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THE WORLD



NEARLY 40 DEAD AS U.S. HITS IRAN-LINKED SITES IN SYRIA, IRAQ
IMRAN, WIFE GET 7-YR JAIL IN UNLAWFUL MARRIAGE CASE
PAGE 14

Maldives says Indian Coast Guard flouted maritime law, seeks report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MALE, FEBRUARY 3

THE MALDIVES' government has formally requested the Indian government to provide "comprehensive details" of an incident in which its Coast Guard personnel allegedly boarded three Maldivian fishing vessels operating within its economic zone.

The development is the latest in the diplomatic row between the two nations that led to the strain in bilateral ties after President Mohamed Muizzu, widely seen as a pro-China leader, came to power in November last year in the Maldives.

There was no immediate response from the Indian government to the Maldivian allegations.

On January 31, the Indian Army intercepted a Maldivian fishing boat engaged in fishing activities within the Maldives' Special Economic Zone (EEZ), located 72 nautical miles northeast of Dhdidhoo, Haa Alifu Atoll, the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

DAYS AFTER AWARD CONFERRED ON EX-BIHAR CM KARPOORI THAKUR

Bharat Ratna for L K Advani, BJP's poll message clear: Social justice, Hindutva

His contribution monumental: PM; Honour for ideals, principles: Advani

VIKAS PATHAK
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 3

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi announced Saturday the government would confer Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian award, on BJP stalwart and former Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani.

"I am very happy to share that Shri LK Advani ji will be conferred the Bharat Ratna. I also

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



BJP leader Lal Krishna Advani is congratulated by daughter Pratibha Advani at their residence in New Delhi, Saturday. ANI

PRAISE, POTSHOTS FROM OPPOSITION PAGE 9

Journey's long arc: Rath Yatra to BJP architect, Atal No. 2 to margdarshak

VIKAS PATHAK
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 3

IT WAS IN 1989 that the Bharatiya Janata Party under LK Advani had taken a decisive ideological stance. Giving up Gandhian socialism as the motto that Atal Bihari Vajpeeyee had been promoting, the party supported the Ram Janmabhoomi movement of the RSS and VHP through the

Palampur resolution of 1989, which called for the site to be handed over to Hindus either through a negotiated process or legislation.

The party had openly embraced Hindutva. Advani followed this up with a Rath Yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya from September 25, 1990. January 22, 2024, could well be seen as the culmination of the Yatra that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



ED moves Delhi court day after Kejriwal skips fifth summons

NIRBHAY THAKUR
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 3

A DAY after Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal skipped the Enforcement Directorate's summons for the fifth time, the ED filed a complaint against him in a court here on Saturday.

The ED made its submissions before Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Divya Malhotra, who will hear the matter on February 7.

While the ED has sought to question Kejriwal in the case related to the AAP government's now-scraped excise policy, the Delhi CM has called the summons "illegal". Questioning the summons, he has said that he



A Delhi Police team outside Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence on Saturday. Praveen Khanna RELATED REPORTS, P4

has not been named as an accused in the case.

Three senior AAP leaders — former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, Rajya Sabha MP

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

PROF BOOKED FOR 'PRAISING GODSE'

LADAKH SHUTS DOWN FOR STATEHOOD

P11 P9

Dept head, 5 students held over play at Pune University, freed on bail

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PUNE, FEBRUARY 3

A DEPARTMENT head and five students of the Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU) were arrested Saturday for allegedly hurting religious sentiments by staging a play with "objectionable scenes" on the campus, police said. They were later released on bail.

Pune ABVP leader Harshvardhan Harpude had filed a com-

plaint at Chaturshringi Police Station, objecting to the depiction of Lord Ram and Sita in the play, *Jab We Met*, which was staged Friday night. He and other ABVP members allegedly also disrupted the show, leading to a scuffle.

Police were deployed in strength on Saturday at the university, which formed a committee headed by a retired district judge to investigate the incident. "Parody of any person,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BJP MLA shoots at Shinde Sena leader in police station, arrested

SAGAR RAJPUT
ULHASNAGAR, FEBRUARY 3

A BJP MLA, Ganpat Gaikwad from Kalyan East, has been arrested for shooting at a local Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde faction) leader inside a police station in Ulhasnagar, in Thane district of Maharashtra, on Friday night, police said. Two of the MLA's associates have also been arrested.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Ganpat Gaikwad being taken to a court in Thane. Deepak Joshi

AN OLD, UGLY TURF WAR FOR KALYAN

PAGE 6

Cat scan: In Gujarat, trackers walk extra mile to keep Asiatic lions safe



A railway tracker patrols the railway line in Gujarat's Badhada village. Gopal Kateshiya

between cotton fields and reaches a stretch of Pipavav-Surendranagar railway track in Amritvel, a village 1 km away from Savarkundla in eastern part of Amreli district. The earthen embankment is the highest point in this part of Shetrangji river floodplains, which are part of the revenue beat of Gir (East) wildlife division's Savarkundla range.

