

## Special Olympics Bharat begins 75-day countdown to Amrit Mahotsav

*~ The national programme will provide support and healthcare to a record 75000 athletes with intellectual disabilities across 75 cities of India ~*

**24 January 2022:** On 22<sup>nd</sup> January, **Special Olympics Bharat**, launched the 75-day countdown to the federation's Return To Play – Inclusion Revolution program for athletes with intellectual disabilities (ID). Launched under the **Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav** initiative by the Government of India, the health screening program will reach a record **75,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities in 75 cities of India marking the 75 years of independence on World Health Day 2022 (7<sup>th</sup> April)**.

Along with the screening, a total of 7500 medical professionals will be trained as part of the project to provide high-quality treatment and training to athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In addition, 750 Special Olympics Bharat Centres will be activated to promote health and sports in the community.

To officially flag off the 75-day countdown, a virtual timer was started on the federation's website. Speaking on the occasion, **Dr. DG Chaudhari, General Secretary of Special Olympics Bharat** said, "The pandemic has pushed persons with ID back into isolation and inactivity. With Return to Play, the Special Olympics Bharat Athletes are preparing to get back on the field after a long gap, and that too on the occasion of the mega festival which is uniting all of India - Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav. This is a true inclusion revolution, highlighting and celebrating the importance of good health for good sporting performance."

His sentiments were echoed by **Deepanshunath Singh, Athlete Leader, SO Bharat-Delhi**, "For me, Amrit Mahotsav is a celebration of sports and good health. Both these aspects, go together. For a great performance, athletes must maintain good fitness and health. Hence, I have got myself registered for the screenings and am motivating many more athletes to do the same."

To support the national program, Special Olympics Bharat has set up a fund-raiser in collaboration with **Give India**. The funds raised will directly go towards improving the quality of life of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and provide them opportunities to experience high-quality sports experiences.

Speaking about the initiative, **Dr. Mallika Nadda, Chairperson of Special Olympics Bharat** said, "This is set to be the biggest health initiative for persons with intellectual disabilities, in terms of its reach and impact. People with ID are less physically active

and have a higher risk of chronic health conditions, and yet they lack proper access to healthcare, a situation which has been worsened further by the pandemic. I urge everyone to come together to support this important cause that will not only drastically improve the lives of those with ID, but also benefit their families, communities as well as the entire nation.”

**For more information on the fundraiser, please visit -**

**<https://fundraisers.giveindia.org/projects/return-to-play-inclusion-revolution>**

### **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.