

SPECIAL OLYMPICS BHARAT

BULLETIN

**Special
Olympics**
Bharat



Major Sports Events & Championships

Assam State Games: A Grand Celebration of Inclusion and Resilience

The Indira Gandhi Athletics Stadium in Guwahati came alive with energy and excitement on 25th October 2024 as 100 remarkable athletes from nine districts of Assam participated in the Special Olympics Bharat State Games in Athletics 2024. The event featured a range of thrilling competitions, including the 100m sprints, team relays, shot put, and softball. Each event celebrated the incredible abilities, determination, and resilience of the athletes, showcasing the power of sports to unite and inspire. The Games were inaugurated by Dr. Anjana Goswami, Area Director of Special Olympics Bharat Assam, along with President Pratul Chandra Phukan and the board members. Their presence and support highlighted the organization's commitment to fostering inclusion and empowering individuals with intellectual disabilities through sports.



Mandya District Level Athletics Meet 2024: A Celebration of Athletic Excellence and Inclusion

The Mandya District Level Athletics Meet 2024 was successfully held on 13th September at Sir MV Stadium, Mandya, showcasing exceptional athletic talent and fostering a strong sense of community spirit. Over 200 athletes representing 7 schools participated in the event, demonstrating remarkable dedication and sporting prowess that left the audience in awe. The event was graced by the presence of esteemed Chief Guest, Shri RajaMurthy, Deputy Director of the Human & Child Department, Mandya District. Honoured guests included Shri Komal Kumar, DDWO, Mandya District, Shri Roop Singh, Vice President of SO Bharat Karnataka, and Shri Ananda DC, Treasurer of SO Bharat Karnataka. The invaluable support and presence of the District Committee members further elevated the success of the meet.



Kerala School Sports Meet 2024

The city of Ernakulam came alive with vibrancy and unity during the Kerala School Sports Meet 2024. With 24,000 athletes, including 1,500 special athletes, the event stood as a beacon of inclusivity and the transformative power of sports. The remarkable participation and energy of the athletes showcased the collective vision of a truly unified sports community.



Uttarakhand: A Celebration of Unity and Inclusion

Special Olympics Bharat Uttarakhand brought together over 50 athletes with intellectual disabilities and 20 unified partners and volunteers for an inspiring event that showcased the true spirit of fair play and friendship. The athletes demonstrated their skills through a series of exciting matches, reflecting their dedication, talent, and love for sports. Addressing the gathering, President Sandeep Rawat highlighted the significance of breaking barriers and promoting equality through inclusive sports initiatives.



CDS Gwalior: Preparing Champions for the Special Olympics World Winter Games

Excitement and determination are at an all-time high at CDS Gwalior as our talented female floorball athletes gear up for the Special Olympics World Winter Games. From October 9th to 18th, the training camp has been buzzing with energy as the athletes dedicate themselves to honing their skills, pushing their limits, and uplifting each other with unwavering support. The sense of camaraderie and team spirit is truly inspiring, reflecting their passion and determination to make the nation proud on the global stage.



National Bocce and Bowling Championship 2024: A Phenomenal Display of Skill and Unity

The Atal Bihari Vajpayee Training Centre for Disability Sports in Gwalior and the Rcube Monald Mall in Delhi came alive with energy and excitement from September 2nd to 5th, 2024, as athletes from across India gathered for the National Bocce and Bowling Championship 2024. With around 140 Bocce athletes from 21 states and 95 Bowling athletes from 13 states, the event was a beautiful celebration of inclusion, determination, and the unifying power of sports under the banner of Special Olympics Bharat.



The championship began with an uplifting Opening Ceremony, where Mr. Aaravin, Specialist in Sports & Competition for Special Olympics Asia Pacific, and Mr. OP Babbar, a humanitarian and former Member of the Legislative Assembly, inspired everyone with their heartfelt speeches. Their words set the stage for an incredible week, as athletes showcased their skills and competed passionately.



At the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Training Centre, Bocce athletes put on a spectacular show of precision and teamwork:

- **Female Doubles:** Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Assam emerged victorious in divisions F01 to F05.
- **Male Doubles:** Chhattisgarh won M01, while Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Pondicherry took the top spots in M02 to M05.
- **Mixed Team:** Uttarakhand led MD01, with Delhi, Karnataka, Assam, and Uttar Pradesh claiming MD02 to MD05.

The Bowling events at Rcube Monald Mall were just as electrifying, with athletes impressing spectators with their focus and skill:

- **Doubles Category:** Uttar Pradesh (F1), Delhi (F2), Odisha (F3), Delhi (M1 & M2), Assam (M3), and Ladakh (M4) emerged as champions.
- **Mixed Team Category:** Gujarat secured M1, Pondicherry claimed M2, and Chhattisgarh triumphed in M3.

