



Policy Brief

Policy Futures for Sports Governance in Bihar

Elective

Policy Design for Future-Proofing Work

Guides

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Executive Summary

The Indian sports landscape is undergoing a paradigm shift, driven by a new, holistic national vision. The Union Government's approval of the **Khelo Bharat Niti 2025 (National Sports Policy)** and the introduction of the landmark **National Sports Governance Bill, 2025**, signal a move towards a more structured, accountable, and economically integrated sports ecosystem. This national framework aims to transform sports into a driver of economic growth and social inclusion, establishing clear standards for governance that all states are encouraged to adopt.

As sports are a 'State Subject' under the Indian Constitution, the onus is on states to translate this national vision into a practical reality. Bihar is at a pivotal juncture, having demonstrated its commitment through the drafting of the **Bihar State Sports Policy (Khel Niti) 2024** and a significant budgetary allocation of **₹568 crore**¹. While the state's policy establishes a strong athlete development pathway, a comparative analysis reveals critical gaps. The policy lacks a dedicated focus on key national pillars such as "Sports for Economic Development" and "Sports for Social Development."

This brief provides a strategic roadmap for the Government of Bihar to bridge these gaps. It offers actionable recommendations to formally integrate the national pillars into Bihar's Khel Niti, elevate the state's **46 Eklavya Centres** from training facilities to multi-purpose community hubs, and align governance practices with the national bill to ensure transparency and accountability.

Key Takeaways

01

Integrate National Pillars

Formally amend the Bihar State Sports Policy 2024 in accordance with Khelo Bharat Niti 2025 to include dedicated pillars for "Sports for Economic Development" and "Sports for Social Development," with specific strategies for Sports Tourism and Entrepreneurship.

02

Elevate Eklavya Centres

Redesignate the 46 Eklavya Centres as "District Sports Excellence Hubs." Develop a framework to integrate them with local economic development, tourism circuits, & community engagement, transforming them into sustainable, multi-purpose assets.

03

Align with National Governance Bill

Proactively align the BSSA's governing charter with the principles of the National Sports Governance Bill, 2025. Prioritise establishing a formal, time-bound athlete grievance redressal mechanism and ensuring the BSSA is considered a "public authority" under the RTI Act to enhance transparency.

¹Source: <https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmgsites/in/pdf/2025/09/sportlight-the-business-of-sports-in-india.pdf>



Introduction

The most significant development shaping the future of Indian sports is the National Sports Governance Bill, 2025. This Bill moves beyond suggestions and establishes a legal framework for the functioning of sports bodies nationwide. It mandates the creation of a **National Sports Board**, a National Sports Tribunal for dispute resolution, and enforces transparency by defining sports organisations as "public authorities" under the RTI Act, 2005. For states like Bihar, this Bill is the foundational architecture within which future policies must operate to ensure legal and structural alignment.

Framework for Policy Excellence

To provide a robust structure for our analysis, this brief adopts the core principles of the **OECD's Recommendation on Public Policy Evaluation**. This framework is built on three essential pillars that determine the success of any policy:

- 1. Institutionalisation (The "How"):** Assesses whether the policy is embedded within a strong governance structure with clear roles and effective coordination.
- 2. Quality (The "What"):** Examines the quality of the policy's design, initiatives, and the capacity available to implement them (e.g., coaches, infrastructure).
- 3. Impact (The "Why"):** Evaluates whether the policy is designed to achieve meaningful economic and social outcomes and whether its results are measured and used.

Using this three-pillar framework, we will now analyse the alignment of Bihar's Khel Niti 2024 with the national vision.

A Formula for Policy Success

In addition to the OECD's structural pillars, we will also apply **Matt Andrews' formula** for policy success to assess the practical viability of Bihar's Khel Niti. This formula posits that real-world success is not just about a good plan, but about its acceptance and feasibility. The formula is:

Legitimacy + Support + Operational Space = Success

- 1. Legitimacy & Support:** Does the policy have the necessary political backing and buy-in from key stakeholders like sports associations, educators, and athletes?
- 2. Operational Space:** Does the BSSA and its partner departments have the capacity, resources, and autonomy to adapt and implement the policy effectively on the ground?

