

Greetings from Special Olympics Bharat

SO Bharat Athletes at the Lions Give Conclave 2024

Special Olympics Bharat participated at the Give Conclave held at the Jio convention centre, for the very first time this year, through the support of the International Vice President Lion AP Singh and PID Lion Sangeeta Jatia. The event organised by the Lions International, is an endeavour to bring together individuals and organisations to catalyse positive change in communities across India. Community workers, enablers, grant makers, CSR experts, philanthropists, and workers from non-profit organisations merged on a common platform. SO Bharat joined the conclave along with representatives from over 200 humanitarian projects supported by Lions international in India



From the state chapter of SO Bharat- Maharashtra, Athletes, Mihir Soni, Karan Shiv Kumar along with Bharati Marathe, Meliza Shiv Kumar Naik and Coach Sunil Ade attended the event on both the days, spreading awareness about the organisation. Dr Usman Memon, Clinical Director Opening Eyes, Dr Usman Memon, Clinical Director Opening Eyes, presented the Healthy Athletes program and his association with SO Bharat since 2008, while also highlighting the National Health fest held in India in April 2022.

Special Olympics issued its first annual letter on the Global State of Inclusion in Education on the International Day of Education



This year, UNESCO dedicated the International Day of Education on 24 January to the crucial role education and teachers play in changing mind-sets. The first International Day of Education was observed in 2019. The transformative role that education plays in shaping a peaceful future resonated unanimously in November 2023 when the new [Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development](#) was adopted. The recommendation acknowledges that education in all its forms and dimensions, in and out of schools, shapes how we see the world and treat others, and it can be a pathway to constructing lasting peace.

Special Olympics education programming rests on the premise that inclusion is a learned behaviour that can be taught alongside academic skills. Special Olympics issued its first annual letter on the Global State of Inclusion in Education, on the day of education 2024. According to Dr Shriver, Inclusion has come a long way since 1968. Today, there are over 30,000 Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools in 152 countries that reach approximately one million students, and many more educators, coaches, and families. While this growth is significant, it represents only a fraction of the need. SO Bharat is continuously reaching out to schools and colleges educating the students about SO sports that is adequately positioned to catalyse acceptance and inclusion of diverse abilities. Inclusion has come a long way since 1968, when Special Olympics was born.

The letter has Dr. Tim Shriver, Chairman of Special Olympics, assess the world's successes and the barriers, in making schools and education systems more inclusive for students with intellectual disabilities (ID). "I look forward to a time when countries and communities make bolder commitments to creating welcoming, effective and safe learning environments"- Dr Tim Shriver. [Read More](#)



National Championship – Female Floorball



The National Championship Floorball Female was held from 27-31 Jan 2024, in Delhi witnessing participation of approx. 87 Athletes and 28 Coaches from 14 States of India. Mr Hansraj Hans, singer & member of parliament, graced the occasion as Chief Guest, joined by Mr. Yogeshwar Dutt, Indian professional wrestler, Dr Mallika Nadda, President SO Bharat, along with other distinguished guests.

The Championship provided an opportunity for the athletes to play at the national level, adding value to the year-round training they receive. Some of them even make it to the international levels. The Championship also helped in identifying athletes for the Special Olympics World Winter Games 2025 to be held in Italy.

The training focused on Floorball skills, physical conditioning, and mental resilience. comprehensive assessments were conducted with grouping & divisioning and intense Floorball competitions were conducted

Quote by Mr Hansraj Hans: Events like the National Championship showcase the abilities of the population who the society very often isolates. Playing at a National level is not what everyone can do but they have demonstrated their determination in scaling such heights. I appeal to the society to accept and embrace differences and contribute in making this world a joyful place to live in

In the words of Mr Yogeshwar Dutt: I am familiar with the sacrifices and hard-work expected of an Athlete along with his /her Coach and family members. I am overwhelmed to be part of this event that emerges as a phenomenal platform of sporting talent and inclusion.



Play for the Planet



WWF-India observed its 'sports -themed' annual Volunteer Day with over 50 volunteers playing and interacting with the SO Bharat Athletes in Assam and New Delhi. It was their first ever engagement of a kind with athletes around the theme of #Play4Planet.

