

Greetings from Special Olympics Bharat

## A heartwarming dialogue between Macquarie and Special Olympics Bharat Athletes



Muskan and Deepanshu Singh, athletes from Haryana and Delhi were invited by Macquarie Group to share their life journeys at Elevate, their learning and development program for the staff. The two athletes shared their achievements, challenges, and thoughts with more than 140 attendees. Each session concluded with several questions for the athletes. Muskan is a judo athlete from the Special Olympics World Summer Games held in Berlin this year, while Deepanshu is a passionate figure skater aiming to book his space at the upcoming Special Olympics World Winter Games to be held in Turin, Italy in 2025.

Muskan's journey from rejection and humiliation to a hero's welcome after the Berlin Games specifically drew the curiosity and admiration from the audience. Ms Reena, her mother and Mr Satish, her mentor from her school Gurukul, added anecdotes about her struggles and how she manages to overcome them. Deepanshu's resolve to upgrade figure skating skills despite the distance and the financial constraints was as much overwhelming as it was surprising to hear his swift and sharp responses to the questions posed to him.

"The interactions with champion athletes Muskan and Deepanshu were an eye opener. It made me realise that being differently abled goes beyond the appearance. It is also about neurodiversity. I am inspired by the athletes' drive and conviction to make their own dreams come true, despite their hardship and struggles. From them, I learned how one should find happiness in the smallest moments and not let her/his circumstance be her/his excuse for not pursuing her/his goal. Their story illustrates how one should make the most of this life, rise, shine, and create a name for herself/himself with the least resources available," said Rahul Chandola Vice President from Macquarie Group.

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## Rithik Hukku reaches out to more youth and schools to expand the Inclusion Revolution



Rithik Hukku, Athlete leader from Rajasthan, who is also a member of the SOAP- AIC (Special Olympics Asia Pacific- Athlete Input Council), continues to amaze schools and youth as he leads to spread the message of Special Olympics Inclusion. He led a session for the Army Public School and the Asha Sapta Shakti special school, Jaipur at an event that was attended by over 80 persons. The event held in honor of the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Special Olympics globally, drew attention of the students and the school admin towards Inclusion through sports with the youth in the lead. With the support of the SO Bharat Rajasthan Chapter & his mentor Dr DC Gupta he organized Unified Zumba, fun activities, quiz along with discussion on topics like, leadership qualities, inclusion and more. He also invited various other stakeholders who he continues to stay connected with, as part of his engagements throughout the year.

Rithik, currently, is working at Hotel The Lalit Jaipur. While doing so he ensures that he contributes to spreading awareness about Special Olympics motivating and activating as many more to join the inclusion revolution

## The Punjab State Sports Policy 2023 upholds the bravery and determination of the SO Bharat Athletes



The Special Olympics World Games 2023 have ushered new tidings following an impressive demonstration of the abilities of athletes from the world over. The one that emerges conspicuously, amongst the rest, is the notification of the Punjab Government regarding the State Sports Policy, announced on 31 July 2023.

Upholding sports as Punjab's culture and a medium for positive and healthy development, the policy reiterates the urgency of building capacity of the coaches and trainers along with various administrative and financial aspects and recognitions. Special Olympics have been included in the new Sports Policy for the first time in Punjab. The new policy provisions make space for recognising the Special Olympics achievements (pg30), specifying a cash award to the medal winners as well as to the participants of the Olympic Games, who could not win any medal. [State Sports Policy](#)

Accordingly, the gold medal winner will get an amount of INR 75lakhs (USD 90000), while the silver and bronze medal winners will get INR 50lakhs (USD 60000) and INR 30lakhs (USD36000) respectively. INR 10 lakhs (USD 12,500) will be given to the athletes who participated but could not win a medal.

The Sports Policy announced a cash incentive for those athletes who reached the National preparatory camp but could not qualify for the final team. Recognising their abilities, the Punjab Government has sanctioned an amount of INR 8 lakhs(USD 10000) to help the athlete pursue sports and continue his/her attempt to qualify for the next Olympic Games. Even those athletes who win any medal at the National Championships organized by SO Bharat will be given a suitable cash award.