This formula will be used to ensure our final recommendations are not only strategically sound but also practically implementable within Bihar's administrative context.

Bihar's Ambition Meets National Vision: A Comparative Analysis

With the **Bihar State Sports Policy (Khel Niti)**³ being drafted in 2024 and the **National Sports Policy (Khelo Bharat Niti)**⁴ being approved in 2025, Bihar has a timely opportunity to align its state-level ambitions with the national strategic vision. This analysis compares Bihar's Khel Niti against the five foundational pillars of the Khelo Bharat Niti 2025 to identify areas of strong synergy and pinpoint strategic gaps that present opportunities for enhancement.

Mapping Bihar's Khel Niti Against the National Sports Policy Pillars⁵

Five Key Pillars	Assessment	Description
Excellence on the Global Stage	Strong Alignment	<p>Bihar's policy strongly corresponds with this national pillar through several key chapters and initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 3: Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) Plan, which features a clear pathway including the "Mashaal" talent hunt, Eklavya Residential Sports Schools Centres of Excellence, and the Rajgir High-Performance Centre. • Chapter 5: Technical Workforce Enhancement, focusing on coach development and sports science. • Chapter 6: Rewards and Recognition, which details awards and scholarships for athletes.
Sports for Economic Development	Significant Gap	<p>While the national policy has a dedicated pillar for economic drivers, Bihar's policy only mentions "Boosting Sports Tourism" as a sub-point in Section 9.2 under "Partnerships" and lacks a dedicated strategic framework. The key area of Sports Entrepreneurship is not explicitly addressed.</p>
Sports for Social Development	Partial Alignment - Fragmented	<p>Initiatives related to social development are present but are scattered throughout the policy rather than being consolidated under a single pillar. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 4.4: Development of Para and Special Sports. • Preamble & Events: Mentions of traditional games like Kabaddi and a "Malyudh Championship". • Section 4.2: The "Medal Lao Naukri Pao" Scheme, which positions sports as a viable career path.
Sports as a People's Movement	Moderate Alignment	<p>Bihar's policy aligns with the goal of mass participation through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Objective 1.2.3: A focus on Community Sports Engagement. • Section 3.1: The state-wide "Mashaal" talent hunt program, which aims for mass participation from the school level upwards. • A focus on developing grassroots infrastructure, such as mini-stadiums at the block level.
Integration with Education (NEP 2020)	Intend Aligned, Strategy Gap	<p>The intent to collaborate is clear, but a detailed strategy is missing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Objective 1.2.8: Explicitly states the goal to collaborate with educational institutions. • Chapter 10 (Implementation): The Department of Education is listed as a key stakeholder responsible for integrating sports into the curriculum.

³Source: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BiVNsZMBWARKMU1ojiMOW_5taHmc760E/view?usp=sharing

⁴Source: https://yas.gov.in/sites/default/files/Khelo-Bharat-Niti-2025_0.pdf

⁵Source: <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2141141>

Key Analytical Findings (OECD Framework)

- **High 'Quality' in Athlete Development:** As shown in the mapping table, Bihar's comprehensive four-phase LTAD plan demonstrates a high degree of **Quality** in its policy design. This strong alignment with the national goal of "Excellence on the Global Stage" provides a powerful foundation for its sporting ambitions.
- **Significant Gap in 'Impact':** The mapping reveals a critical gap in the **Impact** pillar. By relegating "Sports for Economic Development" to a minor subsection, the policy is not currently designed to achieve its full potential for meaningful economic outcomes, such as boosting tourism and fostering entrepreneurship, which are central to the national vision.
- **Weak 'Institutionalisation' of Social Goals:** The fragmented approach to social initiatives, highlighted in the table, points to a weakness in **Institutionalisation**. Without a consolidated, dedicated pillar for "Sports for Social Development," the policy lacks the clear coordination, structure, and authority needed for effective, state-wide implementation of its inclusivity goals.



Bridging the Gaps: Strategic Opportunities for Bihar

The comparative analysis reveals that while Bihar's Khel Niti 2024 has a strong foundation in athlete development, there are significant opportunities to enhance its strategic scope by aligning more closely with the multi-faceted vision of the Khelo Bharat Niti 2025.

