

# PANJ Newsletter

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## LATEST WRITING

### WHY THE BALL IS IN PUNJAB'S COURT

by Sehaj Singh & Agastya Shukla

Punjab is traditionally known for producing both, leading sportsmen and sports equipment. Sports like *Kabaddi* and *Weightlifting* originated in the “akhadas” of Punjab. From shuttlecocks and footballs to cricket bats, Jalandhar has developed as the epicenter of sports production in India.

Punjab over the last few years has shown a notable resurgence in sports, particularly highlighted by its performance at the 2023 Asian Games, where athletes from the state secured 20 medals out of 32 participants. This marked a significant improvement compared to previous years, indicating a strong potential for future Olympic participation. Punjab's athletes are being recognized on international platforms, with names ranging from Indian hockey veteran, the late Balbir Singh Kullar, to youth hockey icon Harmanpreet Singh (also known as “Sarpanch Sahab”), the captain of the men's Indian hockey team, becoming household names.

Under the Khelo India initiative, Punjab has been actively promoting grassroots sports by establishing sports nurseries and talent identification programs. To this effect, in 2023 the Punjab government committed itself to nurture young athletes through structured training and support systems, ensuring that talent is recognized and developed over time. In order to pursue this vision, the state launched the Punjab Sports Policy 2023, laying out the government's intent to harness youth potential at early stages and provide support to professional sportspersons. This policy aims to create a comprehensive framework for sports development, with the government promising to invest in building 1,100 playgrounds and sports complexes.

While this was a welcome move, the facts preceding the launch of this policy speak otherwise. According to a CAG audit report from 2022, the State performs poorly in managing and maintaining sports infrastructure and professionals. For instance, the State government purchased sports infrastructure worth ₹8.48 crore in 2021.

Read the complete article [here](http://www.panj.org.in): [www.panj.org.in](http://www.panj.org.in)

## LATEST OPPORTUNITIES

### LAMP FELLOWSHIP

The Legislative Assistants to Members of Parliament (LAMP) Fellows work with work full-time with the assigned MP during a given year, starting from the Monsoon session of Parliament till the end of the Budget session. The primary role of a LAMP Fellow is to provide extensive research support to her/his MP for their parliamentary work. Read more and apply [here](#).

### U.S. GOOGLE PUBLIC POLICY FELLOWSHIP

The U.S. Google Public Policy Fellowship is offered year round to students passionate about the internet and technology policy. Accepted fellows will spend a semester working at a public interest organisation at the forefront of debates on tech policy issues. Read more [here](#).

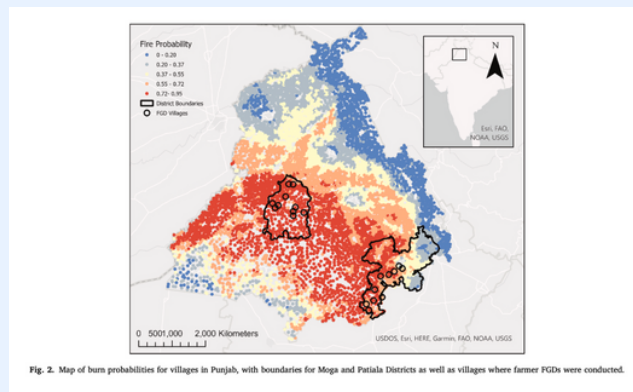
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## MUST READS ON PUNJAB

Every year, stubble burning, particularly in Punjab, makes news across the country. Both the state as well as the central government constantly battle to find a permanent fix for the issue. Yet, no solution is in sight. Academicians have attempted at studying the issue and arriving at solutions for farmers to adopt alternative methods. The paper in consideration ‘*Farmer perspectives on crop residue burning and sociotechnical transition*’ by authors *James Erbaugh, Gurpreet Singh, Zhixian Luo, Gurulingappa Koppa, Jeffrey Evans, and Priya Shyamsundar* published in *Journal of Rural Studies*, The Elsevier, is an attempt in this direction.

The paper applies a multi-level perspective (MLP) framework to understand the linkages of policy, practices, and technologies relating to crop residue burning. The paper limits its study to the state of Punjab, where agriculture employs over one third of the state’s 29.9 million residents and approximately 83% of its gross cropped area dedicated to cereals including rice and wheat. The paper is an enquiry into studying the interaction of ‘no-burn agriculture’ with the socio-technical regime and what measures are required to make sure that the shift away from residue burning is sustainable for farmers as well.



