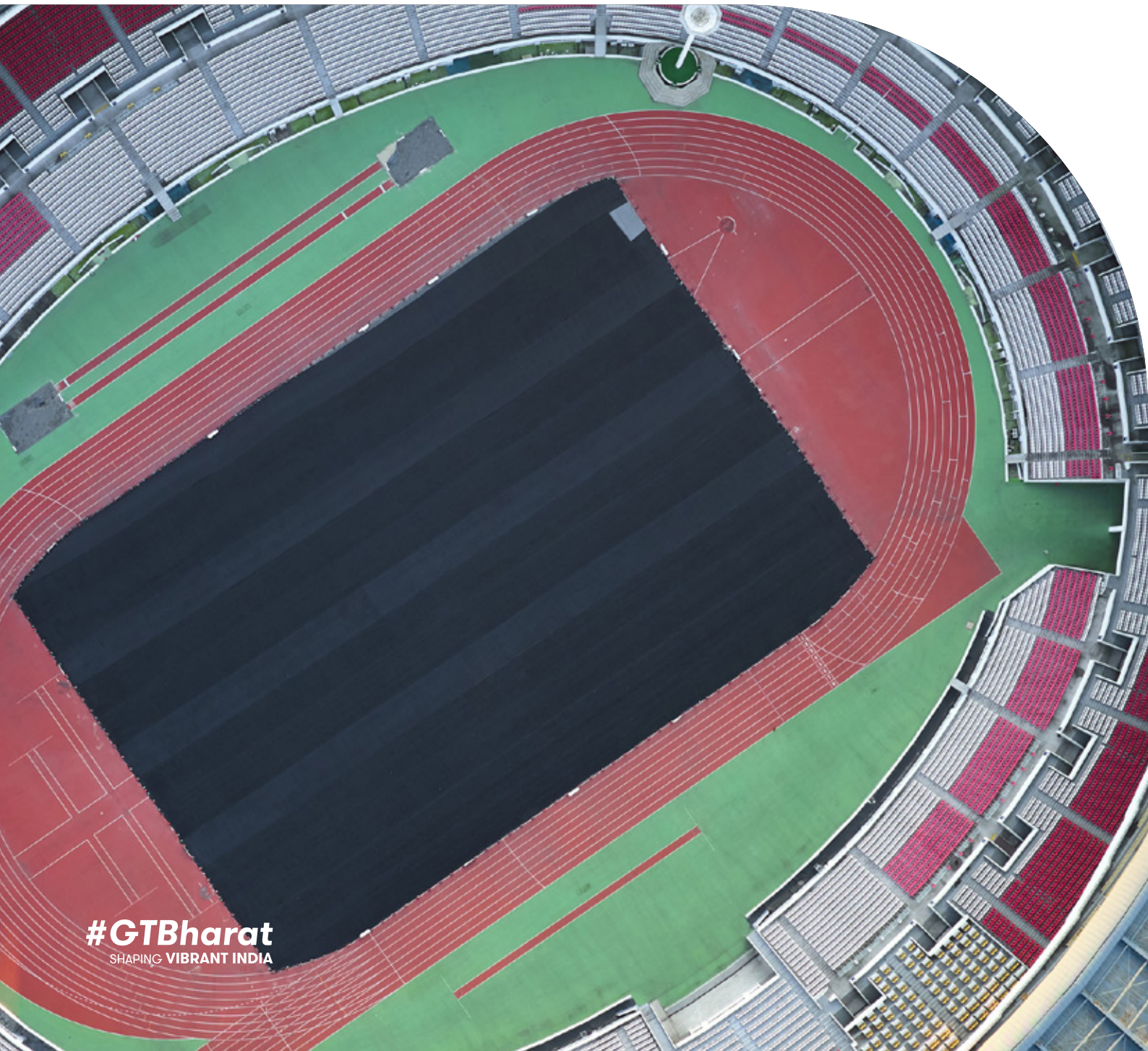


CII Scorecard 2024





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Empowering change: Innovating towards a sustainable and inclusive sporting future in india

Empowering change: Innovating towards a sustainable and inclusive sporting future in India

Inaugural session by Mr. Chanakya Chaudhary, Chairman, CII National Committee

Mr. Chanakya Chaudhary, Chairman, CII National Committee on Sports, was delighted to welcome the panel of dignitaries and esteemed guests to the ninth edition of the Scorecard, considered the flagship event of CII. In his inaugural address at the CII Scorecard 2024 event, he emphasised the need for collaborative efforts to strengthen India's sports ecosystem. He acknowledged the leadership of Srimati Sujata Chaturvedi in advancing Indian sports and highlighted the CII National Committee on Sports' ongoing work in promoting infrastructure development, grassroots programmes and public-private partnerships. He noted that this year's theme, Empowering change: Innovating towards a sustainable and inclusive sporting future in India, reflects the importance of inclusivity, sustainability and innovation in shaping the future of sports in the country.

