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HUMAN CAPITAL FOR VIKSIT BHARAT

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Concept Note for Sub Theme 5 –

**Sports & Extracurricular: Beyond Classrooms**



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Fifth National Conference of Chief Secretaries

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Nodal Ministry/Department: Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports

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## 1. Introduction

India is on the cusp of a historic transformation as it marches towards the goal of Viksit Bharat (Developed India) by 2047. With over 65% of its population below the age of 35, India's demographic dividend offers a unique opportunity to position itself as a global leader. The Chief Secretaries Conference 2025, themed "Human Capital for Viksit Bharat," is convened to deliberate and strategize on harnessing this demographic potential, especially in the context of India's aspirations to host the Olympics 2036 and Commonwealth Games 2030.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports recognizes that building robust human capital requires a holistic approach not only for sports excellence but for developing an overall sports culture integrating education, health, skills, civic engagement, global exposure, and world-class infrastructure. This concept note outlines the four sub-themes that will guide the conference deliberations:

- Modernizing Infrastructure
- Promoting FIT India
- Volunteerism for Nation Building
- Unlocking Talent for International Engagement

## 2. Context

India's current sports and wellness ecosystem is steadily evolving, driven by flagship initiatives like the Khelo India Scheme and the Fit India Movement. Multiple sports infrastructure projects have been sanctioned, along with the establishment of Khelo India Centres, State Centres of Excellence, and Accredited Academies to promote grassroots participation and athlete development. Fitness awareness is growing through nationwide campaigns, school-based programs, and digital tools like the Fit India Mobile App. Volunteerism is being actively promoted to instill civic responsibility and community participation among youth through platforms like MY Bharat. Simultaneously, focused efforts are being made to unlock talent for international engagement through the International Youth Exchange Programme (IYEP), providing the youth with valuable global exposure by facilitating cultural, educational, and developmental exchanges with partner countries.

Despite its proven benefits, sports and fitness remains an underutilized investment avenue, even though every \$1 invested in sports can yield \$3–\$124 in social returns (UNESCO, 2023). Integrating sports and extracurricular activities into the core of school education is vital to unlocking India's demographic potential and nurturing well-rounded individuals from an early age. Age-appropriate sports, fitness, and group activities from early childhood (3 years and above) can be introduced through playful learning, school-based physical education, and community engagement to build foundational motor skills, social behavior, and lifelong interest in active lifestyles. A strong foundation in physical activity and creative expression during early childhood and schooling not only enhances cognitive development but also instills discipline, teamwork, and resilience. Embedding these elements into the curriculum, as envisioned in the NEP 2020, bridges the gap between academic learning and life skills, creating a holistic educational experience that caters to diverse talents and aspirations. This shift will enable schools to act as incubators of potential, shaping youth who are physically, emotionally, and intellectually prepared for advanced education and the future workforce.

To fully harness this potential, strong collaboration is required not only between States/UTs and Central Government but also among key Government Departments such as Health,

Education, and Urban Affairs. The first step is modernizing infrastructure to ensure safe, inclusive, and accessible spaces that promote participation in sports and extracurricular activities. In parallel, promoting the FIT India Movement will embed fitness and wellness into everyday life, cultivating healthy habits from an early age. Institutionalizing volunteerism for nation building is equally crucial to foster civic responsibility, leadership, and a sense of community among the youth. Lastly, by unlocking talent for international engagement through structured talent scouting, skilling pathways, and global exposure, India can shape a generation of youth that not only contributes meaningfully at home but also represents India confidently on the world stage.

### **3. Modernizing Infrastructure:**

#### **Introduction**

The modernization of sports infrastructure aims to enhance India's sports culture by creating inclusive, accessible, and high-quality play spaces for all. By upgrading existing facilities and developing modern sports and fitness complexes across the country, the initiative reinforces the idea that every child must play and sports must be for playing and not always winning, as a fundamental aspect of youth development. It focuses on ensuring that individuals from all sections of society have access to safe, well-equipped environments that encourage sports culture, active lifestyles, nurture potential, and promote widespread participation in sports as an integral part of daily life.

