

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF  
TAMIL NADU AT INAUGURATION OF SOUTH ZONE REGIONAL ABILYMPICS  
2019 ORGANISED BY SARTHAK AND NAAI AT TATTVALOKA, TEYNAMPET,  
CHENNAI ON 19.07.2019 AT 10.30 A.M**

**Anaivarukkum Kaalai Vanakkam**

**Thiru. Krishan Kalra,**  
President,  
National Abilympics Association of India

**Thiru. Lov Verma,**  
Former Secretary,  
Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities

**Dr. Jitender Aggarwal,**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Sarthak

**Tirumathi. Sarala,**  
Editor, Tattvaloka

**Distinguished Invitees**

**Ladies & Gentlemen**

It gives me happiness to be taking part in the inauguration of the South Zone Regional Abilympics 2019 being organised by Sarthak Educational Trust which manages the National Abilympics Association of India.

Abilympics are vocational skill competitions specifically designed for persons with disabilities to enable them to display their unique talents.

At the Abilympics competitions are held in the display of vocational skills such as Desktop Publishing; Character Designing; E-Sports, Floral Arrangement, Bakery and Cooking, Tailoring; Jewelry Making; Beauty and Wellness and Computer aided design Architecture, etc.

The first Abilympics competition was held in Tokyo in 1981 to commemorate the United Nations' International Year of Disabled Persons. Abilympics now takes place every four years, governed under the International Abilympic Federation, Japan, and has been held so far in Tokyo, Colombia, Hong Kong, Perth, Prague, New Delhi, Shizuoka, Seoul and Bordeaux.

I am informed that the National Abilympic Association of India (NAAI) was formed to work together with NGOs for organising regional level Olympics for persons with disabilities and to assist in spreading the Abilympics movement around the country.

The Sarthak Educational Trust is engaged in mainstreaming of Persons with Disability through Vocational skilling and placement since 2008 and officially has therefore been vested with the management of the National Abilympic Association of India.

I am happy to know that Chennai has been chosen for holding the South Zone Regional Abilympics this year. The West Zone Regional Abilympics have already been held at Mumbai in June, and the North Zone Abilympics at New Delhi in July 2019. The East Zone Abilympics will be held in Kolkatta in August 2019.

These regional events are directed towards getting together the Indian contingent for the

International Abilympics 2020 that will take place in China.

The World Health Organisation defines people with disabilities as those who encounter impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions in their day to day lives.

It has been estimated that more than one billion people in the world live with some form of disability. Of these, nearly 200 million people experience considerable difficulties in functioning.

In India, according to the 2011 census, about 2.21 per cent of the population is affected by some form of disability. There is also a Statistical Profile prepared in 2016, which gives the percentage

figures based on type of disability suffered by the population in India.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, came into force with effect from 19th day of April 2017. This Act aims at empowering persons with disabilities by adhering to the following principles –

- i. Respect for inherent dignity, individual economy including freedom to make own choice and independence of persons with disabilities;
- ii. Non-discrimination;
- iii. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society; and

iv. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity.

A number of International commitments and guidelines have also come into effect in the recent past for the welfare of the disabled persons. India is a signatory to the 'Declaration on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asia Pacific Region'. India has also ratified the 'UN Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities'. We are a part of the 'Biwako Millennium Framework' which provides for action towards an inclusive, barrier free and rights based society.

The Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific has provided us with the first set of disability inclusive development Goals.

Professor Stephen Hawking, the Astrophysicist who passed away recently used to say that “disability need not be an obstacle to success”. He was speaking from personal experience.

Professor Hawking himself had a motor neurone disease for a large part of his adult life. But it did not prevent him from becoming a famous astro-physicist.

Stalwarts with disabilities like Gayathri Sankaran (Padmashri awardee, musician),

Dr.Aiswarya, J. Anuradha (winner of wheel chair race in Chennai marathon), K. Radhabai (first visually disabled woman to receive a Ph.D degree in south India) have never let any form of disability come in their way of success and have left an unforgettable mark in their respective fields.

Sarthak Skill Development programs provides youth with disabilities with a wide range of unique skill building experiences including leadership, social, communication, computers, and basic life skills.

Improving vocational training and employment opportunities for persons with disability is not only a critical element for enhancing the quality of life for individuals and their families, but also for

reaping as a whole substantial gains for the economy.

I wish to conclude by reminding you that the display of any skill of an outstanding order leads to recognition. And recognition leads to a life a dignity and respect in society.

The differently abled persons who have come here to participate in the event are deserving of the highest level of praise from all of us. Let us cheer them on the road to victory. They are indeed pioneers in showing other people in society as to how challenges should be overcome. I pray and wish that the Almighty God should shower all his grace and blessings on them.

The organizers deserve a special word of praise and appreciation for their noble efforts towards organizing an event of this nature. This I am sure is going to be a trendsetter for many more to follow their footsteps. My best wishes and greetings to them and to all of you assembled in the audience. May success greet you in all your endeavours.

Nandri Vanakkam...

Jai Tamil Nadu.....

Jai Hind.....