

Greetings from Special Olympics Bharat

National Championships pressed sports into fever pitch



The months of February and March 2024 infused a delightful sporting bonanza through the National Championships held in 11 summer sports bringing 721 athletes into the sports arena. The sports included Badminton, Basketball, Cycling, Football, Golf, Judo, Powerlifting, Swimming, Table Tennis, Tennis and Volleyball. Additionally, 52 Athletes participated at a National Snow sports Championship held in the scenic district of Narkanda, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh.

The Championships were held to expand the sports training & competition experience for the Athletes, creating opportunities for the states to build capacity to host national level sporting events leveraging their respective partnerships and networks, as well. The nine host states which included Assam, Chandigarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Pondicherry, Punjab and UP, added their unique dimensions of celebration and showcase to the championships.

Commenting on the National Championships, Ms Chitra Shah, Vice President SO Bharat & Area Director SO Bharat- Pondicherry said, "National championships are a lifeline in the Special Olympics experience, delivering a two-pronged outcome. It gives us a reality check on the quality of training extended to our athletes and their competition acumen. It also, gives the hosting states an experience of putting together an athlete-friendly sports event, inviting the parents and the general public to witness & begin to break stereotypes about intellectual disability.

Ten more National Championships are lined up for the second half of the year 2024, including Bocce, Bowling, Cricket and Beach Volleyball, to name a few.

Judo and Tennis opens new avenues of expansion



Special Olympics Bharat – Delhi organised the National Judo and Tennis Championship at the Modern School, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi. It was a very first national level event held at the school which is emerging as a proactive member of the unified school champion program. The event was presided by Dr. Mallika Nadda, President, Special Olympics Bharat, who was joined by the Chief Guest Ms Ambika Pant, Honorary Secretary, Board of Trustees, Modern School, along with Special Guest Dr Jyotsna Suri, CMD of Bharat Hotels Limited. The Tennis tournament was played between 27th March to 31st March featuring 13 Male and 4 female players. The Judo tournament took place during the same time with participation of 23 Male athletes and 13 female athletes. 53 Athletes participating in both the tournaments represented nine states of India. It was a delight to see few of the Berlin Games 2023 players back on the field

Chandigarh and Punjab celebrated sports on and beyond the field.



Special Olympics Bharat- Chandigarh conducted the table tennis (male) nationals from 4-8 March 2024 drawing support from the Sports Department Chandigarh, Verka Plant Chandigarh, also ensuring to engage their diverse stakeholders like NGOs, NSS Volunteers from DAV college and more. Having conducted its very first national level event called for a celebration later, that was done at the behest of the youth leaders

"I am grateful to all our supporters. A very meaningful lesson emerged out of this event, telling us the willingness of the society to support us in bringing about Inclusion. It feels that the positive world that we are striving for is shaping up. We will keep showcasing the abilities of our Athletes to bring about acceptance"- Ms Sheetal Negi, Area Director SO Bharat Chandigarh





A sports celebration unfolded in the city of Hoshiarpur in Punjab that held the Table Tennis (female) from 8-12 March 2024 National Championship in the female category. JSS ASHA KIRAN SPECIAL SCHOOL was the venue of the event, being one of the Unified Champion schools that the state has developed in the past 2-3 years. To deliver a successful outcome, the state leveraged its stronghold in the corporate sector inviting distinguished guests from Vardhman Textiles Ltd., and the Vassal Education Group, to name a few. Expressing gratitude to the overwhelming support by the local supporters of the event, Mr Paramjit Singh Sachdeva, Area Director SO Bharat Punjab said, "Events like the National Championship serve as a catalyst for boosting the confidence of the athletes. The opportunity to compete at such a high level not only ignites their competitive spirit but also instills a sense of pride and determination to perform their best. The Table Tennis (female) Championship certainly was an exciting and energising event."

The Athlete Leadership Training rolls out with positivity and potential



Earlier this year, Siddhant Nath, Athlete leader and a then, National office colleague, would be part of every resource team that would introduce Special Olympics to new schools and colleges. In one of his last assignments before moving on, he introduced SO Bharat to approx. 50 teachers at the Navjyoti Institute for Intellectual Disabilities, New Delhi. He gripped the attention of the trainees as he began

with quizzing them on guessing his role, and then went on with his session of introducing the organisation to them. Siddhant, diagnosed with hydrocephalous, pushed himself into scaling unimaginable heights through his journey in SO Bharat. He represented SO Bharat at the Asia Pacific Regional Games held in 2013 in 100 mtrs Athletics and 200mtrs Shotput, followed by several assignments as a youth leader, within and outside of India.