Sports Centres

Jharkhand & Jindal Steel: Transforming Lives Through Sports

In January 2023, a significant Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between Special Olympics Bharat (SOB) Jharkhand and Jindal Steel & Power to establish a dedicated Sports Center at Asha - Jindal, an NGO funded and supported by Jindal Steel, located within their Patratu campus. Since its inception, the center has become a hub of growth and opportunity for athletes. Currently, the center supports around 50 athletes (both male and female) between the ages of 6 and 16, who enthusiastically participate in sports such as powerlifting, football, cycling, and bocce. This year, their hard work translated into stellar performances at the National Powerlifting and Cycling Championships held in Kanpur and Panchkula.



Tripura: Promoting Inclusion Amidst Challenges

In August 2024, Special Olympics Bharat Tripura demonstrated remarkable resilience and progress in advancing inclusion and unity through sports. Despite significant challenges, including the ongoing Panchayat elections and severe floods that led to school closures, the team remained unwavering in their mission. From July 13th to 15th, Tripura celebrated Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav at the NHPC-powered Sports Centre, where Special Athletes delivered outstanding performances across various events, showcasing the spirit of independence, determination, and sportsmanship.



Furthering their commitment to athlete well-being, the Healthy Athletes Programme (Special Smiles) was successfully organized on July 30th and August 30th, with the support of the Government Medical Officer, ensuring athletes received vital dental care and support. In addition, key meetings with officials such as the District Education Officer and the State Project Director were held to discuss the implementation of Unified Sports in schools across Tripura. These discussions reflected a strong commitment to expanding inclusive sports programs and creating new opportunities for Special Athletes.

Youth & Education

SKF Orientation and Team Facilitation Camp: A Journey of Skill, Teamwork, and Inclusion

The SKF Orientation and Team Facilitation Camp in Chinchwad, Pune concluded on a high note, marking an incredible 15-day journey of growth, dedication, and teamwork. The camp brought together 15 passionate athletes from 8 different states, who trained under the expert guidance of 4 seasoned coaches to enhance their football skills and embrace the spirit of sportsmanship.

The camp provided a comprehensive football training experience, combining skill assessments, fitness sessions, agility training, and competitive matches. From day one, athletes underwent personalized evaluations to tailor training plans to their abilities. They participated in endurance drills, gym sessions, and recreational games, while also focusing on the mental and strategic elements of football.



Key highlights included football formation drills, endurance training, and a cross-country run to build stamina and resilience. The camp culminated in a grand finale match, where the Special Olympics Bharat (SOB) team delivered an outstanding performance, securing a 6-1 victory. This thrilling match reflected the hard work, perseverance, and progress the athletes achieved throughout the camp.

Kerala: Youth Activation Program Inauguration and Success

In July 2024, Special Olympics Bharat Kerala successfully launched the State Level Youth Activation Program in Idukki, Kerala. The event brought together 70 students from St. Stephens High School and Pratheekshabhavan Special School, creating unforgettable moments of teamwork, inclusion, and joy. The inauguration set the tone for fostering a sense of belonging and sportsmanship among youth. The second phase of the program, held in August 2024, extended its reach to Sneha Mahal Special School and Calicut Orphanage School, where 50 students actively participated in sports activities, celebrating the spirit of unity and inclusivity. The program continues to empower children of diverse abilities, fostering a sense of community and promoting the values of respect and inclusion through sports.



Youth Orientation Session at Bal Bharti Public School, Delhi Promoting Inclusion and Unity

A heartwarming Youth Orientation Session was held, bringing together students from the special wing, mainstream classes, and Arpan Special School for a day filled with fun, learning, and unity. The event focused on the power of inclusion through Unified Zumba and Unified Sports, offering participants an opportunity to share unforgettable experiences while embracing diversity and teamwork. The standout moment of the day was when Divya, a student from Arpan Special School, expressed her heartfelt thanks to the National Youth Leadership Council for providing such a meaningful and impactful opportunity. These moments highlight the importance of acceptance and the role of inclusive events in fostering a unified generation. This event is a step forward in turning the vision of inclusion into a reality, strengthening the bonds between all participants and promoting unity through sports and shared experiences.



EKS Day Celebration: A Unified Celebration of Inclusion in Rajasthan



On 21st September 2024, Special Olympics Bharat Rajasthan hosted a vibrant and impactful EKS Day, bringing together a diverse community for an inspiring series of Youth Activities. The event featured enthusiastic participation from multiple Unified Schools and dedicated special educators, all contributing to making the day truly unforgettable. EKS Day was further elevated by the presence of esteemed guest speakers from three prominent institutions: Apex College, Vedic College, and the Army School. The day's highlight was the powerful and moving presentations by the Youth Team, who embodied the core values of inclusion and unity, showcasing the strength and potential of a unified community.

