



India Union Budget 2026-27

Point of view

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Sports

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Key announcements for the sector

1. Introduction: Sports as a strategic national priority

Sports has been a special focus in the Union Budget 2026-27, reflecting a decisive shift in how sport is positioned within India's national development framework. No longer treated as a peripheral social sector, sport is now explicitly linked to youth development, employment generation, manufacturing, skilling, tourism, technology, and India's global positioning.

The budget prioritises the objective of making India a sporting powerhouse through multiple initiatives around sports manufacturing, grassroots programs through the Khelo India framework, workforce skilling, and sports-led tourism. This transformation is reflected both in the scale of financial allocations and in the introduction of structural, mission mode reforms.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) has received an allocation of INR4,479.88 crore for FY 2026-27. This represents an increase of INR1,133.34 crore over the Revised Estimates (RE) of FY 2025-26, signalling strong policy intent to deepen and institutionalise sports development across the country.

When compared with the Budget Estimates (BE) of FY 2025-26, the rise is approximately INR685.58 crore, reflecting both enhanced funding and a correction following under utilisation in the previous fiscal year. This distinction is relevant for interpreting real fiscal momentum versus accounting adjustments.

The budget introduces two landmark interventions:

1. The Khelo India Mission, a decade long, system wide reform framework
2. A first ever INR 500 crore allocation for sports goods manufacturing, aligning sport with India's industrial and export strategy.

Together, these moves suggest a transition from event centric and ad hoc sports funding to a pipeline driven, ecosystem-oriented sports policy.

2. Overview of budgetary allocations

2.1 Aggregate allocation

For FY 2026-27, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has been allocated INR4,479.88 crore (BE), compared with INR3,346.54 crore (RE) in FY 2025-26. This increase is one of the most significant year on year jumps for the ministry in the last decade.

The enhanced allocation is designed to support:

- Long term athlete development
- Expansion of grassroots participation
- Strengthening of institutional capacity

- Employment creation in coaching, sports science, management, and event ecosystems
- Integration of sports with manufacturing, exports, and tourism.

2.2 Scheme wise allocations

The following allocations define the operational priorities of the sports ecosystem in FY 2026-27:

- **Khelo India Programme: INR924.35 crore**
Khelo India remains the single largest sports specific scheme, underscoring its central role in grassroots participation, talent identification, and early-stage athlete development
- **Sports Authority of India (SAI): INR917.38 crore**
Funding for SAI has increased to support national training centres, overseas exposure, residential academies, and elite athlete support systems
- **National Sports Federations (NSFs): INR425 crore**
Assistance to NSFs has been marginally enhanced, reflecting the government’s intent to strengthen international participation and competition readiness across disciplines
- **National Service Scheme (NSS): INR357.39 crore**
While not exclusively a sports scheme, NSS funding supports youth engagement and community participation, indirectly reinforcing sports culture and volunteer ecosystems
- **National Sports University: INR46.98 crore**
The allocation for the National Sports University has been reduced from previous levels, indicating a possible shift toward consolidation rather than rapid expansion
- **National Sports Development Fund: INR5 crore**
The contribution to the fund has increased from INR 3 crore, although it remains modest relative to overall ambitions
- **Anti-Doping Bodies (NADA and NDTL): INR20.30 crore**
The allocation for the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) and the National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL) has been adjusted slightly, while continuing to support India’s anti-doping framework.

Scheme/programme	Allocation
Khelo India	INR924.35 crore
Sports Authority of India (SAI)	INR917.38 crore
Mera Yuva Bharat	INR655.22 crore
National Sports Federations	INR425 crore
National Service Scheme (NSS)	INR357.39 crore
National Sports University	INR46.98 crore
National Sports Development Fund	INR5 crore
Anti-Doping Bodies	INR20.30 crore

3. The Khelo India Mission: From programme to system reform

3.1 Rationale and vision

A central pillar of the Budget 2026-27 is the announcement of the Khelo India Mission, envisioned as a 10-year transformation plan for Indian sport. Unlike the existing Khelo India programme launched in 2017 and focused primarily on competitions and talent identification, the Mission adopts a holistic, system wide approach.

The mission aims to address long standing structural gaps such as:

- Fragmented athlete pathways
- Shortage of qualified coaches and support staff
- Limited integration of sports science
- Inconsistent competitive exposure.

