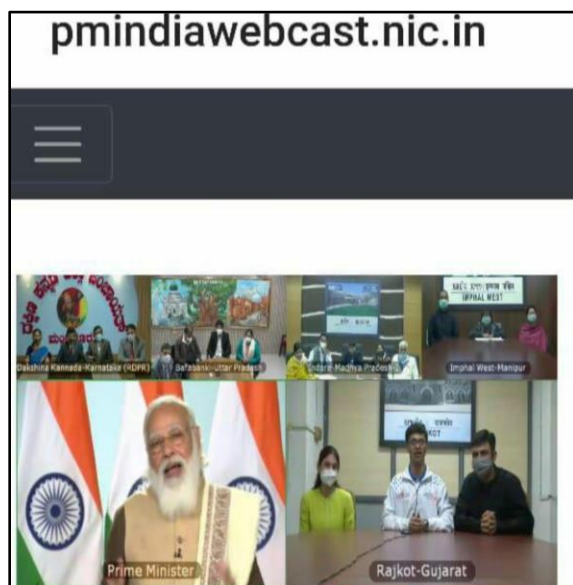




Greetings from Special Olympics Bharat

## On or beyond the Sporting field, Special Athletes continue to shine



It is certainly not a day-to-day experience for anyone to have the privilege of offering tea and jalebi to the Prime Minister of India. Very modestly and confidently, Mantra Jitendra Harkhani, an Athlete from Rajkot, Gujarat, embraced the opportunity on 26 January 2021, sharing his sporting achievements as also his dreams with the Honourable, PM Shri Narendra Modi ji through video Conferencing. Mantra was one of the recipients of the **Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2021** in recognition of his extraordinary feat from the World Games 2019 Abu Dhabi.

Moving attention to yet another location in Gujarat, Gandhinagar, on the same day, Ms Pooja Soni, a Cyclist from the Shanghai Games 2007 was invited to hoist the National Flag at the Swarnim Gujarat Sports University, Govt. of Gujarat in the presence of Dr. Arjunsinh Rana, the Vice Chancellor of the University



Even during times when the Covid -19 situation keeps the world from holding outdoor events or events in volumes like before, the abilities of the Athletes continue to surface through multiple platforms, drawing the attention of all from diverse forums and echelons.

The Special Olympics Global Webinar held recently, featured a critical part of the movement, which is to encourage and promote Athletes to assume leadership roles. The new members of the Global Athlete Leadership Council (GALC) were introduced. The goals of Athlete leadership were highlighted before each member introduced himself/ herself along with sharing their respective Special Olympics journeys. Shrey Kadian, a first ever member from India, expressed a desire to see a more inclusive world where there are many more job opportunities and leadership roles for Persons with intellectual Disability and certainly more support from the Government, Corporates, Youth, Schools and everyone. Shrey is a Gold Medalist in Softball, from the LA World Games 2015





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## Meet Mantra, the Swimmer from Rajkot

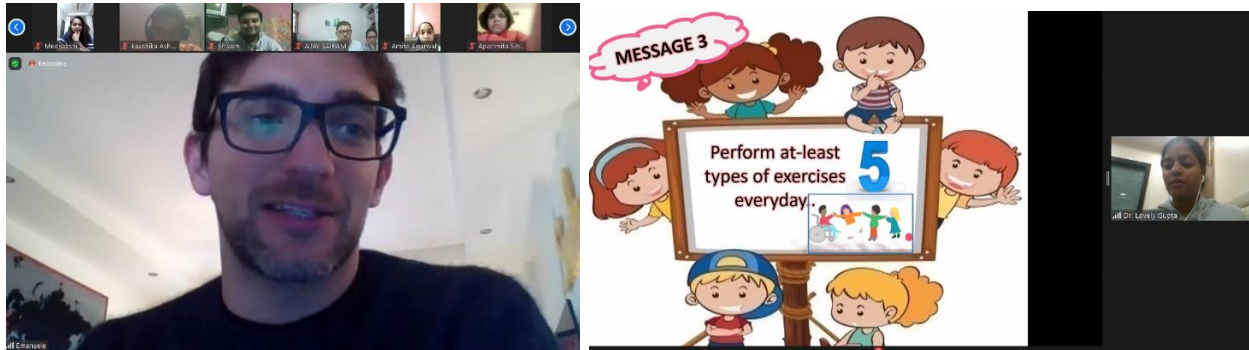


Mantra, born with Down's Syndrome, dreams to be world's best swimmer. He is currently in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade of the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and is also visiting his family store, called Mantra's Mart, to get accustomed to managing money transactions. Mantra is a cheerful young man, who enjoys the company of his friends, practices yoga and is fond of singing and dancing. This is not a picture presented to his parents when he was born. His diagnosis and the possibility of developing other medical complications left them disillusioned.

