

Greetings from Special Olympics Bharat

## Medical screenings organised in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand



L to R: Dr Mallika Nadda, President SO Bharat with the National Office & the UP Chapter officials; 'Special' photography team



Audiometry Screenings in progress in Ghaziabad UP

The month of May witnessed the Special Olympics Medfest , supported by GIC (General Insurance Corporation), across the two states of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Uttarakhand , examining health parameters of approx. 1000 athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities. 640 Athletes were screened at the Vardaan Multi-speciality hospital (VMH) in Ghaziabad, UP while the rest were screened across the three districts of Dehradun, Haldwani and Ramnagar in Uttarakhand. Over 100 doctors supported by about 180 volunteers conducted the screenings covering multiple health parameters including oral care, hearing, eye, physiotherapy and vitals including BMI,

Height, Weight, Blood Pressure and Oxygen count



Oral Screenings in progress in Haldwani, Uttarakhand

Some note-worthy events unfolded as the screenings took place. Uttar Pradesh invited four persons with Down Syndrome, trained photographers, to capture the event in Ghaziabad. Members of the 'Unique Eye Photography', are on the panel of the SO Bharat UP-state chapter that has invited them for photography at several occasions in the past. Their expertise spans across event, nature, wildlife, and portraits. Turning to Uttarakhand, the Army School in Dehradun that hosted the screenings, appreciated the Special Olympics format as being fun-filled and interactive and expressed a desire to have the screenings on a Sunday for a higher turn-out. 15 % of the Athletes

examined in the district were diagnosed with one or the other condition that would require follow up. They have requested for more Healthy Athletes screenings and MATP (Motor Activity Training Program). Ram nagar had several cases of tooth extraction and one that required an eye -surgery as well. The CMO in Haldwani called the screenings 'athlete-centric', appreciating the steps taken by the team to make Persons with Intellectual Disabilities comfortable during the process.

## International Conference on 'Inclusion through Sports' organised by the Amity University in collaboration with SO Bharat and RCI



L – R: Dr Sharanjeet Kaur, Prof Shukla, Ms A Srija, Dr Srivastava, Dr Jayanti Pujari, Prof Dr. Gurinder Singh



L – R: Ms Chitra Shah, Vice President SO Bharat, lighting the lamp at the inauguration , with distinguished guests

Amity Institute of Rehabilitation Sciences organised an international conference on 'Inclusion through sports, in collaboration with Special Olympics Bharat(SO Bharat) and the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), New Delhi, on 8&9 April 2024. The two-day conference witnessed participation of Students, Educators, Scholars & Rehab Professionals. The primary objective of this conference was to provide a platform for Special Educators and practitioners to exchange knowledge and insights, fostering the promotion of Inclusion through sports. It was also an earnest endeavour to reshape community perceptions regarding persons with disabilities by emphasizing on their abilities and reducing the focus on their disabilities. Moreover, the aim was to examine the role of NEP2020 in facilitating sports-integrated learning, fostering physical and psychological well-being, promoting life skills, and enhancing cognitive abilities among students.



The conference was launched by Dr SK Srivastava, Sr Director, Vice President & Advisor at FPO, Prof Balvinder Shukla Vice Chancellor and Dr Jayanti Pujari, Dean, Faculty of Rehabilitation Sciences Amity University, who were joined by Dr. Sharanjeet Kaur, Chairperson, Rehabilitation Council of India , Ms A Srija, Economic Advisor, SSL, Education Department, Govt of India and Mr Dipak Natali , President and Managing Director, Special Olympics – Asia Pacific Region all of whom relayed the significance of Inclusion in education, with sports as a tool of unification

and personality development.

The valedictory function was presided by Mr Vikas Trivedi, Member Secretary, Rehabilitation Council of India and had the keynote address delivered by Mr Himanshu Gupta, Secretary CBSE. [Read More](#)

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## Transforming Into the Power & Joy of Sports





Kaka, 17 yrs, wearing Jersey number 5, played a good defence at the Special Olympics South Asia 7-a-Side Unified Football Competition Dhaka 2024. Although the final result of the competition held the Indian male football unified team in the fifth position, the experience was bound to leave an impact on Kaka, victory or defeat

Kaka is a person with Intellectual/Developmental disabilities. In his early childhood, he may have cried for hours, left in isolation in circumstances that were overwhelmingly challenging. The world known to him consisted of his father, who too would struggle, to the extent of changing his religion for financial support, to be able to bring up his child. Kaka's mother resides in a care-facility, owing to her mental illness, while Kaka's sister, who too has an intellectual disability is in another home. His father is a street-vendor, selling mobile covers to make ends meet. Manovikas School of Inclusion located at Radhey Puri, East Delhi embraced Kaka, re-routing his journey about nine years back.

