

9th International Abilympics



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History of Abilympics

Abilympics are vocational skills competitions for persons with disabilities. The first international abilympics was held in Tokyo in 1981 to commemorate the United Nations International year for persons with disabilities. The International Abilympics is held once every four years in different parts of the world. These are organized jointly by the host country, International Abilympic Federation (IAF) and Rehabilitation International (RI). Subsequently these were held in Columbia, Hong Kong, Australia, Czech Republic, India, Japan and South Korea. The focus of the Abilympics is showcasing the vocational abilities and increase participation in socio economic activities. It also provides an opportunity to participants to learn latest development in their respective fields and forge friendship amongst participants from different countries.

Abilympics in India

The history of Abilympics in India dates back to the first International Abilympics itself. It is a story rich with pride, determination and success.

India has been participating in the international Abilympics since its inception. During the 5th International Abilympics held in Prague in 2000, the 14 member team from India gave a magnificent and memorable performance, winning three gold and three bronze medals as well as a Certificate of Excellence. During the 5th IA India's bid to host the next IA in 2003 was unanimously accepted. The National Abilympic Association of India (NAAI) was formed in May 2001 at the behest of Government of India as a first step to organizing the international event. Amar Jyoti Charitable Trust as a coordinating agency setup its national headquarters at Delhi.

The main objective of NAAI, inter alia, is to discover and nurture the talent of persons with disabilities; create awareness in the society at large about their productive skills of persons with disabilities. The headquarters of NAAI was established at Amar Jyoti Charitable Trust, Delhi. The five zonal offices i.e. North, South, East, West & Centre were established for spreading the movement and facilitate ease of functioning. These offices were established in NGOs working in the disability sector with requisite infrastructure. Heads of these NGOs and some other well known persons in the field of disability sector were appointed as Vice President in each Zone. This helped to create a network amongst the NGOs, the government and different sections of society to spread the message of Abilympics.

Under the aegis of NAAI, State, Sub-regional and Regional Abilympics are organized in different zones where in addition to the events generally included in the international Abilympics a few events which promote economic self-reliance in the respective regions are organized. These range from embroidery to painting, jewelry making to creating web pages,

wood carving to photography. The medal winners of the Regional participate in the National Abilympics.

The 6th IA was successfully organized in New Delhi during November 2003. It was for the first time in the disability movement that ability, not disability, was the focus of the events on a mega scale. India won 7 Gold, 8 Silver and 15 Bronze in 6th International Abilympics.

A contingent consisting of 40 persons including 29 contestants took part in the 7th International Abilympics held in Shizuoka, Japan in 2007. India won 3 Silver, 1 Bronze medal and a Certificate of Excellence. A contingent consisting of 25 persons including 15 contestants took part in the 8th International Abilympics held in South Korea in 2011. India won 1 Bronze medal and a Certificate of Achievement. This participation was largely as a result of the support from the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment. All the medal winners of the Sixth & Seventh Internationals were awarded cash prizes by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India.

Since the inception of Abilympics, the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment has always been a major supporter. Over a period of time financial support is also received from some State Governments. In addition corporate sector, public /private sector, NGOS, and individual donors support the activities. Educational and technical institutes also support some of the events by providing facilities and offering their expertise.

4th National Abilympics

The 3rd National Abilympics were held from November 3-5 at NITTTR, Chandigarh. A total of 434 participants (including those who took part in 2 contests) took part in 33 events. In 4 events the number of participants was less than 5 and as such no gold medal was awarded. The Governing Body expressed their happiness at the convergence of resources at Jabalpur.”



It was for the first time that NAAI decided to organize the event outside the National Capital. The event was financially supported by Madhya Pradesh Government. The venue for the event

Ranital Stadium and Babu Rao Paranjpe Stadium were made fully barrier-free with the help of Government and the Local Administration. The event was inaugurated by Shri Ishwar Das Rohani, Honorable Speaker of the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly. A total of 470 participants (370 contestants [252 male and 118 females] including 100 officials and escorts) participated.

Preparations for 9th IA

Skill Evaluation

The skill assessment of all the Gold medal winners of the 4th Nationals was carried out and that the main criterion for selection should be the medal winning potential of each member. The tentative task assignments received from the organizers in Korea were circulated to the gold medal winners and used for their screening and evaluation.

