

Sports as Soft Power

Why in news?

The smaller nations in the world are investing more in elite sports as it is thought that success in international sporting events boosts a nation's chances of attaining soft power.

What is soft power?

- Soft power is a country's ability to influence the preferences and behaviours of various actors in the international arena through attraction or persuasion rather than coercion.
- The term was coined by an American political scientist Joseph Nye Jr. in the late 1980s.
- **Benefits of Soft Power**
 - A strong nation brand and positive soft power perceptions allow a nation to promote itself as a place for people to visit, invest in, and build a reputation for their quality of goods and services.
 - It allows a country to rise in the esteem of its neighbours, market its resources and compose the face it presents on the international stage.
 - The soft power can encourage domestic tourism, consumption of domestic goods and services (rather than imports).

To know about India's soft power diplomacy with Thailand, click [here](#)



What is the role of sports in the soft power?

- A survey was conducted in 2020 on China's performance in the Olympics and the impressions about China based on its rising medal count.
- The survey noted that the country's Olympic achievement has a positive effect on its national soft power.
- China uses its superiority in elite sports to build people-to-people relations with other countries.
- For example, athletes from African countries such as Madagascar are trained in swimming, badminton, table tennis, etc. in China.

*Constitutionally, sports form a part of Entry 33 of the **State List**, under Article 246 of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India.*

What is the picture of India in sports?

- **Tokyo Olympics Games**- India's medal tally in the recent Tokyo Olympics Games is seven.
- India has one of the world's poorest population-to-medal ratios in the Olympics.
- India has won 35 medals at the Olympics since the 1900 edition.
- **Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games (CWG)**- At the CWG 2022, Indian athletes won 61 medals, including 22 golds.
- **Thomas Cup**- India's badminton team stunned 14-time champions Indonesia at the men's finals for a historic win at the 2022 Thomas Cup.
- **Chess Olympiad 2022**- The 44th edition of the FIDE Chess Olympiad 2022 is currently being hosted by India for the first time.

*In 2014, the Ministry of Sports launched the **Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)** to improve India's performance at the Olympics and Paralympics through extra monetary assistance and training from the best national and international coaches.*

How to increase the sporting performance and soft power?

- In 2016, a NITI Aayog report came up with a 20-point plan to improve India's Olympics performance.
- **MoU**- India should concentrate on forging MoUs with nations that excel in specific sports to train Indian players overseas.
 - For example, Australia and the United Kingdom can assist us in swimming and African countries like Kenya in running.
- **Boosting the number**- India needs to boost the number of athletes under TOPS to foster a competitive climate, in turn aiding performance.
- **Investment**- Private investment needs to be harnessed to develop infrastructure.
- The Government should work on a public-private partnership (PPP) model to create basic sporting infrastructure at the district level to capture young talents at an early stage.

References

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Quick facts

International Olympic Committee (IOC)

- Established in 1894, the International Olympic Committee is a not-for-profit independent international organisation.
- It is based in **Lausanne, Switzerland**, the Olympic Capital.
- It is entirely privately funded and distributes 90% of its revenues to the wider sporting movement, for the development of sport and athletes at all levels.
- The vision of the International Olympic Committee is to Build a Better World through Sport.
- The International Olympic Committee is the guardian of the Olympic Games and the leader of the Olympic Movement.

Indian Olympic Association (IOA)

- India first participated in the Olympics in 1900 in Paris.
- The IOA was established in the year 1927 with Sir Dorabji Tata.
- It is registered as a Non-Profit Organisation under the Societies Registration Act of 1860.
- The Indian Olympic Association is the governing body for the Olympic Movement and the Commonwealth Games in India.
- It is an affiliated member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF), Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) and Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC).
- It oversees the representation of athletes or teams participating in the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and other international multi-sport competitions of IOC, CGF, OCA and ANOC.
- The Indian Olympic Association is recognised by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.