

# NEWSLETTER



# NEW HIGH!

Indian contingent dominated 2024 Asian Cross Country Championships held in Hong Kong.



### BREAKING NEWS

India's star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra has new coach Czech javelin legend Jan Zelezny to prepare for 2025 season.

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# REGIONAL COMPETITIONS TO INFUSE MORE STRENGTH TO ECOSYSTEM SAYS AFI CHIEF

## Adille Sumariwalla

**Regional competitions incorporated in the 2025 calendar year are part of the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) ecosystem to build a solid foundation, Adille Sumariwalla, president AFI, said.**

The AFI has shortlisted more than 15 regional venues across the country to conduct the regional level events which is expected to encourage more participation at domestic level from next season.

“Regional competitions in the neighbourhood will give opportunities to promising athletes to showcase their potential,” Sumariwalla explained. “Having quality competition in the backyard will save time and money too.”

Sumariwalla, who is also one of the vice-presidents of World Athletics, said AFI will provide the technical inputs while the local organising committee will oversee the logistics for a smooth conduct of the competitions. “AFI will closely monitor the regional competitions and will ensure proper guidelines are followed.”

Last year AFI introduced a one-day relay carnival. It was conducted in March in Chandigarh. The elite Indian athletes preparing for the 2024 World Athletics Relay in Bahamas used the relay carnival platform to evaluate their performance.



"The main goal of the new regional competitions is to provide opportunities to young athletes whose performance has been modest in the previous year," the president of AFI explained.

The entry standards for the newly introduced regional domestic meets will be relaxed to allow more athletes to gain valuable experience and gradually climb the ladder, Sumariwalla said. "Good competition at the state level will also act as a build up for the main domestic events," he added.

Ranking points will be awarded to the athletes during the regional events. Top athletes will get a chance to graduate to the main domestic circuit even if their performance is below the entry criteria set by AFI, Sumariwalla said.

Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam, Jharkhand, Bihar and Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have been identified to organise regional competitions.

Army Sports Institute in Pune and Anju Bobby Sports Foundation in Bengaluru have also been spotted to conduct regional meets.

"Each regional competition will have different disciplines depending on the popularity of a particular event in that area," he added.

Coaching education and technical officials programmes to update their knowledge are among other verticals AFI has been working on to strengthen the ecosystem. "Collective efforts of all the stakeholders have enabled AFI to achieve a target set each year for the development of track and field in the country," the AFI president added. "The AFI is regularly conducting World Athletics Level 1 and Level 2 coaches education courses across the country."

## World Athletics coaching course in progress



**World Athletics Level 1 and 2** coaching courses conducted across the country in the first and second week of November will further give opportunities to several coaches to enhance their knowledge, Radhakrishnan Nair, chief athletics coach said. The Level 2 coaching courses were conducted between November 4 to 9. The Level 1 courses in six batches will be conducted between November 15 to 19 at different venues.

Patiala's National Institute of Sports in Punjab was one of the venues of Level 2 coaching courses. Thirty-eight candidates attended sprints and hurdles coaching courses. Twenty coaches are expected to join the middle and long distance course.

Courses in combined events and jumps will also be conducted. All the courses are being conducted in coordination with Sports Authority of India and REC Limited. The Level I coaching course, chief athletics coach said, will be conducted in an e-learning module format of the World Athletics.

Candidates who attend classes through e-learning will be given a certificate of successfully completing the course and thereafter will be eligible to attend practical classes.

# Indian distance runners stamped their authority at **Asian Cross Country in Hong Kong**

**Current crop of Indian elite distance runners made the most of the opportunity at the 17th edition of the Asian Cross Country Championships held at Hong Kong's picturesque golf course on October 20.**

The Indian contingent tamed the undulating 2km loop of the golf course to claim four team titles—men, women's, U20 men and U20 women's group—to stamped their authority in the continental competition.

The Indian team also won three individual gold medals to showcase their potential at the Asian level. Overall the Indian team won 11 medals.

Majority of global distance runners usually compete in cross country races during winter months to gain strength and endurance. Several runners also compete on road racing circuits to build up tempo for the outdoor track season in summer.

India's Gulveer Singh, who holds both men's 5,000m and 10,000m national records, has shown he can easily adapt to undulating cross country courses as well as excel on track.

After improving national 5,000m track record to 13:11:82 in September at World Athletics Continental Tour in Niigata, Japan, nearly four weeks later Gulveer Singh dominated senior men's 10km cross country in Hong Kong.

Gulveer Singh will skip the upcoming SAAF Cross Country Championships scheduled to be held on November 24 in Islamabad, Pakistan. Kartik Kumar, another prominent distance runner has opted out of the SAAF competition. The Indian team would leave for Pakistan on November 20.