The Skill evaluation trials were conducted at Blind Peoples' Association, Ahmadabad on May 1-2, 2015. As a result of the assessment, and based on the recommendations of the Judges, 19 contestants were selected for participation in the 9th International Abilympics. The names of 2 experts to act as Judges in the International event were forwarded to the organizers in France.

The Indian Contingent

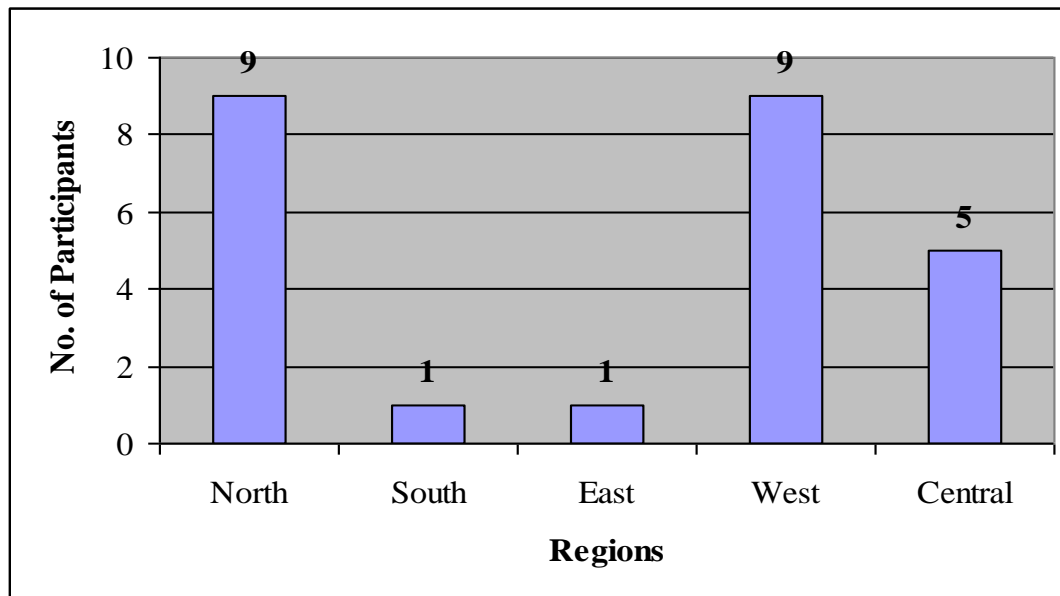
The Judges recommended the names of 16 contestants for inclusion in the Indian contingent to participate in the 8th International Abilympics. One of the members could not be included in the final contingent because all the necessary documents were not submitted in time.

The Indian team for the 8th International Abilympics consisted of 15 contestants, 3 Judges, 7 officials and escorts (list given below), all of whom came from various parts of the country. The contestants took part in a total of 18 events. 4 contestants took part in more than one event.

List of Participants

SN	Contestant's Name	Event No. & Name
1	Ram Raghubir Mishra	V26 Silk Painting L38 Painting
2	Ramavtar Singh	V21 Personal DBMS V30 Data Processing - Basic
3	Anurag Kumar Agrawal	V22 Photography - Outdoor
4	Mohammad Shamim Alam	V27 Tailoring

5	Deepak Kumar Dwivedi	V16 Electronic Assembly & Testing
6	Manharlal Narshibhai Chauhan	V23 Photography - Studio
7	Parvatiben Rajabhai Sangani	V31 Dress Making - Basic Course
8	Vilas Rambhau More	L39 Pottery
9	Neetaben Kalubhai Humbal	L35 Embroidery
10	Devendra Patil	L40 Waste Reuse
11	Balraj Pratap Narendra Jitsingh	V10 Computer Assembly
12	Saikrishnan Purushothaman	V22 Photography - Outdoor V23 Photography - Studio
13	Mohammad Rafiq Ansari	V15 Dress Making - Advanced Course V31 Dress Making - Basic Course
14	Mahendrakumar Jayrambhai Suthar	V33 Furniture Making - Basic Course
15	Rajneesh Agrawal	V13 Creating Web pages V11 Computer Programming
16	Uma Tuli	Official
17	Satish Govind Inamdar	Official
18	Ashok Kumar Datta	Official
19	Narindar Singh	Judge
20	Bhushan Lal Punani	Judge
21	Minetta Sharad Paatil	Judge
22	Tejalben Siddharth Lakhia	Escort
23	Shivajee Kumar	Escort
24	Trilochan Kaur Dhillon	Escort
25	Smriti Nagpal	Sign Language Interpreter



Training

Training plays an important role before participation in any competition particularly at international level. From past experience it was noticed that it is necessary to plan and organize an intensive training programme including exposure the equipment to be used during the internationals in the training at the respective places of participants. The participants began their training at their respective places of residence/work to improve their skills. The regional vice presidents, members of the GB were requested to constantly review the training.

