organisational costs.
- Maintenance of sports facilities after events.
- Financial pressure on host cities.
- The compact model adopted by **Glasgow 2026** attempts to address these concerns by using:
- Existing infrastructure.
- Limited venues.
- Cost-effective planning.

Changing Nature of Global Sports:

- The Commonwealth Games face challenges due to:
- Competition from other international sporting events.
- Changing priorities of participating nations.
- Increasing expectations regarding athlete welfare.
- The future relevance of the Games depends on their ability to:
- Maintain inclusivity.
- Ensure financial sustainability.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for athletes.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Sports as an Instrument of Governance and Development:

- Sports contribute to:
- Youth empowerment.
- Social inclusion.
- National identity building.
- International cooperation.
- Effective sports governance requires:
- Transparency in sports organisations.
- Professional administration.
- Athlete-centric policies.
- Equal opportunities for participation.

Government Initiatives for Sports Development:

Khelo India Programme:

- The **Khelo India Programme** focuses on developing sports culture at the grassroots level.
- Its major objectives include:
- Identification of young sporting talent.
- Development of sports infrastructure.
- Promotion of youth participation.

Target Olympic Podium Scheme:

- The **Target Olympic Podium Scheme** provides specialised assistance to elite athletes preparing for international competitions.
- The scheme supports athletes through:
- Financial assistance.
- International training exposure.
- Access to better facilities.

National Sports Policy:

- A strong sports policy framework aims to promote:
- Mass participation in sports.
- Excellence in competitive events.
- Scientific training methods.
- Sustainable sports infrastructure.

Conclusion:

- The **Commonwealth Games 2026 in Glasgow** represent the continuation of a sporting tradition that began in **1930** and has evolved into an international platform based on excellence, inclusion and cooperation.
- India's participation reflects its increasing focus on developing a competitive sporting ecosystem and improving its position in global sports.
- The transformation of the Games from the **British Empire Games** into a modern inclusive competition highlights the changing nature of international sports.
- As India prepares to host the **Centenary Commonwealth Games 2030**, emphasis on:
- Strong sports governance.

- Athlete development.
- Sustainable infrastructure.
- Transparent administration.

will be essential for achieving long-term sporting success.