In Delhi, a Basketball Tournament was organised on 20th January at Maitreyi College with the 30+ WWF volunteers playing as unified partners. In Assam, the Day was observed on 25th January at the Ashadeep Rehabilitation Centre, Guwahati playing Bocce and Relay Race along with a few floor games that were thoughtfully integrated with the messaging around plastic awareness. WWF Nature Store products such as jute bags were given as prizes and takeaways to the participants.

"This engagement gave exposure to our volunteers on hidden gems which were the SOB Athletes. The sports-based activities were not just for competition but also for fostering healthy relationships among volunteers and athletes. The volunteers were delighted, in fact amazed, to know about the achievements of the SOB Athletes winning prizes at the international level" quoted Tannu Saini, Senior Programme Officer-Youth & Volunteer Engagement, WWF-India.

Youth Activation at the Scottish High International School



“Try us, play with us, make friends with us, be a part of us and see the magic of how disability vanishes and the athletes play and bring pride to our nation”, said Ranveer Singh Saini, Golfer, SO Bharat Haryana, while sharing his experience and thoughts with a promising group of youth at the Scottish high International School Gurugram. The Youth Activation session stood out as unique, as the athletes from Vishwas Special School, turned out to be more articulate than the youth without intellectual disabilities. It came as a pleasant surprise for Kalash Kaushal, associated with SO Bharat since 2016, who supervised the whole session while overseeing a different group of youth leading the sessions as well.

While Khushi Grover and Siddhant Nath led a session on Special Olympics, the one on Unified Leadership had athletes especially, coming up and talking about their role models, one specifically, mentioning his parents and brother as his. The session concluded with a unified table tennis experience and a plan for a next session with the unified club, that will have members from the attending group, for a focussed ‘Leadership’ training.

Celebrating the Purple Fest with Inclusive Sports



It has been an incredible experience to participate in the purple fest. It was my first time and was fascinating to see so many people participating in so many different sports. Our team gave our best on the field and we won the gold medal. I am proud of the achievement of my team and it gives me immense joy to be part of a winning team. I hope many more athletes will turn up for this event in the future, and I hope the purple fest grows bigger and bigger every year. ❤️🏆 - Francis, Footballer from Goa and a Gold medallist at the Special Olympics World Summer Games held in Berlin 2023. The International Purple Fest Goa was held from 8-13 Jan 2024 in Panaji Goa. 168 athletes and unified partners from seven states of India participated in the event, across Unified 5-aside football, Volleyball, beach volleyball, Badminton and Dance sport. The Athletes from all the states were overjoyed with the experience that brought them once again on to the sports field amidst much festivities and fun. 18 Athletes who, just a few months back, experienced the phenomenal world games at Berlin Germany, were thrilled to re-enter an arena of sports celebration.

The Sports centre that keeps Sahil active and fit



(L-R) Trishan, Sahil, Saptajit

Sahil, 19 yrs, trains and practices regularly at the sports centre which is at Abhoy Mission where he resides. He practises all five days in a week playing Football, Handball and following a fitness routine. For Sahil it is therapeutic, gives joy and gives him confidence of building a talent. In March 2023 Trishan, his Coach and mentor joined the movement and introduced Sahil to Unified Sports. He played several times at the local level. Continued to build his stamina and strength in the track and field athletics. The prize and accolades he received at the end of

each event, brought him cheer. Through Unified sports he met his unified partner, with whom he participated at the Youth Summit in 2023 in Delhi. Unified sports connected him with Saptajit, 24 yrs, his unified partner & buddy. Saptajit is a passionate footballer and plays badminton as well. Sahil's skills have upgraded playing with him.

According to Ms Susmita De, Area Director, SO Bharat Tripura, he used to be very aggressive. She remembers an occasion when he smashed a window with his fist. Things look so different now. Sports has helped him develop, understand discipline, comply with the commands, maintain a good posture while walking, eat well etc. [Read More](#)

Training the Coaches of the Govt Schools in Delhi to spread Inclusion at the grassroots



Since October of 2023 three unified coaches' trainings have been held with over 300 coaches representing approx. 120 govt schools from different zones of Delhi. The trainees have been a mix of Coaches and special educators and the sessions include theory as well as practical. With the School admins being very clear about inclusion and an expected outcome of the trainings being a change in mind-sets, the path is well-aligned with the mission of Special Olympics. The existing buddy system in schools is in sync with the inclusive youth engagement that Special Olympics encourages.

The month of March is set to see a series of more trainings that would complete within the month. The trainees are expected to complete a 6-week plan of implementing the lessons learnt, in their respective schools

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