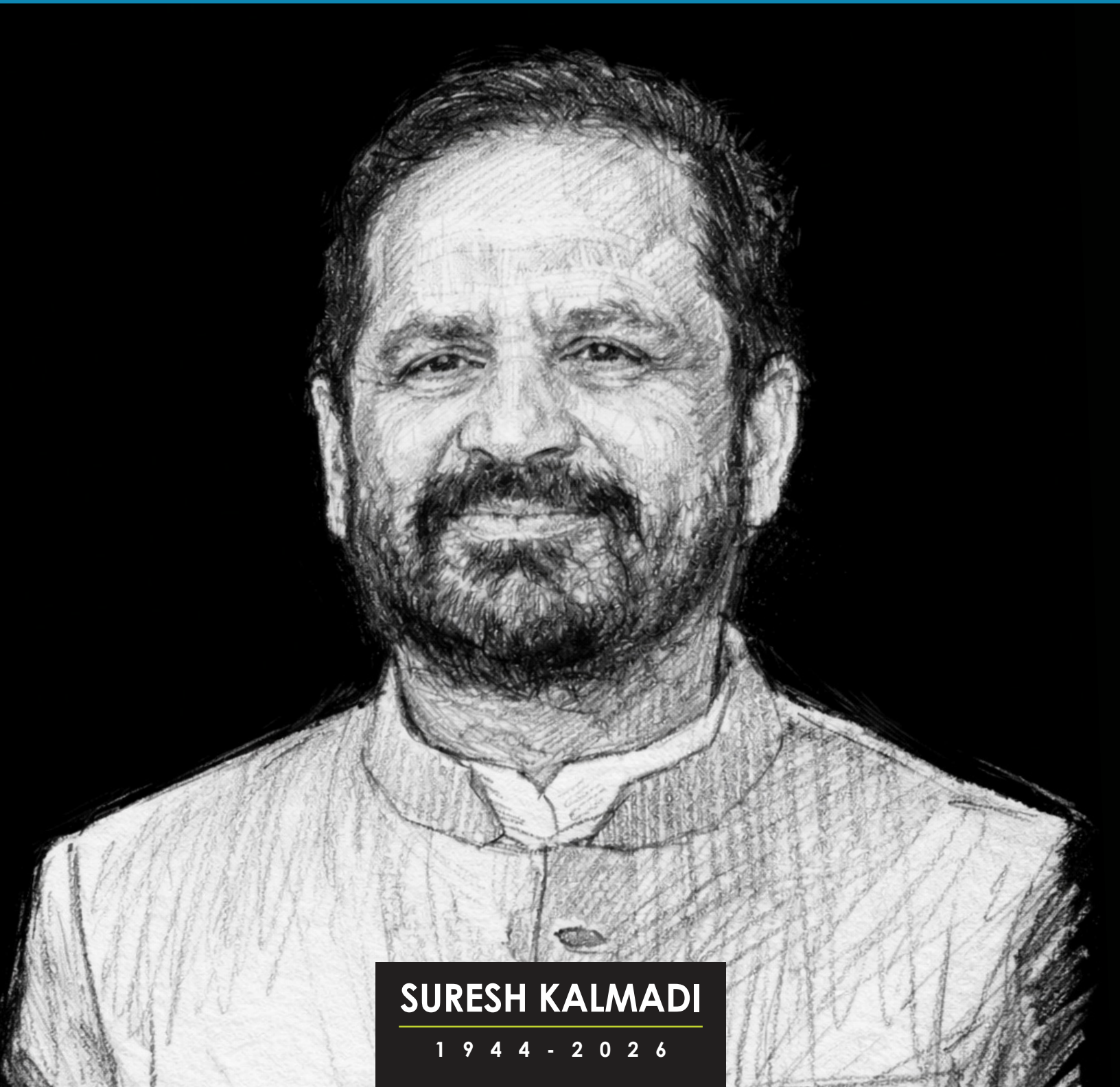


THE AFI **BULLETIN**

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



SURESH KALMADI

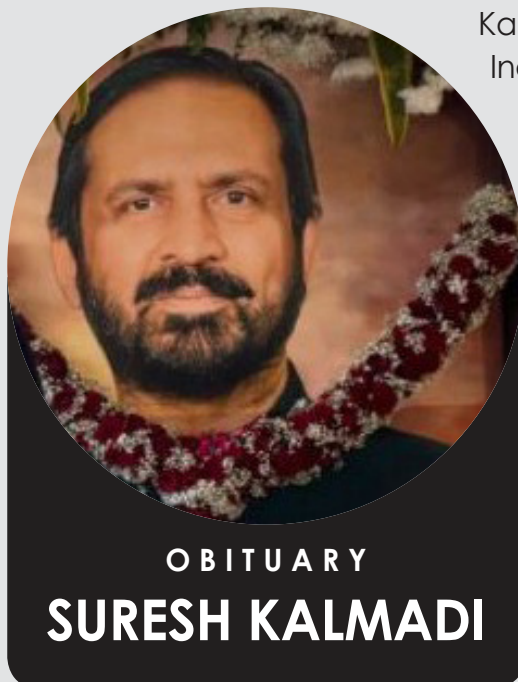
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SURESH KALMADI'S innovative ideas changed concept of sports in the country

India's seasoned sports administrator and former president of the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) changed the concept of sports in the country with his innovative ideas. Kalmadi, 81, recently passed away after a brief illness in his hometown Pune.

The former president of Indian Olympic Association and Asian Athletics Association revolutionised Indian sports in general and athletics in particular during his long tenure as an administrator, says Dr Lalit Bhanot, former AFI secretary. "His (Kalmadi) contribution to Indian sports was beyond comparison. He will be remembered in the sporting circle for his tireless efforts," he said.

Bhanot, who is the president of SAAF (South Asian Athletics Federation), was associated with Kalmadi by virtue of being secretary of the national governing body of track and field in the country. "He introduced one-day prize money track-and-field permit meets in the early 1990s in the country. Sporting fans had the privilege to meet and greet elite foreign athletes, including Olympic champions like Carl Lewis and Mike Powell during the Permit meets. All this changed the concept of sports in the country," Bhanot added.



Kalmadi was president of the Indian athletics body from 1987 to 2006 and also served as member council of World Athletics. He was chief of the Asian athletics body for nearly a decade starting 2000. Kalmadi was president of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) from 1996 to 2011. With an aim to build modern sports infrastructure across the country, he was instrumental in the revival of the National Games.

