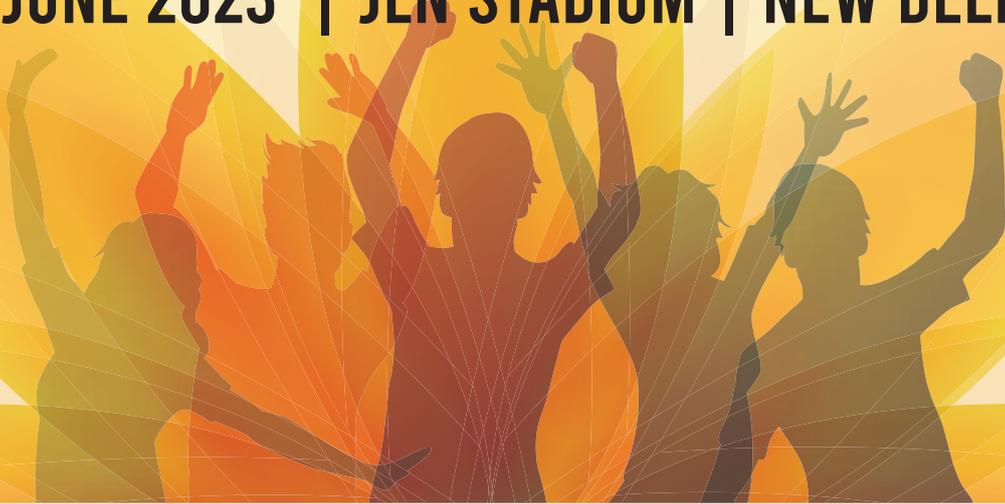




DISCUSSION ON CHALLENGES TO PURSUE SPORTS AS A MAINSTREAM CAREER FOR PARA ATHLETES

4 JUNE 2023 | JLN STADIUM | NEW DELHI



A REPORT



India is chairing the reputed G20 group, thereby the Department of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports has been organizing Youth-20 events on sidelines with the G20 events.

CPSFI was chosen by the Ministry, amongst other reputed organisations to conduct a discussion on “**challenges to pursue sports as a mainstream career for para athletes**”.

CPSFI is grateful to the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports for placing them in the list of 20 reputed Institutions to conduct the brainstorming session on topics of paramount importance to necessitate more athletes with disability take up sports.

CPSFI conducted the session on 04 Jun 2023 at VVIP Lounge, JLN Stadium New Delhi. Discussion was conducted in two sessions comprising eminent personalities and athletes, with nearly 200 participants. It was an interactive session with Q&A all along.



Session one

Panelists

Mr Rohit Jain, Athlete

Ms Harshita Tater, Athlete

Mr R. Rahul, Footballer

Mr Rakesh Bhatt, Athlete

Session two

Panelists

Dr. Rajeev Varshney, Director DIPAS, DRDO

Brig Bhibhu Nayak, Sports Physician

Mr M.L Dogra, Former Director AFI

Mr Rajesh Tomar, Ex National Athlete, President CPSFI

Mr Joseph Kuok, Swimmer, Asian Medallist



Moderators

Ms Kavita Suresh, General Secretary CPSFI

Mr Joseph Kuok, Treasurer CPSFI



Mr Rohit Jain, athlete

Rohit Jain is a person with cerebral palsy with the following credentials and more

- Participated in CP World Games 2018 in Spain Barcelona, represented India for first time as co-captain for India team
- Medals till date 11; 7 gold, 2 silver, 2 bronze in various national & state level competitions in last 6 years
- Recipient of Golden Book of World Record of “Largest Artificial Limb Implementation”

- Recipient of National Award by President of India for most efficient employee in India under cerebral palsy category & also received Rajasthan state role model award both in 2017
- MBA in Finance & Marketing (MNIT University), BE (Computer Science), BCA from BITS Ranchi

Rohit is currently employed with a private bank as a manager.