Opportunity 1: Enhancing Policy 'Impact' by Unlocking Sports as an Economic Engine

Analysis: The National Sports Policy 2025 dedicates an entire pillar to "Sports for Economic Development," recognising its potential to boost tourism, manufacturing, startups, and entrepreneurship. In contrast, Bihar's Khel Niti 2024 addresses "Boosting Sports Tourism" only as a sub-point (Section 9.2) under "Partnerships and Collaborations," lacking a comprehensive strategic framework. The crucial area of Sports Entrepreneurship is not explicitly addressed as a focus area in the policy document.

Opportunity: This presents a major opportunity for Bihar to create a dedicated policy pillar that transforms sports into a key economic driver. By doing so, the state can design targeted policies to:

- Develop high-potential locations like Rajgir and Gaya into premier sports tourism destinations, attracting national and international events.
- Foster a local sports entrepreneurship ecosystem by creating schemes that encourage and support local vendors, travel agencies, and tech startups during sporting events, as suggested during the stakeholder meeting (Startup India & Startup Bihar).
- Attract private & corporate investment in sports infrastructure & leagues, aligning with the national vision of using Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and CSR.

Opportunity 3: Improving 'Quality' through Educational Integration

Analysis: The National Sports Policy 2025 dedicates a full pillar to alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, aiming to integrate sports into school curricula and train educators. Bihar's policy lists the Department of Education as a stakeholder responsible for this integration and has an objective to collaborate with educational institutions. However, it currently lacks a detailed, actionable strategy to implement this vision on the ground.

Opportunity: By developing a formal, inter-departmental plan, Bihar can bridge this gap & ensure that its "catch them young" mission is successful. This will create a seamless pathway from school playgrounds to the Eklavya Centres. Key actions are:

- Creating a joint task force between the Department of Sports and the Department of Education to develop a state-specific curriculum module for sports as a mainstream subject.
- Launching specialised skill development and certification programs for Physical Education Teachers (PETs) to ensure high-quality sports delivery in schools.

These recommendations are designed for practical success by satisfying Andrews' formula (Legitimacy + Support + Operational Space). They leverage the *Legitimacy* of national and state policies; build broad *Support* by creating value for multiple stakeholders (athletes, entrepreneurs, educators); and utilise the *Operational Space* provided by the BSSA's mandate and the existing network of 46 Eklavya Centres.

Opportunity 2: Strengthening 'Institutionalisation' with a Future-Ready Governance Framework

Analysis: The National Sports Governance Bill, 2025, provides a detailed legal blueprint for professionalising sports administration, mandating structures for fair elections, transparency, and dispute resolution through a National Sports Tribunal. It also holds recognised sports bodies accountable as "public authorities" under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005. While Bihar's establishment of a new Department of Sports and an empowered BSSA is a commendable first step, its policy does not yet formally incorporate these robust national standards for governance.

Opportunity: Bihar can lead by example by proactively aligning its governance structure with the progressive principles of the National Bill. This will build trust among athletes and investors. Immediate actions can include:

- Establishing a clear, impartial, & time-bound internal grievance redressal mechanism for athletes and coaches, in line with the Bill's "Safe Sports Policy" framework.
- Adopting transparency norms by positioning the BSSA as a public authority under the RTI Act, ensuring public access to information about its functions & funding.
- Mandating the inclusion of athlete representatives in key decision-making committees within the BSSA, a core principle of good governance promoted by the National Bill.

Eklavya Centres: The Foundation for Bihar's Sporting Excellence

Bihar's network of **46 Eklavya Centres⁶** represents the cornerstone of its talent development strategy and its single most valuable asset in building a grassroots sports ecosystem. Functioning as residential sports schools, these centres identify and nurture promising young athletes, typically in the **11-16** age group, by providing simultaneous formal education and specialised sports training.

Strategically located in districts with identified sports potential (e.g. Patna for hockey), they serve as the primary talent pipeline, feeding athletes into higher-level institutions like State Centres of Excellence and SAI centres. With athletes selected through India's largest-scale talent identification program and supported by scholarships of up to **₹3 lakhs** per year, the Eklavya Centres are the engine of Bihar's sporting future. However, their potential extends far beyond talent development.