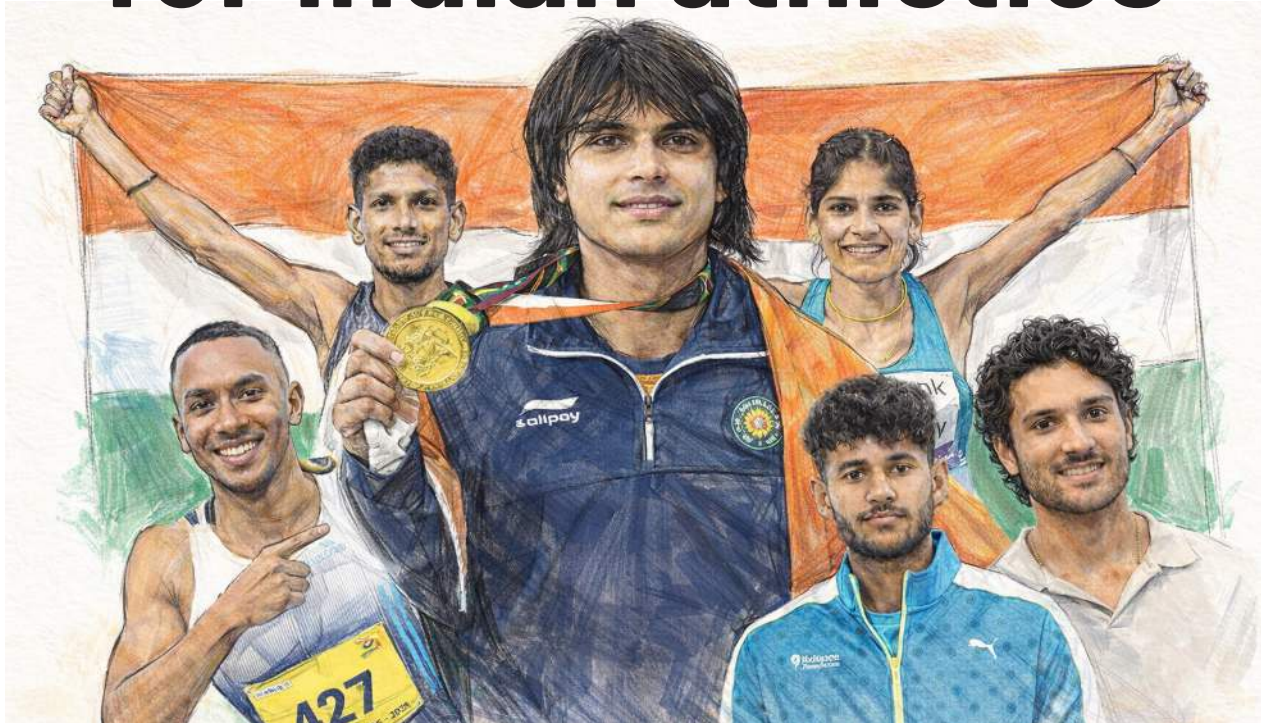
His illustrious career as sports administrator will be incomplete without mentioning the hosting of Afro-Asian Games in Andhra Pradesh and the Youth Commonwealth Games in Pune. He also paved the way for organising the 2010 Delhi Commonwealth Games. He was chairman of the organising committee.

Off the field, the former union minister initiated a Railway travel concession for sportspersons, a great step towards building sports culture in the country.

"He will always be remembered for unwavering commitment to the cause of Indian sports," Bahadur Singh Sagoo, president of AFI, said.

Several prominent sports administrators of the country paid tribute to Kalmadi on January 9 at his residence in Pune.

A breakthrough year for Indian athletics



The 2025 season turned out to be a breakthrough year for Indian athletics. Two-time Olympic medallist Neeraj Chopra conquered new territory. The ace javelin thrower joined the 90m club last year in May, which was the highlight of the season. At the 2025 Doha Diamond League in May, Chopra hurled the javelin to a distance of 90.23m to finish second behind Julian Weber (91.06m) of Germany, who also became a member of the 90m club at the same venue. "To break the 90m barrier was a big achievement in 2025," Chopra had said post Doha Diamond League.

The engaging 2025 season also witnessed more than ten national records, including two in the women's group. One national record was also improved in the newly introduced mixed 4x100m relay.

The season began with the men's sprint rivalry. As the domestic season progressed, the men's 100m record changed hands from Punjab's Gurindervir Singh to Animesh Kujur of Odisha. Kujur's current national 100m record is 10.18 seconds. He added another feather to his cap by improving the men's 200m national record to 20.32 seconds.

Top sprinters representing Reliance improved the long standing men's national 4x100m relay record to 38.69 seconds.

All national records are subject to usual ratification by the AFI (Athletics Federation of India) panel.

With the domestic season coming to close, Tamil Nadu's lanky sprinter Vishal TK ran a staggering one lap in 45.12 seconds, a national record.

In the two-lap event Mohammed Afzal

twice lowered the national record. In his second attempt, he dipped below 1:45 seconds to become the first Indian runner to achieve that honour. His best performance in 2025 was 1:44.93 seconds.

Army's 27 years old Asian Games bronze medallist Gulveer Singh was on fire in 2025. He stamped his superiority over a wide range of distance starting 3000m track race. He also dipped below 13-minutes for the 5,000m and narrowly missed the 27-minute barrier for 10,000m. His biggest achievement of 2025 was winning Asian 5,000m and 10,000m titles.

Away from track events, Madhya Pradesh's rising pole vaulter Dev Kumar Meena continued to raise the bar. His best performance of the season was 5.40m, a national record.