#### **Current Situation**

India has made significant strides in the development of sports infrastructure over the past decade, largely driven by initiatives like the Khelo India Scheme. As part of the mission to revive the sports culture at the grassroots level:

- 327 Sports Infrastructure projects have been sanctioned across the country, under the component 'Creation and Up-gradation of Sports Infrastructure' of the Khelo India Scheme.
- 1048 Khelo India Centres and thirty-four Khelo India State Centre of Excellence have been notified across the nation.
- 306 academies have been accredited under the Khelo India Scheme.

#### **Challenges and Issues to be resolved**

Despite the policy push, several challenges persist in the modernization of sports infrastructure.

- There is a significant urban-rural divide in terms of facility availability and quality. Many rural districts lack basic sports infrastructure or have facilities in a state of disrepair.
- Issues of land acquisition, bureaucratic delays, and lack of coordination between central and state agencies hinder timely execution.
- Financial constraints and underutilization of allocated funds due to procedural inefficiencies have slowed progress.
- Maintenance and management of infrastructure remain weak due to lack of trained personnel and sustainable funding models. There is inadequate integration of technology and data systems for monitoring and evaluating infrastructure effectiveness and usage.
- The existing sports infrastructure is primarily geared towards competitive sports, lacking inclusivity and failing to promote fitness and mass participation at the community level.

- Most sports infrastructure under schools and municipal corporations remains underutilized, limiting community access and overall impact on public fitness.

### **Possible Solutions/ Issues for deliberation**

To overcome these challenges, a multi-pronged and collaborative strategy is required.

- Funding and resource allocation should be equitable and need-based, ensuring balanced development of sports infrastructure across regions.
- Public-private partnerships (PPPs) can be leveraged to bring in investment, technical expertise, and efficient management practices.
- Repurpose underutilized spaces into open gyms, walking tracks, and fitness zones. Promote pedestrian and cycle-friendly infrastructure through dedicated lanes and green corridors.
- Involving local communities and Panchayati Raj Institutions can ensure better ownership and upkeep of infrastructure.
- Capacity-building programs for sports administrators, coaches, and maintenance staff will help ensure the long-term sustainability of facilities.

### **Way Forward**

- Urban planning in cities and towns should integrate inclusive, accessible, and eco-friendly sports and fitness infrastructure.
- Promote modular and mobile sports infrastructure in rural areas such as open gyms, portable sports kits, and multi-purpose play areas to overcome space, resource, and accessibility constraint.
- Collaboration with MoHUA and its scheme to develop sports friendly infrastructure such as parks, cycling tracks, and open gyms in urban areas, and ensure every village has at least one playground for equitable access to fitness facilities.
- Sports and fitness infrastructure should be planned and constructed with the principle that every child must have the opportunity to play, focusing on participation and enjoyment rather than just winning, and ensuring universal access for all age groups and communities.
- Real time monitoring to ensure transparency, timely execution, and accountability in infrastructure projects.
- Design inclusive sports and wellness infrastructure that encourages participation across all age groups and ensures accessibility for women, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities, with the core principle that every child must play and sports must be for enjoyment, camaraderie, and physical fitness, and not always winning.

## **4. Promoting FIT India:**

### **Introduction**

The Fit India Movement, launched by the Government of India, is a national initiative that urges people to embrace healthier and more active lifestyles. Reinforcing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message that "Fitness is not just a word but a necessary condition for a healthy and prosperous life," the campaign highlights that "Fitness is easy, fun, and free." It aims to combat rising cases of obesity and lifestyle-related diseases by promoting regular physical activity, nutritious eating, and mental well-being. Acknowledging the rising challenges of stress, anxiety, and excessive screen time, the movement equally prioritizes mental well-being through practices like mindfulness, yoga, and digital detox initiative. Through schools, workplaces, and community engagement, Fit India is building a culture of preventive health and long-term wellness across the nation.

## **Current Situation**

The Fit India Movement has gained significant momentum across the country, engaging citizens through a variety of initiatives and platforms, reflecting widespread public engagement.