Satisfied that the embankment is clear of vegetation — meaning better visibility for forest department's trackers and loco pilots in spotting lions

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Who stole my Butter Chicken?

The dish is in the soup of its own making — over the question of who invented it

FOUR-PAGE PULLOUT

Yash, Boss!



Amul
Creams the competition!

daCunha/AB/931

Banwarilal Purohit quit day after he met Amit Shah. File

Punjab Governor resigns, cites personal reasons

NAVJEEVAN GOPAL
CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 3

A DAY after he met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Delhi, Punjab Governor and Chandigarh Administrator Banwarilal Purohit resigned on Saturday, citing "personal reasons".

"Due to my personal reasons and certain other commitments, I

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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'SYMPATHISE WITH THEM... BUT DRAMA IS BEING DONE': KEJRIWAL

MLA poaching claim: Cops serve notice to CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 3

DRAMA UNFOLDED outside Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence Saturday morning when a Crime Branch team arrived — for the second time — to serve him a notice in connection with allegations that the BJP had tried to poach seven AAP MLAs by offering them Rs 25 crore each. AAP leaders present there asked why the notice could not be handed over to his staff even as the officers maintained that it needed to be given in person.

Later in the evening, the notice was finally served, asking Kejriwal to reply within three days.

The CM in a post on X reacted: "I sympathise with this crime



A Delhi Police team, led by Crime Branch ACP Pankaj Arora, outside CM Arvind Kejriwal's residence, Saturday. *Praveen Khanna*

ated by them after they received the BJP's complaint, but returned as he was not present. The team also went to AAP minister Atishi's house but she was in Chandigarh.

On Saturday morning, the Chief Minister's Office said his staff was ready to accept the notice on his behalf but the police team was not handing it over.

CM sources also alleged the police team had brought media crews along and that its aim was "to defame the CM".

A senior Crime Branch officer, however, said the notice would be served only to Kejriwal in person and that some preliminary questioning would also take place, so the chief minister has to be present in person.

Jasmine Shah, Kejriwal's aide, alleged in a post on X, "I asked a simple question to Delhi police officer standing in front of entrance of residence of CM @ArvindKejriwal: Under which law is he insisting to hand over a notice personally to CM? He had no answers. It is clear they are only here to do 'nautanki'."

A senior police officer countered, "If the CM asks for another

day to be present at his residence, we will come... and serve notice..."

Reacting to the video of the confrontation between the police team and AAP members in the vicinity of the CM's residence, AAP Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said the incident was embarrassing for the BJP. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva alleged: "To divert attention from the allegations of corruption against his government and the crumbling INDIA alliance, Kejriwal accused the BJP of breaking his MLAs and also claimed to have evidence of luring of MLAs."

I&B minister Anurag Thakur told reporters, "Arvind Kejriwal ji should provide evidence of this accusation as his own spokesperson claimed to possess audio evidence".

Thursday (February 1).

It was revealed during investigation that three years ago, accused Sandeep had sold his land for Rs 15 lakh and gave the money to Manoj to secure a job for the former's nephew, said police. Manoj, however, did not secure a job for Sandeep's nephew or return the amount. Two years ago, Manoj gave the possession of his car — a Hyundai i20 — to Sandeep, leaving a due of around Rs 8.50 lakh. He, however, failed to return the remaining money over the years.

On Thursday, the three accused kidnapped Manoj at gunpoint from Naurangpur's M3M Society, and took him to Sonipat. Police traced the trio and apprehended them, and also rescued the victim on Friday.

'FINANCIAL DISPUTE'

Man abducted at gunpoint rescued from Sonipat, 3 held



A survey on Chintels Paradiso in Gurgaon had revealed that it was 'unfit' for habitation. *Archive*

Rebuild or buyback:
Chintels asks Phase 2 tower owners if they want either option

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GURGAON, FEBRUARY 3

CHINTELS INDIA Private Limited, a Gurgaon-based developer, has asked flat owners of four Phase II towers if they want the same "settlement" options as those extended to the five towers — D, E, F, G and H — in Phase I declared "unsafe". These five Phase I towers were the first ones to be built under the project.