Many challenges fell on the path of his parents be it from the family members, who constantly compared him with other children his age, or his school where the teachers came back frequently with disappointing news of him being unable to 'cope'. His introduction to sports brought a whole new direction which felt positive and in turn helped him overcome the odds, perching him on a platform that got him face to face with situations which may be beyond the reach of so many [Read More](#)

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## Getting fit with Enel Green Power



The Athletes of Special Olympics Bharat are ready to pair up with the employees of Enel Green Power India to pursue a five-week fitness regime that promises to foster Fitness as much as sensitization. The plan that follows would lead the Enel Green Power participants engage in a fixed fitness routine while monitoring their day-to-day score on Tracker Sheets. Once a week all would meet up virtually to engage exclusively with their respective Athlete partners through break-out rooms, sharing experiences with each other

**In the words of Emanuele Polimanti, Head of Sustainability Asia and Oceania at Enel Green Power:**  
*"This partnership with Special Olympics will allow us to improve the awareness of Enel Green Power India colleagues regarding the Intellectual disability, by implementing a program of mutual support provided by Special Olympics Members to Enel people and vice versa. Enel Green Power is collaborating with Special Olympics also in Mexico and Greece, within the Valuable 500 program, the worldwide initiative catalyzing the influence of large private sector corporations that Enel is running in all its countries to work with the potential of disability, on social, economic and corporate level, in line with Enel sustainability and equality view."* [News](#)

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## Baggo is launched amidst eager anticipation





With approx. 180 viewers and a barrage of questions arising out of curiosity and clarity for implementation, BAGGO was launched on 27 January 2021. Baggo is a bean bag toss or Cornhole. SO Bharat Odisha executed the on-ground implementation that continued to screen

live during the virtual session. The questions which emerged from the viewers demonstrated the intrigue and attraction to the game that has been considered fit to be part of Developmental Sports, a program supported by Herbalife Nutrition. As the activity rolled out, a simultaneous narration defined the micro details including equipment specifics, field marking, Scoring, throwing skill etc. Its simplicity, potential impact and ease of application, also showing similarities with Bocce, makes it a strong contender for mass popularity.

## Haryana goes 'in-person' for the Unified School Programming



*"The past three years have brought me face-to-face with unexpected experiences. I had never seen Ice Skating before, but once when I went for a camp, I was amazed to see the Special Athletes performing so well in a sport, largely unknown. I can't even stand on the Ice rink! I have learnt that- always keep your mind and heart open because everyone has abilities which we may be ignorant of. I also find few of the Athletes to be all-rounders"- Anuj Kumar, Youth Leader, SO Bharat Haryana*

Special Olympics Bharat Haryana organized its first on-ground Unified School program, in January 2021, supported by **Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF)** at the Rhuchi School Sonipat complying with the Covid19 Safety guidelines issued by the Haryana administration and the Sports Authority of India. The Sessions were led by five Youth leaders, to over 45 new youth leaders. The team of Youth leaders were trained separately. They have also participated in camps featuring Young Athletes and Developmental Sporting activities, earlier in the state, having had repeated opportunities of engaging with Children with Intellectual Disabilities.



## Changing not the children with special needs but the world to accommodate them- Ms Chitra Shah



Satya Special School, Puducherry was felicitated with the 'Alert being Award' 2020 in recognition of their exemplary initiative in transforming lives of Children with Special needs through supporting them and their families to become participating members of the Society. "People usually feel sorry or sympathetic towards children with Special Needs. We want the perspective to change. We want to empower them and not make the children change but to change the world

to accommodate them as well"- Ms Chitra Shah, Founder of Satya Special School and the Area Director of SO Bharat Puducherry. [View here](#)

## Himachal Pradesh conducts State Games featuring Snow Sports



Although with a degree of apprehension, Himachal Pradesh held their first in-person Camp after the lock-down. They were braced to take all the Covid precautions although the attendance fell short by approx, a 50% of the expected number of Athletes from all over the state. Strict instructions were sent to all the districts for not sending any Athlete with the minutest of symptoms.