Additionally, it would be for the first time that the Maharaja Ranjit Singh Award, a state recognition of sports achievements, would felicitate one athlete with Intellectual Disability each year from the current financial year onwards, amongst the 20 sports persons who are felicitated each year. The winner of this Award will get INR 5Lakhs (USD 6250), a citation, trophy, and blazer.

Overwhelmed with the development, Mr Paramjit Sachdeva, Area Director SO Bharat Punjab, revealed his arduous journey laden with several disappointments and perseverance since 2013 to achieve the outcome. Moving on, he describes the squalid conditions in which few of the athletes reside. Their enormous achievements combined with a lack of financial education gears him to design a proposal that would help optimum wealth management for their financial future. [News](#)

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## **Young Athlete Pranav uses his art streak to raise funds for the sports stadium coming up in Haryana**





It was none other than a Young Athlete who raised funds for the Daulatabad Stadium, a space assigned by the Haryana Govt last year in July for carrying out Special Olympics sports. The state has been, since, reaching out for funds for overhauling the space to make it sports-friendly for the Special Athletes.

Pranav, 11yrs now, a child with Down Syndrome & a student of the Heritage School, Gurugram, prepared several artworks for an exhibition held on 2 and 3 September 2023. INR 100,000 from the funds raised were contributed to the Haryana Chapter for the stadium. Pranav's parents humbly commented that this is a contribution from them to Special Olympics, an acknowledgement of what the organisation does for everyone.

Having joined 'Young Athletes' in 2021, balancing and flexing, he showed his leaning towards Roller Skating. In February 2020 he participated in a district level one-day Athlete Meet competing in Roller-skating and was amongst 180 Athletes who participated in various events. While carving his way into the sports space Pranav parallelly is showcasing his flair for arts and doing something for the society! And that makes him truly special

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## New partnerships and initiatives amplify inclusion in West Bengal



The pic of Rupanjan and Sanjib that featured at the UNESCO photo contest 2023 in France

West Bengal enjoyed dual achievements in the recent months, that may not relate with each other, literally, but substantiate an expanding awareness. At an annual photo contest run by UNESCO, a photo of two Athletes from Kolkata was nominated and displayed, with the others, for about six days in France.

Separately, as Kolkata celebrated the feat, they also rejoiced hearing back from the Janine & Rahul Foundation (JR Foundation) who expressed interest in conducting a Unified Sports fest. The event was held at the Bijoygarh Vidyapith, a government school and a unified champion school in Kolkata. Approx 40 Athletes from six schools participated at the event that witnessed an overall attendance of approx. 100 persons. They together played indoor Bocce (as the rain played spoilsport) and combined in Yoga as well.

JR Foundation who are engaged in initiating multiple philanthropic activities stayed connected with the Bengal state chapter, after having been invited at the Health Fest in April 2022. The Foundation and the state are in the process of planning three programs jointly within the current financial year (ending 31 March 2024), namely, an annual Unified sports where the Foundation-run business school will play unified partners, unified pairs will be invited to interact & sensitise the students through their experiences. The third annual activity would be an inclusive cultural experience that would include theatre and more.

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## Odisha combines 'Sambhav' and 'Sports' to create a unique experience





The state of Odisha emerges as a unique model of implementation of Special Olympics at the community level, each time. When they aim at the overall development of the Athletes and the sensitization of the youth (both with and without ID) they refer to a gamut of experiences that would shape them into confident and responsible citizens. SO Bharat Odisha reached out to Sambhav, a nonprofit that works on the twin issues of gender and environment in Nayagarh (approx. 120km from Bhubaneswar), to combine environment consciousness and sports.

Through the initiative of the NGO, a barren land of 90 acres has transitioned into a dense forest within a span of 30 years, bringing the national honour of Padam shri to the father-daughter duo responsible for bringing this change.