The flat owners were also asked to provide information on the same as the developer needs to immediately take steps to demolish the five towers of Phase I and start the process of obtaining the necessary approvals for rebuilding them. "We request you to kindly inform all the flat owners of Phase II that we could consider making the same offer as given to Phase I flat owners. However, this offer will depend on the response from the majority of the Phase II flat owners," said the email.

In February 2022, a portion of a six-storey apartment in Tower D of Phase I had collapsed on the first floor, killing two women and injuring one.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

Man charred to death after his car rams into pole, catches fire: Police

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GURGAON, FEBRUARY 3

A MAN died after his car rammed into an electric pole in Sohna on Friday night and caught fire, police said on Saturday, adding that even the vehicle was completely burnt in the blaze.

Police said the 32-year-old deceased — Mohit, who worked at a CCTV installation company — was heading to Sohna from his residence in Dholi around 10.30 pm on Friday, when he rammed his car into the electric pole, and the vehicle caught fire rapidly.

On being informed by villagers, the fire department reached the spot, but Mohit had

died even before he could be taken out of the car, said police.

He had "suffered a head injury" in the accident. "Police personnel and fire department officials reached the spot immediately, but could not save the victim who suffered a head injury and died on the spot. He had also suffered minor burns. He was taken to a nearby hospital, where the doctors declared him 'dead on arrival,'" said an officer. The body of the deceased has been sent for post-mortem, said police, adding they are yet to ascertain the reason behind the accident.

Based on a statement provided by Mohit's brother Ashish to the police, inquest proceedings were initiated under CrPC 174 (police to enquire and report on suicide, etc), said police.

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Laying the foundation stone of TWO NEW SCHOOLS of Delhi Government in Sector 41, Rohini

Artistic impression of proposed school building



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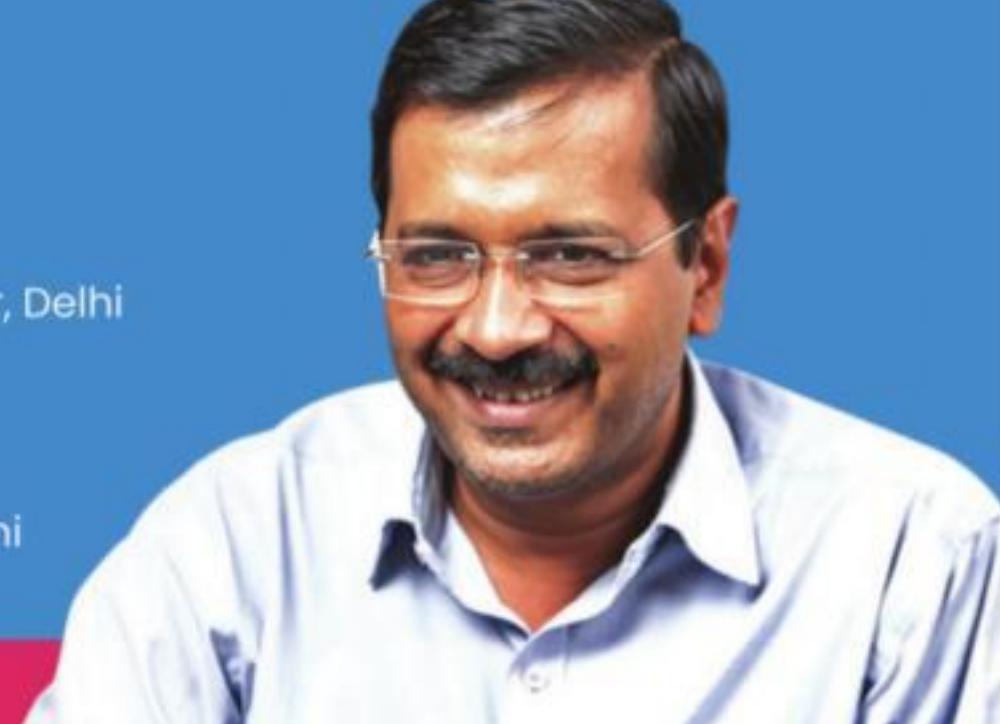
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**-Bhagwant Singh Mann,
Chief Minister, Punjab**



Department of Information and Public Relations, Punjab

Ramkumar recovers in time as India take 2-0 lead vs Pakistan

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
FEBRUARY 3

AISAM-UL-HAQ Qureshi, one of Pakistan's most accomplished tennis players, may now be 43 years old, and may not even be placed on the singles rankings of the ATP Tour, but he found himself seven points away from creating a huge upset. But India's Ramkumar Ramanathan clutched up on serve and return to save himself from the blushes and overturn a one-set deficit against Qureshi, prevailing 6-7(3), 7-6(4), 6-0 in the opening singles rubber of the Davis Cup World Group 1 playoff tie between India and Pakistan in Islamabad on Saturday.