- Activities like Fit India Quiz and Fit India Week are annually held to create awareness about fitness in schools and colleges. Further, Sundays on Cycle have attracted over 4,00,000 citizens across 7,500+ locations, encouraging active lifestyles at the community level, and Fit India Carnival, first of its kind initiative has been introduced to make fitness fun, easy and free to public. A Fit India Star Rating System for schools, colleges, and universities has been introduced.
- Fit India actively commemorates National Sports Day, International Yoga Day, and other significant occasions in collaboration with schools, colleges, and SAI Centres to promote the concept of holistic fitness.
- The Fit India Mobile App (FIMA) has been downloaded by over 10,00,000 users, providing digital support for fitness tracking and motivation.
- Fit India allocates budget for fitness infrastructure and awareness programs.
- Fit India leverages mass media, social media, and the Fit India mobile app to encourage fitness tracking and engagement, making it a Jan Andolan.
- National fitness guidelines (benchmarked by age, gender, occupation) are being developed and a National Fit India Framework is being designed to integrate sectors such as health, education, and sports.

## **Challenges and Issues to be resolved**

Despite its growing popularity, the Fit India Movement faces several key challenges.

- Significant urban-rural divide in awareness and participation, with rural and remote areas often lacking access to fitness resources or events.
- Sustained individual motivation remains a barrier, as initial enthusiasm may wane without continuous community engagement or incentives. Additionally, schools and institutions in its current curriculum, may struggle with time, space, and budget constraints that limit participation in fitness programs.
- Technological access also varies, preventing uniform use of tools like the Fit India Mobile App.
- Limited coordination between government departments, schools, local authorities, and influencers can hinder the efficient execution of initiatives.

## **Possible Solutions/ Issues for deliberation**

To address these challenges, a targeted and inclusive strategy is essential.

- Consider nominating Nodal Officers under the Chief Secretary/Principal Secretary (Sports) to implement MoYAS programs and reward 3/5-Star certified institutions.
- Implement a nationwide, theme-based weekly engagement model combining fitness, mental health, cleanliness, digital detox, nutrition, and community bonding to embed holistic wellness into daily lifestyles across age groups and regions, while also instilling values like sharing, empathy, and social responsibility in children.
- Foster inter-departmental collaboration by integrating Fit India into school curricula and health programs through coordinated efforts across health, education, sports, rural development, and women & child welfare departments, in line with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- Promote a holistic sports culture that encourages participation not only for competitive excellence but also for enjoyment, fitness, and overall well-being, by

integrating sports into daily life through schools, community programs, and public awareness initiatives.

- Promote Fit India certifications in schools, mandate fitness and yoga sessions, conduct inter-school challenges, engage Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), and leverage NSS/NCC units in colleges to lead community fitness drives under Unnat Bharat Abhiyan.
- Drive a Jan Andolan by engaging fitness icons, leveraging mass and digital media, enhancing the Fit India App, deploying mobile fitness vans in rural areas, and promoting fitness through local festivals and events.
- Bridge the urban-rural fitness divide by developing Rural Fitness Clusters using existing infrastructure and schemes, incentivizing rural internships for fitness coaches, and supporting local innovations like folk-dance-based fitness programs and community-led celebrations.
- Localize guidelines by translating fitness content into regional languages and addressing state-specific issues like malnutrition in tribal areas and urban obesity.
- Empower local bodies through Fit District/Village programs, link with flagship schemes Swachh Bharat, Poshan Abhiyaan etc, and mobilize ASHAs, Anganwadi workers, and community leaders as fitness ambassadors.
- Engage in grassroots outreach, offer incentives to clubs, promote the Fit India Workplace Certification, utilize CSR funds to develop fitness infrastructure, and collaborate with wellness start-ups to boost awareness

## **Way Forward**

The way forward for the Fit India Movement lies in deepening its integration into everyday life and institutional frameworks.