He also highlighted the accompanying Sports Technology and Manufacturing Expo, which showcases advancements in sports technology and innovation, symbolising the rapid growth of the Indian sports industry driven by youth participation. He also commended the launch of the Sports Cities of India 2.0 report, prepared in collaboration with Grant Thornton Bharat, as a significant step towards identifying and enhancing India's

capacity to host global events while nurturing grassroots talent. The report offers valuable insights and recommendations to bolster sports infrastructure development across the nation.

He stressed the importance of recognising and supporting smaller, localised sports initiatives across the country, which often produce outstanding talent but remain underappreciated. He shared plans to organise an event to bring such grassroots initiatives and stakeholders together to foster knowledge sharing and collaboration, ensuring their sustained impact. Additionally, he highlighted the transformative role of women in grassroots sports development and affirmed a continued focus on their contributions.

Concluding his address, Mr. Chaudhary emphasised the need for collective efforts by the government, industry and the sporting community to realise India's Olympic ambitions, particularly for the 2036 Olympics. He called for inclusive discussions and collaborations to shape a sustainable, inclusive and vibrant future for Indian sports.

Keynote address

Hon'ble Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Smt. Sujata Chaturvedi

Sujata Chaturvedi, the Hon'ble Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, began by acknowledging familiar faces and her three-year tenure in the department. She highlighted the continuous efforts by the CII and others to support sports through corporate sector involvement. She mentioned her additional role as the Director General of the Sports Authority of India and shared updates on recent initiatives, including the National Sports Governance Bill and the draft sports policy, both open for public consultation. She also emphasised the importance of CSR contributions to national sports federations and expressed excitement about upcoming developments and events, such as the Khelo India Games and India's bid for the 2036 Summer Olympics.

She discussed the theme of the CII Scorecard event, focusing on sustainability, inclusivity, grassroots sports development and digital transformation. She highlighted the importance of collaboration between the government, industry and the sports community. Chaturvedi mentioned the Sports Technology and Manufacturing Expo, providing an opportunity for stakeholders to exhibit their products and services. She also pointed out the presence of stalls from the National Sports Development Fund and the Sports Authority of India.

Smt. Chaturvedi introduced the Sports Cities of India 2024 report, second edition, which evaluates Indian cities' capacity to host global events and highlights the country's vibrant sports culture. The report covers various sports, including indigenous and emerging trends like esports and pickleball. She stressed the need to recognise and support smaller sports centres and passionate individuals across the country. She shared examples of successful athletes from lesser-known academies and emphasised the importance of nurturing talent from all areas.

In conclusion, Smt. Chaturvedi expressed her happiness about the work being done and urged the corporate sector to support smaller sports initiatives. She highlighted India's recent success in chess and the importance of building a strong bench strength in all sports to become a global sporting power. She wrapped up by thanking everyone for their efforts and wishing them a successful event.

Sports Cities of India 2024, report highlights

Abhishek Binaykia, Partner and Sports Industry Leader, Grant Thornton Bharat

Abhishek Binaykia, Partner and Sports Industry Leader, Grant Thornton Bharat, discussed the second edition of the Sports Cities of India 2024 report, highlighting the capability of Indian cities to host global events, with a vision to host global mega-events such as the Olympic Games in 2036 and to cultivate world-class athletes. He further spoke about the country's broader ambition of achieving Viksit Bharat 2047—a vision that sees sports as a catalyst for national development. This report also examines grassroots development, infrastructure and other initiatives to help Indian athletes succeed globally.

He briefly introduced Grant Thornton Bharat, a premier consulting firm leading in sports advisory. He highlighted the firm's work in strategic development, project management, sports technology and infrastructure, as well as its collaborations with both private and public sectors. Binaykia spoke about the shared dream of bringing the Olympics to India in 2036 and significantly increasing the medal count for Indian athletes.

