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Sports Law in India: Evolution, Challenges, and Contemporary Developments

Dr. Siddhant Chandra

Assistant Professor, Xavier Law School, St. Xavier's University, Kolkata

Abstract: *This article examines the evolution of sports law in India, focusing on the transformative impact of the National Sports Governance Act, 2025. The study analyzes India's transition from fragmented, guideline-based sports governance to comprehensive statutory regulation, addressing historical challenges of accountability, transparency, and athlete representation. Through examination of key legislation, institutional developments, and landmark cases, the research reveals how India is establishing a multi-tiered governance structure encompassing the National Sports Board, National Sports Tribunal, and mandatory democratic processes for sports federations. The article explores contemporary issues including contract law, anti-doping regulations, dispute resolution mechanisms, intellectual property rights, gender equality, and emerging areas such as esports recognition.¹ While acknowledging significant progress in creating athlete-centered governance frameworks, the study identifies ongoing challenges including implementation gaps, jurisdictional limitations, and the balance between governmental oversight and sporting autonomy. The research contributes to understanding sports law development in federal systems and provides insights for sports governance reform in developing nations. The findings suggest that while India's new statutory framework addresses many historical deficiencies, sustained attention to enforcement mechanisms, institutional independence, and inclusive participation will be crucial for realizing the legislation's transformative potential.*

Keywords: Sports Law, Sports Governance, National Sports Governance Act, Athlete Rights.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sports law in India represents a rapidly evolving domain that has gained significant prominence with the country's growing international sporting achievements and the commercialization of sports. Despite India's rich sporting heritage and increasing global presence, the legal framework governing sports has historically been fragmented, relying primarily on general contract law, tort principles, and administrative guidelines rather than comprehensive sports-specific legislation. This legal landscape underwent a fundamental transformation with the enactment of the National Sports Governance Act, 2025, marking India's first comprehensive statutory framework for sports governance.²

The emergence of sports law as a distinct legal discipline in India can be traced to the establishment of the Indian Olympic Association in 1927 and the subsequent formation of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in 1982. However, the absence of unified legislation has meant that sports-related disputes and governance issues have been addressed through a patchwork of existing laws, creating uncertainty and inconsistency in legal outcomes. The commercialization of sports, particularly following the success of the Indian Premier League, has further highlighted the need for specialized legal frameworks to address complex issues ranging from broadcasting rights to athlete contracts.³

Contemporary sports law in India encompasses diverse areas including governance and administration, contract law, intellectual property rights, anti-doping regulations, dispute resolution mechanisms, and athlete welfare. The legal framework operates within India's federal structure, where sports falls under Entry 33 of the State List, creating additional complexity in terms of jurisdictional competence and enforcement mechanisms. This article examines these multifaceted aspects of Indian sports law, analyzing how recent legislative developments address historical gaps while creating new challenges for implementation and enforcement.⁴

¹ Paul Smith, 'Television Sports Rights beyond the West: The Cases of India and South Africa' (2016) 12 Global Media and Communication; Shaun Star and Divyangana Dhankar, 'Major Differences in Minors' Contracts: A Comparative Analysis into the Validity of Contracts with Minors in the Sport and Entertainment Industry' (2022) 43 Liverpool Law Review; Vijay Kumar Singh, 'A Primer on Sports and Competition Law Interface in India' [2017] SSRN Electronic Journal.

² Agnieszka Brenk and Olga Ilona Smoleńska, 'Safety and Nature versus Tourists, Athletes and Residents in Sagarmatha National Park Nepal' (2020) 6 Quality in Sport.

³ Shayan Dasgupta, 'Match Fixing: Threat to Indian Sport's Integrity' [2013] SSRN Electronic Journal.

⁴ M Hanagavadi and others, 'Psychosocial Issues: Support for People with Hemophilia and Their Families in India' (2012) 18 Haemophilia.