Youth Orientation Session Hosted by Uttar Pradesh Chapter

On September 4th, 2024, the Special Olympics Uttar Pradesh Chapter organized an inspiring youth orientation session at the Divyajyoti Institute, which successfully brought together 150 enthusiastic participants. The event celebrated the spirit of inclusion and unity, featuring a Unified Youth Club and a range of engaging activities such as zumba, dance, singing, and fun games, including hula hoops and fruit salad. The event was further elevated by the presence of distinguished guests, including Chief Guest Shri Mukesh Shukla, Guest of Honour Mr. Raghav Gard, Dr. Pradeep Shukla, and CEO Mrs. Smriti Jassar, whose inspiring remarks emphasized the importance of inclusion. The session concluded with a Walkathon to show support for athletes with intellectual disabilities, symbolizing the commitment to fostering a more inclusive and empowering community.



Meetings / Conferences / MOUs

Highlights from the SO Bharat Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of Special Olympics Bharat was held on 16th and 17th October 2024 in New Delhi, marking an inspiring two-day event that brought together the organization's dedicated board members and passionate State Directors from across the country. The meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on the incredible progress made over the past year and engage in discussions about the future direction of the organization, with a renewed sense of energy and commitment. A standout moment during the meeting was the presentation of awards to states that have gone above and beyond in their efforts, highlighting the exceptional work taking place across the nation.



These awards not only celebrated the achievements of the states but also emphasized the power of unity and dedication in achieving the shared goal of creating an inclusive world for all. The AGM served as a reminder of the incredible progress being made and the collective strength of the Special Olympics community in driving positive change.

Regional Leadership Conference at Malaysia Promoting Inclusion and Sustainable Growth

The Regional Leadership Conference held in Malaysia brought together Special Olympics leaders from across the Asia Pacific region to engage in discussions on the intentional recruitment of older athletes, a vital step in reclaiming the reach of Special Olympics and ensuring the sustainable growth of the program. A key highlight of the conference was the presentation by Dr. Mallika Nadda, President of Special Olympics Bharat, who addressed the topic of "Reclaiming the Reach of 22+ Year-Old Athletes". In her presentation, Dr. Nadda emphasized the importance of expanding opportunities for athletes beyond the age of 22, underscoring the need for an inclusive approach that supports individuals with intellectual disabilities at all stages of life. The conference reaffirmed the collective commitment to driving the #InclusionRevolution, with an emphasis on creating an inclusive environment that supports athletes of all ages and abilities, ensuring the continued growth and impact of Special Olympics across the region.



Apex Body Meet: Strategizing the Future of SO Bharat held in Delhi

The Apex Body Meet convened leading experts from the sports, disability, education, social work, and health sectors to chart a strategic roadmap for the future of Special Olympics Bharat (SOB). The session focused on enhancing upcoming events, with particular emphasis on the landmark Special Olympics Asia Pacific Bocce and Bowling Competition 2024. Discussions centered on leveraging the diverse insights and collective expertise of the participants to ensure that these events are executed to the highest standards, providing opportunities for athletes to showcase their talents with pride and joy. The meeting underscored the importance of collaborative planning and knowledge sharing in creating impactful, athlete-centered experiences while driving positive change in the sports and disability landscape.



Union Minister Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat Honours Rajasthan Athletes

Special Olympics Bharat is deeply honored by the recognition and heartfelt words shared by Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, who acknowledged the exceptional achievements of athletes from the Special Olympics Bharat Sports Center, Navjyoti Manovikas Kendra, Jodhpur. The Minister celebrated the incredible journey of Deepika Vyas, Poonam Bhati, Pawan Kumar, Shantanu Singh Rathore, and Shoaib Ansari, who brought immense pride to Rajasthan by winning silver medals at the National Bocce and Bowling Championship.



During their meeting in Delhi, Shri Shekhawat emphasized that true success transcends physical and mental barriers. He highlighted that with determination, guidance, and unwavering spirit, any challenge can be overcome. His praise for Mr. Mahesh Kumar Parik, Master Trainer, for his role in shaping these 'Unique Diamonds,' perfectly reflects the core mission of Special Olympics Bharat—to nurture, celebrate, and empower every individual's potential.

Himachal Pradesh Signs MOU with Samagra Shiksha for Unified Sports

On September 28, 2024, Special Olympics Bharat Himachal Pradesh signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Samagra Shiksha, Himachal Pradesh Government, marking a significant step towards enhancing inclusion and opportunities for children with special needs (CwsN) in the state. The MOU was signed by Rajesh Sharma, State Project Director, Samagra Shiksha, and Parikshit Mehdudia, Area Director of Special Olympics Bharat Himachal, with the presence of Pratibha Bali, State IE Coordinator, Samagra Shiksha.



