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Newsletter October 2022

**Greetings from Special Olympics Bharat**

## **Building inner strength through the 2022 Berlin Marathon**



For Ankush Saha, SO Bharat Athlete from Karnataka, this was another feat to achieve. Ankush is a passionate runner and a golfer, coached meticulously by his father, Lt Col Saha, who too participates actively in both. Following his Silver Medal victory in Golf at the Special Olympics World Summer Games 2019, Abu Dhabi, his focus shifted to building his strength for the next RUN. The BMW Berlin Marathon 2022 held on 25 September 2022 was Ankush's fifth full Marathon. Ankush has been running since 2012 slowly building up to running half marathons (21.1 kms) from 2014 onwards, having run several of them before switching to running full marathon (42.2 kms) from 2017, a conscious decision he took completely by himself. In that year he successfully completed his first full marathon at Standard Chartered Mumbai marathon in 4 hours 2 minutes. Since then, he now only trains to run full marathon whenever he is not playing golf for Special Olympics.

At the Berlin Marathon 2022 he was proud to run along side approx. 45000 runners from all over the world, clocking 42.2 kms in 4 hours and 46 minutes.

**A candid account in the words of Ankush,** "I waited for 2 years to run the Berlin Marathon. My father and I had registered in 2020, but then covid happened. I trained very hard, although there were many problems. There were covid restrictions, very heavy rains in Bangalore, my father, who is my trainer, had many personal fitness problems; but we kept working hard.



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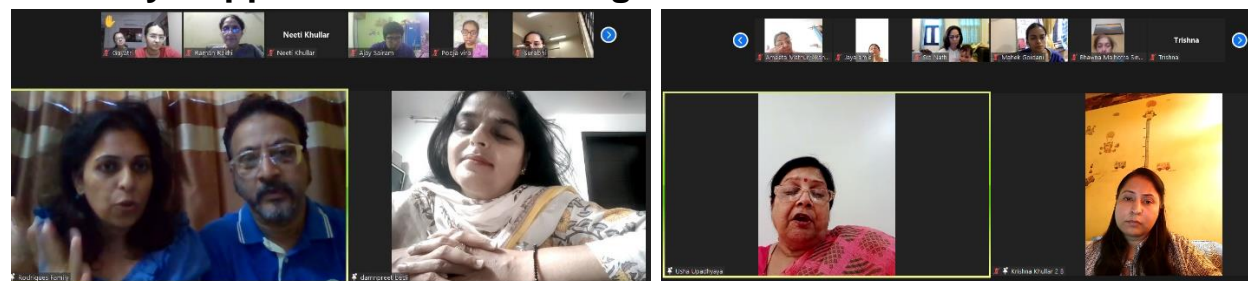


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The run started well for both of us. at the 23rd Km, I started getting cramps. By the 26th Km, the pain was severe. I stopped for a physio massage and was able to start running. Then, again at the 36th Km the cramps came back. Again I stopped for physio support. And again I got back to running. The pain was severe. I was limping. But I told my father that I will be a finisher. I will not give up! I could not achieve my personal time goal, but I'm very proud of myself that I finished the run with a fairly good time of 4:46. In 2018, I had run the Minnesota Twin City Marathon, and had established my personal best time of 3 hrs and 54 min. I had wanted to get a new personal best this time. But I'm not disappointed. I have learnt that I can manage pain without fear and I am strong mentally. Of course, my father was there all the way with me. And I had the support of all my fellow runners from my running group, Runners High, Bangalore. Now I'm waiting for the next one. I'll now get back to golf training, which is my other sport. I'm a proud Special Olympics golfer and a Marathoner! I love both sports!"

The BMW BERLIN-MARATHON is one of the sixth biggest and most important marathon events in the world. Ms Champa Saha, his mother, sees it as a major triumph for the cause of Inclusion as Ankush runs Marathons as a mainstream participant, where his challenges of being an individual with ID (Intellectual Disability) are completely his own and his participation is completely on an equal platform with the other runners. Although unable to meet Nyasha Derera, Athlete from Zimbabwe, at the event, Ankush congratulates him and sends him his best for many more runs in future.

## A Family Support Network building over Coffee



Ms Damanpreet Bedi , parent of Gunocean Singh Bedi, Athlete from Delhi, led a session on 'Keto Diet' for the members of the Family Café held in September 2022. Earlier this year Ms Usha Upadhya , Executive Director, Divdarshika, led the Café wherein she shared opportunities and her experience across 33 years, with Persons with Intellectual Disabilities in employment. A December master session is in the plan. Conducting a Master Session from time to time is an initiative executed this year , on request by the members. As the members , one by one, take the lead, every monthly session to share their personal journeys, they are also able to reach out with any relevant support required by the rest. Through the candid anecdotes shared by the lead members, all others are able to strike a common bond, bringing energy, certainty and joy.

Every session brings a smile through the meticulously designed virtual ice breakers , mostly by the Rodrigues family , supported by the core Family Café team. Proud parents of Joanne and Brydan, as they call themselves, Bryne and Janice share moments of determination & positivity and those everyday-moments which place their children , both with Intellectual Disabilities, on the path of an inclusive world.

On 15 May 2021 the first Family Café was held with a small group of family members of the Special Athletes, marking the World Family Day. Following conversations with a few parents, it was decided that with so





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much happening around, it would be meaningful to create a platform that would be less structured inviting an open interaction within the group. A camaraderie amongst families who share similar challenges and achievements was missing and could be explored - creating a support network.

