

GOLDEN FIST: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE VICTORY FOR INDIAN WOMEN BOXERS

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Indian women boxers collected four gold medals — like their predecessors in 2006, M.C. Mary Kom, Sarita Devi, K.C. Lekha and R.L. Jenny — in the [Delhi World championships](#) to make an emphatic statement ahead of the Hangzhou Asian Games, a qualifying event for the 2024 Paris Olympics. Seventeen years ago, when India recorded its best ever showing of four golds, one silver and three bronzes, the event was still young and women's boxing was six years away from making its Olympics debut. The current performance of four golds, when the sport is in the Olympics and the event receiving 300-plus entries from 65 countries (this despite the boycott by some prominent nations as Russian and Belarusian athletes were participating under their flags amid the Ukraine war) is remarkable as it has propelled the third-time host to top the table. [Golden girls Nitu Ghanghas](#) (48kg), Nikhat Zareen (50kg), Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) and Saweety Boora (81kg) had different accomplishments but needed to prove themselves again. Nitu, a Commonwealth Games gold medallist, was keen on making a mark at the elite level. Nikhat, the 52kg World champion, who came down to an Olympic weight and was unseeded, had to face six tough opponents and assert herself in the new class to become the second Indian after Mary to win more than one World title. Olympic medallist Lovlina, also a two-time World bronze medallist, was determined to establish herself in a new Olympic weight. Thirty-year-old Saweety, a 2014 World silver medal, wanted to underscore that she was no less. Some exciting talents that included 19-year-old Preeti Sai Pawar (54kg) and Jaismine Lamboria (60kg), impressed everyone. With multiple boxers vying for each spot, the coaches face a 'good problem' in the build-up to the Olympics.

The event, demonstrating the competitiveness and appeal of women's boxing, should encourage the International Boxing Association (IBA), which is in conflict with the International Olympic Committee due to its exclusion from the Olympics over various issues. The IBA, monitored on site by an independent McLaren team, tried to ensure transparency and fairness. It took action against below-par match officials and athletes who seemingly enjoyed an unfair advantage. It offered a lucrative prize purse, including \$100,000 to each winner, and financial support to boxers as an incentive to boost participation. The successful conduct of the event, barring the odd blip, has encouraged the IBA to look at India, a potential market, as a boxing destination. Eyeing a better performance in the Olympics, the Boxing Federation of India's desire to stage more elite events will inspire the boxing community further.

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