



Press Release

Khelo India and Svayam collaborated to Improve Support for Para Athletes at Para Games 2023

December 18th, 2023: Khelo India, the flagship program of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, and Svayam, India's pioneering accessibility organisation, joined hands to ensure transportation and infrastructure are accessible in New Delhi during the Khelo India Para Games.

Accessible transportation services were provided for more than participating 1400 para-athletes. More than 300 volunteers, and officials associated with the Games were sensitised at the beginning of this 8-day-long event. Accessible buses and minivans were kept ready for all the Para-Athletes, Para-Officials, and Para-Coaches from their arrival in the city to their departure, including from railway stations, bus stations, and the airport. Moreover, the transportation between accommodation (hotels/hostels) and the respective stadiums were also considered while making the arrangements.

At the Khelo India Para Games 2023, more than 500 wheelchair-using players participated. Hence, providing them with accessible infrastructure had been the utmost priority, which entails not just ramps with handrails but also accessible toilets, accessible seating, and accessible parking for para players and spectators. Whether a player is using a wheelchair, has a visual impairment, or faces other challenges, with accessibility in place, they are able to compete and enjoy sports just like everyone else. Through accessibility, Khelo India allowed everyone to show their skills.

Paralympic silver medalist Bhavina Patel said, “An inclusive infrastructure and accessible transportation system mean more than ramps and designated spaces for a para-player; it offers us a place of equal opportunity. Many people wouldn't understand the importance of accessible transport, but as para-players, we have experienced first-hand how dignified and safe we feel when provided with an accessible van or a bus during sporting events. Similarly, the way accessible toilets are made available at the games, they should be made an integral part of all facilities. I really appreciate Khelo India and Svayam for taking up this responsibility and bringing accessibility on the ground.”

Recognising the necessity for an accessible environment to ensure a safe and dignified experience, a fleet of accessible buses and minivans has been made available for the transportation of para-athletes, officials, and coaches from their arrival points—be it railway stations, bus stations, or the airport. Additionally, multiple workshops were organised before the games, to sensitise officials and volunteers on providing support to each para-athlete throughout the games. The training in correct behaviour and communication with individuals with reduced mobility conducted by Svayam has fostered inclusivity and respect at the game and ensured a supportive, welcoming environment for everyone, regardless of their physical abilities, promoting empathy and understanding among all individuals.

With 23 years of impactful work, Svayam has revolutionised accessibility in public infrastructure and transportation and supported organisations like the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) and the Differently Abled Cricket Council of India (DCCI) in sports.

The collaboration between Khelo India and Svayam remained a significant step towards creating a more inclusive and accessible sports environment in India. The dedication to ensure that everyone, regardless of physical abilities, can participate in, compete in, and witness the excitement of sports that unite the nation reflects the association.