According to Ms Indira Alok, Principal, Manovikas School for Inclusion, when Kaka had arrived in the institute, while looking severely challenged, he also exhibited a physique that showed a sports potential. He was immediately made to join the Special Olympics sports program. Ms Indira feels, "Sports is a medium to develop and to bring about a change. It is not recreational. For Kaka, it has opened a career avenue based on his potential and most importantly, interest". She appreciates the proactive role played by Mr Vikram Singh Rawat, Area Director, SO Bharat- Delhi and by Mr Sachin, Coach, in supporting Kaka's journey through sports.

Since his return from the Dhaka Tournament Kaka, sports have become very central to his daily activities. He plays football every day looking after his fitness as well. He considers himself a sports Champion and feels proud. He dons the T shirt once every day, encouraging his co-residents to care for their fitness and play sports. [Read More](#)

## Building the Momentum for the Gothia Special Olympics Trophy



A team of 10 male footballers from SO Bharat will participate from India for the first time in the Gothia cup, a world championship supported by SKF, and held in Sweden. Following the pre-requisites of participating in the event SO Bharat conducted a **Meet the World National Football Championship** at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Training Centre for Disability Sports, Gwalior, MP, from 26-28 April 2024. The Championship witnessed enthusiastic participation from all corners of the country, with 71 athletes forming 12 male teams representing 12 states (Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Pondicherry, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh & West Bengal). The opening ceremony was presided by Dr Mallika Nadda, President SO Bharat, who was accompanied by Dr DG Chaudhari, General Secretary, Mr VK Mahendru, Executive Director, and Mr Dipankar Banerji from SO Bharat. The distinguished guests included Mr. Ajay Singh, Principal of The Scindia School Gwalior, Ms Pallavi Pandey Deputy Director CDS, Indu Bora Vice Chancellor LNIPE, Tanul Singhal Head, Corporate Affairs & CSR SKF India & South East Asia and Mayur Deshmukh, Deputy Manager, Corporate Affairs & CSR, SKF India. The Championship concluded with 25 Athletes being shortlisted for the next camp (Prep-1). [Report on the National Championship](#)

Following up to the championship, a National Coaching Preparatory Camp (1), was held at the CDS Stadium in Gwalior from 15th to 22nd May 2024. It saw participation of 45 campers from 12 states, including 24 athletes, 13 coaches, supported by 2 volunteers, 1 medical staff, 1 physiotherapist and 3 resource persons. This camp was a critical phase in the selection process for the Gothia Cup India team. Based on a comprehensive evaluation of individual skills and match performances, the top 15 athletes were shortlisted for the next camp. [Report on the NCC Prep 1](#)

With two more camps lined up, the team from India is suitably gearing to clash with the competing teams at the world event that will soon take place in Gothenburg, Sweden.





## Learning to be a team player through Unified Sports



Mayank, a student of Class 9 and Aryan a student of class 8 at Destiny International, Patna, Bihar met on the football grounds, teaming up for Unified sports. Mayank is an Athlete with Autism and was recommended for the Unified football team by his special educator who has also been trained as Coach by Mr Sandeep Kumar, Area Director, SO Bharat- Bihar. The teams were being recruited to establish unified sports in the school as part of the program supported by SNF (Stavros Niarchos Foundation)

Observing his skills in traditional football, his coach found Mayank well prepared to be integrated into the football team. Earlier, Mayank didn't respond readily when spoken with, he would not really listen. An individual sport like powerlifting, was identified for him as his social communication was weak and may have impacted team performance, if integrated too early into the team.

Aryan, his unified partner, is a national badminton player. He has a sibling with an IDD (Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities) whose name is Anurag. Aryan, dominated by his mind-set, would hardly be seen with his brother. Gradually, Aryan expressed interest to join a unified team. Paired with Mayank, Aryan, began to bond with him and with his brother too.

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## Youth pairs lead to promote Inclusion through Sports and Innovation



L: The two youth teams prior to leaving for the Berlin Games in held in 2023. R: Team Yashika and Mahi at India Gate



Sashwat and Sagar at their school Jaypee Public School Gr NOIDA UP

‘Let’s connect Saathi’ and ‘Inclusion beyond sports’ are two projects which are being led by two power pairs- Sagar Kapoor (Athlete leader) and Shashwat Agarwal (Youth leader) from Greater NOIDA , Uttar Pradesh and Yashika Bhatt (Athlete leader) , Mahi Dheri (Youth leader) from Delhi respectively. While twenty-five states in India are spreading awareness and sensitizing more and more educational institutions about the Athletes of Special Olympics and their abilities, few unified pairs (a pair of youth with and without Intellectual and developmental disabilities between ages 14-25 yrs of age) are taking the lead to do the same through their intriguing creativity.