Harshita Tater, athlete

Harshita was diagnosed with right sided spastic hemiparesis after suffering a perinatal head injury when she was 6 months old, was rehabilitated for over 14 years with 5 major surgeries and underwent multiple procedures to help with her disability and the pain that came with it. Following are her achievements

- Won the gold medal in 400m at the National Para Athletic Meet 2022 and broke national record by over 9 seconds, she also won the silver medal in 200m.
- Won the gold medal in 400m at the national meet by CPSFI, New Delhi 2022.

- Represented India at the WPA MOROCCO 2023.
- Won the gold medal in 200m and bronze in shotput at the CPSFI National Meet, 2023.
- Participated in IPC Regional Training 2023 in the Proud Paralympians program

Harshita aspires to represent the nation at various international competitions and win medals and laurels for her country. Next competition that she is training for is the Hangzhou Asian Para Games 2022(2023). Her main aim is to participate and win medals at the Paris Paralympics 2024 and LA Paralympics 2028.



Mr R Rahul, athlete

Rahul is a person with disability who is also a football coach

- Worked as team manager of Golden Threads in I League Second Division in 2022-2023
- Working as Head Coach of Sacred Heart College football team
- Winner of Kerala premier league football championship for the season 2021-22 as assistant coach of Golden Thread Football Club
- Selected in the Indian Football Team for differently abled in the Asian Championship at Iran 2019
- Coach of Winning Football Team (under 15 and 13) organized by various Football Academies in Kerala



Mr Rakeshbhai Bhat, athlete

Rahul is a person with disability who is also a football coach

- Worked as team manager of Golden Threads in I League Second Division in 2022-2023
- Working as Head Coach of Sacred Heart College football team
- Winner of Kerala premier league football championship for the season 2021-22 as assistant coach of Golden Thread Football Club
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Brig Bibhu Nayak, Sports Physician, Founder Director for Upcoming National Centre for Sports Sciences & Research

Brig Bibhu Nayak commissioned in Army Medical Corps of Indian Army in 1995, an MD from AFMC Pune in 2003, International Olympic Committee (IOC) Diploma in Sports Medicine & has been extensively trained in Sports Traumatology & Sports & Exercise Physiology from National Institute of Sports Medicine at Havana, Cuba & National Sports Centre at Madrid, Spain. He has worked in Army Sports Institute, Pune as

officer In Charge of Human performance Lab for almost 6 years along with Elite athletes of the country. He has been the Team Doctor of Indian Youth Boxing Team from 2007 to 2009. He has represented the country at Commonwealth Games 2010, Asian Games 2010, Men’s Hockey World Cup 2010 as Team Physician of Indian Hockey Team.

He has also performed the duties of Chief Medical Officer of Indian Military Academy, Dehradun from 2011 to 2014 & also commanded a Field Hospital in Eastern Ladakh Region in Galwan Valley from 2014 to 2016. He has been the Team Doctor of Indian Contingent at 2012 London Olympic Games, Chief Team Physician of Indian Contingent at RIO 2016 Paralympic Games & FIH Medical Officer at Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

He has the distinction of being first Indian Doctor to be appointed as Medical Officer at any Olympic Games by IOC. He has been appointed as the Chairman of Health & Safety Committee of FIH in 2019 & has been re appointed as Chairman till Mar 2023 after the safe conduct of 2018 Hockey World Cup & Hockey event of 2020 Tokyo Olympics. He is also the first doctor from India to be appointed as Chairman of Health & Safety Committee of any International Sports Body.

He has worked as Specialist On Deputation at Sports Injury Centre, VMMC & Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi from 2016 to 2022. Currently he is appointed as the Founder Director for Upcoming National Centre for Sports Sciences & Research under Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports.