II. EVOLUTION OF SPORTS GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

A. Historical Development and Regulatory Gaps

The governance of sports in India has evolved from an informal, association-based system to an increasingly regulated statutory framework. Prior to 2025, sports governance relied primarily on the National Sports Development Code of 2011, which attempted to regulate term limits, age restrictions, and transparency in sports federations but lacked binding legal authority. This created what scholars term a "governance gap," where administrative instructions could be ignored without meaningful consequences, leading to persistent issues of factionalism, indefinite tenure of office-bearers, and lack of athlete representation in decision-making processes. The Indian Olympic Association, established in 1927, served as the primary interface between Indian sports and international sporting bodies, while the Sports Authority of India, created in 1984, focused on athlete development and infrastructure. However, the absence of unified legislation meant that disputes were often resolved through general civil courts or remained unresolved, creating uncertainty for athletes and administrators alike. The Supreme Court's intervention in various sports governance disputes, particularly regarding the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), highlighted the need for specialized legal frameworks.⁵

B. Legal Framework and Regulatory Structure

Constitutional and Legislative Foundations

Sports law in India operates within a complex constitutional framework where sports regulation falls under Entry 33 of the State List, giving primary legislative competence to state governments. However, the National Sports Governance Act, 2025 asserts central legislative authority, likely drawing on Article 253's power to implement international treaties and Entry 97 of the Union List for matters of national importance. This constitutional positioning raises questions about federal balance and potential challenges to the Act's validity, though the legislation's alignment with India's international sporting obligations provides strong constitutional backing.⁶

The Act's constitutional implications extend to the status of sports federations as potential "State" entities under Article 12 of the Constitution. While the Supreme Court in *Zee Telefilms v. Union of India* held that the BCCI was not a "State" entity, the statutory powers conferred by the new Act may alter this analysis. The Act's requirement that recognized federations perform public functions with statutory authority suggests they should be subject to constitutional scrutiny, particularly regarding athletes' fundamental rights to equality and due process.⁷

III. CONTRACT LAW AND ATHLETE RIGHTS

A. Sports Contracts and Legal Framework

Sports contracts in India are governed primarily by the Indian Contract Act, 1872, with additional layers of regulation from sports governing bodies, anti-doping rules, and labor laws. The legal framework recognizes sports contracts as specialized agreements that must balance general contract principles with sport-specific requirements, including performance obligations, conduct clauses, and regulatory compliance. Key elements of sports contracts include party identification, service obligations, revenue-sharing arrangements, arbitration clauses, and termination provisions.⁸ The evolution of sports contracts reflects the increasing commercialization of Indian sports, with agreements now covering complex arrangements for broadcasting rights, sponsorship deals, and image rights. Professional leagues have introduced sophisticated contractual frameworks that address player transfers, salary caps, and disciplinary procedures. However, the absence of comprehensive sports-specific labor legislation means that the classification of athletes as employees versus independent contractors remains contentious, with significant implications for taxation, benefits, and dispute resolution.⁹ The landmark case of *Percept D'Mark (India) Pvt. Ltd. v. Zaheer Khan* established important precedents regarding restraint of trade in sports contracts, with the Supreme Court ruling that individuals cannot be compelled to remain in contracts against their will. This decision reinforced principles of personal liberty while recognizing the commercial interests of sports management companies. The case also highlighted the importance of clear contractual terms and the courts' reluctance to enforce overly restrictive covenants that impede athletes' career mobility.¹⁰

⁵ Aditya Sondhi, 'The Legal Status of BCCI: Unwarranted Ad-Hocism, Constitutional Hurdles and the Pressing Need for a Cricket-Legislation' (2010) 22 National Law School of India Review.

⁶ Hanagavadi M. and others, 'Psychosocial Issues: Support for People with Hemophilia and Their Families in India'.

⁷ Sascha L Schmidt and Florian Holzmayer, 'A Framework for Diversification Decisions in Professional Football', *Routledge Handbook of Football Business and Management* (2019).

⁸ Goolam Vahed and Ashwin Desai, 'Identity and Belonging in Post-Apartheid South Africa: The Case of Indian South Africans' (2010) 25 Journal of Social Sciences.

⁹ Gerard Holden, 'World Cricket as a Postcolonial International Society: IR Meets the History of Sport' (2008) 22 Global Society.

¹⁰ Thiagarajan M and Sridevi J, 'A Study on Women Safety Measures to Overcome Stress' (2022) 12 Journal of Management and Science.

