

Standing Committee Report Summary

The National Anti-Doping Bill, 2021

- The Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth, and Sports (Chair: Dr. Vinay P. Sahasrabudhe) submitted its report on the National Anti-Doping Bill, 2021, on March 23, 2022. The Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha on December 17, 2021 and was referred to the Committee on December 25, 2021. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
 - **Selection mechanism for the National Board:** The Bill provides for the constitution of the National Board for Anti-Doping in Sports. Functions of the Board include making recommendations to the government on anti-doping regulation and ensure compliance of international commitments on anti-doping. The Board will oversee the activities of the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) and issue directions to it. The Board will consist of a Chairperson and two members appointed by the central government. The Committee recommended that a mechanism may be laid down for selection and appointment of the Chairperson and members of the Board. This will ensure proper vetting of the person(s) appointed by the central government. Note that currently the Bill does not provide for a selection process for appointments to the Board.
 - **Protective mechanism for minor athletes:** The Committee noted that the Bill does not make any distinction between minor and major athletes. The World Anti-Doping Code (WADA Code) states that the protected class of athletes (includes athletes below 16 years of age, amongst others) may be given a lesser number of sanctions. The Committee recommended that the distinction between a minor and major athlete should be made in the Rules to ensure the protective mechanism for minor athletes.
 - **Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE):** According to the WADA Code, a TUE is provided to athletes who may have any illnesses or conditions that requires them to take certain prohibited medications. The Committee recommended that a detailed Standard Operating Procedure may be prepared to ensure that deserving athletes can get a TUE without facing any difficulty.
 - **Penalties for athletes:** Under the Bill, penalties are imposed on athletes committing anti-doping rule violations. The Committee recommended that since an athlete's sporting career is limited, there is a need to ensure that the quantum of penalties is proportional to the degree of the violation. The Committee noted that even after the penalty period is over and athletes have resumed their sporting career, they are not considered for national awards. It recommended that since this is a policy decision, the central government may examine this issue.
 - **Awareness around anti-doping:** The Committee noted that large scale awareness, education, and information is required for athletes, coaches, support personnel, and medical practitioners to eliminate the menace of doping in sports. Therefore, it recommended that a dedicated institute should be set up to undertake research, awareness initiatives, develop educational content, and run courses (diploma/degrees) to promote anti-doping measures outlined in the Bill.
 - **Dope Testing Laboratories:** Under the Bill, the existing National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL) will be deemed to be the principal dope testing laboratory. The Bill also allows the central government to establish more NDTLs. The Committee observed that there are a total of 29 (including NDTL) WADA accredited laboratories in the world. Out of the 29 laboratories, six are in Asia. The Committee emphasised the need to open more Dope Testing Laboratories, preferably one in each state, to cater to the need of the country and become a leader in the South East Asia region in the areas of anti-doping science and education.
 - **Strengthening the anti-doping ecosystem in India:** The Committee recommended several measures to improve and strengthen the anti-doping ecosystem in the country. These measures include: (i) strengthening manpower for anti-doping bodies (such as NADA and NDTL) which are currently short-staffed, (ii) enforcing regulatory action towards labelling and use of 'dope free' certified supplements, (iii) mandating 'dope-free' certification by independent bodies for supplements consumed by athletes, (iv) mandating provisions for having at least one certified sports medicine doctor to advise and treat athletes in every sports camp, and (v) putting mechanisms in place for legal aid to athletes to present their point of view before the authorities/panel.

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