N Sriram Balaji, a relatively inexperienced singles player in the past few years, followed up Ramkumar's win by defeating 44-year-old veteran Aqeel Khan 7-5, 6-3 to give India an imposing 2-0 lead in the tie heading into the second day.

India were the favourites on both experience and ranking - even without their two top-ranked players Sumit Nagal and Sasikumar Mukund - and it was Ramkumar's ability to hold his own on grass courts that was supposed to give the side the edge. However, Qureshi had Ramkumar on the ropes throughout the second set, after edging the tiebreaker in the first, keeping up with his opponent's big serving game. Qureshi was 40-15 up at 3-4 on Ramkumar's serve before the Indian served his way out of trouble. He never looked back.

Ramkumar, a serve-and-volleyer, had not been up to the mark on his first serve up until that point, making only 48% of them, but was still racing through his service games in the first set. It remained key for him as he was able to turn the match around by locking in on serve, continuing to keep his service games and points short, and allowing his veteran opponent to wear himself out as he took the second to another shootout.

He then broke Qureshi's game down with a couple of big winners to fashion a 4-0 lead in the tiebreaker and served it out to take the match to a deciding set. And as Qureshi wilted under the intensity and the pressure, suffering an apparent hamstring issue, the Indian would not lose another game as he handed out a bagel in the third set and ignited India's push to break down Pakistan's spirited challenge.

The Davis Cup team's tour of Pakistan remains one of the rare occasions that an Indian sports team has crossed the border over the past few years, as geopolitical tensions have risen between the two countries. In view of that, and India's multiple requests to move the tie to a neutral venue like it had been done in 2019, the ITF forced the Pakistan Tennis Federation's hand in keeping this tie a low-key affair, with only 500 odd spectators in attendance at the Islamabad Sports Complex on a gloomy day.

Next up in doubles, Yuki Bhambri and Saketh Myneni will take on Muzammil Murtaza and Barkat Ullah in the third rubber on Sunday, with which they could seal the tie for India with a win.



Ramkumar Ramanathan beat Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi 6-7(3), 7-6(4), 6-0. AP

Thailand Masters: Chaliha's run ends in semifinals

VINAYAK MOHANARANGAN
FEBRUARY 3

THOSE WHO follow Indian shuttlers closely on the BWF World Tour would be no strangers to the name Supanida Katethong. The Thailand shuttler is in the top 20 in the world but hasn't really won a whole lot to be considered truly elite. But she has been a thorn in the flesh for PV Sindhu in the past, defeating her at the India Open in 2022 and 2023. And there is also the fact that she is coached by Sindhu's former coach Kim Ji Hyun, who sat in the Indian's corner when she won the 2019 World Championships.

Both Kim and Supanida had plenty to

cheer about on Saturday at the Thailand Masters in Bangkok as they accounted for another Indian shuttler. Ashmita Chaliha's best ever run at a BWF World Tour event came to a close in the semifinals as she couldn't find the consistency against a fellow leftie in Supanida, bowing out 13-21, 12-21 in a 35-minute clash.

The 24-year-old would have fancied her chances against Supanida before the match as both are naturally aggressive in their shot-making. Ashmita's best bet would have been to test Supanida's patience by perhaps taking the initiative early. But playing in front of the home fans, the world No 17 was off to the better start, buoyed on by the ever-animated Kim.

The first seven points saw the two

shuttlers trade blows with Ashmita pulling off a few good rallies, but the Thai set the tone early with her crosscourt drops and slices that have often undone Sindhu too. A combination of errors from the world No 61 and Supanida's better control meant the opening game quickly became one-sided, at 15-5. Ashmita rallied at the backend of the first game, settling into a better rhythm and showing off her own attacking skills, winning five straight points at one stage, but that only helped her reduce the deficit to 13-21.