B. Athlete Welfare and Protection Mechanisms

Gender discrimination in sports remains a persistent challenge, with female athletes facing unequal funding, training opportunities, and media coverage compared to their male counterparts. Legal protections include the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013, which explicitly covers sporting venues and activities. However, implementation challenges persist, with advocates calling for more stringent enforcement and institutional support for women athletes.¹¹

IV. DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND SPORTS ARBITRATION

A. Current Dispute Resolution Mechanisms

Sports dispute resolution in India has historically relied on a fragmented system combining internal federation mechanisms, traditional litigation, and limited access to international arbitration through the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). The Indian court system has witnessed nearly 770 sports-related cases over the past decade, ranging from governance disputes to selection controversies, highlighting the acute need for specialized dispute resolution mechanisms.¹²

The Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 provides the primary framework for alternative dispute resolution in sports, with many sports contracts incorporating arbitration clauses. Sports Dispute Resolution Chambers (SDRCs) within National Sports Federations offer specialized forums for internal disputes, though their independence and effectiveness vary significantly across different sports. The Court of Arbitration for Sport plays a crucial role for international disputes and doping cases, with its decisions binding and enforceable in India under international arbitration treaties.¹³

Current challenges include enforcement delays, fragmentation of forums with overlapping jurisdictions, and limited awareness of ADR mechanisms among smaller federations and athletes. The lack of sports law expertise among arbitrators and mediators further compounds these challenges, creating demand for specialized training and capacity building in sports dispute resolution.

B. The National Sports Tribunal: Innovation and Limitations

The National Sports Tribunal established under the National Sports Governance Act, 2025 represents India's most significant attempt to create a specialized sports dispute resolution mechanism. The Tribunal's composition, headed by former Supreme Court or High Court judges with expert members, aims to combine legal expertise with sports knowledge. However, its jurisdiction excludes doping cases and matters reserved for international federations, limiting its comprehensive effectiveness.¹⁴

This jurisdictional limitation reflects a departure from international best practices, where sports arbitration bodies typically handle comprehensive sports disputes including doping matters. Countries like Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom have established sports tribunals with broader jurisdiction, enabling more coherent and efficient dispute resolution. The Indian model's exclusion of doping cases to the National Anti-Doping Agency creates potential forum confusion and delays.

The Tribunal's effectiveness will depend on several factors including timely appointments, adequate funding, clear procedural rules, and robust enforcement mechanisms. Comparative analysis with international sports tribunals suggests that success requires independence from government influence, expertise in sports law, and efficient case management systems. The Act's provision for appeals to regular courts may undermine the Tribunal's finality and efficiency, contradicting the speed and specialization that make sports arbitration attractive.

V. ANTI-DOPING REGULATIONS AND COMPLIANCE

A. National Anti-Doping Framework

India's anti-doping framework is governed by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA), established as a statutory body under the National Anti-Doping Act, 2022. NADA implements the World Anti-Doping Code in India, with responsibilities including planning and monitoring anti-doping activities, investigating violations, and promoting anti-doping education. The agency operates under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and works closely with the Sports Authority of India to ensure comprehensive coverage of anti-doping measures.

¹¹ Akash Agarwal, 'DOPING IN SPORTS – ITS EVOLUTION AND ITS LEGALITY' (2021) 1 THE JOURNAL OF UNIQUE LAWS AND STUDENTS.

¹² Kayomard Irani, Shivani Rajesh and Ashish Deshpande, 'Combating Anti-Competitive Practices in the Commercialised Sports Industry with Special Emphasis on Sports Federations in India' (2024) 24 International Sports Law Journal; Rohit Kumar Dugar, 'Overview of Sports Law in India: Meaning, Concept, and Laws' (2023) 09 Journal of Legal Studies & Research; Abhishek Srivastava, 'A Comparative Study of Sports Law of India and France' (2021) 9 International Journal for Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology.

¹³ Sharda Ugra, 'The Third Umpire Lodha Committee Report on Indian Cricket'.

¹⁴ NB Kumar and others, 'Fatal Accidental Cut Throat Injury by Manja: A Case Report' (2015) 9 Indian Journal of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology; Ruijuan Zhao, 'Physical Education Management System Evaluation Model Based on Mathematical AHP' (2013) 8 BioTechnology: An Indian Journal.

