

THE NATIONAL SPORTS GOVERNANCE BILL, 2025

An Overview of India's Proposed Legal Framework for Sports Governance

INTRODUCTION



- **Purpose:** The primary purpose of the National Sports Governance Bill 2025 (***2025 Bill***) is to provide a framework for transparent, ethical, and effective sports governance in India.
- **Guided by:** Olympic Charter, Paralympic Charter, international best practices.
- **Key Aims:**
 - Provide for development and promotion of sport;
 - Ensure welfare of athletes and enable their voices to be heard;
 - Create transparent mechanisms for resolving disputes.

WHY A NATIONAL SPORTS ACT

Over 350 legal disputes pending across various sports bodies, courts have repeatedly emphasized on a unified governance model.

Increasing demand for integrity, transparency, and fairness in sports management.

Need for alignment with global best practices for sports governance.

Need for protection and promotion of athletes' rights and promotion of gender equity.

Need to establish effective internal grievance redressal and dispute resolution mechanisms.

BROAD HISTORY OF INDIAN SPORTS REFORM EFFORTS



COMPARISON OF THE KEY PROVISIONS

CRITERIA	2011 SPORTS CODE	2025 BILL
Legal Standing	Executive guidelines - enforced by judiciary	Statute— will become law of the land once passed
Age Cap	Strict cap at 70—no extension/relaxation allowed for any post.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cap of 70 at the time of filing nominations;• Flexibility: 70–75 allowed if permitted by International Charters and bye-laws. <i>[Section 4(2)(e)]</i>
Term Limits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Max 3 terms (4 years) for the President with or without break.• 2 successive terms for Treasurer and Secretary after which a mandatory cooling off period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 consecutive terms (President, Secretary General, Treasurer).• 4-year cooling off mandatory after 3 terms.• No cap on maximum terms. <i>[Section 4(2)(b)]</i>
Women and Athlete Representation	Inclusion of sportspersons with voting rights in the management of NSFs.	Minimum 4 women in Ex. Committee; 2+ sportspersons of outstanding merit and 2 from Athlete Commission. <i>[Section 4(1)(b)]</i>
Oversight/Dispute Redressal	Recognition/oversight by Ministry; Disute resolution through normal courts; No independent Tribunal or oversight Board.	National Sports Board <i>[Section 5];</i> National Sports Election Panel <i>[Section16];</i> National Sports Tribunal <i>[Section17–26].</i>
Safe Sports, POSH, Ethics	Based on the Vishakha judgement, all NSF’s and bodies under them directed to build appropriate mechanisms for prevention of sexual harassment.	Mandatory Code of Ethics <i>[Section 12];</i> Safe Sports Policy including minors and women <i>[Section 13].</i>

ESTABLISHES KEY OVERSIGHT BODIES

BODY	ROLE & AUTHORITY	WHAT THIS ENABLES	RELEVANT SECTIONS
National Sports Board (NSB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory apex regulatory authority for all National Sports Federations. Functions like SEBI for sports: recognition, audits, compliance, power to suspend/cancel recognition, set ethics and safe sport policy. Acts as an enabler: aims for capacity-building, alignment with international standards, constructive oversight (not purely punitive). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSB brings uniform legal oversight replacing fragmented “Ministry recognition”. Single nodal point for regulation, guidance, and intervention. GAME-CHANGER: may manage to bring BCCI under its purview. 	5, 6, 8–11
National Sports Tribunal (NST)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated quasi-judicial body for sports disputes: handles cases on elections, athlete selection, management, grants, ethics breaches. Appeals only to Supreme Court and not High Courts - cuts down litigation delays. Mandatory transfer of ongoing cases from civil courts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faster, expert, cost-effective dispute resolution. Unlike old regime: no parallel civil litigation, high degree of specialization and independence. 	17–26
National Sports Election Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory election panel: retired election commissioners/electoral officers to monitor election process in all NSFs. Ensures fair, transparent, and uniform elections. Shifts away from prior system (federation constitutions/Court appointees). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electorate selection, supervision, and grievance redressal shift to experts – not vested officials or ad hoc Court appointees. Standardizes and professionalizes elections of sports bodies. 	16

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE 2025 BILL

UNIFIED LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Every NSF must obtain recognition and comply with the directives of the NSB, ensuring standardized oversight and an end to special exemptions.

TRANSPARENCY & STATUTORY RTI COMPLIANCE

- *All recognized sports bodies are legally deemed “public authorities” under the RTI Act, making their operational and financial dealings open to public scrutiny;*
- *Penalties for violations include suspension/cancellation of recognition.*

GLOBAL ALIGNMENT & EVENT HOSTING READINESS

The 2025 Bill is expressly crafted to meet Olympic, Paralympic and international standards, strengthening India’s case for major event bids and ensuring administrative practices match global best practices.

ELIGIBILITY & TENURE LIMITS

To hold key posts, one must have prior experience (2 terms in executive committee or sports person of merit). Further, term limits along with cooling off enable continuity and at the same time create opportunities for new people.



USAGE OF NATIONAL NAMES & INSIGNIA

A sports organisation must obtain a NOC from the Central Government for using national insignia or symbols in its name / affairs.

SPECIALIZED & FAST-TRACK DISPUTE MECHANISMS

Disputes escalate in tiers: from internal committees, to the NST, and ultimately the Supreme Court. NST does not handle international event or anti-doping cases; those remain with appropriate panels

PYRAMID STRUCTURE

Gives sanctity to the sports pyramid structure wherein international federations shall be consulted in the case of NSFs and NSFs shall be consulted wherein the matter pertains to affiliated units.

ATHLETE & GENDER REPRESENTATION & CAPS

The Executive Committee, limited to fifteen members, must have at least two sportspersons of outstanding merit, two elected from the Athletes Committee, and a minimum of four women. This framework guarantees strong athlete representation and gender balance, while also ensuring compliance with the POSH Act to safeguard vulnerable groups.

WAY FORWARD

Once promulgated, the Act:

- will ensure that all NSFs fall in line (become compliant) within a mandated time frame;
- will be a step forward in guaranteeing enhanced athlete rights and their meaningful participation in decision-making and will promote gender equity;
- will centralize oversight and public scrutiny of sports organizations.
- will put an end to the trend of court appointed ad hoc committees and the threat of suspension by international bodies on account of deemed third party interference (cases where athletes tend to suffer most).
- will ensure expedited, specialized, and cost-effective resolution of sports disputes the the NST (and appeals being permitted solely to the Apex Court).



CONCLUSION: While the National Sports Governance Bill, 2025 lays down a much-needed foundation built on transparency, accountability, and athlete welfare, many of its provisions remain broad in nature. It makes room for detailed rules / guidelines to be brought in for several key areas—such as the NSB, NST, safe sports, data protection, ethics and dispute resolution mechanisms, recognition of sports bodies, and governance norms such as conflict of interest in NSFs, which, once established, will bring real, and meaningful change.



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