

## Greetings from Special Olympics Bharat

### Special Olympics Bharat Stadium at Daulatabad receives funds through special art



Dr Mallika Nadda felicitating Pranav Aggarwal, Athlete SO Bharat- Haryana



The NYLC & Haryana officials with Pranav & his brother Lakshya

The Shree Yash Art Gallery recently, presented a cheque of Rs. 5 Lakhs to Dr Mallika Nadda, President SO Bharat for the development of the Special Olympics Bharat Stadium located at Daulatabad Haryana. Shree Yash Art had organised an art exhibition titled, Ikigai, at the India Habitat Centre from 1-4 April 2024, inaugurated by Dr Nadda, who was joined by Mr Rajesh Jain, Managing Director, LPS Bossard Pvt Ltd.

One of the artists contributing to the fund-raiser was Pranav Aggarwal, who is a 10 yr old roller skater hailing from Haryana. Pranav is a person with Down Syndrome. Approx 100 pieces, of art were on display. 4-5 amongst them, from Pranav were a pleasing mix of soothing colours including his favourite – 'blue'. A segment of the exhibition was dedicated to 3-4 artists with IDD (Intellectual /developmental disabilities), showcasing their eye-catching talent. Noteworthy to recall, Pranav left his footprint last year as well, by raising INR 100,000 for the stadium, through his art pieces. This year his efforts scaled up to reach the heart of the city of Delhi. [Read More](#)

## Sports Centres multiply as the Delhi Govt comes on board



Teams from both organisations at the MoU signing with the IGIPSS

On 28 March 2024, the Directorate of Education inked an agreement with the SO Bharat Delhi Chapter to run ten sports centres in New Delhi committed to offer year-round sports training to approx. 200 Athletes with Intellectual & Developmental disabilities (IDD). The Delhi Govt will pay a remuneration to the Head Coach and Asst Coach (SO Bharat athletes) besides providing sports equipment and T Shirts to the athletes and coaches. To ensure quality training and engagement which will include the Special Olympics additional initiatives (Health, leadership etc), a joint visiting team will be formed, composed of the of the Sports & the inclusive education branch officials and those from SO Bharat.

Soon after the landmark agreement, yet another partnership for a Sports centre was formalised between the SO Bharat Delhi Chapter and the Indra Gandhi institute of Physical Education & Sports Sciences (IGIPSS).

The association of the institute with the Delhi Chapter goes back to 2021 when the students volunteered at events. Gradually their participation scaled up to providing technical support including, taking scores, being referees and in overall management of the sports events. The students have also played as unified partners alongside the SO Bharat athletes, with one participating in the Unified Handball team at the Special Olympics world summer games held in Berlin Germany in June 2023.

12 Sports centres have been established in New Delhi between August 2023 and April 2024, taking the total number of Sports centres in India to 36 across 8 States/UTs.

## Appointments that promise to sustain quality growth and promote Inclusion



L-R: Mr Gireesh Kumar, Dr Mallika Nadda, Ms Yashika Bhatt, Mr VK Mahendru

Special Olympics Asia Pacific recently announced Dr. Mallika Nadda's appointment as Chairperson of the Asia Pacific Advisory Council (APAC). As the Chairperson of APAC, Dr. Nadda will stand to be a cohesive voice of the entire Special Olympics Asia Pacific region that runs across 34 countries. Dr Nadda would serve as the SO Bharat representative on the APAC where Special Olympics Bharat enjoys a permanent seat. Her term would run for three years, from May 1 2024 until March 31 2027. Expressing her enthusiasm on the appointment, Dr. Mallika Nadda, said, "I am grateful to the Asia Pacific Advisory Council members for placing their trust in me. It is a privilege to represent SO Bharat and serve towards the betterment of the lives of athletes and their families across the region. I am determined to contribute to the best of my capacity, and look forward to collaborate with my fellow members in achieving the goals of Special Olympics, together driving the movement towards sustained quality growth across all the three verticals – sports, health & education." [Read More](#)

Turning to the SO Bharat National office, Mr Virender Kumar Mahendru, is the new Executive Director of SO Bharat. Mr Mahendru brings with him a substantial experience of serving ONGC for 35 years, with a key role in developing sports. In his capacity as of Head, Corporate Sports Division at ONGC between 2009 and 2014, he managed 22 disciplines, recruiting and grooming sportspersons to achieve world-level accolades. He has managed 400 National and international sportspersons including some prominent names such as Virender Sehwal, Virat Kohli, Pankaj Advani (Billiards & Snooker) and Ashwini Ponnappa (Badminton) to name a few, with 30 sportspersons having won national awards. Reflecting on his recent appointment, Mr. V.K. Mahendru said, *"I am delighted to be appointed as the Executive Director of Special Olympics Bharat, an organisation extremely close to my heart. I am closely attached to sports. I look forward to putting in my efforts, work, and efficiency that would lead towards the betterment and development of our organisation and our precious athletes."* [Read his complete profile here](#)

