

## Hosting World Para Athletics Championships Successfully Gives India Pride of Place Globally, Say Top Stars, Legends

### Top Sportspersons Say Inclusivity, Accessibility, and Sports Infrastructure Have Improved Since India Hosted the Commonwealth Games 2010

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Curtains came down on the Indian Oil New Delhi 2025 World Para Athletics Championships on Sunday, which witnessed more than 2200 participants from 100-plus nations competing for 186 medal events, with the first-time hosts pocketing a record 22 medals, including 6 Gold, 9 Silver and 7 Bronze, their best-ever performance till date.

By hosting the World Para Athletics Championships 2025, India has entered a space usually reserved for elite and established organisers, feel celebrities in the sports world. The iconic Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium has been witness to the 2010 Commonwealth Games that included para athletics as a medal event but this WPAC has pitchforked India's capability to seamlessly host an international event to a "different level," feel several international para athletes, World Champions and Indian sports icons. India is the fourth Asian nation after Qatar, UAE and Japan to host the world para athletics championships.



At previous world championships, India had clinched nine medals at the Dubai 2019 edition, 10 medals at Paris 2023 and 17 medals at the 2024 Kobe edition. In the Paralympics too, India's medal tally witnessed a surge from two medals at the 2004 Athens to four medals in 2016 Rio de Janeiro, 19 medals in 2020 Tokyo and 29 medals, their best performance till date, at 2024 Paris Paralympics.

The telling rise in the performance of Indian para athletes is clearly a reflection of the government's support towards them. In WPAC 2025, 15 athletes under the government's Target Olympic Podium Scheme and one from the Khelo India programme finished among the medals. 23 TOPS group athletes and 22 Khelo India athletes competed at WPAC 2025.

Fleur Jong, a six-time gold medallist in World Championships and three-time Paralympic medallist from the Netherlands, praised the Indian hospitality and the welcoming attitude of the hosts. Fleur, a double amputee, won two gold medals here in the long jump and 100m T64 category.

"It has been a fantastic experience here in India. The people, including the officials, volunteers, medical staff, and hotel staff, have all been very welcoming and always ready to help. The event has been organised very well. I look forward to coming back whenever the opportunity comes," Fleur Jong said.

Deepa Malik, winner of multiple international medals at the Paralympic Games, Asian Para Games and World Championships and a veteran administrator, said that both citizens and the Government must now acknowledge the achievements of para athletes.

Deepa further added that she had never expected that India would be organising the World Para Athletics Championships so well. "As an athlete and as an administrator, I am absolutely elated to say that India has successfully hosted 100-plus countries, and this has been the biggest-ever celebration of para sport in India. This is going to create so much awareness and love in the hearts of Indians and not just in India on the global map. Last time when we had the biggest conglomeration of Para Sports in a multi-nation tournament, it was CWG 2010. The scene today is altogether different when it comes to the organisation of the Games, from infrastructure to accommodation, travel to volunteers, etc."



“Yes, India is ready for 2036 and India is the new inclusive Viksit Bharat, where opportunities are immense for a para athlete to pursue their dreams, grow and make their country proud,” Deepa said.

Paralympic medallist and coach Amit Saroha, who trains World Championship medallists Ekta Bhyan and Dharambir, said that WPAC is the best-organised international event in India till date and that the hosts are capable of staging the Paralympics now.

Amit also drew the comparison with the CWG 2010 when para-athletes came from different nations and played alongside players from India. “This is the biggest para sporting event that India has hosted and having been part of 4 world championships and multiple Paralympics, I can say with absolute confidence that the quality of infrastructure, stay, food, and accessible transport facilities that have been given to the athletes is among the best that international athletes would have experienced in other countries as well. With the successful hosting of these games, I feel that we are truly prepared to host the Paralympics and the world has seen that now,” he said.

Sumit Antil, a triple World Champion who created a Championship Record on the way to gold in the men’s javelin throw F64 event during WPAC 2025, said that support through the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) made all the difference for Indian para athletes.

“TOPS started in 2014 and from there the wheel started turning in the right direction for Indian athletes. From getting international exposure to best-in-class training facilities at Sports Authority of India’s (SAI) centres in Sonapat and Gandhinagar, para athletes are provided top-notch coaches, nutritionists, diet, and recovery mechanisms which were unheard of before the Commonwealth Games. That has helped our performance improve manifold.”

There was more praise for India.

World champion in long jump T64 class, Markus Rehm of Germany said: “This is my second time here but I enjoyed every moment here in India. The hospitality was great; people are super friendly.”

Canada’s Greg Stewart, who became a World Champion in the shot put discipline in New Delhi, said that “Indian culture is very different from what we have back in Canada, but the hospitality has been incredible. I felt the warmth everywhere I went around the stadium or the city.”

Para long jumper Derek Loccident of the USA, who won silver here in the T64 event, said: I have had a great experience here in New Delhi, India. I have been here for more than a week. From food to the overall organisation of the event has been simply fantastic.”

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