

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.

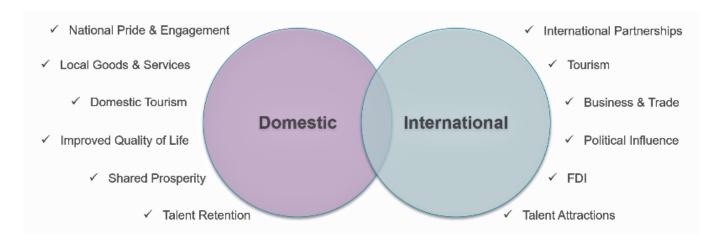
What is soft power?

- 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.
- \circ 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



Benefits of Soft Power: A Strong Domestic and International Nation Brand

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.
 - \circ 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.