- Infrastructure like parks, cycling tracks, and community gyms should be expanded, particularly in under-served areas.
- Technology should be leveraged not just for tracking but also for personalized guidance, community challenges, and behavioural nudges.
- Annual Fit India audits and recognition for best-performing institutions can motivate sustained participation.
- Encourage multi-sport participation until age 14 to ensure holistic physical, cognitive, and emotional development, before transitioning to specialized training based on individual aptitude and interest.
- Promote and incentivize corporates and private entities to support widespread citizen engagement integrating fitness into daily routines through community programs such as marathons and events like Raahgiri, local festivals, digital campaigns, and partnerships with influencers, with regular assessments and feedback loops.
- Introduce incentives such as fitness-linked academic credits, workplace rewards, and public recognition to encourage sustained behavioural change.
- Encourage schools and workplaces to adopt low-cost, flexible fitness models like short activity breaks, open gyms, and yoga sessions without increasing their operational burden.
- Make fitness a mandatory and assessable component of the school curriculum in alignment with NEP 2020, promoting participation in multi-sport or fitness activities from an early age.
- Maximize the use of existing infrastructure such as gyms and wellness centres in schools, colleges, government offices, and corporates by making them hubs for Fit India activities beyond academic and work hours.

## 5. Volunteerism for Nation Building

### Introduction

Volunteerism is a catalyst for civic engagement and social innovation. Mobilizing India's youth for volunteer activities can address developmental challenges, foster social cohesion, and nurture future leaders. India is continuously growing and marching towards Viksit Bharat @2047 and the youth are in centre of this journey of nation building. To revolutionize and implement the ideas through new age volunteerism, Prime Minister launched 'Mera Yuva Bharat' (**MY Bharat**) platform for the youth of the country on 31 October 2023.

### Current Situation

To optimally tap constructive and creative energies of the youth, the Department of the Youth Affairs pursues the twin objective of personality-building and nation-building. Following are the key strategies of department to capacitate and encourage volunteering for Nation Building.

- Department of Youth Affairs has developed a digital platform (<https://mybharat.gov.in/>) as one stop service platform for Youth of the country. Platform enables the creation of youth profile, participation in various volunteering and learning activities, getting mentorship from experts, connect with other youth etc. Several engagement programs including Experiential Learning Programs (ELPs) are hosted on the platform. The platform also provides web space to other Ministries, Organizations, Industries, Youth clubs etc. for conducting various engagement programs. More than 1.76 crore youth have registered on the platform.
- MY Bharat an autonomous organization under the Department, having physical presence in every district of the country, works at the ground level to organize various programs like Padyatras, Youth Utsavs, plantation and cleanliness etc. to institutionalize volunteerism at ground level. Various mega events like Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue (VBYLD) and Viksit Bharat Youth Parliament (VBYP) which start at block level and culminate at national level are conducted to inculcate a sense of understanding on Government policies and involve youth thinking in decision making.
- The National Service Scheme (NSS) is a central scheme under the Department, which involves student volunteers from higher secondary schools and universities in various community activities to promote personality development and inculcate social responsibility. Various activities such as village adoption, blood donation and cleanliness drives are conducted by these NSS volunteers. Approx 26.5 lakh student volunteers in 33 thousand knowledge institutions are connected with NSS. Every volunteer under NSS is supposed to contribute 120 hours of service in a year.

### Challenges and issues to be resolved

Though the volunteering is into the roots of our youth since time and memorial, its ways and methods are to be evolved to keep pace with technology and emerging landscapes.

- Youth today face increased academic pressure, personal responsibilities, and time constraints, leaving little room for volunteering.
- With the rise of digital consumption, young people are becoming less involved in community-based activities and social causes.
- Lack of innovative approaches in youth engagement for nation-building activities, with current models often failing to align with the evolving interests, aspirations, and digital habits of today's youth.
- Volunteering is often not incentivized reducing its perceived value.
- Many volunteers face challenges related to travel, food, and other expenses, which are usually not reimbursed by organizing bodies.



- Youth is not exposed to cultural traditions especially in urban areas.
- There is a lack of information on volunteer activities on real time basis.

