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India Finishes Fourth at Commonwealth Games 2026 and Officially Takes Over Hosting of the Centenary 2030 Edition

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Recent Developments:

- **India** concluded the **2026 Commonwealth Games** in **Glasgow, Scotland**, with **39 medals (13 Gold, 17 Silver and 9 Bronze)**, securing **4th position** behind **Australia, England and Canada**.
- During the closing ceremony, **India** officially received the **Commonwealth Games Flag**, marking the formal handover of hosting responsibilities for the **Centenary Commonwealth Games 2030** to **Ahmedabad**. **Neeraj Chopra** received the flag on behalf of India, while **Jaismine Lamboria** served as India's flag bearer.
- The **2030 Commonwealth Games** will be India's **second** time hosting the event after **New Delhi 2010** and will coincide with the **100th anniversary** of the Games.

India's Performance at the Commonwealth Games 2026:

Overall Performance:

- **India** finished with **39 medals**, comprising **13 Gold, 17 Silver and 9 Bronze**, to secure **4th place** in the overall medal standings.
- India achieved this performance despite fielding a **reduced contingent of 122 athletes**, owing to **doping-related eligibility restrictions** and the exclusion of several traditional medal-rich sports.
- Sports such as **Shooting, Wrestling, Badminton, Hockey and Table Tennis**, which had contributed **25 of India's 61 medals** at the **Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022**, were not part of the Glasgow programme.
- Although India's overall medal tally declined from **61 medals** in **2022** to **39 medals** in **2026**, the country's **medal conversion rate** improved from **29%** to **31%**, indicating greater efficiency among participating athletes.

Major Sporting Achievements:

- **Boxing** emerged as India's most successful discipline with **10 medals**, including **7 Gold and 3 Silver**, registering the highest boxing gold medal haul by any country at a single Commonwealth Games.
- India recorded its **best-ever Para Commonwealth Games campaign**, winning **7 medals**, which equalled the combined total secured in all previous editions.
- **Neeraj Chopra** returned to the Commonwealth Games after missing **Birmingham 2022** and won the **Silver Medal** in the men's **Javelin Throw**.
- **Asmita Dey** and **Harsh Singh** became **India's first-ever Commonwealth Games Gold Medallists in Judo**, marking a historic breakthrough for the sport.
- **Tejaswin Shankar** became the **first Indian** to win a Commonwealth Games medal in the **Decathlon**, securing a **Bronze Medal**.

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- **Gulveer Singh** emerged as India's **only double medallist**, winning **Silver** in the men's **10,000 metres** and **Bronze** in the **5,000 metres**.
- **Mirabai Chanu** became the **first Indian weightlifter** to win **three consecutive Commonwealth Games Gold Medals**, following victories at **Gold Coast 2018, Birmingham 2022 and Glasgow 2026**.
- Indian women boxers dominated the competition by winning **five Gold Medals**, led by **Sakshi Chaudhary, Preeti Pawar, Jaismine Lamboria, Priya Ghanghas and Arundhati Choudhary**.

Factors Behind India's Performance:

Improved Medal Efficiency:

- A smaller but more competitive contingent produced a higher medal conversion rate despite participating in fewer sporting disciplines.
- Better athlete preparation, scientific coaching and targeted investment contributed to improved performance across selected events.

Growing Success in Emerging Sports:

- **Boxing, Athletics, Para Sports, Weightlifting and Judo** compensated for the absence of several traditional medal-winning disciplines.
- Greater participation of women athletes and para athletes demonstrated India's expanding sporting depth.

Need for Diversification:

- Dependence on a limited number of sports continues to remain a challenge.
- Expansion of talent identification and high-performance programmes across more Olympic and Commonwealth disciplines is necessary for sustained success.

Commonwealth Games:

About the Commonwealth Games:

- The **Commonwealth Games (CWG)** is the **second-largest multi-sport event** in the world after the **Olympic Games**.
- The Games bring together athletes from **Commonwealth Games Associations** representing sovereign nations, territories and dependencies linked to the **Commonwealth of Nations**.
- The concept was proposed by **Melville Marks Robinson**, a Canadian sports administrator and journalist.
- The idea originated from the **Inter-Empire Championships, 1911**, organised in **London** during the **Festival of Empire**.
- The inaugural edition, then known as the **British Empire Games**, was held in **Hamilton, Canada**, in **1930**.
- **Gordon Smallacombe** of Canada won the **first Gold Medal** in Commonwealth Games history in the **Triple Jump**.
- The Games have generally been organised every **four years**, except in **1942** and **1946** due to the **Second World War**.
- The event officially adopted the name **Commonwealth Games** in **1978**.