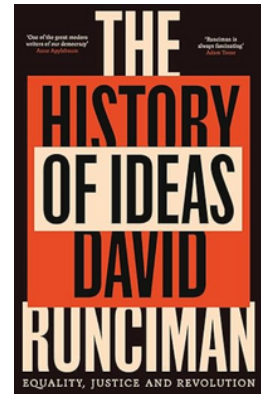
The paper uses focus-group discussions (FGD) and semi-structured interviews to collect primary data across two districts—Moga and Patiala—of Punjab. The paper’s findings reveal the policy measures undertaken to encourage a shift away from crop residue burning, the prevalence of knowledge of these policies/measures among farmers, and their response patterns.

The authors’ data reveals the choice behind non-basmati rice variety (a water-consuming and polluting crop) is motivated by the MSP linked to the crop. The authors conclude that the current socio-technical regime for rice-wheat agriculture in Punjab supports burning crop residue, and that even when farmers are willing to make a shift away from burning, they need assistance to do so. They state ‘Farmer responses reveal mistrust and uncertainty regarding current incentives for no-burn CRM, including subsidies for purchasing no-burn CRM machinery and fines for burning.

Nonetheless, farmers support new long-term price subsidies for alternate rice varieties, crops, and fuel. In addition to cost-reduction measures, farmers and key informants voice support for local demonstrations of no-burn CRM, promoting agricultural services through social organisations, and being free to choose how to best reduce or eliminate burning on their fields. In contrast to studies that consider individual farmers’ willingness to accept payment for reduced burning, our findings emphasise the importance of considering the political and technological aspects of CRM in Punjab. Respondents acknowledge the importance of improving individual incentives while working through local organisations to provide wider access to no-burn CRM technology and address information asymmetries.’

**Read the complete publication [here](#)**

## BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS



*The History of Ideas: Equality, Justice and Revolution* by David Runciman is published by Profile Books 2024



*Following Their Leaders: Political Preferences and Public Policy* by Randall Holcombe is published by Cambridge university press 2023



## SPORTS LANDSCAPE AND POLICY IN PUNJAB

### ‘FIVE QUESTIONS’ WITH PROF. (DR) JAGTAR SINGH GILL

PROFESSOR(RET'D.), PEC UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, CHANDIGARH



**Q1. Despite Punjab’s rich history in producing top-tier athletes, the current sports policy framework seems to lack robust structures to support new talent. Can you share your assessment of Punjab’s sports policy framework in terms of talent development pipelines and grassroots engagement? What key structural weaknesses stand in the way of transforming young athletes into competitive professionals?**

**Ans:** The Punjab Sports Policy 2023 emphasises developing sports infrastructure across village, cluster, district, and state levels, offering enhanced cash incentives and awards to elite athletes, coaches, and top-level competitions. Key initiatives include establishing 1,000 sports nurseries and providing coaching, equipment, and refreshments to 60,000 children aged 6-17. However, the policy lacks supporting data and an evidence-based framework with a strategic, time-bound action plan. High sporting standards require a foundation of inclusivity and mass participation, which the current focus on 60,000 children out of Punjab’s 1.38 crore population may not adequately achieve. A broader approach is essential, promoting physical literacy at all educational levels to have a true sports culture in ‘Rangla Punjab’. The Punjab Government should support ‘Sport for All’ to enhance health and social well-being across society. Additionally, dedicated policies are needed to promote activities like swimming, cycling, and running among all citizens

**Q2. Do you believe that Punjab’s current budget and policy allocation truly reflect a commitment to fostering diverse sports talent across the state? Where do you see the most critical gaps in fund utilisation, and how would you suggest these be addressed to maximise long-term impact?**

**Ans:** Funding for sports development in any region generally comes from government grants and corporate sponsorships. Government funding in Punjab is limited and insufficient, reportedly even lower than Stanford University’s sports budget. The Punjab government should promote corporate sponsorship, diaspora investment, public-private partnerships, and sports incentives. A lack of coordination among state departments hinders effective sports development and scheme implementation. Research shows sports contribute to GDP growth, making them a valuable tool for economic development. Punjab should recognise sports’ role in creating jobs and wealth. Institutions, especially MBS Sports University, should advance research and training for sports careers in sports science, administration, and management. Policy should support sports as an industry in these domains:

- Sports Manufacturing: Develop niche markets in Jalandhar’s sports industry and establish a ‘sports technology research centre’ for R&D
- Sports Tourism: Nowadays sports tourism has become one of the most lucrative sectors in the tourism market. Punjab must tap into this fast-growing global sector
- Sponsorship and Investment: Attract corporate sponsors through structured sports product promotion
- Media Rights: Strategise sports events to attract media and promote Punjab as a sporting hub

**Q3. In your view, how can Punjab redefine sports not only as a competitive outlet but as a respected and financially stable profession?**

**Ans:** There is an urgent need to foster a genuine “sports culture” in Punjab, beyond merely celebrating achievements in sports. True sports culture means embracing sports and physical activity as a valuable lifestyle, addressing socio-economic and health issues. Supporting sports from the panchayat to state level lends legitimacy to these activities and creates an environment where allied careers in sports—such as sports nutrition, psychology, management, and mental health—can flourish. The government can re-engage retired athletes as coaches or train them in these allied fields such as sports nutrition, sports psychology, sports management/administration, mental health for sports practitioners, etc., ensuring they stay active and productive post-competition. This approach supports long-term development and helps prevent former athletes from facing inactivity or lack of purpose after their competitive careers end.

## ‘FIVE QUESTIONS’ WITH PROF. (DR) JAGTAR SINGH GILL

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**Q4. How do you perceive the state’s approach to infrastructure and institutional support for sports? What policies or reforms could help ensure that existing and new facilities serve as reliable hubs for rigorous training and competition?**

**Ans:** Provision of sports facilities is a cornerstone of Punjab’s sports development plan, with new infrastructure proposed at village, cluster, district, and state levels, and upgrades for existing urban facilities. However, limited matching grants for villages indicate a cautious approach to infrastructure investment. A high-level advisory body should guide the balanced distribution of sports facilities across Majha, Malwa, and Doaba regions, conducting surveys to assess demand and prevent under-utilisation. Urban planning authorities must integrate sports facilities into development plans, with private sector involvement encouraged. Schools and institutions should ensure accessible, safe sports facilities, especially for the disabled.

Chandigarh

Punjab has 645 HEIs [including 5 Institutions of national Importance; 28 Universities (14 Govt. and 14 Private), 64 Govt. Colleges, 152 Private aided Colleges, 426 Private self financed Colleges, 168 Technical colleges] and more than 19,000 government schools (12,880 primary, 2,670 middle, 1,740 high, and 1,972 senior secondary) and 9000 private schools (CBSE 1086, PSEB) where basic sports infrastructure already exists. The government could mandate these institutions to actively promote sports and physical activity. Finally, a state cycling event, “Tour Punjab da,” could be introduced, similar to the Tour de France, to boost youth engagement in cycling and fund sports development.

**Q5. Despite an apparent interest in physical education among Punjab’s youth, data shows limited integration of structured sports education in schools, with fewer than 40% of schools actively promoting sports beyond basic physical training. Given this statistic, what reforms would you suggest to better integrate sports education into the curriculum, potentially fostering a more professional sports outlook from a young age?**

**Ans:** Punjab’s sports policy must prioritise schools as focal points for sports and physical education, following global standards set by WHO, UNESCO, UNO, IOC etc. Per the UNESCO Charter (2015), everyone has a fundamental right to physical education and sports without discrimination, and Punjab’s educational authorities should ensure all students have equal access to facilities and quality physical activity opportunities. While sports participation is common in early school years, many students disengage during adolescence, with most not meeting WHO’s recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity. To address this, Punjab should launch programs like ‘Active Schools’ to enhance mass student participation and make every school a ‘sports nursery’ for future athletes.

In higher education, globally recognised as an Olympic springboard, student-athlete participation is minimal in India, which impacts its medal rankings. Punjab should mandate intramural sports programs and clubs in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to boost participation. Establishing Centres of Excellence and autonomous bodies, such as a University Sports Union of Punjab, can enhance athlete development and inter-university competitions. All HEIs should prioritise sports and physical education, and integrate sports proficiency credits into degree programs, promoting a healthier, active lifestyle among students.

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