It was heartening to witness triple jumper Praveen Chithravel equalling his own national record of 17.37m in 2025 season.

In the gruelling decathlon Tejaswin Shankar set a new benchmark by collecting 7826 points, which was a national record.

On the distaff side, Parul Chaudhary negotiated water jumps and barriers with comfortable ease to post an excellent time of 9:12.46, a national record in the women's 3000m steeplechase.

In the gruelling 35km race walk, Priyanka Goswami clocked 2:56:34, to better the national record.

Tamil Nadu sprinters combined well to post a national record of 43.44 seconds in the mixed 4x100m relay.

(Senior National Records in 2025)

MEN

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|---|
| 100m: 10.18 seconds (Animesh Kujur) |
| 200m: 20.32 seconds (Animesh Kujur) |
| 400m: 45.12 seconds (Vishal TK) |
| 800m: 1:44.93 seconds (Mohammed Afzal) |
| 5000m (Indoor): 12:59.77 Gulveer Singh |
| 10,000m: 27:00.22 (Gulveer Singh) |
| Javelin throw: 90.23m (Neeraj Chopra) |
| Pole vault: 5.40m (Dev Kumar Meena) |
| Triple jump: 17.37m (Praveen Chithravel-- equalled his national record set in 2023 in Cuba) |
| Decathlon: 7826 points (Tejaswin Shankar) |
| 4x100m relay: 38.69 seconds (Reliance team) |

WOMEN

3000m
steeplechase:
9:12.46 seconds
(Parul Chaudhary).

35km
race walk: 2:56:34
(Priyanka Goswami)

Mixed: 4x100m
relay: 43.44 seconds
(Tamil Nadu team)

Gulveer Singh and Seema stamped their authority at Kolkata 25k



Country's leading distance runners...Gulveer Singh and Seema posted national records on their way to winning titles in their respective groups at the 2025 Kolkata 25k held in December last.

The Army's 27 years old Asian champion in distance track races in 2025, improved his own national record by nearly two minutes clocking 1:12:06 to win first position in the elite Indian category at the Kolkata 25k. His 2024 winning time was 1:14:10 seconds.

Gulveer Singh also finished fifth overall in the men's group. There is a separate group for elite Indian runners and elite foreign athletes.

The elite Indian men's category at 2025 edition of the Kolkata 25k was dominated by Army runners as they were winners of top three positions. Army's Harmanjot Singh was second (1:15:11) behind Gulveer Singh and Sawan Barwal (1:15:25) was third.

"Consistency is the key to success," Gulveer Singh said in the post-race interaction. "I always like to do better than the previous day."

Himachal Pradesh's international runner Seema made a statement in the elite Indian women's category. Seema led from start to finish to win the race with a time of 1:26:04, which was better than the previous record of 1:26:53 seconds set by Suriya L in 2017.

Maharashtra's Sanjivani Jadhav was second with a time of 1:30:34 and Gujarat's Nirmaben Thakor was third (1:32:02). Seema led from start to finish

Deliberations on key issues during Annual General Meeting

The members of AFI (Athletics Federation of India) will deliberate on several issues, including the annual calendar for holistic development of track and field in the country during its AGM (Annual General Meeting) to be held shortly. Synthetic track certification will be one of the key issues that need to be discussed thoroughly during AGM, Adille Sumariwalla, former AFI president said. "After completion of synthetic track by respective company/vendor, the AFI panel will check whether all the guidelines have been followed before a certificate of completion is issued. This is being done in consultation with all the stakeholders."

Sumariwalla, who is one of the vice-presidents at World Athletics said, it is important to cross check that good material is being used to construct the oval track having artificial surface. "Quality of the track should be as per specification. Good quality all weather running tracks across the country will enable the AFI to spread its domestic competition to different parts of the states," he added.

Life span of synthetic track is generally eight to ten years. But if substandard material is used, it will wear down in two-three years and will be injury prone, Sumariwalla revealed.