Governing Body:

- **Commonwealth Sport** (formerly the **Commonwealth Games Federation**) governs, supervises and coordinates the organisation of the Commonwealth Games and associated sporting programmes.

India and the Commonwealth Games:

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India's Journey:

- India made its Commonwealth Games debut at the **1934 London Games**.
- **Rashid Anwar** won India's **first Commonwealth Games medal**, securing **Bronze** in **Wrestling**.
- **Milkha Singh** became India's **first individual Commonwealth Games Gold Medallist**, winning the **440 yards** event at the **Cardiff Games 1958**.
- India hosted the **2010 Commonwealth Games** in **New Delhi**, recording its best-ever performance with **101 medals (39 Gold, 26 Silver and 36 Bronze)** to finish **second** overall.
- **Ahmedabad** will host the **2030 Commonwealth Games**, making India only the **second nation after Australia** to host multiple editions in the modern era.

India's Doping Challenge:

Current Situation:

- According to the **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) 2024 Testing Figures Report**, India recorded a **3.6% positivity rate**, the highest among countries conducting more than **5,000 tests**, for the **third consecutive year**.
- Multiple **Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs)** resulted in the loss of one **Weightlifting quota**, reducing India's contingent for the Glasgow Games.

Concerns:

- Repeated doping violations affect India's international sporting credibility.
- The issue assumes greater significance as India prepares to host the **2030 Commonwealth Games** and seeks to host the **2036 Olympic Games**.
- Doping undermines fair competition, athlete welfare and the integrity of Indian sport.

Reform Measures Required:

- Strengthen the institutional capacity of the **National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)**.
- Improve **intelligence-based investigations** and inter-agency coordination against organised doping networks.
- Expand athlete education on prohibited substances, nutritional supplements and therapeutic exemptions.
- Enforce stricter legal and disciplinary action against coaches, medical personnel, suppliers and trafficking networks involved in doping.

Significance of Hosting the Commonwealth Games 2030:

Strategic Importance:

- Hosting the **Centenary Commonwealth Games** will strengthen India's position as an emerging global sporting nation.
- The Games will support India's preparations for its proposed **2036 Olympic Games** bid.
- Large-scale investment in sports infrastructure, athlete development and urban transport is expected to generate long-term socio-economic benefits.
- The event provides an opportunity to showcase India's organisational capacity, cultural diversity and sporting ecosystem before the international community.

Challenges Ahead:

Key Priorities:

- Expand excellence beyond traditional medal-winning sports.

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- Improve grassroots talent identification and long-term athlete development.
- Strengthen sports science, nutrition, psychology and injury management systems.
- Ensure transparent governance and accountability in sports administration.
- Eliminate doping through stronger regulation, education and enforcement.
- Increase investment in women's sports, para sports and rural sporting infrastructure.

UPSC Mains Linkages:

Essay Themes:

- **Sports as an Instrument of Nation Building.**
- **Excellence in Sports Requires Strong Institutions.**
- **Clean Sport and Good Governance as Pillars of Sporting Success.**

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Institutions:

- **Commonwealth Sport (formerly Commonwealth Games Federation)** — Governing body of the Commonwealth Games.
- **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)** — International body responsible for harmonising anti-doping rules globally.
- **National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)** — India's apex agency for implementing anti-doping regulations.
- **National Centre of Excellence (NCOE)** under the **Sports Authority of India (SAI)** provides elite athlete training.

Important Government Initiatives:

- **Khelo India Programme** — Grassroots talent identification and sports infrastructure development.
- **Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)** — Financial, scientific and technical support for elite athletes.
- **National Sports Development Fund (NSDF)** — Mobilises public and private resources for sports development.
- **National Sports Policy 2025** aims to strengthen sports governance, athlete welfare, sports science, grassroots participation and India's emergence as a global sporting powerhouse