The report's methodology involved transparent self-nomination by states and union territories, answering a series of questions covering various parameters in a survey-based form. Public

polling was also conducted, involving federations, athletes, fans and various other stakeholders influencing the sports ecosystem. Cities were ranked based on their scores, with categories such as India's Top Marvels, Rising Stars and Regional Champions.

Key highlights included Bhubaneswar being ranked as the number one sports city, closely followed by Chennai. Chennai was also the top choice among athletes, federations and coaches, while Delhi was a fan favourite. Binaykia threw light on the need for robust infrastructure, technology, grassroots development and structured training programmes to achieve success in the Olympic Games.

The report provides a global context and details on each city's evaluations and scores in the assessment for the top 10 cities. It further details the impact of events like Khelo India and the Paralympic Games on Indian sports. It also covers indigenous sports and emerging trends like esports and pickleball.

Closing comments

Sunil Kumar Misra, Principal Advisor, CII

Sunil Kumar Misra began by extending a warm welcome to all attendees and acknowledging the presence of Sujata Chaturvedi, Secretary of Sports, Government of India, and other distinguished guests. He commented on the importance of discussions at the CII Scorecard event, highlighting CII's commitment to contributing to the future of sports in India.

He further outlined the key themes of the day's sessions. The session on **futuristic playgrounds** explored how technology and innovation can be leveraged to create sustainable and engaging sports environments. Another session, **reaching Olympic excellence**, discussed how strategic planning and financial commitment can eventually elevate Indian athletes on the global stage. There was also a focus on **sports as a catalyst for maintaining physical and mental well-being**, highlighting the essential role sports would play in fostering not only physical fitness but also mental resilience. Further,

the session on **ensuring sports development** emphasised the importance of investing in grassroots initiatives and empowering women leadership to ensure a diverse and equitable future in sports.

Misra reflected on the contributions of Indian industry in supporting the nation's aspirations in sports, particularly the efforts in rural India and the recognition of unsung heroes. He concluded by encouraging everyone to carry the momentum forward and work together to drive the desired change in the Indian sporting ecosystem.

A female athlete is captured in a starting crouch on a track at night. She is wearing a teal sports top and leggings, and white sneakers. Her hands are on the ground, and she is looking forward with a focused expression. The background shows a large stadium with tiered seating and bright lights, creating a futuristic and high-tech atmosphere.

Session 1: Futuristic playgrounds: The nexus of tech, innovation and ecoconscious sports

Moderator

Mr. Abhishek Binaykia

Partner and Head of Sports Advisory at Grant Thornton Bharat



Speakers

Mr. Puneet Khunger

Advisor, Ralph Wheeler and Associates

Mr. Mukul Choudhari

Head of Sports Excellence Centers, Tata Steel & CEO, Jamshedpur FC

Mr. Siddharth Raman

CEO, Sports Interactive

Mr. Prasun Badani

GM, India, SportsRadar

Mr. Jai Shankar Arunachalam

National Head, Technical Solutions & Sales, Myrtha Pools

Session summary - Futuristic playgrounds: The nexus of tech innovation and eco-conscious sports

The session, moderated by Abhishek Binaykia, Partner and Sports Industry Leader at Grant Thornton Bharat, focused on the transformative potential of technology, sustainability and innovation in the sports ecosystem. It explored how advancements in infrastructure design, data analytics and eco-conscious practices are reshaping athlete development, fan engagement and sports operations.

In conversation with Mr. Puneet Khunger

Advisor at Ralph Wheeler and Associates

Puneet discussed the challenges and opportunities in creating eco-conscious sports venues. He emphasised the need for modular architecture and adaptive reuse as cost-effective and sustainable strategies for venue design. Highlighting the operational side of sustainability, he recommended integrating renewable energy solutions such as solar panels and localised wind energy to reduce energy consumption. Puneet also stressed that sports events like the Olympics should engage entire cities rather than being confined to physical venues, promoting community-centric designs that foster participation and sustainability.



“Solutions for sports infrastructure must be contextual, leveraging India’s strengths in technology and community. Innovations like digital twins can enhance operational efficiency while ensuring sustainable and inclusive designs.”