The preparations for the final stage of training in Delhi began several months before departure. The officials of NAAI visited a number of institutes and contacted experts in the areas to select institutes and mentors for finalizing the details of training. The participants arrived in Delhi on September 4, 2011 for a three week training programme. While arrangements for training / mentoring of some of the participants were made at Amar Jyoti other traveled around and even beyond Delhi to seek guidance from their respective mentors. Necessary arrangements for the transport of participants were made.



Training Institutes in Delhi & NCR

- Dell
- Delhi Blue Pottery
- Amar Jyoti Charitable Trust
- Bajaj Studio
- Laser Science and Technology Centre
- A H Siddiqui & Bros
- Ramms International

The arrangements for stay in Delhi for male contestants and their escorts were made at BnB, Shrestha Vihar and for female contestants at YMCA Priyadarshini Working Women's Hostel, Vishwas Nagar. Both these places were very convenient due to their proximity to Amar Jyoti. The accommodation at BnB was made barrier free. Packed lunch was provided to the contestants going to the different institutes.

Kit

An official kit including blazer with NAAI emblem embroidered on the pocket, trouser, and sarees for the ladies was given to each participant. ONGC was kind enough to sponsor some items for the kit including 2 shirts, sweater, 2 pairs of socks, track suit, suitcase and a shoulder bag. Since a majority of the participants were vegetarian a food packet with dry snacks was provided to each participant by Blind People's Association, Ahmedabad. In addition some packed snacks were also distributed to the participants in Korea .



Travel Arrangements

Visas : Arranging Visas for all the members of the Indian contingent was an uphill task but with the kind intervention of President NAAI and a letter from the Organizers in Korea, the Visas for all the participants were made available at the last minute.

Mediclaim

Mediclaim policy was arranged for each member to meet any emergency health problems in Korea. Fortunately all the participants kept fit but for some minor ailments medicines were administered from the first aid box carried by the team.

Tickets

Cathay Airways provided wheelchairs and special assistance for the participants and made special arrangements for the seating of the entire team. This facilitated easier communication amongst the participants.

Foreign Currency

It was difficult to arrange Korean Wons in Delhi, foreign currency in the form of dollars was arranged by NAAI to meet the expenses in Korea. Most of the participants carried their own foreign exchange to meet personal expenses.

Courtesy Call on Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment

Shri Mukul Wasnik, Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India invited the team on September 21, 2011 to wish them Good Luck and Safe Journey. The Hon'ble Minister interacted with the participants and advised them to make the country proud both by their performance in the contest and behavior in Korea.



Departure to Korea

All the participants were geared up for the journey to Korea. Most of the contestants were full of excitement since it was their first journey by air and travel abroad. The team was divided into small groups of 3-4 members each and the officials/escorts were assigned to each group to facilitate check-in, immigration and related formalities. Dr. Bhushan Punani made the task easier for the entire contingent by interaction with the air line staff during the check-in. Once inside the aircraft, the participants easily figured out how to use all the facilities like changing the video channels and assisting a few of the team officials who were struggling with the TV remote.

After changing the flight at Hong Kong, the team arrived Incheon at 2 pm on September 24, 2011. Immigration was smooth and the team was warmly greeted by the volunteers from the organizers with the Indian Flag. They made arrangements for conversion of the currency at the airport itself. Mr. Amar a volunteer from Korea who had studied in India acted as an interpreter for the delegation and was available to the team most of the time.

The team left the airport for Seoul in two barrier-free coaches. On the way, which was a two hour drive, the interpreter pointed out beautiful and spectacular sites on both sides of the roads including the longest sea bridge. At 5.30 in the evening almost 22 hours after leaving from Amar Jyoti, the team arrived at Hotel Ramada in Seoul. Rooms were allotted to the participants and everyone rushed to the room for the well-earned rest. Later in the evening the team left for dinner and later Dr. Bhushan Punani and Ms. Tarlochan distributed sachets for tea, sugar and milk to all the participants in their rooms.