Ms Yashika Bhatt, a Silver Medallist in Basketball who represented SO Bharat at the Abu Dhabi World Games in 2019 has joined the Special Olympics Bharat National office as a full-time staff member. Yashika joined the SO Bharat program shortly before the preparations for the Abu Dhabi games began in 2018. After the games she became the member of the National Youth leadership Council working inclusively for spreading awareness and activating more youth to join the movement. "I feel proud to be part of the National office. I want to tell people how sports has changed my life and want to support other athletes to achieve their best.", says Yashika [Read more about her](#)

Yashika Bhatt and Gireesh Kumar are part of the National office team who provide a hands-on experience of inclusion and the joy that it brings along.

## A Unified pair that is spreading awareness and joy



L-R: Parishmita & Loni

Parishmita Baishya and Loni Kalita are youth leaders with and without Intellectual disabilities who are excited to join the Youth Summit to be held in Singapore in June 2024. Loni is a student of the NREM College in Guwahati, Assam and has a degree in social work besides being a certified Developmental Therapist, while Parishmita is a student of the Ashadeep Special School. Unified Bocce brought them together as part of the Unified Champion School programming (UCS) of which the state has been an active participant since 2021. Parishmita and Loni often join each other in playing other sports as well besides planning and executing Youth activation sessions to expand youth engagement in the state. They were part of the reception team during the opening and closing ceremonies at the National Badminton Championship held in the state in March 2024. Besides Bocce, Parishmita plays Badminton, Football and Athletics.

Speaking about them Ms Priyanka Goswami, their Adult Mentor says, “The UCS programming has enabled us to bring several youth with differences together. Both Loni and Parishmita are a super active pair, working together and learning from each other in the process. Their confidence increases when they have a hula-hoop or a badminton racquet with themselves. They support each other and work together cheerfully”. [Read More](#)

## The Berlin Games 2023 established a place for Swaraaj in the world of Sports



L-R; Swaraaj, Abhishek, a friend



Swaraaj at the Berlin Games

Had it not been for Special Olympics, Swaraaj, a person with learning disability, may not have continued with Tennis, a sport that he holds dear to his heart. He drew inspiration from his brother, who played Tennis regularly before joining his current job. Swaraaj was gifted with a small racquet at the age of 13 and that marked his entry into the tennis court. Sadly, Covid and the tragic passing of his father broke his link with Tennis but, temporarily. Few months later, Swaraaj joined SO Bharat- Delhi recommended by NIEPID, his alma mater. He was just in time to ink history as for the first time India was preparing Athletes for Tennis for the Special Olympics Berlin Games in 2023. Following a tight schedule of fitness and sport under the mentorship of his coaches Abhishek Kumar (fitness) and Jeet Kataria (Tennis) he participated and won a Silver and a Bronze medal at the world games.

The practises and his victory at the Games have placed Swaraaj on a platform never imagined by his family members, and he is working furiously under both his coaches, scaling up his skills to participate in the ‘special’ segments of Australian /French open – some day! [Read more](#)

## SO Bharat at the Unified Football tournament held in Dhaka

Two Unified teams from India, one male and one female, participated in the Special Olympics South Asia 7-a-side Unified Football Tournament held in Dhaka Bangladesh from 16-20 April 2024. The final preparation of the teams was held at the Manav Rachna University, Faridabad, Haryana, before they left for Dhaka.

**Offering words of motivation to the Indian contingent, Special Olympics Bharat President Dr Mallika Nadda said, “The 7-a-side Unified Football tournament in Dhaka is another opportunity to draw attention to the outstanding power of Unified Sports in combining people from different backgrounds abilities and nationalities, on and off the sports field”.** Moving on to appreciate the association of Manav Rachna with SO Bharat Dr Nadda said, “Events such as this, journeys us through some overwhelming partnerships that help us promote inclusion through sports”.



The HOD and Coach of the Indian Team with the officials of SOAP and SO Bangladesh



SO Bharat Female team at the football grounds

The South Asia Unified Cup kicked off on 17 April 2024 with over 90 delegates from 5 Special Olympics Programs, namely Bangladesh, Bharat (India), Hong Kong, Indonesia & Maldives. The games were declared open by Mr. Md. Khairul Alam Sheikh, Honorable secretary, Social Welfare Ministry. The occasion was graced by the presence of several distinguished guests including Mr Dipak Natali, President & Managing Director, Special Olympics- Asia Pacific region, Mr. Md. Shah Alam, Managing Director (Joint Secretary) and Dr. Shamim Matin Chowdury, Immediate Past Chairman & Advisor, Special Olympics Bangladesh.