Forming their respective core teams, both the pairs above have reached out to 4 schools each to regularise unified sports and also trained their students, in the past 9 months, to sustain inclusive activations throughout the year. They planned the design and implementation of the grant-fuelled projects, including budgeting, with support from their adult mentors namely, Ms Neeraj Singh and Ms Mala Arora to lead the change! The targets are small as is the time



period, but the learning is big as it brings together the youth in simple and regular conversations that lead them to accept each other; as they do so the change begins, very naturally. Both the teams qualified the meticulous application process prior to the Berlin Games, got selected based on the same to participate at the Global youth congress held during the Berlin Games held in June 2023. On their return they have been occupied in completing their respective projects in India.

Special Olympics awards project-based grants to young people with and without intellectual disabilities. These grants fund youth-led projects that promote inclusion in schools and communities across the globe. Through Innovation grants, Special Olympics aims to empower a global Unified Generation of youth, ushering in a new world of inclusion. Unified pairs from SO Bharat have been leading projects since 2018. Five Unified pairs from different parts of India are currently leading different innovation projects, committing to achieve their targets within the year 2024

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## Grassroot Football Day celebrated by the TATA Football Academy Jamshedpur with SO Bharat Athletes



To commemorate the World Grass Root Football Day on 15 May 2024, the Tata Football Academy unit of Jamshedpur Football Club (JFC), one of the premium football academies of the country, organized fun activities for the special athletes of SOB Jharkhand at their premises. Approx fifty local special athletes participated in colorful and enjoyable celebration, attracting the parents and siblings into sporting action as well. 42 grassroots Football coaches of JFC conducted these activities for our athletes with the support of the SO Bharat Jharkhand team led by Mr Satbir Singh Sahota

Special athletes were divided in a team of ten along with equal number of partners and each group took part in different recreational activities. The experience truly was unique for the Athletes, made possible by the support of SNF (Stavros Niarchos Foundation)

Mr Kaund Chandra, Head of the Grass Root Program and all the coaches are working at the Jamshedpur local schools for the development of young & budding school going footballers, contributing to the expanse of SO Bharat Unified Schools





Athlete, Unified Partner and Coach who were part of SO Bharat team that participated in the Asia Pacific Football tournament held at Dhaka in April 2024 were also felicitated at the event

Due to the enthusiastic support extended by Mr. Mukul V Choudhari, CEO Jamshedpur FC & Chief Sports Tata Steel, few days later, the SO Bharat Jharkhand team conducted a Coaches training program for 32 JFC grassroots football coaches, with Mr. Hemant Gupta Head Sports, (Academies & Adventure Foundations) in attendance.

## Taking a walk through the Sports Centres on any regular day



To understand the running of the Sports centres we thought of taking a peek into the schedule of any one state and its functioning in one month. Taking Himachal Pradesh, the state, and May as the month, the nine districts of Bilaspur, Chamba, Kangra, Kullu, Mandi, Shimla, Sirmour Solan and Una came in focus. The Sports centres conduct regular fitness regimen preceding any session of sporting activities held 5-6 days in a week. The centres together, provide opportunities to approx. 425 Athletes, divided into mostly two batches, or even three as is the case with cycling.

Each centre run by 1-2 Coaches trains the athletes across Athletics, Badminton, Volleyball, Cycling, Football, Basketball & Roller-skating, although not restricted to these sports. Each session begins with a general warm-up that includes light exercises. The Coaches follow circuit training to increase the endurance, strength and speed of the Athletes. While the lower ability athletes begin with 25Mtr 100 Mtrs and Softball Throw, the higher ability practice 200 Mtr, 400 Mtr races & Shotput. Due to a controlled number in each batch, individual attention becomes a viable mode of assessing and transitioning to higher levels, wherever possible. The sporting schedule is followed by recreational activities like

Musical Chair, Ladder Jumping, Skipping and Carom Board, to name a few, that keep the learning going with fun and laughter

Besides sporting arenas, the centres double up as care centres like on 25 and 29 May 2024, when medical screenings were held in Una and Shimla, respectively, examining over 100 athletes, by a team of doctors including specialist in ENT, Eyes, Dental and Medicine.

The Sports Centres were introduced in SO Bharat in 2022 as a legacy to the National Health Fest held in April of the same year, with Himachal Pradesh being the first state to open the first one. Through the support of NHPC, they have successfully developed an infrastructure to sustain the opportunities of sports to both persons with and without IDD residing within reasonable distance of each.

#### PARTNERS IN INCLUSION



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