The National Anti-Doping Rules, 2021 govern conditions for sports participation and establish procedures for sample collection, result management, and disciplinary proceedings. These rules apply throughout India and align with the 2015 WADA Code, ensuring international compliance and consistency. The framework includes provisions for athlete whereabouts information, therapeutic use exemptions, and sanctions for violations ranging from disqualification to multi-year bans.¹⁵

Recent developments include the establishment of the National Board for Anti-Doping in Sports, which oversees NADA's activities and issues policy directions. The Board constitutes disciplinary and appeal panels for determining consequences of anti-doping rule violations, providing specialized expertise in complex doping cases. However, the separation of doping cases from the National Sports Tribunal creates potential coordination challenges and forum confusion.

B. Enforcement Challenges and International Compliance

India's anti-doping enforcement faces several challenges including limited testing capacity, inadequate laboratory infrastructure, and awareness gaps among athletes and support personnel. The National Dope Testing Laboratory serves as the primary testing facility, but expanding testing programs requires additional regional laboratories and enhanced capacity building. NADA has emphasized education and awareness programs, recognizing that prevention is more effective than punishment in maintaining clean sport.¹⁶

International compliance remains crucial for India's sporting reputation and athlete eligibility for global competitions. High-profile cases like those involving wrestlers Narsingh Yadav and other athletes have highlighted both the effectiveness of India's testing programs and the challenges of ensuring due process in complex doping cases. The Court of Arbitration for Sport has heard several appeals from Indian athletes, with mixed outcomes depending on the strength of evidence and procedural compliance.

The integration of anti-doping measures with broader sports governance structures requires careful coordination between NADA, sports federations, and the new institutional architecture established by the National Sports Governance Act, 2025. Clear protocols for information sharing, investigation procedures, and sanctions coordination are essential to maintain the integrity of India's anti-doping program while protecting athletes' rights.¹⁷

C. Intellectual Property and Broadcasting Rights

Legal Framework for Sports Broadcasting

Broadcasting and media rights represent a crucial component of sports law in India, governed primarily by the Copyright Act, 1957 and the Sports Broadcasting Signals (Mandatory Sharing with Prasar Bharati) Act, 2007. The legal framework protects broadcast signals, recorded footage, and commentary while balancing commercial interests with public access to major sporting events. Copyright protection typically extends for 25 years, providing broadcasters with exclusive rights to rebroadcast and sublicense content.¹⁸

The Sports Broadcasting Signals Act, 2007 mandates that private broadcasters share signals of designated significant events with Prasar Bharati on a revenue-sharing basis, ensuring public access to nationally important sporting events. This legislation reflects the balance between commercial rights and public interest, with revenue splitting arrangements that provide 75% to rights holders and 25% to Prasar Bharati for television broadcasts.

Intellectual property challenges in sports broadcasting include signal piracy, unauthorized streaming, and jurisdictional issues in enforcement. The Copyright Act provides criminal penalties and empowers courts to block illegal websites and seize equipment used for unauthorized broadcasting. However, technological advances and cross-border streaming create ongoing enforcement challenges that require international cooperation and updated legal frameworks.

D. Commercial Rights and Athlete Image Rights

The commercialization of sports has created complex intellectual property issues regarding athlete image rights, team trademarks, and commercial partnerships. Indian law recognizes various forms of intellectual property in sports including copyrights in audiovisual content, trademarks in team logos and event branding, and personality rights of athletes. However, the absence of comprehensive personality rights legislation creates uncertainty regarding athlete control over their commercial image.

¹⁵ Jasmine Priya M, 'Sexual Politics in the Short Stories of M.A Susheela from Feminist View' (2022) 4 International Research Journal of Tamil.

¹⁶ Shivam Kapoor, Pranay Lal and Amit Yadav, 'Indirect Tobacco Advertising, Promotion and Sponsorships in the Indian Premier League 2020: Tobacco Industry's Continuous Presence in Indian Cricket' (2021) 68 Indian Journal of Tuberculosis.

¹⁷ 'Gender Discrimination in Sports: Depleting Respect of Women Players in India' (2017) 6 International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR).