### **Possible Solutions/ Issues for deliberation**

- Possible solutions include leveraging digital technology for new age volunteerism such as portals like <https://mybharat.gov.in/>. Portals have to be made more user friendly with activities of youth interest and space for uploading media.
- Adopt youth-centric and tech-enabled engagement models that leverage social media, gamification, digital platforms, and experiential learning to make nation-building activities more appealing, relevant, and aligned with the interests and lifestyle of today's youth.
- Youth clubs will be activated at village/block level with modest funding, linked to panchayats and local bodies.
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Public-Private Partnership can be better leveraged for experiential learning activities which provide all-round development as well as give exposure to various business activities.
- Integration of volunteerism with National Missions such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat, Har Ghar Tiranga, Mission Life (Lifestyle for Environment), and Jal Jeevan Mission.
- NSS participation mandatory with the key focus on health, fitness, team building etc. at the higher secondary and undergraduate levels and NSS performance should be included as part of academic transcripts.
- There has to be a policy on incentivizing volunteer activities with academic credits or preference in job opportunities. Hours dedicated to volunteerism may be formally recognized through a Certificate of National Youth Service, and partnerships with the private sector can be explored to provide incentives or rewards in lieu of volunteer hours, thereby enhancing motivation and participation.
- Annual national volunteer awards to recognize innovation, impact, and inclusiveness.

### **Way Forward**

Along with the conventional ways and methods, new age volunteerism opportunities have to be worked out utilizing conventional wisdom, innovative approaches, digital tools and artificial intelligence.

- Complement conventional volunteerism with new-age opportunities by leveraging digital tools and artificial intelligence for wider and smarter engagement.
- Inculcate volunteerism based on Indian ethos, emphasizing Seva-Bhaav (spirit of service) and Kartavya Bodh (sense of duty) to build character and responsibility.
- Align volunteerism with youth aspirations to foster growth, belonging, patriotism, and build strong human capital for the nation.
- As per the spirit of nation building, Yuva Gram Sabhas can be introduced as youth-led platforms parallel to Gram Sabhas to address local youth issues like fitness, sports, skill development, and volunteerism.
- The AI and data analytics empowered My Bharat Portal should serve as a one-stop solution for youth-centric events, collaborations, volunteer opportunities, and knowledge sharing enabling seamless participation, capacity building, and dissemination of best practices across the country.
- Volunteerism Impact Index to be developed to assess impact of volunteerism.

## **6. Unlocking Talent for International Engagement**

### **Introduction**

The Department of Youth Affairs endeavours to create an international perspective among the youth in collaboration with other countries and International Agencies/organizations to involve them in promoting exchange of ideas, values, and culture amongst the youth of different countries and also to promote peace and understanding. To achieve this objective, the Department signs Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with various countries and international organizations to strengthen and encourage cooperation on youth matters through participation in events and activities, in consultation with Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India. International Youth Exchange Programme (IYEP) with friendly countries are taken up on reciprocal basis to provide international exposure to the youth of India and exchange of major learning experiences.

In terms of its standing in international competitive sports, though India has steadily improved its position, yet country currently ranks 71st out of 206 nations in terms of Olympic medals. This underscores the need to unlock and nurture talent to enhance the country's performance at the international level.

### **Current Situation**

- As part of its international outreach, the Department of Youth Affairs currently maintains 30 active MoUs on youth cooperation with countries including Armenia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, etc.
- Under these MoUs, International Youth Exchange Programs (IYEPs) are taken up with the objective to provide international exposure to the youth of India, promote exchange of ideas, values and culture exchange amongst the youth of different countries, exchange major learning experiences among the youth, etc.
- During the last 5 years, a total of 73 Indian youth delegates participated in 12 international events organised in different countries, providing them with valuable international exposure and cross-cultural learning experiences.
- The Department has signed two multilateral MoUs on youth cooperation with BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, enabling broader regional collaboration and youth engagement on multilateral platforms.
- India's sporting landscape has witnessed significant development, particularly in disciplines such as badminton, boxing, wrestling, shooting, and athletics, leading to improved medal prospects on the international stage.
- Key initiatives like Khelo India, Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), and the establishment of National Centres of Excellence (NCOEs) have contributed to targeted athlete development.
- Despite these efforts, challenges persist. Talent identification mechanisms remain fragmented, with many promising youths unable to advance due to limited exposure, inadequate infrastructure, and systemic inefficiencies, including governance gaps within National Sports Federations (NSFs).
- Additional barriers such as regional disparities, gender imbalances, and the lack of integration between sports, health and education continue to hinder the full conversion of potential into international success.