## Inauguration of Sports Centers through the support of NHPC



The month of September received a great boost in strengthening Special Olympics sports at local levels, as nine such centers were launched across Himachal Pradesh through the support of NHPC (National Hydroelectric Power Corporation Ltd); one in each of the districts of Kangra , Chamba , Una , Mandi ,Kulu, Bilaspur ,Shimla ,Una, & Sirmau. NHPC will be supporting 20 centers for the next three years, spread across the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, Leh and Tripura.

The launch was executed in a hybrid mode wherein the centers had the athletes and officials present , as Dr Mallika Nadda, Chairperson of SO Bharat announced the centers open virtually. The NHPC team present at the occasion was led by Mr Uday Shanker Sahi, Executive Director, NHPC limited corporate office. An MoU has been signed between NHPC and SO Bharat defining the support that would provide continuing opportunities to Persons with and without Intellectual Disabilities to train and compete in several sports while experiencing expanded inclusive engagements. [Read More](#)

## Partnership inked against the backdrop of a National Coaching Camp

While the National Coaching Camp at Bokaro, the steel city of Jharkhand, focused on honing the sporting talents of the special athletes across Badminton, Cycling, Football & Futsal, a joint commitment between The camp was hosted by the Bokaro Steel Plant. SO Bharat and SAIL Bokaro Steel Plant validated the



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urgency of development and Inclusion through sports. The MoA (Memorandum of Agreement) was signed by Mr CRK Sudhanshu, GM(CSR-BSL) and Air Cmde LK Sharma, ED (SO Bharat) in the presence of Amarendu Prakash, Director Incharge BSL, and the senior officials of BSL and Mr Satbir Singh Sahota, Asst Area Director, SO Bharat- Jharkhand. As part of its initiative for promotion of sports and inclusive development, SAIL-Bokaro Steel Plant has taken a giant leap forward by supporting the Indian contingent preparing for the Special Olympics World Summer Games 2023 to be held in Berlin, Germany.



Addressing the special athletes, Mr Amarendu Prakash, Director Incharge BSL expressed his delight on hosting the camp, wishing the athletes his best. Speaking about the vision of the Bokaro Steel Plant, he told the media that the initiative is one of the persistent endeavours of the organisation to bring about Inclusion [Read More](#)

## **An Anchor diagnosed with an imperfect speech**





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Many -a-times Rohit has led the Special Olympics Athlete oath, he has anchored events to a great big audience without even a hint of nervousness. He has a strong opinion about fitness and does not hesitate to express that Fitness is an essential for everyone, and not just for those who are active in sports. Rohit exercises for about an hour daily, and goes for a 10-minute walk to the ground, close to his house. These are his achievements through his sporting journey in Special Olympics, which make his family proud.

Rohit Raina is 22 years old and is an Athlete from the Delhi, always cheerful and carrying a passion for sports, especially Cricket. He has a learning disability, that began to show, as his growth graph slowed down. He would walk

backward; his speech was described, 'imperfect', his teachers in his early schooling days complained of his aggressive behavior wherein he would often bite his classmates and so on. [Read More](#)

## Laying out new roads to Inclusion through the Unified Champion School program



The Unified Champion School programming supported by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the U.A.E., Ruler of Abu Dhabi, and Supreme Commander of the U.A.E. Armed Forces, is rolling out new pathways, as is happening in the state of Odisha. In a quaint and remote district of Bargarh, a Unified Youth meet was held on 10 September. The youth with and without Intellectual (number)Disabilities from the Little Angels School and the Therapy center jointly attended a session on Special Olympics including the young athletes drills, fun activities & guided discussions led by the youth inclusively. The therapy center has been accessible to the Athletes of Special olympics there for therapy



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only for the past 3-4 years, but the UCS program has opened expanded engagements and boosted unified sports. Through this event the students from there even participated in the Table Tennis National level Camp. The schools have planned more activations in the days to come

“The Unified Champion School program is a perfect complement to the YAP because it allows continuity of activities for the athletes and partners. As far as inclusion is concerned the UCS has proven to be a game changer as it has not only brought inclusion of people with and without disabilities but also has removed the caste barriers that are prevalent in some schools. The program has strengthened the process of removal of taboos concerning the condition of the people with Intellectual Disabilities, their rights and life with dignity”, Mr Prakash Rath, Area Director SO Bharat- Odisha

## The Delhi Chapter announces new committee members promising to revitalize

The occasion upheld dual achievements, one being the announcement of the Delhi Chapter Committee members and the other being recognition of persons dedicated to SO Bharat on ‘Sewa Divas’, a day that celebrates the birthday of the hon’ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Modiji. The celebrations highlighted the Abu Dhabi Games 2019 achievements of Anita, Athlete from the Asha Jyoti home, Delhi; the Athens Games medalist, Keshav, Athlete from Haryana along with the State Area Director & team. Mr Virender Kumar, Area Director, SO Bharat- Haryana was felicitated for his profound and continuing contribution and zeal in bringing about unparalleled milestones impacting the lives of the Athletes. It was indeed a golden moment to felicitate the office staff of SO Bharat National Office, with Mr Amit Kumar in the lead, who has dedicated 20 years of his life to the SO Bharat National Office, the others being Avinash and Sandeep.



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