Dr Rajeev Varshney, Director, Defence Institute of Physiology & Allied Sciences, Delhi

Dr Rajeev Varshney is currently serving as the Director of the Defence Institute of Physiology and Allied Sciences (DIPAS), Delhi, India. He was Associate Director and Head Technology Management Division prior to assuming the charge of Director. Before moving to DIPAS, he served as Director, Technology Support & Management in the office of the Secretary

Department of Defence R&D and Chairman DRDO. Dr Varshney is a postgraduate in biochemistry from Aligarh Muslim University and PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He has successfully contributed to the development of mechanism-based drugs for countering radiation injuries. He has also contributed in understanding human responses to high altitude adaptation and maladies using ‘omics’ approaches. Initiated a programme for inclusion of human factors engineering for indigenously developed military platforms. He has been awarded DRDO Spin off award, DRDO Lab-level Technology Group award and the Young Scientist award (twice) for presenting his work in Japan and Italy. He has contributed towards seamless transfer of over 16 technologies developed at DIPAS through LAToT agreements to 132 industries for bulk production and induction of products with users. He played a pivotal role in establishing DIPAS as one of the leading COVID-19 testing laboratories in the country and involved in the research work related to identification of COVID-19 severity biomarkers. He has served as an expert member of DST and ICMR projects advisory committee for funding and is a member of the National Academy of Medical Sciences. He has published several research papers in



Mr M.L. Dogra, Former Director Athletics Federation of India

Had been an athlete and footballer in early days . Qualified Athletics Coach and had been coach with Airforce and Services Athletics teams for many years. Coach with Indian Athletics team in national camps and various major Games as well a qualified technical officials of AFI. Former Director (Technical) with Athletics Federation Of India for more than two decades. Had been in technical and administrative teams of organisers in various major Athletics Events held in India since 1978 .



Mr Rajesh Tomar IRS (retd), President CPSFI

Mr Rajesh Tomar a graduate from St Stephen’s College, is a retired bureaucrat. He has contributed to the field of sports and para sports extensively. Having been a National level athlete himself, he always wanted to contribute to the cause of sports in India. In the last decade he has been actively involved in developing and promoting sports for persons with disability.

Cerebral Palsy Sports Federation of India (CPSFI) is an outcome of an initiative of Mr Tomar. CPSFI has been recognised by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) as an NSF to promote and develop sports for persons with Cerebral Palsy, a neurological disorder. Under his able leadership, CPSFI has conducted 35 awareness programs across India through its members in 25 States/UTs.

His few contributions in the past are,

- Vice-President, Asian Paralympic Committee (2014-19)
- President, Paralympic Committee of India (2014-15)
- Leader of delegation Asian Para Games Incheon (2014)
- CDM, FESPIC Games, Kuala Lumpur, 2006 & Asian Para Games, Guangzhou (2010)
- In the bid committee of IOA for Asian Games.
- Member of the administrative team of Olympic, Asian, Common Wealth Games
- Leader of Sports Presentation Committee, Commonwealth Games (2010)
- Associate Vice President of Athletic Federation of India and a member of Selection Committee, AFI (1987-1996)
- Deputy Director of TEAMS Wing, Sports Authority of India, (1987-1992)
- Administrator, Sports Authority of India.



Joseph Kuok, Swimmer, Asian Games Medallist, Treasurer CPSFI

Joseph Kuok’s alma maters have been St. Columba’s School, New Delhi and St. Stephen’s College, Delhi University. He completed his Master’s in Business Economics from Delhi University. He served in the Customs and Central Excise Department under the Ministry of Finance, Govt of India and attained superannuation as an IRS Officer. His lifelong passion has been his love for sports, especially swimming and

waterpolo. He represented India at various international championships from 1977 to 1984. The highlight of his sporting career was winning a Bronze medal in Water Polo at the 1982 IXth Asian Games held at New Delhi. He participates in Masters category and went on to represent India at the World Masters Swimming championship held at Budapest, Hungary in 2017 and Gwangju, Korea in 2019. He is the Vice President of the Delhi Swimming Association, Treasurer of the Cerebral Palsy Sports Federation of India (CPSFI) and Secretary of the Delhi Cerebral Palsy Association.