Registration

A registration desk was set up at the lobby on the first floor of the aT Center for registration of delegations who had registered through the online system in advance and for the in site registrants. The registration open from September 25 and during registration kits were distributed in groups. All the participants were issued ID cards for access to venue, meals, transport tours etc. as well as for the opening/closing ceremony and receptions. Visitor cards were provided to the visitors from September 26 onwards. Separate counters for information about shuttle services for transportation and tours around Seoul, Kyeongki province were also set up.

Inauguration

The Opening Ceremony was held at the Olympic Hall of the Olympic Park on Monday September 26, 2011 beginning with a march of flags of participating countries under the theme of 'unlimited challenge to the world'. This was followed by a welcome address by **Mr. Chae-Pil Lee, Minister of the Ministry of Employment and Labour, Korea**. He welcomed all the

participants to the 8th International Abilympics Seoul 2011 under the slogan “unlimited challenge to the world”. He assured everyone that this festival of skills for the disabled, will entertain visitors and participants with spectacular events, performances and exhibitions along with the International Symposium. He wished the best for all the contestants in the skills contest. He expressed the hope that everyone will have a memorable experience of Korean lifestyle and high level of events.



Mr. Seong-Gyu Lee, President of Korea Employment Agency for the Disabled welcomed and thanked the participants for participation in the 8th IA. He said that the best welfare for persons with disabilities is providing them a job. Skill is an important median for securing employment and International Abilympics helps lay the foundation of job creation and social integration. He expressed confidence and hope that the contestants will prove that it is possible to ignite passion with the spirit of challenge and creativity. He expressed his gratitude to all present for being together in the arena where persons with disabilities from all over the world will display their creativity and skills.

Mr. Young-Gyu Kwon, Acting Mayor of Seoul and Co-Chairman of Organising Committee said that it is a matter of great pleasure to have the opportunity to host the 8th International Abilympics. For the past four years the Seoul Metropolitan Government were constantly engaged in planning “Happy City project for People with Disability”, where persons with disabilities were actively involved and remove the barriers around the city for the benefit of participants. He expressed his best wishes to the contestants and advised to show their best performance for the skills that they are trained for participation in the respective contests.

Mr. Kyung-Shik Sohn, Chairman of Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Co-Chairman of Organising Committee welcomed the participants and stated that the upcoming IA Seoul 2011 will support persons with disabilities and enjoying full rights in the society and overcome prejudices against them and display their talents and abilities to the general public. He informed the audience that an effort has been made to combine various cultural and arts event to set a festive stage for the enjoyment of everybody.

Mr. Eisuke Saotome, President, International Abilympic Federation stated that since 1981 the International Abilympics has been providing a platform for persons with disabilities to demonstrate their skills and proficiency in becoming totally integrated in the society. He advised the contestants that winning a medal is secondary. Participation in the IA will provide them with a confidence and strength to continue moving forward to the next stage of their lives and careers. In addition, participation in the skills contests and demonstrations, the fact that Abilympics will provide an opportunity to exchange knowledge and enjoy friendship with a large number of people with different skills from different countries/regions will become a treasure for the future. He wished each and everyone best of luck. And congratulated the organizing committee members for the effort and creativity shown in organizing a great event.

Ms. Yoon-Ok Kim, The First Lady and Honorary Chairperson of the 8th International Abilympics welcomed the Vice President and his lady wife of Ecuador, Presidents of IAF and RI and distinguished guests especially since President Lee Myung-Bak as Mayor of Seoul, had successfully won the right to hold abilympics in Korea. 450 contestants from 57 countries will take part in 40 contests and display their skills and competency earned through overcoming difficulties representing their valuables sweat and tears. She mentioned that the employment rate of disabled is roughly half of their non-disabled counterparts. This momentous occasion will provide opportunities for everyone think about the competency and employment of persons with disabilities and for the disabled person to become true hero in their lives.

Ms. Anne Hawker, President, Rehabilitation International, expressed her confidence that United Nations Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities will provide the disability community hope for a brighter future. International Abilympics is taking a leadership role in discussing the future direction of both vocational training and employment to people with disability. The event provides not only the opportunity to share and learn but also to catch up with old friends and to make new friends and new connection. She congratulated the organizers and wished all the best to the participants. RI is proud to be involved in this event and looks forward to being a part of the numerous discussions that will occur during the event and symposium.