The second game too saw a similar storyline as Ashmita stayed in the contest till 6-7 but a run of six straight points either side of the interval for Supanida put the match beyond the Indian's reach.

ready for the nationals. But the rehabilitation phase was not easy. An injury is tough for a sportsperson and on top of this she also had to worry about the issues related to the wrestling federation. At times she had to travel from Bangalore (training facility) to Delhi to meet people and then go back. It wasn't easy but she is now ready to return to the mat," Rathore said.

In December, Vinesh returned her Arjuna and Khel Ratna Awards by leaving them on

"There is a bit of nervousness but also joy that I am returning to the mat. It has been a year-and-a-half since I competed on the mat. Whole of last year was hectic because of all the issues related to the wrestling federation. Tomorrow (Sunday), when I am on the mat, those things will seem distant for a short while."

VINESH PHOGAT
FORMER WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MEDALLIST

New Delhi's Kartavya Path after Brij Bhushan loyalist Sanjay Kumar Singh was elected as the president of the Wrestling Federation of India. Two other prominent faces of the protest Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia too took big decisions. Sakshi retired from the sport in protest, while Bajrang returned his Padma Shri award. Vinesh says Sakshi and Bajrang took the bulk of the responsibility in dealing with WFI matters when she was on the sidelines.

"I was focussed on following the guidelines the doctors gave me during rehabilitation. Whatever was happening (WFI related) Bajrang and Sakshi took the lead and I took a backseat. We will continue the fight against injustice but the competition for athletes should not stop. I hope all the issues in wrestling are sorted out once-and-for-all only then can the path for wrestlers become clear."

Learning from Olympic medallists, Vishnu aims an ambitious top-10 finish at Paris Games

NITIN SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 3

LAST WEDNESDAY, sailor 24-year-old Vishnu Saravanan finished 26th in the men's ILCA-7 World Championships to earn the quota place for the Paris Olympics. It was the second successive Olympics qualification for the Indian Army subedar who spent some time listening to 2012 silver medalist and two-time world champion 33-year-old Pavlos Kontides of Cyprus at the Adelaide Sailing Club.

With Kontides being a veteran of four Olympics and competing in his fifth Games in Paris, Vishnu was all ears for the Cyprus sailor, post the finish.

"It's definitely nice to be able to qualify again for the Olympics. It has to be the first goal in the Olympic cycle and I am glad to achieve that in Adelaide. Pavlos Kontides has been a legend in the sailing world and during the regatta the whole week, he was lined up next to me. And to hear about his experience of competing in multiple Olympics and to win a medal is perhaps the biggest motivation for me," says Vishnu while speaking with *The Indian Express*.



VISHNU SARAVANAN. PTI

For someone, who spent his childhood watching his father Ramachandran Saravanan windsurf at the Army Yachting Node in Mumbai, Vishnu's tryst with a sailboat started at the age of nine. The youngster often learnt his lessons on the Optimist, a light sail having hull weight of 35 Kg as compared to ILCA-7's hull weight of 58.9 Kg.

Four appearances in world and Asian championships in the light sail dinghy were followed by the youngster making his debut in the ILCA-7 class in 2017. It was a historic bronze in the Laser U-21 World Championship in Croatia in 2018, which put the young Indian on the sailing world map. "My father put a lot of emphasis on the need for physical strength right from my younger days. When I had shifted to Malta to train under Olympian Alexandre Denisiuc of Moldova in 2018, I got to meet five-time Olympic champion Robert Scheidt of Brazil and Kontides for the first time and they too would lay emphasis on the physical strength first apart from the right technique. As they say in the sailing world, 'You need legs of steel first,'" remembers Vishnu.

While he had qualified for Tokyo Olympics five months prior to the Games, the six feet six inches tall sailor finished a

26th spot among 152.

In comparison, Tokyo Olympics gold medalist Mattew Wearen of Australia won the title with a net score of 24 points with points in ascending order for the next finishers. Vishnu's best finish was a second-place finish in his fourth race.

The Indian has been to Marseille Marina, the venue for the sailing events for the Paris Olympics, during last year's test event. With the Marseille coast having less of tides or current, Vishnu believes the challenge will be to be tactically and strategically right. "At Paris, the sea state is much different than in Tokyo. The sea is much smoother and one relies more on technique and steering the dinghy better. As a sailor, I learn every day. Sometimes, I see YouTube videos of sailors like double Olympics silver medallist Tonci Stipanovic of Croatia and Kontides on how to position the body on the boat and whether to be smooth or rough on the steering apart from a perfect mainsail trimming technique," says Vishnu.