Key Points - Session One

Mr Rahul Jain

Defied all odds is a successful professional and a sportsperson due to the encouragement and support of his parents which he says is key to being able to dream big and excel. He focused on the need for the right classification awareness and personnel for classification of athletes with cerebral palsy. He also highlighted the need for club for club throw athletes which are not available in India, thereby making it impossible to train.

Ms Harshita Tatar

Spoke on facing a rejection as a female child with disability and was brought up with societal barriers especially the extended family members. According to her accepting the rejection becomes the challenge itself which leads to motivation among athletes. She bravely switched from medicine to sports, pursuing her passion. Harshita also pointed out that hesitancy, anxiety, nervousness, and self-doubt are commonly experienced challenges among athletes.

Mr Rakesh Bhatt

Highlighted the importance of education along with sports and how he managed doing his Masters alongside his training. Time management is the key according to him. He also emphasised the need for awareness around cerebral palsy sports and the need to take up sports for persons with disabilities.

Mr R. Rahul

Feels that language acts as a barrier to pursue sports. He believes that his sporting abilities are not adequately supported due to communication challenges, hindering his educational aspirations. Rahul emphasized that a major obstacle faced by para athletes is the lack of knowledge and awareness, which greatly limits their access to various opportunities.





Key Points - Session Two

Dr. Rajeev Varshney

Dr Varshney believed in providing opportunities to disabled individuals, fostering inclusivity. He feels the need for mainstream schools to be sensitised to empower children with disabilities, encouraging their participation in cerebral palsy sports. He shared his personal experience to highlight the difficulties of encountering discrimination within the education system of society. He also mentioned that individuals need to break the psychological barriers and participate

Brig Bribhu Nayak

Focused on pursuing sports for self-well being and physical health is crucial. According to him research suggests education enhances decision-making, empowering you further. He classified these challenges into three main categories: physical, psychological, and logistics. These challenges primarily affect athletes, leading to unemployment and mental pressure within society. He urged athletes to celebrate their success and strive to contribute back to the society.

Mr M.L Dogra

Encouraged athletes, saying 'Persevere and you shall achieve, a strong mind is key to overcome challenges. He emphasized the importance of parents imparting initial education and awareness to their children in the early years for a strong foundation.

Mr Rajesh Tomar

Mr Tomar motivated athletes to embrace challenges, persevere, and grow. He emphasized on self-reliance, encouraging them to face obstacles head-on and never give up. Mr Tomar mentioned the need for more opportunities and platforms to showcase sporting talent for athletes at the National and International levels.

Mr Joseph Kuok

Mr Joseph Kuok articulated the need for sporting equipments like race runner, boccia balls, club to be made available in every state/UT for athletes to take up these sports which are not taken up due to lack of equipments in India. He also expressed the need for awareness about the benefits of financial benefits for meritorious athletes.





Summary and Action points

1. **Limited access to education** : Athletes face barriers in accessing quality education. Educational institutions may lack awareness and appropriate infrastructure, resources, trained staff to support their specific needs. This can lead to exclusion, lower educational achievement, and limited opportunities for their future. Mainstream schools to be made sensitive to accept and encourage children with disabilities within their educational institutions and also let athletes pursue their highest education alongside their training.
2. **Social stigma and discrimination** : Athletes also often face social stigma and discriminations, which can lead to isolation, exclusion, and a negative impact on their self-esteem. Awareness programs about the opportunities and platforms for athletes with cerebral palsy and other disabilities may help develop a more inclusive society.
3. **Healthcare and rehabilitation services** : Access to healthcare and rehab services can be limited or inadequate in certain regions, leading to difficulties in receiving appropriate medical care and therapies. Personalized counselling sessions during training for psychological support can be an added help.
4. **Sport equipments and training support** : Availability of sporting equipments like race runner, boccia balls, club necessary for an athlete to pursue the sport and excel.
5. **Opportunities for exposure** : Providing opportunities and platform to athletes for training and participation in National and International level competitions.
6. **Livelihood support** : Awareness about benefits of cash awards and job opportunities for meritorious athletes to be created for better participation and committed training.







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