- Mr. Puneet Khunger

In conversation with Mr. Mukul Chaudhari

Head of Sports Excellence Centres at Tata Steel and CEO of Jamshedpur FC

Mukul shared insights into Tata Steel's focus on athlete development through technological interventions. He discussed how DNA testing is being used to identify young athletes' potential and tailor their training programmes. Mukul also elaborated on the role of sports science in injury prevention and faster recovery for athletes, highlighting the integration of real-time performance tracking and evidence-based interventions. Additionally, he shared examples of sustainability initiatives, such as recycling plastic waste collected during events to construct roads, reflecting Tata Steel's commitment to combining sports and environmental responsibility.



“Technology is transforming athlete development by enabling evidence-based training and injury prevention. Innovations like DNA testing allow us to identify and nurture potential talent early, ensuring a brighter future for sports in India.”

- Mr. Mukul Chaudhari

In conversation with Mr. Siddharth Raman

CEO of Sports Interactive

Siddharth emphasised the importance of leveraging data and storytelling to enhance fan engagement both inside and outside sports venues. He shared examples from IPL franchises, which have improved fan experiences by introducing high-speed Wi-Fi in stadia and promoting eco-friendly practices like waste segregation and public transport use. Siddharth stressed the power of simple, data-driven narratives to drive behavioural change among fans, demonstrating how technology can inspire more sustainable and responsible fan participation.



India is making progress in fan engagement, as seen in IPL franchises embracing sustainability and encouraging positive behavior. Using data-driven stories, we empower fans to see the real impact of their actions and drive meaningful change

- Mr. Siddharth Raman

In conversation with Mr Prasun Bhadani

GM of SportsRadar India

Prasun provided a comprehensive overview of how AI and data analytics are transforming sports integrity and fan experiences. He explained how SportsRadar uses tools like the universal fraud detection system (UFDS) to monitor and detect match-fixing and suspicious activities in high-stakes events such as IPL and FIFA. Prasun also highlighted the role of computer vision in delivering immersive fan experiences, such as real-time rally analysis in tennis and basketball, enabling fans to predict outcomes and interact with the game.



“The trend towards interactive and immersive sports experiences excites us, with technologies like AI, computer vision, and real-time analytics creating deeper engagement for fans and enabling smarter player development globally.”

- Mr Prasun Bhadani

In conversation with Jai Shankar Arunachalam

National Head of Technical Solutions and Sales at Myrtha Pools

Jai Shankar presented innovations in pool design and resource management. He explained how Myrtha's modular technology ensures millimetric precision, making it ideal for competitive events like the Olympics. Jai discussed energy-efficient solutions such as using chiller byproducts for pool heating and designing systems to heat only specific zones, reducing energy consumption significantly. He emphasised the importance of sustainable pool designs that cater to both athletes and the broader community, ensuring year-round usability and environmental friendliness.

The session concluded by emphasising the need for a holistic, human-centred approach to sports infrastructure and engagement. It called for leveraging technology and sustainability to not only enhance sports performance and fan experiences but also address broader societal challenges. The insights shared by the panel underscored the potential for India to emerge as a leader in sustainable and innovative sports ecosystems, aligning with global best practices while addressing local needs.



“Sustainable infrastructure is critical for sports venues. Innovations like efficient pool heating and energy conservation through modular design ensure accessibility and environmental responsibility, benefiting both athletes and communities.”

- Jai Shankar Arunachalam

Session 2: Reaching olympic excellence through sustainability and global excellence



Moderator

Mr. Ayon Sengupta

Editor, Sports Star



Speakers

Mr. A.M. Tiwari

Chairperson, Shroff Foundation & Provost, TransStadia University)

Mr. Arunav Chaudhury

Strategic Advisor,
Sports and Media

Mr. Divyanshu Singh

CEO, JSW Sports

Mr. Vinay Mittal

Managing Director,
Deepali Designs and Exhibits

This session explored how India can achieve Olympic excellence by focusing on sustainability, global partnerships and strategic planning. It also discussed international best practices, grassroots sports development, innovative infrastructure and community engagement as pivotal steps in building a robust sports ecosystem.