¹⁸ T Milton, 'Sports Tourism in Tamil Nadu-Problems and Prospects' (2020) 83 Test Engineering and Management; S Saravana Kumar and Ashwini Sanmath, 'An Empirical Study on Esports Consumer Consumption Patterns, Motives and Its Effect on Consumer Behavior' (2023) 16 BALTIC JOURNAL OF LAW & POLITICS A Journal of Vytautas Magnus University.

Sports organizations increasingly rely on trademark protection for logos, mascots, and event branding, with enforcement actions against unauthorized use becoming more common. The Delhi High Court's decision in *Star India Pvt Ltd v. Jackstream.com* (2023) demonstrated judicial willingness to protect broadcasting rights against illegal streaming, granting injunctions to prevent copyright violations during major sporting events.¹⁹

The growth of digital platforms and social media has created new challenges for intellectual property protection in sports, requiring updated legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms. Issues include unauthorized use of sports content on social media platforms, domain name disputes, and cross-border enforcement of intellectual property rights.

VI. LIABILITY AND SPORTS INJURY LAW

A. Legal Principles and Negligence Standards

Sports injury liability in India is governed by general tort law principles, particularly negligence, as codified in the law of torts and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. The legal framework requires establishing duty of care, breach of that duty, causation, and actual damage to hold parties liable for sports-related injuries. Courts apply varying standards of care depending on the inherent risks of different sports, with contact sports generally requiring higher thresholds for liability.

Key precedents include *Dinesh Chandra Ojha v. Sports Authority of India*, where the court held SAI liable for providing defective equipment that caused athlete injury. The court established that sports organizers have a duty to ensure reasonable safety of equipment and facilities provided to participants. Similarly, in *Sarojini v. State of Uttar Pradesh*, the court found school administration liable for injuries caused by unsafe playing conditions.²⁰

The regulatory framework includes provisions under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, which may apply to sports services, and various safety regulations imposed by sports federations. However, the absence of comprehensive sports-specific liability legislation creates uncertainty regarding standards of care and available remedies. Legal experts advocate for dedicated sports injury legislation that would clarify liability standards and provide structured rehabilitation support.

B. Institutional Responsibility and Risk Management

Sports organizations, educational institutions, and event organizers face increasing liability exposure as courts recognize broader duties of care to participants and spectators. The Supreme Court's observation in *Zee Telefilms v. Union of India* that sports governing bodies have duties to create safe rules and maintain ongoing safety reviews established important precedents for institutional responsibility.²¹

Risk management strategies include comprehensive insurance coverage, safety protocols, equipment maintenance procedures, and emergency response plans. Sports contracts increasingly include liability waivers and assumption of risk clauses, though their enforceability depends on clarity of language and reasonableness of terms. Courts have shown reluctance to enforce overly broad waivers that attempt to exclude liability for gross negligence or intentional misconduct.

The National Sports Governance Act, 2025's mandate for Safe Sports Policies represents a significant development in institutional responsibility, requiring sports bodies to implement comprehensive athlete protection measures. These policies must address not only physical safety but also protection from harassment, abuse, and discrimination, creating new dimensions of institutional liability.

VII. GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSIVE SPORTS LAW

A. Legal Framework for Gender Equality

Gender equality in sports is addressed through constitutional provisions under Articles 14 and 15, which guarantee equality and prohibit discrimination based on sex, and specific legislation including the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013 explicitly covers sporting venues and activities, providing legal protection for women athletes and sports personnel. However, implementation challenges persist, with significant gaps between legal protections and practical equality.²²

¹⁹ Tarveen Jandoo and Ravi Mehrotra, 'Tobacco Control in India: Present Scenario and Challenges Ahead' (2008) 9 Asian Pacific Journal of Cancer Prevention; John J Miller and others, 'A Content Analysis of the Journal of Legal Aspects of Sport: 1992-2016' (2018) 29 Journal of Legal Aspects of Sport.

²⁰ Vivek Benegal, 'Gambling Experiences, Problems and Policy in India: A Historical Analysis' (2013) 108 Addiction.

²¹ Benegal (n 20).