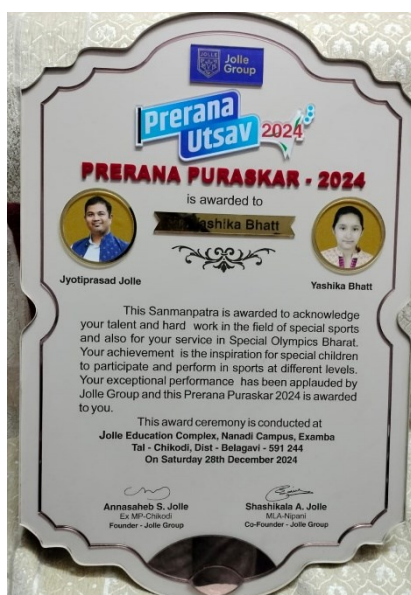
This partnership aims to introduce Unified Sports for CwsN studying in government schools across Himachal Pradesh. The initiative will roll out in two phases:

1. **Phase One:** Teachers and coaches will undergo specialized training to build their capacity in conducting Unified Sports, with a focus on schools selected for the program.
2. **Phase Two:** State-level Unified Games will be organized for both special needs and general students, featuring sports such as basketball, football, and volleyball.

Yashika Bhat honoured with Prerana Puraskar 2024

Ms. Yashika Bhat, Assistant Manager at Special Olympics Bharat, has been awarded the Prerana Puraskar – 2024 for her remarkable contributions to the field of unified sports. The award was presented during Prerana Utsav, an annual cultural festival, organised to acknowledge the efforts and hardwork in this area.

The award includes a cash prize of ₹51,000, a Sanmanpatra (certificate of honor) and a memento. The ceremony, held on December 28, 2024 recognised Yashika's dedication and impact in promoting inclusivity in sports, reinforcing the importance of opportunities for individuals with ID.



Coach Training

National Coaching Preparatory Camp for Bocce

The Atal Bihari Vajpayee Training Centre for Disability Sports in Gwalior became a hub of inspiration on 25th September 2024 as athletes prepared for the Special Olympics Asia Pacific Bocce and Bowling Competition. The National Coaching Preparatory Camp embodied the spirit of dedication and determination, bringing together athletes, coaches, and supporters committed to excellence in sports.



National Coaching Preparatory Camp for Bocce Begins in Gwalior

The National Coaching Preparatory Camp for Bocce has officially commenced at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Training Centre for Disability Sports, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. This camp marks a significant step in preparing athletes for the upcoming Special Olympics Asia Pacific Bocce and Bowling Competition 2024, set to take place in New Delhi. Athletes from across the country, who have qualified for the prestigious Games, have gathered to fine-tune their skills, sharpen their focus, and unite under a shared mission — to deliver their best for the nation. Their participation reflects the unwavering determination, perseverance, and team spirit that lies at the heart of Special Olympics Bharat.



Unified Coaches Training in Bilaspur: Empowering Educators for Inclusivity

The Unified Coaches Training event held in Bilaspur brought together over 50 dedicated Special Educators and Physical Education Teachers from Himachal Pradesh for a transformative two-day training session. Organized under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, this event focused on enhancing the capacity of educators to deliver inclusive sports programs. Esteemed dignitaries, including Mr. Rajesh Sharma, State Project Director, SSA & RMSA, Dr. Mallika Nadda, President of Special Olympics Bharat, and Pratibha Chandel, Coordinator, CWSN SSA, graced the event with their presence. They shared valuable insights and emphasized the importance of inclusivity in sports. The training was not only aimed at enhancing technical skills but also at fostering a community spirit that recognizes and celebrates every athlete's potential, creating an environment where all children can thrive through sports.



Achievements

Commonwealth Powerlifting Gold

An extraordinary moment of triumph unfolded at the Commonwealth Powerlifting Championship 2024 in South Africa as Mr Vishal from SO Bharat – Puducherry secured Gold with an impressive 370kg lift. This incredible achievement, guided by his coach Mr. Bakkiyaraj, showcased the potential and determination of SO Bharat athletes, inspiring all.



Historic Achievement by Sadiq Ali and Musharaf Ilahi at the National Bocce and Bowling Championship

Special Olympics Bharat proudly announces that Sadiq Ali and Musharaf Ilahi have made history as the first athletes from Kargil to win gold medals at a national level competition. At the National Bocce and Bowling Championship held in Delhi, both athletes showcased extraordinary skill and determination, securing gold medals in Bowling. This achievement represents not only a personal victory for Sadiq and Musharaf, but also a momentous milestone for the entire Kargil community. The success of these athletes underscores their commitment to excellence and the unwavering support they received from their families and coaches.