Gulveer Singh in action.

## Results (Asian Cross Country Championships):

- **Women (10km):** Seema 37:20, Sanjivani Jadhav 37:20, He Wuga (China) 38:02.
- **Team:** India (Seema, Sanjivani Jadhav, Ankita (4), Sonika (14).
- **Women (U20) 6km:** Li Yuan (China) 22:59, Shilpaben Veljibhai Dihora (India) 23:04, Fang Yujia (China) 23:05.
- **Team:** India (Shilpaben Veljibhai Dihora (2), Prachi Ankush Devikar (4), Sunita Devi (6), Ekta Dey (15), China, Hong Kong China.
- **Men: 10km:** Gulveer Singh (India) 32:43, Abhishek Pal (India) 32:49, Arun Rathod (India) 32:51.
- **Team:** India (Gulveer Singh (1), Abhishek Pal (2), Arun Rathod (3), Kartik Kumar (4), China, Hong Kong China.
- **Men: U20: 8km:** Vinod Singh (India) 26:30, Fu Qiguang (China) 26:33, Yu Shuiqing (China) 26:44.
- **Team:** India (Vinod Singh, Gaurav Bhaskar Bhosale (4), Kripashankar Yadav (5), Amardeep Pal (6), China, Hong Kong China.

# Junior national to be held in first week of December in Bhubaneswar

Due to inclement weather conditions in Odisha's coastal regions, including Bhubaneswar the junior national meet was postponed in October. The rescheduled competition will be held from December 7 to 11 at the same venue (Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar), N Ramesh, chief junior national coach said.

"The local weather conditions due to the cyclone were not conducive to conduct a junior national meet that attracts more than 600 athletes in different age groups," the chief junior national coach added.

Junior national competition always acts as a good platform to scout talent. The selected athletes can be later drafted to National Center of Excellence (NCOE) scheme run by Sports Authority of India (SAI) across the country and have good facilities, N Ramesh added.

The Indian contingent at the SAAF junior meet held from September 11 to 13 in Chennai, gave a good account of their performance. The Indian team not only improved several meet records but walked away with the overall trophy, the chief junior coach said.

"Delhi's international teenage runner Jay Kumar was the most consistent quarter-miler in the junior group this year," he added.

Highlight of Jay Kumar's performance graph was season and personal best of 46.86 seconds clocked during SAAF competition in Chennai.

The 18 years old competed in three individual 400m races at 2024 World U20 Athletics Championships held in August in Lima, Peru. He was also a member of the four relay races, including mixed 4x400m and men's 4x400m heats.



While he finished in the top six in the individual 400m at World U20, he anchored the national 4x400m relay team that clocked a national record of 3:08.10 seconds at World U20 Athletics Championships.

Earlier in April the Indian team made a big impression at the 2024 Asian U20 Athletics Championships held in Dubai.

The Indian contingent had a rich haul of 29 medals, seven of them gold. Impressive performance ranked India second behind China in medal standings at the Asian U20 Athletics Championships.

This is for the first time since 1996 Indian contingent took the second spot in medal standings behind China at the Asian U20 Athletics Championships.

At the 2023 Asian U20 Athletics Championships held in Yecheon, South Korea, the Indian team won 19 medals, six gold, seven silver and six bronze to finish third.

# NCOE will be new hub for elite athletes



Athletes during training in Bengaluru.

Top sprinters will practice at Trivandrum in Kerala, while Bengaluru in Karnataka will be the main venue for elite middle and long distance runners. Patiala in Punjab will be the main center for throwers, Radhakrishnan Nair, chief athletics coach said.

The AFI (Athletics Federation of India) had announced earlier this year that post 2024 Paris Olympic Games national camps will be decentralized. "Due to decentralization, top athletes have an option to train close to their home. They can either practice at the National Center of Excellence or at departmental training centers that have good facilities," the chief athletics coach added.

Long jumper Murali Sreeshankar has recovered from a long layoff due to knee injury and started training. Sreeshankar has a choice either to train in Trivandrum or Bengaluru.

## Ajmal injured

Meanwhile, Muhammad Ajmal, one of the key members of the national 4x400m relay team has been sidelined due to a knee injury. He had to undergo surgery to get rid of the pain. "He has started rehab and it might take four to five months to fully recover and get back to serious practice," the chief athletics coach added.



The main international competitions in the 2025 season, said Radhakrishnan Nair, will be World Relays scheduled to be held on May 10 and 11 in China. The Asian Athletics Championships will be held from May 27 to 31 in Korea. The 2025 World Athletics Championships will be held in Tokyo from September 13 to 27.

# Indian athletes won four team titles at 2024 Asian Cross Country Championships in Hong Kong.