²² Rushabh Guravi, 'Reforming Abortion Laws in Sri Lanka: A Socio-Legal Approach with Special Reference to Rights of Women' [2021] International Journal of Law Management & Humanities; Saloni Khanderia, 'Identifying the Applicable Law in Cross-Border Disputes on Injuries Caused by the Covid-19 in India: A Critical Analysis' (2021) 47 Commonwealth Law Bulletin.

The National Sports Development Code includes provisions for equal funding allocation between men's and women's tournaments when government funding is provided to national sports federations. Rule 10.8 of the Code mandates equal monetary allocation for both genders, while Rule 1.6 addresses sexual harassment prevention in sports. Despite these provisions, women athletes continue to face unequal treatment in terms of funding, facilities, training opportunities, and media coverage.

Recent legal developments include increased judicial scrutiny of gender discrimination in sports and growing recognition of women's rights to equal participation and treatment. Courts have begun addressing issues such as prize money disparity, unequal facilities, and discriminatory selection procedures, though systemic change remains slow.

B. Implementation Challenges and Reform Initiatives

The implementation of gender equality laws in sports faces significant challenges including cultural attitudes, institutional resistance, and resource constraints. Many sports federations have been slow to comply with equality requirements, requiring continuous monitoring and enforcement by regulatory authorities. The lack of women in sports administration and governance positions perpetuates systemic inequalities and limits women's voice in decision-making processes.²³

Reform initiatives include the Khelo India scheme's focus on women's sports development, appointment of women coaches for national teams, and increased investment in women's sporting infrastructure. The National Sports Governance Act, 2025's requirement for women's representation in sports governance structures represents a significant step toward institutional equality. However, the effectiveness of these measures depends on genuine implementation rather than token compliance.²⁴

Advocacy organizations and legal experts emphasize the need for comprehensive monitoring mechanisms, regular audits of compliance with gender equality provisions, and stronger enforcement of existing laws. The development of sports-specific gender equality standards and guidelines could provide clearer frameworks for sports organizations to follow.

VIII. EMERGING ISSUES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

A. Esports and Digital Sports Recognition

The recognition of esports as a legitimate sport under India's regulatory framework represents a significant development in sports law. The Indian government officially recognized esports in 2022, bringing it under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports while distinguishing it from general gaming activities. The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025 provides a comprehensive framework for esports regulation, requiring registration with regulatory authorities and compliance with specific standards. The legal framework for esports addresses issues including player contracts, tournament regulation, anti-doping compliance, and intellectual property protection. However, challenges remain regarding the scope of recognition, with current rules limiting recognition to titles featured in multi-sport events, potentially excluding popular games that drive the ecosystem. Industry stakeholders advocate for broader recognition criteria and streamlined registration processes to support sector growth.

The integration of esports into traditional sports governance structures raises questions about regulatory approaches, dispute resolution mechanisms, and international alignment. The requirement for esports titles to be recognized under the National Sports Governance Act, 2025 before registration creates potential bottlenecks that could limit industry development.²⁵

B. Technology and Sports Law Evolution

Technological advances are reshaping sports law across multiple dimensions including performance monitoring, data privacy, virtual competitions, and enforcement mechanisms. The use of artificial intelligence in performance analysis, drug testing, and match analysis creates new legal questions regarding data ownership, privacy rights, and competitive fairness. Sports organizations increasingly grapple with balancing technological innovation with traditional sporting values and regulatory compliance.²⁶

Digital broadcasting and streaming platforms have transformed intellectual property enforcement challenges, requiring updated legal frameworks and international cooperation mechanisms. The growth of social media and digital content creation by athletes raises questions about image rights, sponsorship compliance, and commercial exploitation of sporting content.

²³ Anil Kumar Thakur and Rekha Rani, 'Sports Law in India: Present Status and Future Road Map' (2018) 15 Journal of Advances and Scholarly Researches in Allied Education.

²⁴ Riti Shimkhada and John W Peabody, 'Tobacco Control in India' (2003) 81 Bulletin of the World Health Organization; Zhongyu Hu, 'The Teaching Research Based on Natural Ecological Environment and the Knowledge Theory of University Sports' (2013) 8 International Journal of Applied Environmental Sciences.