Health

Healthy Athletes Program “MedFest” Hosted by Jharkhand



The "MedFest" event organised by Special Olympics Bharat Jharkhand in collaboration with Asha Lata Viklang Vikas Kendra on 20th September 2024 was a significant milestone for athletes with ID in the region. The health screenings conducted during the event were pivotal not only in identifying and addressing immediate health concerns, but also in ensuring that the athletes were fit and prepared for their upcoming participation in Special Olympics sports. By providing athletes with essential medical evaluations in areas such as Special Smiles (oral health), Healthy Hearing, Fit Feet (foot and lower limb health) and overall health promotion, the event made sure they received the care they need to perform to the best of their abilities.

For many of the athletes, this program marked their first ever exposure to professional healthcare. This can be life-changing, as it enabled the identification of potentially life-threatening conditions such as undiagnosed hearing impairments, dental issues or musculoskeletal problems. Timely interventions through referrals for further treatment were not just a benefit for the athletes' athletic journeys, but also for their overall well-being.

The involvement of dignitaries like Shri Hari Mohan Jha, Chief General Manager of Bokaro Steel Plant, Mr. B S Jaiswal, Director of Asha Lata and Principal Mr. P K Deby in the event's inauguration emphasises the importance of community support and the recognition of the challenges faced by athletes with ID.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS ASIA PACIFIC BOCCE & BOWLING COMPETITION 2024



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
ASIA PACIFIC
BOCCE & BOWLING
COMPETITION
NEW DELHI, INDIA 2024

The Special Olympics Asia Pacific Bocce & Bowling Competition 2024, organized by Special Olympics Bharat, was held from November 18th to 22nd, 2024, in New Delhi. The historic event marked a significant milestone in the global Special Olympics movement, being the first competition dedicated to older athletes with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) aged 22 and above.

The competition featured participants from over ten countries spanning three regions—Asia Pacific, East Asia, and Europe Eurasia—and embodied the core principles of inclusion, resilience, and empowerment. The event was formally inaugurated by the Hon'ble Vice President of India, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar, with the opening ceremony presided over by Dr. Mallika Nadda, President of Special Olympics Bharat and Chairperson of the Special Olympics Asia Pacific Advisory Council.



The event marked a groundbreaking step in the evolution of the Special Olympics in India by introducing bowling as a competitive sport. This new addition was made possible through a partnership between Special Olympics Bharat and the Tenpin Federation of India. This collaboration aimed to provide older athletes with tailored development programs, ensuring they were empowered through the sport of bowling alongside bocce, which has long been part of the Special Olympics repertoire. In the bocce competition, 44 athletes (22 male and 22 female) from 11 countries within the Asia Pacific region—SO Australia, SO Bangladesh, SO Bharat, SO Hong Kong, SO Indonesia, SO Macau, SO Malaysia, SO Myanmar, SO Philippines, SO Singapore, and SO Thailand—competed in a series of events that highlighted the spirit of camaraderie and healthy competition.

The bowling competition saw participation from nine countries with 35 athletes and 17 coaches. The tournament, supported by 37 technical officials, 25 volunteers, and 10 venue staff, consisted of three categories: mixed-team, doubles, and singles. A total of 91 matches were played across nine divisions, with Indian athletes delivering exceptional performances. India's athletes secured 14 medals in bowling—four gold, six silver, and four bronze.





The closing ceremony was a vibrant celebration of the athletes' achievements and the unifying spirit of the competition. Distinguished dignitaries, including Shri Brajesh Pathak, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, and Shri Pabitra Margherita, Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs attended the ceremony. India emerged as a strong contender, securing an impressive total of 25 medals, with 14 in bowling and 11 in bocce. The competition provided a platform for athletes to demonstrate their potential, proving that their abilities extend far beyond the limitations often imposed by society.

SO BHARAT – 25 MEDALS



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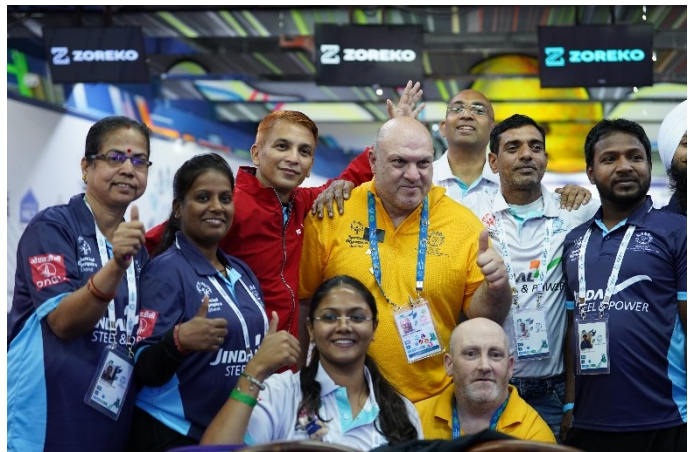


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RUN FOR INCLUSION



SPECIAL OLYMPICS BHARAT

RUN FOR INCLUSION

NEW DELHI, 2024

The **Run for Inclusion**, organised by **Special Olympics Bharat**, took place on **9th November 2024** at the **Central Civil Service Ground, Nehru Park, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi**. Beginning at **6 AM**, the event saw an overwhelming participation of over **7,000 runners** across India. More than just a race, the event symbolised a powerful movement advocating for **inclusion, accessibility, and the empowerment of individuals with intellectual disabilities**.