A representative each of the contestants and judges thereafter took the Abilympic Oath.

All through the proceedings were interpreted in sign language for persons with hearing impairment. There was a wide coverage of the event in the local print and electronic media.

This was followed by a cultural programme where dancers from 5 continents took part. A magnificent opening of Korea's "Arinang" was performed with a combination of fusion Korean classical music group and multimedia show to welcome the participants. Byeoksa Dance Academy and Sookmyung Women's University – Wheelchair dance team performed a group dance using flags to celebrate the opening of the festival. The dancers used fabric strips to

perform the emblem of IA Seoul 2011. Tenor Seung-Won Choi – Hanbit Charity Children’s Choir with students from Hanbit School of the Blind presented “Dawn of Abilympics” to celebrate the International Abilympics. The programme ended with a lively performance of Korean Drums and Fusion drums (Nonverbal Percussion Performance – Dood Rock) presented mixed beats of Korean Rhythm and Rock with traditional Korean instruments.



Welcome Reception



The Organisers arranged a grand welcome reception at the National Museum of Korea to express gratitude for participating in the historic event. This also provided an opportunity to exchange information and culture amongst delegations, participants and invitees.

A tour of the National Museum which is a flag-ship museum of Korean history, culture and art was arranged. A number of performers show-cased different Korean Traditional Folk songs and dances to entertain the audience.



Orientation

A delegation orientation was held on September 25, 2011. Representatives from each delegation participated in the orientation to share information about the contests and clarify doubts, if any. A general meeting of all International Judges followed by contest-wise meeting was also organized. The orientation of the contestants for each contest was conducted one day prior to the day of actual skill contest where the details of actual task to be performed the next day were explained to the contestants and their escorts. The time and place of orientation for each contest was specifically designated. During the orientation detailed information about the methodology for holding the contest, necessary materials and equipments to be provided by the organizers was given. The details of the tasks and general dos and don'ts were also made available and doubts clarified. The plans for the seating arrangements were decided by draw of lots. All the officials and escorts were put in-charge of one contest (orientation & competition) on each of the three days. They accompanied contestants during both orientation and the contest to explain the task and get clarification if any for the contestants. The sign language interpreter was of great help for communication with speech and hearing contestants.

Venue & Facilities

The venue of the skills contests was exhibition hall 1, aT Center, which is an exhibition – convention center having a floor space of approximately 8000m². The facilities were barricaded to ensure that visitors and non participants do not enter the contest area without permission of the Chief Judge. The seating arrangements for the contestants were clearly marked and all the equipment and raw materials required for the contest were available at site.



Events

Each contest site was barricaded to ensure that visitors and non participants do not enter the contest area without permission of the each judge. The contestants were required to reach the contest site one hour before the start of the contest to check all the equipment, tools and raw materials and tools provided at the contest site. A copy of the task assignment and in some cases a sample of the task was also displayed at the site for reference



A total of 40 events (33 vocational and 7 leisure and living skills contests) were conducted and the events were spread over a period of 3 days from September 27-29, 2011. In addition a demonstration of mechatronics which is a multidisciplinary field of engineering used for design and manufacture of useful products was also organized. A total of 436 contestants (487 skill category wise) from 35 countries participated in the contests. In addition delegations from a large number of countries including western countries were present during the contests.

Vocational Skills Contests

V1	Artificial Limb Socket Making
V2	Basket Making
V3	Bicycle Assembly
V4	CAD-Architecture
V5	CAD-Electronics
V6	CAD-Machinery
V7	Cake Decoration
V8	Character Design
V9	CNC TURNING
V10	Computer Assembly
V11	Computer Programming
V12	Cooking
V13	Creating Web Pages
V14	Desktop Publishing
V15	Dress Making-Advanced Course
V16	Electronic Assembly and Testing
V17	Floral Arrangement
V18	Furniture Making-Advanced Course
V19	Jewelry Making
V20	Micro-controller Application
V21	Personal DBMS
V22	Photography-Outdoor
V23	Photography-Studio
V24	Poster Design
V25	Product Design
V26	Silk Painting
V27	Tailoring
V28	Wood Carving
V29	Word Processing
V30	Data Processing-Basic Course
V31	Dress Making-Basic Course
V32	Electronic Assembly-Basic Course
V33	Furniture Making-Basic Course

Leisure & Living Skills Contests









L34	Crochet Work
L35	Embroidery
L36	e-Sports
L37	Hand Knitting

L38	Painting
L39	Pottery
L40	Waste Reuse

Of the 40 contests, 16 contests were held on Day 1, 15 contests and 1 demonstration were held on Day 2 and 15 contests and 1 demonstration were held on Day 3.