The mission is aligned with the objective of promoting a sports culture in India and improving performance at Commonwealth Games 2030, Olympics 2028, and beyond.

3.2 Core pillars of the mission

a) **Integrated talent development pathway**

The mission proposes a three-tier training architecture:

- Foundational level: Grassroots identification and early engagement
- Intermediate level: Regional and state level performance centres
- Elite level: World-class high-performance hubs.

This structure is intended to ensure continuity in athlete development from school level to international competition, replacing the historically fragmented progression model.

b) **Systematic coach and support staff development**

A major innovation under the mission is its explicit focus on coaches, sports scientists, physiotherapists, and support professionals. The mission seeks to professionalise this workforce through structured training, certification, and career pathways.

c) **Integration of sports science and technology**

The budget places strong emphasis on biomechanics, physiology, analytics, injury management, and data driven training. The objective is not only to improve performance outcomes but also to enhance athlete longevity and reduce preventable injuries.

d) **Competitions, leagues, and sports culture**

The mission underscores the importance of regular, structured competitions and leagues across age groups. This reflects a shift from sporadic tournaments to a calendar based competitive ecosystem.

e) **Sports infrastructure for training and competition**

Infrastructure development remains a key pillar, with emphasis on upgrading and optimising existing facilities rather than large scale greenfield projects.

4. Sports goods manufacturing: Linking sport with industry

4.1 First ever dedicated allocation

For the first time, the Union Budget has earmarked INR500 crore specifically for sports goods manufacturing. This follows the recognition of sports as a sub sector in 2025 and marks a structural shift in policy from consumption and participation to production and global competitiveness.

4.2 Objectives of the scheme

The allocation aims to:

- Promote domestic manufacturing of high-quality sports equipment
- Support R&D in materials science and equipment design
- Integrate Indian manufacturers into global sports supply chains
- Reduce dependence on imports and improve affordability for athletes.

Traditional clusters such as Meerut, Jalandhar, and Ludhiana are expected to benefit disproportionately, especially MSMEs operating under the Make in India framework. This initiative can see the revival of up to 200 legacy industrial clusters to upgrade infrastructure and technology for manufacturers, with hubs like Jalandhar and Meerut able to piggyback on this to consolidate their leadership in sports goods manufacturing.

4.3 Strategic significance

By linking sports with manufacturing, the budget positions the sector as a source of employment, exports, and innovation, aligning with broader national goals of industrial upgrading and self-reliance.

5. International competition and elite performance support

The budget reflects renewed emphasis on India's performance in major international competitions. Financial assistance for Commonwealth Games preparation has been increased from INR28.05 crore to INR50 crore, a 78 per cent jump.

This increase signals intent to improve medal outcomes and representation, especially in the context of India's longer-term aspirations to host and perform strongly in mega sporting events.

6. Strategic objectives and long-term vision

The sports reforms announced in budget 2026-27 is explicitly linked to national ambitions of positioning India as a global sporting power. Key targets include:

- Becoming a top 10 sporting nation by 2036
- Advancing to a top 5 sporting nation by 2047

These objectives align closely with India's broader Viksit Bharat vision and reflect an understanding that sustained sporting excellence requires long term investment, institutional continuity, and systemic reform, rather than short term or event driven interventions.

7. Key concerns and implementation risks

Despite the positive momentum reflected in the budget, several challenges remain that could affect outcomes:

- Reduced allocations for anti-doping institutions may pose a risk to effective athlete protection and to maintaining India's credibility in international sport.
- Under utilisation of funds in previous years highlights persistent issues in planning, execution, and monitoring, underscoring the need for stronger institutional capacity
- The eventual success of the Khelo India Mission will depend heavily on inter-state coordination, governance reforms, and human capacity building, rather than financial outlays alone.

8. Conclusion

The Union Budget 2026-27 represents a turning point for Indian sport. With higher allocations, a mission mode reform framework, and the integration of manufacturing, skilling, and tourism, the government has laid the foundations for a more structured, professional, and globally competitive sports ecosystem.

However, the true impact of these reforms will depend on execution, particularly how effectively institutions translate policy intent into measurable outcomes on the field, in training centres, and across India's vast youth population. If implemented well, Budget 2026-27 could be remembered as the moment when Indian sport moved decisively from promise to performance.

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