The Run for Inclusion brought together **athletes, families, volunteers and supporters**, all united by a common goal—to celebrate diversity. Whether running, walking, or cheering from the sidelines, every participant played a crucial role in spreading the message of inclusion and equal opportunity.





The event was graced by **Chief Guest, Shri Harsh Malhotra**, Hon'ble Minister of State, Ministry of Corporate Affairs & Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways, Government of India. The presence of **Smt. Bansuri Swaraj**, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), and **Shri Manoj Tiwari**, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), as **Guests of Honour**, further strengthened the commitment towards fostering an inclusive society. Their speeches and engagement with participants highlighted the government's support for Special Olympics initiatives and the importance of accessible opportunities for all. Adding to the excitement, renowned former cricketers **Nikhil Chopra, Atul Wassan, Bhaskar Pillai and Robin Singh Jr.** joined the run as **Champions of Inclusion**. The Run for Inclusion was not just an event but a **movement through sport** with participation from national and local media, supporters, and advocates of inclusion.



HEALTH SUMMIT

The **Special Olympics Inclusive Health Summit** was held on **18th November 2024** at **The Lalit, New Delhi**, with the esteemed presence of **Ms. Anupriya Patel**, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, who inaugurated the event. The Summit brought together key global and national leaders in inclusive health, including **Dr. Dimitri Christakis**, Chief of Health, Special Olympics International; **Ms. Annemarie Hill**, Chief of Health Operations, Special Olympics International; and **Ms. Angela Jenkins**, Director, Global Inclusive Health.



A key highlight of the Summit was the **Panel Discussion on Inclusive Health Systems**, moderated by **Ms. Anjela Nicole Jenkins**, Senior Director, Global Inclusive Health Advocacy. The panel featured prominent experts including **Dr. Dimitri Christakis**, Chief of Health, Special Olympics International; **Mr. Dipak Natali**, Regional President & Managing Director, Special Olympics Asia Pacific; **Ms. Yashika Bhatt**, Silver Medalist at the 2019 Abu Dhabi Games and Assistant Manager - Youth Initiatives & Communications, SO Bharat; **Mr. Vivek Virendra Singh**, Chief of Health, UNICEF; **Dr. B. Mohammed Asheel**, WHO Representative; **Ms. Meera Srivastava**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health; and **Mr. Rajeev Sharma**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. The discussion focused on strategies to enhance healthcare access and equity for individuals with intellectual disabilities, emphasising the role of government policies, international collaborations, and grassroots initiatives in fostering inclusive healthcare systems.



HEALTHY ATHLETES

As part of the Summit, the **Healthy Athletes Clinical Director Training** was conducted to equip healthcare professionals with the necessary skills to improve health screenings and interventions for individuals with intellectual disabilities. **49 Clinical Directors** from across India were trained in seven specialised disciplines by Regional Clinical Advisors, ensuring a broad and impactful learning experience. Additionally, **250 medical students** from institutions actively participated, reinforcing the commitment to building a strong network of healthcare professionals dedicated to inclusive health.



The **Special Olympics Healthy Athletes Program** was inaugurated by **Shri JP Nadda**, Minister for Health & Family Welfare. During the inauguration, the Hon'ble Minister engaged in discussions with officials from **Special Olympics International and Special Olympics Asia Pacific** to explore synergies between the health initiatives of Special Olympics and existing government healthcare schemes. The program featured **seven disciplines of health screenings**, each led by distinguished medical experts.



I&U CEREMONY

The Special Harmony Concert, held on the 17th November 2024 at the Tyagraj Stadium, was a remarkable celebration of talent, unity and inclusion. The concert aimed to provide a platform for young, talented individuals, while highlighting the importance of diversity and inclusion in the arts.

In the lead-up to the event, a rigorous selection process was conducted to identify the most promising students. Around 15-20 students from the region were shortlisted for the program, where their singing abilities were thoroughly evaluated. After the auditions, the top six students were selected to be the main singers for the evening, and they were incorporated into the INU Harmony group. The evening's music not only showcased the incredible talent of the performers but also communicated a profound message of inclusivity and community.