Photography Outdoor (26), Painting (23), Floral Arrangement (22), Word processing (22), Computer Assembly (22) Photography Studio (21) had the maximum number of participants while CNC Turning (2) Micro Controller Application (2), CAD Electronics (2), Product Design (3) Electronic Assembly – Basic Course (4) had a lesser number of contestants.

The details about the number of events, participants, participating counties etc. are given below:

Year	Host	National Flag	No. of Events	No. of Participating Countries	No. of Participants
1981	Tokyo, Japan		17	56	841
1985	Bagota, Columbia		12	54	987
1991	Shatin, Hong Kong		37	83	2000
1995	Perth, Australia		37	32	1000
2000	Prague, Czech Republic		35	29	1137
2003	New Delhi, India		32	33	1116
2007	Shizuoka, Japan		30	34	910
2011	Seoul, South Korea		40	52	1533

A large number of people including the students from various schools visited the contest site which had turned into a beehive of action. The contestants who were not participating in the contests in any given point of time had an opportunity visit the exhibition and demonstration, cultural performances and other events that were organized to entertain the visitors from all over the world.

It was an opportunity of a lifetime to see the skills and abilities of the participants in different events. The abilities displayed by the participants in computer events were highly impressive. The atmosphere in the contest area for these events was absolutely calm with contrast to other

events like furniture-making, tailoring etc. which were bustling with physical activities. Ms. Smriti Nagpal, the sign language interpreter of the Indian contingent had a very busy time moving from contest to contest to help the contestants with speech and hearing impairments. Each event was judged by a panel of judges. Efforts were made by the organizers to have judges from different countries. A total of 56 judges from countries other than Korea participated in the events. Maj. Gen. Narindar Singh, Dr. Bhushan Punani, Mrs. Minetta Paatil from India acted as Judges in Photography – Outdoor, Desktop Publishing and Embroidery respectively. The Chief Judge for each event was from Korea. The winners of each contest were announced through the bulletin board in the forenoon on the day following of each event. A jury of appeal consisting of 7 persons. A list of members of Jury is given at Annexure “A”. Dr. Uma Tuli from India was a member of the Jury.

India won one bronze medal (embroidery) and three special prizes (Computer programming, Computer assembly and Dress-making – basic course). A list of winners of all the contests is given at Annexure “B”.

IAF Assembly & Executive Committee Meetings

A meeting of the Executive Committee of IAF was held on September 26, 2011 at Olympic Park, Seoul, Korea. Mr. Saotome introduced Mr. Taro Muraki as new President, Dr. Seong-Gyu Lee as new Vice President and Mr. Tetsuhiro Kawamura, new Secretary General of IAF. The members were also informed that the number of member organizations from different parts of the world is continuously increasing and seven new organizations have been approved by IAF. These organisations represent Pakistan, Iran, Srilanka, The Netherlands, Mongolia, Bangladesh and France. Election of office bearers for the term September 2011-2015 was held and as per the constitution nine new members were elected. Dr. Uma Tuli from India was amongst the new members elected to the executive committee.

The Abilitylympics coordinator of skills Finland informed the members that they have initiated discussions with their government for hosting the 9th IA in Finland in 2015. The response from the government is awaited keeping in view the economic situation in the world and political situation in Finland after the election. The members agreed that they would wait for their positive answer till the next EXCO meeting in 2012.

Ninth meeting of the IAF Assembly was at T Center, Seoul on September 29, 2011 where representatives from 25 countries/regions and observers from 3 countries were present. Mr. Saotome introduced Dr. Seong – Gyu Le , President of KEAD and Chairman, IA Seoul 2011 organising committee and thanked him and all the members of his team for holding the IA Seoul 2011 successfully. The members were informed that 12 new member organizations from different countries have joined IAF since the last assembly meeting Shizuoka, Japan 2007. The

assembly by an overwhelming majority decided to wait for the official bid of Skills Finland for hosting the 9th IA in 2015.