The Opening ceremony was followed by three days of excitement on the football grounds with each participating team placing its best foot forward. The determination of the players to make their team win was clearly visible. Beyond football, the tournament offered an overwhelming bonding between the players. Healthy Athletes screenings (medical examination of the players) and the Young Athletes drills

(early intervention program) ran on the sidelines of the tournament before it concluded on the 19th of April 2024. The SO Bharat Female Football team secured a third position while the male team a fifth. Bangladesh A and Bangladesh B in the female and male categories, respectively, held the first position in the tournament. [View here](#)

## Meet the World National Football Championship



The SO Bharat National team and the Athletes with Dr Mallika Nadda and Dr DG Chaudhari at the opening ceremony

Dr Nadda & Dr Chaudhari felicitating Mr Tanul Singhal Head, Corporate Affairs & CSR SKF

Meet the World National Football Championship was held from 25-29 April 2024 at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Training Centre for Disability Sports, Gwalior (formerly Centre for Disability Sports - CDS). The event witnessed participation of 71 athletes from 12 states of India, supported by 100 volunteers from local schools and colleges. The overall attendance of 230 campers included the Athletes, Coaches, referees, resource persons, officials and volunteers.

Setting the tone for the next three days, the opening ceremony held on 26 April 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.

Dr Mallika Nadda, wished luck to the athletes and encouraged them to play in the best of their capacities. In her interaction with the media, she spoke about the challenges in training Athletes with IDD, citing communication to be the greatest one. According to her, the SO Bharat coaches are well trained to train the Athletes and guide them as mentors. Travelling from different parts of the country is

also planned carefully, and the coaches are trained to do so dedicatedly. Despite challenges the Athletes reach international levels to showcase their abilities.

Skill assessments, classification rounds and divisioning paved the way to the final matches and the award ceremony held on 28 April 2024. As an outcome of the Championship 25 Athletes have been shortlisted to participate in the first preparatory Camp that will be held in May 2024 at the same venue, to select the final team for the 'Gothia Special Olympics Trophy' to be held in Sweden this year.

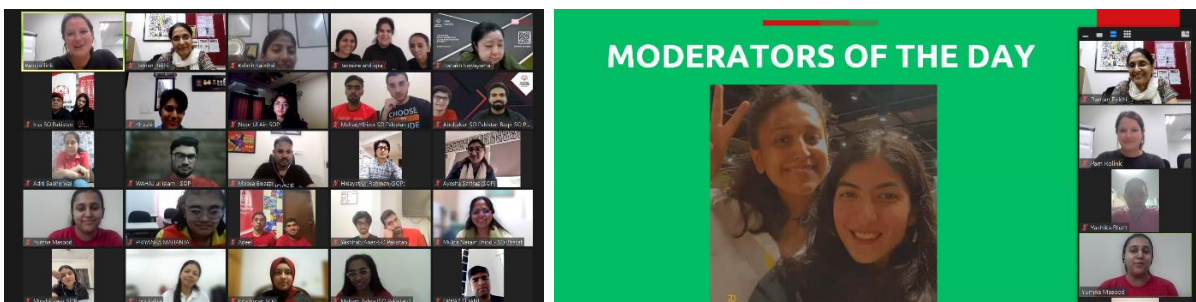
Meet the World, is the qualifying tournament to win a ticket to world's largest youth football tournament - Gothia Cup which is held in Gothenburg, Sweden. Each year, around 1700 teams from 80 nations take part and they play 4500 matches on 110 pitches. SKF is the main sponsor of this annual tournament.

The Championship, marks the very first national level sports event at the facility since its inauguration by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modiji, on 2 Oct 2023. The Atal Bihari Training Centre for Disability Sports is a state-of-the-art facility dedicated to training and nurturing athletes with disabilities.



Football league matches taking place in Gwalior

## The virtual stage combines the NYLC of India and Pakistan



Screenshots of the SO Bharat and SO Pakistan NYLC



The NYLC (National Youth Leadership Council) of SO Pakistan and SO Bharat met virtually to share their experiences and processes of engaging the youth in their respective countries, in April 2024. While the session facilitated by Special Olympics Asia Pacific Regional office, added a learning curve, the journey to the session that combined the two councils led by Ms Yumna Masood (Pakistan) and Ms Kalash Kaushal (India) had its own prized experiences. This was a first of a kind exchange which will lead to more discussions and potentially a roadmap, deliberated between the two forums in the days to come.

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