With a hope of being joined by many more leaders like Siddhant, a first of a kind in-person Athlete leadership Training commenced in New Delhi on 8 March 2024. Leveraging the experience of the mentors and handing over the mike to the Athletes, the training is shaping in a way that transcends any written guidance. Each Athlete leader is a story of individuality and ability.

The training is spread across two sessions in a month running through a module, meticulously put together by the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC). The conversations began with Ms Kalash Kaushal, a Youth Activation colleague at the National office and Siddhant Nath, gradually bringing on board the NYLC and several other stakeholders with a common objective. The online module is likely to commence in the first week of July 2024, spreading across the country, also taking a few resource persons from the current batch.

Rithik keeps the momentum of development & expansion going





Rithik Hukku was recently felicitated with the, 'Award Star of the Month', in recognition of his exemplary services at the Hotel, The Lalit, Jaipur (Rajasthan). Rithik has been employed by the hotel since December 2022. The several awards that he has received underpins his determination to keep carving new pathways for himself. While he continues to excel at his workplace, his connection with SO Bharat continues to thrive. In March 2024, supported by his mentor, Dr DC Gupta, and the SO Bharat Rajasthan Area director, Mr DK Singh, Rithik led

an orientation program at the Suresh Gyan Vihar University, Jaipur, for 65 trainees with and without Intellectual and developmental disabilities. He received a promising response by the faculty members for continuing with inclusive sports and engagements in future.

Sports with the Delhi Govt Education Department begins with Coaches trainings



In July 2023, a landmark agreement was signed between the Directorate of Education & Sports GNCT (Govt of the National Capital Territory) and the SO Bharat Delhi Chapter, opening the Delhi Govt schools to Special Olympics Unified sports. Through the leadership of Dr Mallika Nadda, President, SO Bharat the national office has reached out to the Central education department, and working through the State Area Directors to tap their respective State departments to enter schools with Inclusive sports.

Since Sept 2023 the Delhi Chapter has conducted 7 Coaches trainings reaching out to 681 Coaches from 179 schools falling under the jurisdiction of the Delhi Govt. This is an outcome of the MoU signed between the SO Bharat Delhi Chapter and the Delhi Govt in July 2023. The trained Coaches would have to complete a 6-week implementation plan, following the training. The model that is shaping up in Delhi would serve as a pathway for the other states who have planned Govt engagement as a means of sustaining the Unified Champion School programming developed through the support of the various SOI projects.

Sports centres open in the state of Maharashtra



The month of March and April have witnessed inauguration of three sport centres that have leapt the number to 26 centres across 10 states of India. The centres have opened in the state of Maharashtra across Mumbai, Dhule and Ahmednagar committing to provide year-round access to approx. 100 Athletes. The coaches have been appointed on trial basis for a month and have completed levels 1 and 2 of the SOI Coaches certification courses.

While the centres in Mumbai and Dhule are supported by Dassault Systems, Ahmednagar is supported by the Vikhe Patil Foundation. While all three have facilities for training in Athletics, Mumbai adds Football, Dhule Volleyball and Ahmednagar swimming, to the sports offered

Developing responsible citizens through Youth Activation

As the months of comfortable cool weather pass by the states prepare to keep the athletes in action through re-scheduled early morning and indoor activities. The state of Odisha held an indoor Unified fitness session as part of their 'Next to Earth' project, fuelled by the Innovation grant led by Arpit (youth without IDD) and Aman (youth with IDD). This session was followed by discussions held to take the project forward with meaningful involvement of the youth at all levels. The conversations essentially talked about the continuing activities despite the heat.



The state of Odisha also held an awareness program on 'Road Safety' in the month of January this year, bringing together Unified Champion Schools, many of whom have been engaged with the state chapter since May 2022. A unified rally with about 100 participants was organized to create awareness among the public about basic safety rules to be followed on roads. Athletes- Aman Patel and Sachin Barik played an important role in planning resources and their distribution. Events of this nature are frequently organised by the state, drawing attention to areas of responsible citizenship, with active participation of youth with and without IDD

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