HONOURED GUEST DINNER

The **Honoured Guest Dinner** for the *Special Olympics Asia Pacific Bocce & Bowling Competition 2024* was held at **Taj, New Delhi**, bringing together dignitaries from various states and countries. The evening served as a platform for meaningful dialogue, networking and collaboration, reinforcing a shared commitment to an inclusive future. Leaders, policymakers and changemakers engaged in discussions on advancing opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities, celebrating the spirit of unity and sportsmanship that defines the Special Olympics movement.



CARNIVAL

The Carnival at the Special Olympics Asia Pacific Bocce and Bowling Competition 2024 was a vibrant celebration of inclusion, featuring cultural performances, interactive games and engaging activities for athletes, families and spectators. It created a joyful and festive atmosphere, bringing communities together to honour the spirit of Special Olympics.



NATIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONCLAVE



The National Youth Conclave 2024, organized by Special Olympics Bharat, was held on 13th December 2024 at the Lakshmipat Singhanian Auditorium, PhD Chambers, New Delhi. This landmark event marked a pivotal step toward fostering inclusivity in educational institutions.

The highlight of the conclave was the unveiling of the SO Bharat Youth & Schools Expansion Plan for Delhi NCR 2025, a comprehensive roadmap aimed at empowering educational institutions to foster environments where diversity is celebrated, and every individual is valued. The journey of inclusion, which began with just 13 Unified Champion Schools, has now expanded to over 50 schools across the region, reflecting significant progress in fostering inclusivity.



The conclave featured a thought-provoking panel discussion with some of the brightest minds in the field of education and inclusion. The esteemed panellists included Ms. Vandana Sharma, Director & Principal of Mata Bhagwanti Chadha Niketan; Ms. Parul Gupta, Senior Manager and Country Lead EDI at the British Council; Ms. A. Srijia, Economic Advisor at the Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, Government of India; and Dr. Kalpana Sharma, Dean of the Faculty of Education and Director at Amity School of Physical Education and Sports Sciences. Together, they shared invaluable insights on creating inclusive learning environments, emphasizing practical strategies and the critical importance of collaboration in driving meaningful change.

The dedicated Area Directors from SO Bharat shared their inspiring experiences and the challenges they faced in promoting inclusion. Their narratives showcased the transformative impact of unified sports and inclusive programs in schools, highlighting how even small actions can drive significant change. Schools participating in the Unified Champion Schools program also shared their journeys, illustrating how inclusion has positively impacted their students and communities. These testimonials served as a powerful testament to the program's effectiveness in breaking barriers and fostering empathy and understanding. The event underscored the collective responsibility to create equitable opportunities for all students, including those with intellectual disabilities.

NATIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT



The National Youth Leadership Summit 2024, organized by Special Olympics Bharat, was a dynamic gathering of youth leaders, athletes, and officials from across 22 states and union territories of India. Held from 18th to 20th December 2024, under the theme Unite, Inspire, Lead – Youth at the Frontline, the event served as a powerful platform for dialogue, skill development, and collaborative planning. It underscored the organization's deep commitment to fostering inclusion, building leadership capacities, and inspiring systemic change led by the youth.



The summit's agenda was meticulously crafted to balance knowledge-sharing, experiential learning, and actionable insights. A key highlight was the presentation of the Vision 2025 roadmap for the Youth and Schools Program, which provided both a global and regional perspective on advancing inclusive education. This session laid a strong foundation, further enhanced by discussions on leadership styles that encouraged participants to explore diverse approaches to leadership, equipping them to champion youth-led inclusion initiatives. Sessions dedicated to unified schools showcased the transformative potential of unified sports, inclusive leadership, and whole-school engagement, setting a benchmark for impactful educational practices.

Workshops formed the backbone of the summit, delivering practical tools for advocacy and leadership. The storytelling session illuminated the power of personal narratives in driving awareness about inclusion, while another on cultural and social norms provided thought-provoking insights into how societal attitudes shape inclusivity. Confidence-building workshops led by expert psychologists equipped participants with strategies to lead with conviction, while a session on leveraging social media emphasized its potential to amplify voices and strengthen community outreach.

The summit also hosted thought-provoking panel discussions featuring leaders in youth empowerment. These conversations focused on the transformative role of youth-led organizations in fostering social upliftment, presenting participants with tangible strategies to create meaningful change in their communities. Beyond sessions, the summit celebrated the diversity of ideas and initiatives through poster presentations, where states showcased their contributions to unified programs. The inclusion of insights from SO Asia Pacific added an enriching global dimension, highlighting best practices and success stories that underscored the shared mission of fostering inclusion.