The AFI has also revised its annual domestic calendar for the 2026 season, incorporating more regional competitions. "A series of 16 regional events will be conducted from April to September. The inaugural edition of the National Indoor competition will also be organised in Bhubaneswar on March 24 and 25," Sumariwalla added.

Revision of **junior athletics programme** to strengthen grassroots project in the country

The AFI (Athletics Federation of India) continues to tweak its junior programme to strengthen grassroots development in the country. Each year the junior programme is revised to discourage overtraining and early specialisation in the age group categories, says Dr Lalit Bhanot former AFI secretary.

"Junior programme was initiated by AFI in early 1990's to strengthen grassroots development in the country. But for better results it is important to restructure the programme from time to time to achieve new goals," he added. "Overtraining inadvertently leads to early specialisation." According to Lalit Bhanot, who is also president of SAAF (South Asian Athletics Federation), says over a period of time several reasons have come to light that leads to overtraining in formative years of training. "The goal of the young athlete is to get government jobs. it is one of the one of the reasons for overtraining and early specialisation," he said.

AFI has also been organising seminars and workshops to discuss latest development at the junior level and incorporate best practice followed across the globe.

"The AFI has restructured the competition programme for U14; U16 and U18 (youth) age groups. Several events including 10,000m and 5,000m track events were deleted from the youth category. Triathlon events have been divided into different categories. Multi-discipline events have also been introduced in NIDJAM (National Inter District Junior Athletics Meet)," the former AFI secretary revealed.

To peak at right time, Asian qualification standards announced in January

With a goal to improve overall medal tally in track and field at the 2026 Asian Games in Japan, the AFI (Athletics Federation of India) announced the qualification mark in the first week of January. The Asian Games will be held in the Japanese region of Aichi-Nagoya from September 19 to October 4.

While announcing the Asian Games qualification standards, Adille Sumariwalla former AFI president and spokesperson said, the athletes have ample time at hand to peak at the right time and book tickets for the major international multi-discipline competition of the 2026 season. "The AFI will select at least two eligible athletes in each of the events," Sumariwalla added. "The AFI selection panel will take a final call on the strength of the Indian athletics contingent for the 2026 Asian Games."

Sumariwalla, who is also one of the vice presidents of the World Athletics said, the core group of athletes gave a good account of themselves in 2025, which augurs well for the 2026 season.

"Indian athletics contingent won 29 medals, six of them gold at the previous edition of the 2022 Asian Games held in China," he added. "I'm confident that the overall medal tally in athletics will be better this year in Japan."

The sixth place finish in track and field events at the previous Asian Games held in China was the benchmark set for 2026 Asian Games, he said. However, in several events including 200m, 400m, 800m and high hurdles the qualification mark has been fifth place finish. "The government (Sports Ministry) has been apprised of the AFI qualification mark for the 2026 Asian Games," he added.

The qualification mark in events like race walk and marathon, the AFI is yet to decide.

2026 Asian Games qualification mark

- **100m:** 10.16 seconds (men); 11.54 seconds (women)

- **200m:** 20.88 seconds (men); 23.70 (women)

- **400m:** 45.97 seconds (men); 53.72 seconds (women).

- **800m:** 1:48.80 seconds (men); 2:05.21 seconds (women)

- **1500m:** 3:42.00 seconds (men); 4:19.45 seconds.

- **5,000m:** 13:39.18 seconds (men); 15:36.58 seconds.

- **10,000m:** 29:00.00 seconds (men); 33:50.00 seconds (women)

- **110m hurdles:** 13:63 seconds (men); 100m hurdles: 13.34 seconds (women)

- **400m hurdles:** 49.41 seconds (men); 57.21 seconds (women)

- **3,000m steeplechase:** 8:36.57 seconds (men); 9:47.53 seconds (women).

- **Long jump:** 7.91m (men); 6.48m (women).

- **Triple jump:** 16:28m (men); 13.34m (women)

- **High jump:** 2.19m (men); 1.80m (women)

- **Pole vault:** 5.45m (men); 4.10m (women)

- **Shot put:** 19.41m (men); 16.25m (women)

- **Discus throw:** 60.13m (men); 55.48m (women).