## **Challenges and Issues to be resolved**

Despite notable progress, several critical challenges continue to impede the effective identification and development of talent for international engagement. These challenges are outlined below:

- There shall always be a limit of numbers on physical exchange and hence more digital ways are to be explored for exchange and learning.
- There is a lack of systematic and nationwide scouting mechanisms, particularly at the school and district levels, leading to missed opportunities for talent discovery.
- Access to quality sports infrastructure remains uneven, with rural and tier-2/3 regions facing significant deficits in facilities and equipment.
- There is a shortage of qualified coaches, as well as essential support professionals such as physiotherapists, sports psychologists, and performance analysts.
- Indian youth and junior athletes have limited participation in international competitions, which delays their readiness to compete at the global level.
- Funding inconsistencies and the absence of clearly defined athlete development pathways hinder long-term progress.
- Rigid academic systems offer limited flexibility, often forcing students to choose between education and sports during critical development stages.
- IYEP fosters global exposure and leadership, but sustained engagement with youth delegates is crucial to convert short-term visits into long-term contributions in development, diplomacy, and innovation.
- Effective implementation of IYEP requires coordination and support from central and state departments, as well as arrangements involving high-level dignitaries and visiting institutions.

Addressing these challenges is essential for building a sustainable and high-performing ecosystem capable of consistently producing world-class talents for the international arena.

## **Possible Solutions/ Issues for deliberation**

To address the identified challenges and build a robust ecosystem for international engagement, a set of targeted strategic interventions needs to be undertaken. These measures aim to strengthen talent development pathways, enhance institutional support, and foster collaboration across sectors:

- Youth to be nurtured as ambassadors of change, excellence and fitness, building international youth networks to strengthen cooperation and amplify India's voice globally.
- Leverage cultural entities like SPIC-MACAY to introduce youth to Indian culture, traditions, and the Guru-Shishya parampara from early childhood, fostering a strong cultural foundation that not only nurtures identity but also prepares them to represent India confidently on global platforms, thereby unlocking talent for international engagement.
- More exchange programs have to be conducted as well as soft diplomacy is to be explored for exposing richness of Indian culture like culinary, linguistic etc. to the world.
- Enhanced coordination with central and state departments, and visiting institutions, can enrich delegate experiences through well-executed logistics, deeper cultural immersion, and impactful exchanges that reflect India's youth development and soft power.
- Developing a real-time, digital national athlete tracking system that enables systematic scouting and monitoring at the block, district, and state levels.

- Establishing & tapping regional talent with regional based high-performance centres equipped with world-class facilities, sports science support, and multidisciplinary teams to nurture elite athletes.
- Implementation of a comprehensive National Coaching Development Programme, including structured certification pathways, performance-based incentives, and opportunities for international exposure and training.
- Institutionalizing regular international exchange programmes, exposure tours, and participation in junior/youth-level championships to enhance global competitiveness and cross cultural adaptability.
- Partner with educational boards such as CBSE, State Boards, and UGC to design flexible academic frameworks that support international engagement for students and athletes.
- Encouraging private sector engagement in sports and youth development by offering CSR-linked incentives, launching recognition schemes, and promoting Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models for grassroots infrastructure and talent support.

### **Way forward**

To achieve sustained international engagement in sports, a long-term, athlete-centric ecosystem must be institutionalized which requires:

- Strategic alignment among national sports federations, state bodies, educational institutions, and private stakeholders.
- Technology-driven talent monitoring and performance analytics.
- Inclusion of communities to widen the talent pool.
- Early and structured exposure to international formats, sports science, and mental conditioning.
- In consultation with the Ministry of External Affairs, MoUs on youth cooperation may be signed with more friendly countries and international organizations to expand global opportunities for youth, promote knowledge exchange, and foster international collaboration and leadership.

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