The space became directly relevant to SO Bharat when, earlier this year, a 2-day camp was organised by the SO Bharat Odisha Chapter for over 50 persons in all. While the youth played Unified Badminton, Baggo, Kabaddi, yoga and fitness, they soaked into a unique backdrop that changed from a stadium to natural and green surroundings, also playing on the side of a dam!

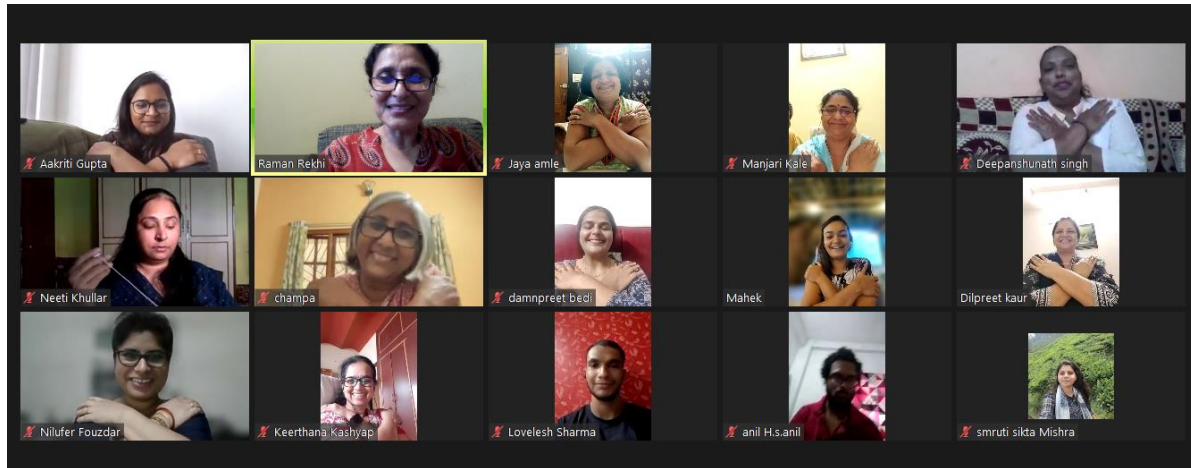
17-18 Youth as well as 12 Coaches were trained in Special Olympics activations. The lead was given by Indramani Kandi, an Athlete leader for over four years and Kalpana, the cyclist who participated in the Berlin games 2023. Sports provided an opportunity to the participants the importance of environment responsibilities as well. In addition to sports, they were exposed to a variety of paddy grown in the area and got a chance to view animals like, a deer up-close. The camp concluded with both thrill & discipline as critical lessons learnt. “ It is an excellent example of one man's understanding of the nature, his leadership and the team work with the communities which matches with the ethos of our Youth Activation Program and that is what we inculcated into the minds of the participants”- Mr Prakash Rath, Area Director, SO Bharat – Odisha

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## Employment, the greatest concern at the Family Café

The August Family Café brought back memories of the World Games leaving the members overwhelmed seeing the determination and abilities of the Special Olympics Athletes. With most of the

members having children with Intellectual Disabilities of an employable age, the discussion steered towards their economic rehabilitation, causing immense concern.



“Even now, when the govt , local or corporate authorities speak of Inclusion and about employing persons with disabilities the conversations close with the mention of ‘Intellectual Disabilities’; Some are hired but fired soon after. Employment of PWID seems an outcome of a long and rocky path that makes life very challenging”, said one of the Café members. “I do not have an answer when my daughter asks that she is trained in cooking like others but there is no one to take her as an intern. Oblivious to the reason, she asks what more must she do so that she could work”, expresses another member at the café.

As the session celebrated the achievements of the Athletes at the Berlin Games 2023, it triggered a disturbing thought of ‘what now’. In view of the impressive partner-outreach that unfolded during the Berlin games, there is hope that there would be upcoming support to catalyse acceptance, accessibility, and inclusion of persons with Intellectual Disabilities. The Family Café, concluded with a fun ice-breaker & on a positive note wherein each offered to support the other. All unanimously agreed that options are somewhere there, waiting to be explored.

## PARTNERS IN INCLUSION



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