The Camp featured the Snow Games and was held from 17-29 Jan 2021 at Manali, Himachal

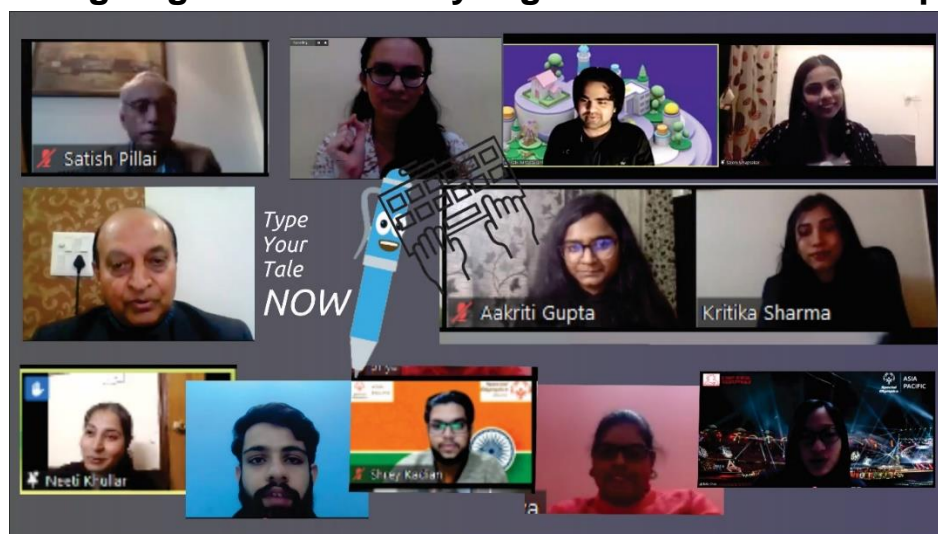
Pradesh for the World Winter Games probables

## INCLUSIVE YOUTH ACTIVATION- *By the youth for the youth*





## Designing a User- friendly Digital Platform for the Special Athletes



A team of students led by Ms Saloni Mhapsekar from National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) Mumbai launched an inclusive, e-learning tool that aims to help children with intellectual disabilities to adapt to the new normal using the power of stories. Basis interviews conducted with a number of SO Bharat

Athletes and their families and Coaches, the narrative platform provides social and emotional education particularly to help children with learning challenges cope with social situations through customized animated stories. [News Coverage](#)

## An experience of the Unified Pair from the Pink City- Aaynu and Nakul



*Authored by Nakul Kaushik, a 4th year student of Occupational therapy in Mahatma Gandhi University of Medical Science and Technology, Jaipur and 3rd year Clinical Psychology from IGNOU. Aaynu is a Badminton Medalist from the Abu Dhabi Games 2019 and is an active member of the National Athlete Input Council.*

Inclusion for me is growing together through common personal and social experiences. I too, experienced it up-close during the course of the Innovation Grant project – Mental Health & Wellness. Conducting a research on the impact of sports in the lives of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, exposed me to the vast platform that Special Olympics has built all over the world as well as in India. 'There was an amazing willingness amongst the Athletes and their families to share information and also to reach out to the general community uninhibited. I had no idea that there existed such a large platform in India itself. At the outset of the research, it was my discussions with

Aaynu which made me frame the relevant questions that were later designed to fit the study.

As I am writing this in discussion with Aaynu, my Athlete partner, in this project, I would like to pen down his input as well. For him the greatest contribution of this project has been to bring him knowledge about topics that he never had given thought to until now, like, Mental Health. Also reminiscing our participation at the **Lead to Include** workshop held in Singapore in December 2019, the experience sharing with persons of different nationalities expanded his perspective, taught him new skills and inspired him overall, to follow the title in its true sense. [Read More](#)

## PARTNERS IN INCLUSION



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