Interactive and cultural experiences added depth to the summit. Visits to Delhi Haat allowed participants to connect informally while immersing themselves in the vibrant cultural landscape of the capital. The crescendo of the event was the much-anticipated Cultural Night, a celebration of diversity and unity. State teams brought their cultural heritage to life through spirited performances, and the presence of Dr. Mallika Nadda, President of Special Olympics Bharat, elevated the evening with her inspiring address. The Cultural Night wasn't merely a showcase but a powerful affirmation of the inclusive spirit that defines the summit. The event concluded with action-planning sessions for 2025, where participants collaborated on clear, actionable goals to expand inclusive initiatives across the country.



CHIEF GUEST AT STATE LEVEL KHELO TRIPURA PARA GAMES 2024

The State Level Khelo Tripura Para Games 2024, held on 18-19 December 2024 at the Swami Vivekananda Ground in Agartala, was a landmark event celebrating the talent and resilience of Divyang athletes. Organised by the Government of Tripura, the event aimed to promote inclusivity in sports, particularly for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The games were officially inaugurated by Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Manik Saha, who expressed his unwavering support for empowering athletes with disabilities. Dr. Mallika Nadda, President of Special Olympics Bharat, attended as the chief guest and lauded the initiative for showcasing the potential of athletes with IDD. Her address emphasised the importance of social integration through sports and the need to continue creating inclusive opportunities.

Alongside the games, Disability Rehabilitation Camps (DDRCs) were organized to offer essential services to Divyang individuals. These camps facilitated the distribution of UDID cards, social certificates, and sponsorships for meritorious students. Such initiatives are pivotal in enhancing access to critical resources and fostering greater social inclusion. The DDRCs also played a vital role in ensuring that athletes and other individuals with disabilities are recognized and supported within the community, further bridging the gap between persons with disabilities and mainstream society.



The games witnessed impressive performances from Special Olympics athletes, who participated with great enthusiasm and dedication. These athletes demonstrated exceptional skill and determination, earning recognition not only from the local community but also from national and international sports bodies. The participation of Special Olympics athletes served as a reminder of their invaluable contribution to the sporting world and the need for continued support in helping them realize their full potential. This event showcased how sports can be a powerful tool for empowerment, breaking down barriers, and fostering a more inclusive environment for individuals with intellectual disabilities. A crucial recommendation is the establishment of more Special Olympics Sports Centers across Tripura. These centers would provide dedicated spaces for training, competitions, and overall development, ensuring that athletes with IDD have the resources they need to excel. Lastly, an amendment to the state's sports policy is necessary to formally include Special Olympics athletes, ensuring a structured approach to their inclusion and empowering them to contribute to the state's sporting culture.

EDUCATION MINISTRY MEETING

The Indian Government is taking significant steps towards joining the Global Coalition for Inclusion, an initiative of Special Olympics, marking a historic milestone in the nation's commitment to inclusive education. The move highlights the Education Ministry's proactive approach in fostering a society where everyone counts and belongs. The initiative underscores the shared vision of creating opportunities that empower individuals of all abilities.

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Dr. Mridula provided valuable insights into India's participation in the Global Coalition for Inclusion, guiding Special Olympics Bharat towards a sustainable and impactful approach. Special Olympics Bharat, in collaboration with the Inclusive Education Unit of the Education Ministry, continues to conduct Unified Sports Training sessions, demonstrating the power of sports in breaking barriers and uniting individuals.



PRINCIPALS' MEET 2024

Special Olympics Bharat conducted a Principals' Meet on 12 September 2024. Educators from 70+ schools and colleges in Delhi NCR gathered at The Lalit, New Delhi, to champion inclusion in sports for our talented athletes. We shared inspiring stories, engaged in dynamic discussions and united in our mission to foster environments where every student can thrive. The energy was palpable as we explored ways to empower our athletes and the athletes demonstrated their exceptional skills on stage.



PRAYER MEET & AD MEET

In fond memory of Air Marshal Denzil Keelor, a prayer meeting was held to honour his extraordinary life and enduring legacy. Family, friends, colleagues, and well-wishers gathered to pay tribute to a man who lived with unwavering dedication, courage, and compassion. The solemn gathering was filled with heartfelt reflections on his remarkable journey—from his distinguished service in the Indian Air Force to his transformative work with Special Olympics Bharat.



Born on December 7, 1933, in Lucknow, India, Air Marshal Denzil Keelor displayed a passion for service from an early age. His most notable contribution came during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, where he was awarded the Vir Chakra for his gallantry. Beyond his military achievements, Air Marshal Keelor dedicated himself to an equally significant cause—empowering individuals with intellectual disabilities. He founded Special Olympics Bharat, a movement that gave countless athletes across India an opportunity to shine. Under his leadership, the program grew from 25,000 athletes in 2001 to 1.4 million athletes, touching the lives of over 450,000 special children. His warmth, humility, and unwavering commitment to service made him not just a leader, but a mentor and a friend to many.



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