The members were informed of the election of officers of the term 2011-2015 and that since only nine nominations have been received, all the nine members have been unanimously elected. The newly elected officers elected Mr. Taro Muraki as IAF President and Dr. Seong –Gyu Lee as Vice President. Members endorsed both new President and Vice President with applause. The members were informed that “World Congress on Disability” is scheduled to be held from October 24 to November 2, 2012 and desired wide participation from IAF members.

International Symposium

An international symposium, sharing the trends in and outside the Korea regarding the employment and vocational competency development of persons with disabilities under the theme “Disability Work and Social Integration” was held on September 28, 2011 at Grand Conference Room, aT Center. The seminar had two sessions under the sub-themes: “Sharing Good Examples of Employment for the Persons from Severe Disabilities” and “Employment & Social Participation of Persons with Disabilities were held”. Six presentations from different countries were made in the first session where Mr. Hyung-Shik Kim, Professor, Korea University of International Studies acted as a moderator during the session. A total of 98 persons from approx. 25 countries participated in the Symposium.



Exhibition, Demonstrations & Other Events

In order to create greater awareness and entertain the visitors from different countries exhibition, experience programs and cultural performances were organized in the exhibition hall at aT Center throughout the period. Along with a demonstration mechatronics specially equipped vehicles to showcase the latest trends in safety aspects of accessible vehicles was arranged. Exhibition booths had PR Zone for Korea Employment Agency for the Disabled, Seoul Metropolitan Government and different organizations and corporations to promote cultures. An exhibition of traditional costumes of different countries and costumes with Braille were also displayed. Costumes for Bhangra and Garbha dance from India attracted a lot of visitors. Health Zone had facilities for assessing the healthcare, for massage therapy etc.



Demonstrations of oriental medicine, natural dyes for handkerchiefs and mother-of-pearl pendant making attracted large number of audience. Performances by Korean traditional groups and cultural delegations by different countries entertain the visitors. A troupe comprising of ... persons from Turning Point, an institution of persons with chronic mental illness from Kolkata also performed. Simulators for aircraft ships and motor racing were the highlight of the work experience booth.



Closing Ceremony

The closing ceremony held on September 30, 2011 at Olympic Hall of Olympic Park was a grand affair. At the closing ceremony medals were awarded to the winners of all the contests under the theme “We are the Champion”. The medals were awarded by various dignitaries. It was proud moment for the winners who waived their National Flags from the podium. The Indian contingent cheered Neetaben Humbal when she went to receive the bronze medal in embroidery. Most of the medals went to



South Korea, Japan, China, Chinese Taipei. A closing performance under the theme “Fly upto the World” was held. This had performances by Monkeys Crew – College Cheerleading Association comprising of prestigious college nationwide and secret – a famous four member girl group gave tentatilisng performances. This was a joyous occasion for the medal winners. The International Abilympic Flag was also handed over to a representative from Finland, the host for the 9th International Abilympics. The closing ceremony was followed by a Farewell Party under the theme “Harmony Party”. This was an occasion to renew old friendships and forge new friendships from amongst the participants



Conclusion

The period leading upto the 8th International Abilympics was really hectic, demanding and full of hard work both for the contestants and the NAAI officials. It was a worthwhile experience for all and good team relationships were forged during this period. The participation would not have been possible but for the financial support from the Ministry of Social Justice & empowerment, ONGC, Blind People's Association, Pepsico and a number of individuals. This whole hearted support has helped spreading the abilympic movement in the country and mainstreaming of persons with disabilities in the society in the true sense. Participation in the International Abilympics also provided an opportunity to the participants to latest equipments and tools and the professional level of competence of participants from other countries. The Indian team won a bronze and three special prizes even though a better performance was expected from the contestants. In a short span of 5 - 6 days all the contestants made friends, exchanged gifts and learned a lot about and from each other. Each one has returned with a treasure of friendship and advance knowledge of his/her vocation. The exposure has made the contestants more determined to work harder and improve their professional skills. It helped develop spirit de corps amongst the contestants and reinforced the belief that irrespective of our background or beliefs we all speak the same language that of humanity, love and acceptance of inclusion. Participation in the 8th International Abilympics was possible due to a convergence of resources in the real sense.

The participation of 52 countries including those from western countries has demonstrated that the abilympic movement is increasingly getting greater attention across the world.