In conversation with Mr A.M. Tiwari

Chairperson, Shroff Foundation & Provost, TransStadia University

Mr. Tiwari began by discussing the potential and challenges of public-private partnerships (PPP) in India's sports infrastructure. He highlighted the success of the TransStadia model, which integrates sports facilities, academic programmes and sustainable design. He noted that while some Indian states, such as Maharashtra and Odisha, are exploring similar models, there remains a lack of clarity and widespread adoption of PPP frameworks. He emphasised that investments in grassroots sports require a 12-year commitment, with an estimated budget of USD 200-300 crore, which only governments can sustain while corporates provide supplementary support. He also mentioned the necessity of adopting best practices from countries like the US and the UK and expressed interest in engaging with global universities to enhance training and infrastructure for coaches at all levels.



“We need to align public-private partnerships with innovative models for sports infrastructure to ensure maximum utilization and sustainability. The core responsibility for grassroots development, including coach salaries and basic facilities, must be borne by the government, with corporates playing a supportive role.”

- Mr A.M. Tiwari

In conversation with Mr Vinay Mittal

Managing Director, Deepali Designs and Exhibits

Mr. Mittal shared his insights into innovative and sustainable sports infrastructure. Drawing from examples like Qatar's 974-Stadium built with shipping containers for the FIFA World Cup, he explained how India could adopt similar modular and portable structures. These innovations, he argued, could provide cost-effective solutions to infrastructure needs while also creating lasting legacies post-events. He also touched upon sustainability in event management, including the use of solar technologies for heating, cooling, and lighting during sporting events. Despite challenges, he expressed optimism about India's ability to innovate in sustainable practices for large-scale sports infrastructure.



“Innovative, modular, and portable stadium designs are essential for creating sustainable sports infrastructure in India, especially in urban spaces with limited room for expansion. Our goal should be to leave lasting legacies for communities post large-scale events, ensuring multipurpose usability.

- Mr Vinay Mittal

In conversation with Mr Divyanshu Singh

CEO, JSW Sports

Mr. Singh emphasized the importance of grassroots development and talent pipelines, sharing his experiences from the Paris Olympics and India's existing sports ecosystem. He noted the critical gap in quality coaching and structured pathways in India and highlighted the JSW Sports model of creating feeder centers in Haryana, Odisha, and the Northeast to identify and nurture young talent. He stressed the importance of creating community-driven programmes that engage youth and develop talent while also addressing gender inequality and other societal issues. Mr. Singh also discussed JSW's role in promoting various sports like kabaddi, football, and hockey while leveraging international exposure through ventures like Pretoria Capitals in cricket. He highlighted the growing public-private collaborations in Indian sports, which he believes are essential for scaling up grassroots initiatives and creating sustainable sporting models.



“India needs clear pathways and investments in grassroots sports to create a broader base of talent for long-term success. We must recognize the immense pressure on athletes from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, and invest in mental health and holistic development as integral parts of sports excellence.”

- Mr Divyanshu Singh

In conversation with Mr Arunav Chaudhury

Strategic Advisor, Sports and Media

Mr. Chaudhury drew parallels between India and Germany, recounting Germany’s successful 20-year plan to reform its football ecosystem after its failure in Euro 2000. He explained how Germany implemented a structured academy system, emphasizing the need for qualified coaches, sports science, and long-term planning. He underscored that India often excels in vision but falters in execution, which hampers its potential to achieve similar results. He also discussed the 50+1 club ownership model in Germany, which allows fans to retain majority control of football clubs, and explored its feasibility in India. However, he noted that cultural differences, including the lack of financial commitment from Indian fans, make such models challenging to implement.



“The 50+1 rule in Germany fosters fan involvement and community engagement, but in India, the challenge is creating a sustainable model where fans are willing to invest in their clubs. The success of global football programs lies in long-term planning, effective implementation, and developing a robust grassroots coaching framework.”

