

Mary Kom supports Special Olympics Bharat on International Day of Persons with Disabilities

~ The Olympic medallist helped launch SO Bharat's National Health Fest to improve healthcare and development of Special athletes ~

03 December 2021, New Delhi: FICCI and Special Olympics Bharat jointly observed the International Day of Persons with Disabilities today by launching the “National Health Fest for Divyangjan – We Care” at the FICCI Federation House in New Delhi. The Chief Guest of the event was **Olympic medal-winning boxer MC Mary Kom**.

Along with launching the initiative, the boxing stalwart also interacted and facilitated athletes with intellectual disabilities who have won medals for India at the Special Olympics World Games in 2019.

Speaking at the event, the six-time world champion Mary Kom said, “It is a great privilege for me to be here to celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities with the athletes of Special Olympics. These athletes are the true heroes of our country, and they are my inspiration. My unwavering support will always be with them, sending them strength and courage in their journey ahead. Never stop fighting and you will surely achieve all your goals”

Launched under the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav initiative by the Government of India, the health initiative will reach a record 75,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities in 75 cities of India marking 75 years of progressive India. The National Health Fest aims to set records for screening and training the highest number of athletes in a single day.

The initiative also aims to train 7500 medical and sports professionals to provide high quality healthcare and training to athletes with intellectual and developmental disability. Moreover, 750 Special Olympics Bharat Centres will be activated to develop fitness and sports through a community-based approach. The entire program will be driven through Central and State partnerships with relevant stakeholders.

Speaking about the National Health Fest, **Dr. Mallika Nadda, Chairperson of Special Olympics Bharat** said, “Special Olympics Bharat is committed towards improving the health, well-being, and fitness of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Through this initiative, we aim to bring together changemakers from around the country to take a meaningful and transformative step towards ensuring quality healthcare for people with ID, benefitting not only them but also their families

and communities. I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to each and every person for their contribution towards the National Health Fest and it's lifechanging impact."

The event also featured a panel on inclusion in sports, followed by an impressive display of band and demo exercises by athletes with intellectual disabilities. Finally, an MoU for the National Health Fest was signed by FSCD (Federation of Special Care Dentistry) & AIFF (All India Football Federation) before the event concluded with a closing address by Dr Amit Bhalla, Co-Chair of Sports and Youth Affairs Committee of FICCI.

"Special athletes are the true leaders of the future," **said Dr. Bhalla.** "We at FICCI feel honoured to be a part of this initiative and pledge our whole-hearted support towards it. Promoting inclusion through sports is a dream we are all working towards, and I hope through our combined efforts we can create long-lasting impact for people and communities."

About Special Olympics Bharat

Special Olympics Bharat is a National Sports Federation accredited by Special Olympics Inc.USA, to conduct sports and development programs all over India. Special Olympics Bharat is registered with the Indian Trusts Act 1882 and is recognized by the Government of India as a National Sports Federation (since 2006) for the development of Sports for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities. Founded by Air Marshal Denzil Keelor *PVSM, KC, AVSM, VrC*, in 2001 it has over 1.5 million Athletes registered across all the States and Union Territories of India.

Special Olympics is a global inclusion movement using sport, health, education and leadership programs every day around the world to end discrimination against and empower people with intellectual disabilities. Founded in 1968 by Ms Eunice Kennedy Shriver, the Special Olympics movement has grown to more than 6 million athletes and Unified Sports partners in more than 190 countries. Special Olympics works through seven regions, out of which India falls under the Asia Pacific Region. In the Asia Pacific region, Special Olympics has touched the lives of more than 1.7 million athletes across 35 countries.

FICCI

Established in 1927, FICCI is the largest and oldest apex business organisation in India. Its history is closely interwoven with India's struggle for independence, its

industrialization, and its emergence as one of the most rapidly growing global economies. A non-government, not-for-profit organisation, FICCI is the voice of India's business and industry. From influencing policy to encouraging debate, engaging with policy makers and civil society, FICCI articulates the views and concerns of industry. It serves its members from the Indian private and public corporate sectors and multinational companies, drawing its strength from diverse regional chambers of commerce and industry across states, reaching out to over 2,50,000 companies.