



Media release/Jan 24/KIWG 2026

On Khelo India Winter Games debut, Kerala's Abhijith Amal Raj returns to ice and brings more than winning gold

- *Abhijith won the figure skating gold in the advanced men's category at KIWG 2026*
- *He is a former world champion in artistic roller skating and also an Asian winner*
- *Abhijith has launched figure skating academies in Kerala and Tamil Nadu*

Leh (Ladakh), Jan. 24: When figure skating made its debut at the Khelo India Winter Games 2026 in Ladakh, it was more than the introduction of a new discipline, it was the arrival of a long-missing national platform. Standing at the centre of that moment was Abhijith Amal Raj from Kerala, who went on to win gold in figure skating-men's advance category, marking a personal milestone.

Abhijith's presence in Ladakh carried weight far beyond a single competition. He is already one of India's most accomplished artistic figure skaters— a world champion in artistic roller skating, having won gold at the World Roller Skating Championship in 2019, along with Gold at the Asian Roller Skating Championships in 2023 and 2025, and the World Skate Oceania and Pacific Cup in 2023. Yet his appearance at Khelo India Winter Games 2026 represented something different, a return to figure skating on ice, and the chance to compete on a serious national stage at home.

Abhijith's journey began almost as soon as he could walk. He wore skates before he could properly speak, starting formal training at the age of three. But in coastal Kerala, ice skating was neither common nor accessible. The cost of equipment, coaching, and infrastructure quickly turned talent into a test of endurance and financial requirements. His father chose to invest everything into his training.

By the age of nine, Abhijith already had an Arjuna awardee Anup Kumar Yama training him and later was trained by 11 times Artistic Roller Skating World Champion and international coach, Luca d'Alisera for which we had to go to Italy. That coaching costed 100 Euros an hour, four hours a day with expenses running into lakhs for just a month. To sustain this, his family sold property and moved into rented



accommodation. Government support came later, but the foundation of Abhijith's career was built on years of financial strain and personal sacrifice.

Before his rise as an artistic roller skating world champion, Abhijith had already built a strong record in ice figure skating. In 2014, he won gold at the Asian Open Figure Skating Trophy in Taiwan, the Dubai Golden Cup, and the Malaysian Open National Championship, along with national titles in 2013 and 2014. He added another international gold in Malaysia in 2016 before shifting his primary focus to roller skating, where he eventually reached the top of the world podium. His figure skating gold at the Khelo India Winter Games 2026 marked a comeback to ice skating after nearly a decade.

Abhijith's story reflects the challenges faced by niche sports like figure ice skating in India. For years, meaningful progress in disciplines such as figure skating required going abroad — for rinks, coaching, and competitive exposure — an option most families could not afford. Today, at just 24, Abhijith is working to change that reality.

Along with his figure skating partner, Vacasya Lakshmi Narayanan, a gold medalist (Artistic Partner) at the Asian Roller Skating Championship, 2025, he co-founded Adler Vision, enrolling future athletes pan India based in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Since its inception two years ago, the academy has enrolled more than 100 students.

They have invited international coaches like Luca d'Alisera and Rachele Campagnol from Italy so young skaters can gain exposure without leaving the country, beginning with roller skating and with the eventual aim of transitioning athletes to figure skating on both roller and ice, and preparing them for national platforms like Khelo India.

Abhijith says that at the academy they “start with roller skating, and based on a skater's interest and performance, they can move into ice skating or continue to excel in roller skating.”

“Our skaters have already participated in multiple national and state-level roller skating competitions, and with platforms like Khelo India, we plan to send select skaters to upcoming ice skating championships,” said Abhijith, who was recruited by the Income Tax department of Maharashtra under sports quota in 2024.



For Abhijith Amal Raj, Khelo India is therefore not only about medals. He calls it a “prestigious championship”, and says his main purpose in Ladakh is to motivate athletes at his academy and show them that meaningful national platforms. With figure skating introduced for the first time, the 6th edition of the Khelo India Winter Games featured 23 skaters from eight states with the highest from Haryana (8), followed by Andhra Pradesh (4) and Uttarakhand (4). This is an encouraging beginning for a winter sport in a largely tropical country like India.

For more on KIWG 2026: please click www.Winter.kheloindia.gov.in

ABOUT KHELO INDIA WINTER GAMES

Under the Khelo India Scheme, the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (MYAS) organizes National-level competitions, i.e., Khelo India Youth Games, Khelo India University Games, Khelo India Para Games and Khelo India Winter Games to provide a platform for talented athletes to showcase their sporting and competitive skills. Starting in 2020, five editions of Khelo India Winter Games have been successfully conducted. While the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir have hosted all editions of KIWG, UT Ladakh started hosting the ice sports from 2024. This will be the third time UT Ladakh will be hosting the ice Games. Gulmarg in J&K will host the snow events. Apart from tapping talent, Khelo India Winter Games also showcase a region’s art, culture, heritage, and promotes tourism through sports.

For more information, please contact:

Akilesh Subramanian +91 98199 95141

Prajakta Belekar +91 96641 61625

(eom)



भारत सरकार
GOVERNMENT
OF INDIA







भारत सरकार
GOVERNMENT
OF INDIA