- Mr Arunav Chaudhury

Theme	Key insights	Header
Sustainability in sports infrastructure	Modular stadiums are cost-effective, flexible, and eco-friendly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Qatar’s 974 Stadium built with shipping containers.Solar technology in event management for energy needs.
	Solar technology is gaining traction for sustainable event management.	Portable solar panels for partial venue lighting
Grassroots development	Structured pathways are essential for nurturing young talent.	JSW Sports’ feeder centres in Haryana, Odisha and the Northeast
	Investment in grassroots programmes ensures long-term excellence.	Focus on athletes aged 12-16 with regional centres feeding into excellence hubs
Lessons from global best practices	Long-term planning is critical (e.g., Germany and Japan’s programmes).	Germany’s 20-year football reform; Japan’s aim to be football world champions by 2050
	India must focus on consistent implementation of strategies.	Structured academies and qualified coaches as seen in Germany’s NH sets programme
Public-private partnerships (PPP)	PPP can transform infrastructure but requires clear frameworks and support.	TransStadia model in Gujarat; projects in Odisha and Maharashtra exploring PPP
Sports diplomacy	Collaborations with global universities can enhance coaching and infrastructure.	TransStadia discussions with the US and UK universities for training and development programmes
Challenges and opportunities in Indian sports	Grassroots investment and structured pathways remain underdeveloped.	Addressing societal stigma around sports coaching careers
	Expanding community-driven programmes can foster a robust sporting culture.	Community engagement through sports, as seen in JSW’s football, kabaddi and hockey programmes

The background image shows a large crowd of people at a sports event, likely a baseball game. The crowd is silhouetted against a bright, glowing green field, which is the focal point of the scene. Many people in the foreground have their arms raised high in the air, suggesting a moment of celebration or cheering. The overall atmosphere is one of excitement and collective joy. The text is overlaid on a purple rounded rectangle in the upper left corner.

Session 3: Sports as a catalyst for maintaining physical and mental well-being

The session explored the transformative power of sports in promoting physical and mental health, delving into its broader societal impact. It brought together accomplished panellists from diverse backgrounds in sports, psychology and wellness to discuss how sports can address pressing challenges like mental health awareness and the need for a more active lifestyle.

Moderated by Miss Hemika Chaudhary, the panel included esteemed personalities from various facets of sports, corporate advocacy, psychology and fitness:

Moderator

Ms Himika Chaudhri

Independent Media Consultant



Speakers

Miss Aparna Popat

A two-time Olympian and badminton champion

Miss Priti Srivastava

Head of Sports Excellence Centers, Tata Steel & CEO, Jamshedpur FC

Mr. Gaurav Natekar

Arjuna Awardee and founder of the World Pickleball League

Dr. Nanaki J. Chadda

Chartered Sports and Performance Psychologist

Miss Sumaya Dalmaya

Founder and CEO of SD Wellness

In conversation with Miss Aparna Popat

Two-time Olympian and badminton champion

Aparna shared her journey as a two-time Olympian and reflected on how the culture around sports in India has evolved. She noted that sports, once considered a mere pastime, is now gaining recognition for its broader benefits. While there are more opportunities and awareness about sports today, she stressed that playing for enjoyment should remain central to the experience. Aparna advocated for encouraging children to participate in non-competitive sports to reap physical, emotional and even spiritual benefits.



“The joy of playing a sport goes beyond medals; it builds resilience, perspective and teamwork—skills for life. It’s about learning to enjoy the process, not just the outcome.”

- Aparna Popat

In conversation with Miss Nanaki J. Chadha

Chartered Sports and Performance Psychologist

As a chartered sports and performance psychologist, Nanaki delved into the psychological challenges athletes face, such as organisational stress, personal pressures and performance anxiety. She noted that while awareness about mental health in sports has grown, there remains a stigma around seeking psychological support. Nanaki shared insights into how mental resilience can be developed through consistent psychological training, likening it to the physical training athletes undergo. She underscored the importance of integrating mental health practices into an athlete's daily routine to overcome barriers like mental blocks.



“Mental health is not just about addressing illness but fostering emotional strength and fortitude, especially in high-pressure situations. Building mental resilience is a continuous process that shapes long-term success.”

- Nanaki J. Chadha

In conversation with Miss Priti Srivastava

Senior VP at Reliance Industries and mental health advocate

Priti brought a corporate perspective to the conversation, sharing her experiences working with young professionals facing stress and anxiety. She emphasised the need to redefine mental health as an everyday emotional state rather than associating it solely with illness. Priti highlighted her efforts in screening emotional well-being to help individuals identify their mental health status. She emphasised that physical and mental fitness go hand in hand and called for educational and societal changes to create a more balanced perspective on mental health.



“India needs clear pathways and investments in grassroots sports to create a broader base of talent for long-term success. We must recognize the immense pressure on athletes from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, and invest in mental health and holistic development as integral parts of sports excellence.”