Beyond Training: Leveraging Eklavya Centres for Holistic Development

To fully realise the potential of the Khel Niti, the Government of Bihar should view the Eklavya Centres not just as training facilities, but as multi-purpose hubs for economic and community development. By expanding their mandate, these 46 distributed assets can become the primary vehicle for implementing the state's broader policy vision.

- **As Hubs for Economic Development:** The Eklavya Centres can be activated as micro-hubs for sports tourism and local entrepreneurship. Competitions hosted at these centres can be promoted as local tourism events, attracting visitors and creating opportunities for local vendors, transport providers, and hospitality services. This approach directly addresses the "Sports Entrepreneurship" gap and provides a practical pathway to implementing the "Sports for Economic Development" pillar at a hyper-local level.
- **As Testbeds for Good Governance:** The centres provide a controlled environment to pilot and refine new governance policies before a state-wide rollout. A new athlete grievance redressal mechanism, aligned with the National Sports Governance Bill, can be piloted across a select cluster of Eklavya Centres. Feedback from athletes, coaches, and parents at these centres can provide invaluable, real-world data to create a robust and effective state-wide system.

- **As Bridges for Educational Integration:** As institutions that already merge formal education with sports, Eklavya Centres are the natural bridge between the Department of Sports and the Department of Education. They can be designated as "Model Schools" for piloting a new, integrated sports curriculum aligned with **NEP 2020**. Furthermore, they can serve as regional centres for the upskilling and certification of Physical Education Teachers from surrounding schools, directly addressing a key objective of both the state and national policies.



⁶Source: https://en.biharsports.org/img/eklavya_Kendra.pdf

Roadmap for Action

Based on our OECD framework analysis and guided by the Andres Formula, leveraging existing Legitimacy, strengthening stakeholder Support, and maximising Operational Space, we propose the following actionable recommendations for the Bihar State Sports Authority (BSSA):

Core Strategic Shifts

Amend the draft Bihar Khel Niti 2024 to create a dedicated chapter for:

01	02	03
Strengthen Policy 'Impact' by Integrating Economic & Social Pillars	Enhance Program 'Quality' through Educational Integration	Solidify 'Institutionalisation' by Aligning with the National Governance Bill
Amend the Khel Niti to include chapters on "Sports for Economic Development" & "Sports for Social Development" – mirroring Khelo Bharat Niti 2025 to promote sports tourism (Rajgir, Patna), foster sports entrepreneurship, and unify social initiatives like Para sports and traditional games.	Form a Sports Education task force to integrate sports into school curricula and reposition 41 Eklavya Centres as "District Sports Excellence Hubs" – model institutions driving education sports synergy, local economic growth, and pilot programs for new state policies.	Align BSSA's charter with the National Sports Governance Bill, 2025 by establishing an impartial, time-bound athlete grievance mechanism and voluntarily adopting RTI-based transparency norms, ensuring accountability, trust, & robust institutional governance.

Reposition Eklavya Centres

Launch a new initiative to formally expand the mandate of the Eklavya Centres beyond their current function as simple training facilities. A framework should be developed to redesignate them as integrated, multi-purpose "District Sports Excellence Hubs." This transformation will enable the centres to become sustainable assets that actively contribute to the state's broader development goals. The expanded role of these hubs would include:

- Serving as venues for local sporting events to drive district-level sports tourism.
- Creating formal opportunities for local entrepreneurs to provide goods and services, fostering a micro-economy.
- Acting as pilot centres for testing new governance and educational integration policies before a state-wide rollout.

The Eklavya Centres that already combine education and sports should serve as the model institutions for this initiative.



Aligning with the National Sports Governance Bill, 2025

Align the BSSA's governing charter with the principles of the National Sports Governance Bill, 2025, to establish Bihar as a leader in good governance, transparency, and trust. Two priorities should be addressed immediately:

- Athlete Grievance Redressal: Establish a formal, impartial, and time-bound athlete grievance redressal mechanism within the BSSA, as outlined in the Bill's Safe Sports Policy framework.
- Transparency and Accountability: Enhance transparency by voluntarily adopting norms that treat the BSSA as a "public authority" under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, ensuring public accountability in its functions and funding.

Thank You

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