²⁵ Paul Smith, Tom Evens and Petros Iosifidis, 'The Regulation of Television Sports Broadcasting: A Comparative Analysis' (2015) 37 Media, Culture and Society.

²⁶ Nikita Shah and Anjani Singh Tomar, 'Taming of the Megalomaniac Institution: Perspectives on Regulating the Unbridled Powers of the BCCI' (2023) 23 International Sports Law Journal.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated adoption of virtual hearings and digital processes in sports dispute resolution, creating new opportunities and challenges for access to justice. These technological adaptations require updated procedural rules, security protocols, and accessibility standards to ensure fair and effective dispute resolution.

C. Internationalization and Global Compliance

India's growing presence in international sports requires enhanced alignment with global governance standards and compliance mechanisms. The National Sports Governance Act, 2025 explicitly recognizes the need for harmony with international federations and Olympic standards. However, balancing international compliance with domestic sovereignty and federal constitutional principles creates ongoing tensions.

International anti-doping compliance remains crucial for India's sporting reputation and athlete eligibility. Recent reforms to NADA and enhanced testing programs reflect commitment to international standards, though resource constraints and capacity limitations continue to pose challenges. The integration of Indian sports dispute resolution with international mechanisms, particularly the Court of Arbitration for Sport, requires careful coordination to ensure effective athlete protection.²⁷

Climate change and sustainability concerns are emerging as significant issues in sports law, requiring updated regulatory frameworks for environmental compliance, sustainable event management, and adaptation to changing climatic conditions. Sports organizations increasingly face legal obligations regarding environmental impact assessment, carbon footprint reduction, and sustainable practices.²⁸

IX. CONCLUSION

Sports law in India has undergone a remarkable transformation from fragmented, guideline-based governance to comprehensive statutory regulation through the National Sports Governance Act, 2025. This evolution addresses long-standing challenges of accountability, transparency, and athlete protection while creating new institutional mechanisms for effective sports governance. The Act's establishment of the National Sports Board, National Sports Tribunal, and mandatory governance structures represents a paradigm shift toward athlete-centered, democratic sports administration.²⁹

However, significant challenges remain in implementation and enforcement. The success of India's reformed sports law framework will depend on genuine compliance with statutory requirements, effective functioning of new institutions, and resolution of constitutional questions regarding federal jurisdiction and sports federation status. The exclusion of doping cases from the National Sports Tribunal's jurisdiction and concerns about governmental influence in regulatory bodies highlight areas requiring continued attention and potential reform.

The integration of emerging issues such as sports recognition, technological innovation, and international compliance demonstrates sports law's dynamic nature and the need for adaptive regulatory frameworks. Gender equality, athlete welfare, and inclusive participation remain priorities requiring sustained legal and institutional support. As India's sporting profile continues to grow globally, the effectiveness of its sports law framework will significantly impact athletic development, international competitiveness, and sporting integrity.³⁰

Future research should examine the practical implementation of the National Sports Governance Act, 2025, assess the effectiveness of new institutional mechanisms, and analyze the balance between governmental oversight and sporting autonomy. Comparative studies with international sports governance models could inform further refinements to India's approach. The evolution of sports law in India reflects broader trends in sports governance globally and provides valuable insights for other developing nations seeking to modernize their sporting legal frameworks.

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²⁷ Sri Padmini Chennapragada and Sunil Jain, 'Demystifying India's Paralympic Movement: Overview of Legislation, Sport Governance and Ground Realities' (2020) 20 *International Sports Law Journal*; Karan Sangani, 'When Fantasy Meets India: Debunking the Need to License Intellectual Property for Fantasy Sports Games' (2021) 21 *International Sports Law Journal*.