- Priti Srivastava

In conversation with Mrs Sumaya Dalmia

Founder and CEO of SD Wellness

Sumaya, as a wellness expert and fitness entrepreneur, reflected on the life skills sports impart, such as time management, teamwork and resilience. Drawing from her personal experiences, she highlighted the growing awareness around fitness and movement, even among children. She observed that while technological advancements have made fitness monitoring accessible, there is an irony in reduced physical activity in daily life. Sumaya called for making movement a part of daily routines, emphasising that even recreational or vanity-driven fitness pursuits can have a significant impact on mental and physical health.



“Sport teaches life skills that no classroom can—how to handle failure, navigate success and manage time effectively. Movement, even at a recreational level, is the foundation of physical and mental well-being.”

- Mrs Sumaya Dalmia

In conversation with Mr. Gaurav Natekar


Arjuna Awardee and founder of the World Pickleball League

Gaurav, a former national tennis champion and founder of the World Pickleball League, emphasised the need for India to transition from being a sports-watching nation to a sports-playing one. He shared how emerging sports like pickleball are bridging the gap by being easy to learn and accessible to people of all ages. Gaurav highlighted the role of parents in fostering a culture of sports and spoke about the transformative power of physical activity in building community, promoting mental well-being and fostering resilience. He also stressed the importance of addressing time constraints and infrastructural challenges to encourage greater participation in sports.



“India must transition from being a sports-watching nation to a sports-playing nation to truly harness the power of sports. It starts with building a culture of participation from grassroots to families.”

- Mr. Gaurav Natekar



Audience engagement

The session concluded with an interactive discussion, where audience members raised questions about mental blocks in athletes and the role of language and media in shaping perceptions. Panellists provided thoughtful insights, emphasising the need to celebrate effort and resilience rather than just success while addressing systemic and societal attitudes towards failure.

The session ended on an optimistic note, urging individuals, families and communities to make sports an integral part of their daily lives.

A wide-angle photograph of a large, modern stadium. The foreground shows rows of blue and white plastic seating. In the middle ground, there is a red running track with white lane markings. Behind the track is a green field. The stadium's architecture features a complex, curved metal roof structure. The sky is visible in the background.

Session 4: Ensuring sports development: Grassroots level investment and empowering women's leadership

The session brought together distinguished speakers to discuss the critical role of sports in grassroots development and empowering women's leadership. Moderated by **Miss Sonali Chander**, the discussion emphasised the intersection of inclusivity, innovation and systemic reforms to shape the future of sports in India. Here's a breakdown of the key contributions from each speaker:

Moderator

Miss Sonali Chander

Head of Sports Content,
Sports Works



Speakers

Mr. Sudarshan Singh Joon

Coach, Indian Youth Soccer
Association and grassroots
development expert

Dr. Nidhi Pundir

Senior Vice President &
Global CSR Head, HCL
Foundation; Director, HCL
Foundation

Mrs Sara Abdullah Pilot

Founder and Chairperson,
Sequin NGO; Former
member of the AIFF

Miss Nupur Gupta

Head of Product, Sports
Village; Leader in school
sports programmes

Mr. Hakimuddin Habibullah

Olympian and Managing Director,
Mirtha Pools; Advocate for aquatic
sports development

In conversation with Mr. Sudarshan Singh Joon

Grassroots Coach, Indian Youth Soccer Association

Sudarshan shared his extensive experience working with girls in rural areas, emphasising the importance of building trust with parents and communities to enable participation. He highlighted the **Kalpna Chawla Women's League**, named to inspire rural girls with relatable role models, and discussed the challenges of breaking traditional barriers in conservative societies. Sudarshan noted that grassroots efforts go beyond career pathways, promoting mental well-being and social empowerment.



“Grassroots sports lay the foundation for future champions. By engaging communities and nurturing young talent, we not only build stronger athletes but also empower lives and create lasting impact.”

- **Mr. Sudarshan Singh Joon**

In conversation with Dr. Nidhi Pundir

SVP & Global CSR Head, HCL Foundation

Dr. Pundir outlined the **HCL Sports for Change Initiative**, which has engaged over 35,000 players across the country, focusing on urban slums and rural areas. She shared success stories of athletes breaking poverty cycles, including a girl from Ajmer whose participation in sports prevented early marriage. Dr. Pundir stressed the need for systematic reforms, particularly in federations and academic reward mechanisms, to sustain talent from grassroots to elite levels.