- **throw:** 77.87m (men); 57.62m (women).

- **Hammer throw:** 69.12m (men); 61.72m (women).

- **Race walk:** 21km/42km: To be announced later.

- **Marathon:** 2::15:04 (men); 2::31:52 (women)

- **Decathlon:** 7250 points (men); 5605 points (heptathlon--women)

RELAY

- **4x100m:** 38.81 seconds (men); 45.24 seconds (women).

- **4x400m:** 3:04.23 seconds (men); 3:31.23 seconds.

MIXED

- **4x100m:** Yet to be announced.

- **4x400m:** 3:26.81 seconds.

AFI to incorporate more disciplines in priority list

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI), the national governing body of track and field in the country plans to incorporate more disciplines in the priority list in 2026. "To have a bigger core group of athletes the AFI has included more events in the priority list," Radhakrishnan Nair, chief national athletics coach said. "Several athletes excelled in different events at international level in the 2025 season. Good results in a wide range of events indicate depth in field." Emphasis in future, says the chief national athletics coach will also be on events like high jump (men and women), discus throw (women) and pole vault. "Top pole vaulters are getting more international exposure through invitational events. International exposure tour has enabled the athletes to improve their performance and gain valuable experience," he added. "From time-to-time AFI includes discipline to priority list. Inclusion of events in the priority list was also discussed with the government (Sports ministry/Sports Authority of India) recently during Annual Calendar for Training and Competition (ACTC)."

Outstanding performance by top sprinters in the 2025 season has raised hope of medal prospects in the 2026 Asian Games, the chief athletics coach said.

Athletics Federation of India to field 17-member Indian team for Asian Indoor Championships in China

Two-time Asian Indoor champion in men's shot put, Tajinderpal Singh Toor from Punjab, will lead the 17-member Indian team at the 12th Asian Indoor Athletics Championships scheduled to be held from February 6 to 8 in Tianjin, China. The team will leave for continental indoor meet on February 3. The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) announced the 17-member Indian contingent that includes promising shot putter Samardeep Singh Gill.

Toor's gold-medal winning performance at 11th Asian Indoor meet in Tehran, Iran, was 19.72m. The Punjab's 31 years old international thrower national outdoor record is 21.77m set in 2023 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

Toor was also winner of the shot put title at the 10th Asian indoor championships held in Nur Sultan, Kazakhstan. The Punjab's seasoned thrower is two-time Asian Games champion.

Promising long jumper Shahnawaz Khan and experienced triple jumper Praveen Chithravel

will also start their 2026 season with Asian Indoor competition in China.

Tejaswin Shankar (heptathlon) and Manikanta Hoblidhar (60m) are other prominent names in the men's team for next month's Asian Indoor meet. Country's top female sprinters Nithya Gandhe and Abhinaya Rajarajan will compete in the 60m dash in Tianjin. Moumita Mondal will compete in both 60m hurdles as well in women's long jump.

Indian national athletics team: Men: Manikanta Hoblidhar (60m), Tejas Shirse (60m hurdles), J Adrash Ram (high jump), CV Anurag and Shahnawaz Khan (long jump), Praveen Chithravel (triple jump), Samardeep Singh Gill, Tajinderpal Singh Toor (shot put), Tejaswin Shankar (heptathlon). Women: Nithya Gandhe, Abhinaya Rajarajan (60m), Moumita Mondal and Pragyan Prasanti Sahu (60m hurdles), Pooja (high jump), Ancy Sojan and Moumita Mondal (long jump), Yogita (shot put) and KA Anamika (Pentathlon).

2026 WORLD ATHLETICS CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS



Indian mixed relay team finished a creditable 12th at the 2026 World Athletics Cross Country Championships in Tallahassee, Florida. The team of Ajay Saroj, Pooja, Yoonus Shah and Ankita clocked 24 minutes 13 seconds in the 8km mixed relay event. In the individual men's 10km, Gulveer Singh finished 40th, Sawan Barwal 60th and Abhishek Pal 80th.