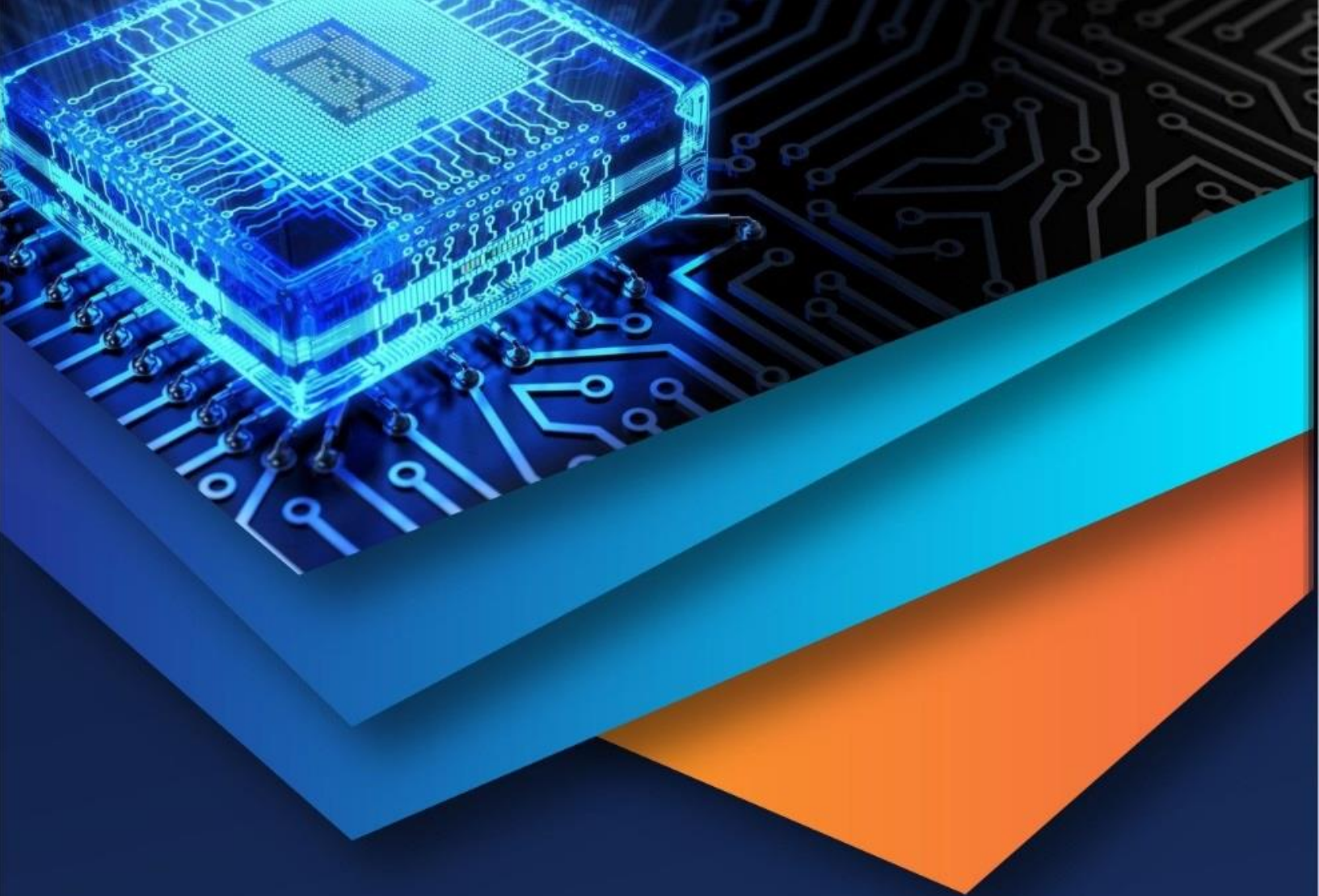
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²⁹ Amit Yadav and Stanton A Glantz, 'Tobacco Industry Thwarts Ad Ban Legislation in India in the 1990s: Lessons for Meeting FCTC Obligations under Articles 13 and 5.3', *Addictive Behaviors* (2022); Vijay Kumar Singh, 'Issues in Emerging Area of Sports Law: Lex Sportivaa' [2017] SSRN Electronic Journal.

³⁰ Dr Joji M Philip and Praveen Thariyan, 'Careers in Sports Management' (2021) 8 *International Journal of Physical Education, Sports and Health*; Alaukik Shrivastava, 'Resolving Legal Complexities and Paving the Way Forward for the Fantasy Sports Industry in India' (2022) 26 *Gaming Law Review*.



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