“Sports have the power to transform lives, especially for young girls, breaking cycles of poverty and empowering them to dream beyond societal norms. We must view sports as a vehicle for change, not just medals.”

- Dr. Nidhi Pundir

In conversation with Mrs Sara Abdullah Pilot

Founder, Sequin NGO

Sara reflected on her journey with **Sequin**, an organisation working to promote women's football and provide opportunities for girls in underserved regions like Mewat. She shared stories of transformation, such as girls forming their own football teams at universities and creating networks of empowerment. Sara also recounted her tenure with the **AIFF**, where she pushed for more attention to women's football, including budgets for leagues and global tournaments. Her focus remained on creating a sports culture where girls are as visible in playgrounds as boys.



“Sports should be a celebration of inclusivity and equality. When girls play, it transforms communities, builds confidence and opens pathways to opportunities that redefine their futures.”

- Mrs Sara Abdullah Pilot

In conversation with Miss Nupur Gupta

Head of Product, Sports Village

Nupur highlighted Sports Village's mission of introducing sports to over 100 million children, particularly through school programmes like EduSports. She pointed out systemic barriers, such as lack of time, space and trained facilitators, which prevent children from engaging in sports. Nupur underscored the need to integrate sports into education policies and offered practical tips to address screen addiction in children by modelling active behaviour.



“Sports in schools should be inclusive and engaging for all. Creating structured programmes that prioritise play over screens can redefine childhood and ensure holistic development in every student.”

- Miss Nupur Gupta

In conversation with Mr. Hakimuddin Habibullah

Olympian & Managing Director, Mirtha Pools

Mr. Hakimuddin Habibullah emphasized the potential of swimming in grassroots development, challenging the misconception that it is inaccessible. He discussed the historical connection between communities and water, particularly in rural areas, and highlighted initiatives to train more female swim teachers, ensuring inclusivity and safety. Mr. Habibullah advocated for celebrating grassroots sports as sustainable business models and stressed that swimming could deliver significant medals, especially in the Paralympics, where 146 gold medals are at stake.



“Swimming connects us back to nature and teaches discipline. With the right investment, swimming can be both a social and economic game-changer, unlocking unparalleled opportunities for India in global sports.”

- Mr. Hakimuddin Habibulla

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About CII



Confederation of Indian Industry

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India, partnering Industry, Government and civil society, through advisory and consultative processes.

For more than 125 years, CII has been engaged in shaping India's development journey and works proactively on transforming Indian Industry's engagement in national development. CII charts change by working closely with Government on policy issues, interfacing with thought leaders, and enhancing efficiency, competitiveness and business opportunities for industry through a range of specialized services and strategic global linkages. It also provides a platform for consensus-building and networking on key issues.

In the journey of India's economic resurgence, CII facilitates the multifaceted contributions of the Indian Industry, charting a path towards a prosperous and sustainable future. With

this backdrop, CII has identified "Globally Competitive India: Partnerships for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth" as its Theme for 2024-25, prioritizing 5 key pillars. During this year, it would align its policy recommendations, initiatives, and activities with this overarching framework to facilitate strategic actions for driving India's global competitiveness and growth through a robust and resilient Indian Industry.

With 70 offices, including 12 Centres of Excellence, in India, and 8 overseas offices in Australia, Egypt, Germany, Indonesia, Singapore, UAE, UK, and USA, as well as institutional partnerships with about 300 counterpart organizations in almost 100 countries, CII serves as a reference point for Indian industry and the international business community.

Confederation of Indian Industry

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About Grant Thornton Bharat

At Grant Thornton Bharat, we are committed to bringing positive change to all that we do. We are a founding member firm of the Grant Thornton international network and India's pre-eminent consulting firm. We offer a range of solutions in assurance, tax, technology, managed services, deals, ESG and risk consulting to mid-market companies, government, large corporates, and digital natives. We **#GoBeyond** for our people, clients, and communities to shape **Vibrant Bharat**.

19 offices | 11,000+ people

(as of 2024)

**Part of Grant Thornton
international: 76,000+ people |
150+ countries**

Our offerings

Our offerings include solutions for Governments, large corporates, middle market and digital natives across various industries and channels:



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& Response**



Deals Lifecycle



**Tax, Finance & Regulatory
Managed Services**



**ESG & Risk
Optimisation**



**Strategy & Operations
Consulting**

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We are Shaping Vibrant Bharat

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