Just before the conversation ends, the Indian is quick to add, "I too want to win an Olympic medal some day. To be realistic, a top-ten finish in Paris is a target for me."

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On a comeback trail

After losing more than a year to protests and injury, Vinesh Phogat set to return at Wrestling Nationals

NIHAL KOSHIE
JAIPUR, FEBRUARY 3

UNDER THE mild winter sun, Vinesh Phogat stepped onto the wrestling mat in the cordoned off practice area adjacent to the main venue of the Senior National Wrestling Championships at the Railway Stadium in Jaipur. After a series of stretching routines and warm up drills, she began grappling. A few minutes earlier, she was in the VIP area exchanging pleasantries with officials, coaches and posing for selfies and group photographs. Her face lit up on seeing the qualification rounds of the Greco Roman wrestlers. "This looks like a proper nationals is taking place, doesn't it? It is a relief to see that wrestlers are back on the mat in an Olympic year," she said.

Vinesh has butterflies in her stomach but is relieved to return to competition after nearly a year-and-a-half. On Sunday, the 29-year-old world championship medalist will feature in the 55kg category.

One of the prominent faces of the protest against former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who faces sexual harassment charges, Vinesh had spent more time on the streets of Jantar Mantar than at training centres. An untimely knee injury also made matters worse and scuppered her Asian Games plans.

In August, she injured her left knee in training and had to undergo surgery. Antim Phangal, the reserve wrestler, took the flight to Hangzhou and returned with a bronze medal. Antim had also bagged an Olympic quota in the 53kg. With the Summer Games in August, Vinesh's return will be keenly followed.

"There is a bit of nervousness but also joy that I am returning to the mat. It has been a year-and-a-half since I competed on the mat. Whole of last year was hectic because of all the issues related to the wrestling federation. Tomorrow (Sunday), when I am on the mat, those things will seem distant for a short while," Vinesh said on Saturday.

Vinesh will participate in the non-Olympic 55kg category because she didn't want to drastically cut weight and is finding her feet after a long break. "For more than a year, I have not participated in competitions and then I had surgery. I did not want to cut too much weight. The 55kg was the best option for me at these nationals. After this, I am aware I have to participate in 53 kg for world events," Vinesh said.

The road ahead will be tough for Vinesh. The Olympic selection policy of the Indian Olympic Association-appointed ad-hoc committee, which runs the sport in the country, mandates trials for Paris 2024. Vinesh will have to compete in the two-stage trials, where she will have to take on



Vinesh Phogat trains in the practice area at the venue of the senior wrestling nationals in Jaipur on the eve of her bout. Express

Factionalism leaves wrestlers in a tizzy

Jaipur: Factionalism in state units of wrestling has made life difficult for wrestlers. Take the case of Rajasthan. One trial was held in Bharatpur for the suspended WFI's Pune Nationals held earlier this week, while a second trial at Kota was conducted by another faction for the nationals conducted by the ad-hoc committee mandated to conduct national wrestling championships.

Haryana Amateur Wrestling Association (HAWA) too held two separate trials for the two nationals. Wrestlers who participated in the trials called by HAWA president Rohtash Singh have been fielded in Jaipur. "These nationals in Jaipur is recognised by the sports ministry. The top wrestlers from Haryana are participating here. Those creating confusion among wrestlers should stop doing so. Pune Nationals has no validity," Singh said.

NIHAL KOSHIE

ready for the nationals. But the rehabilitation phase was not easy. An injury is tough for a sportsperson and on top of this she also had to worry about the issues related to the wrestling federation. At times she had to travel from Bangalore (training facility) to Delhi to meet people and then go back. It wasn't easy but she is now ready to return to the mat," Rathore said.

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BRIEFLY

India squander lead to lose to China

Bhubaneswar: Playing their first match after failing to qualify for the Paris Olympics, the Indian women's hockey team suffered a 2-1 loss to China in their opening match of the FIH Pro League. While Vandana Katariya (15') scored the first goal of the game for India at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Wen Dan (40') and Bingfeng Gu (52') were on target for Asian Games gold medalists China, who completed a comeback victory. India will next play the Netherlands on Sunday. ENS

Mumbai Open: Zeel, Shravalli post upsets

Mumbai: Shravalli Bhamidipaty, making her WTA Tour debut, showed remarkable confidence to knock out Valentini Grammatikopoulou of Greece in straight sets in a first-round qualifying match in the Mumbai Open here on Saturday. Wild-card entrant Zeel Desai too showed poise in ample measure to brush aside the challenge of another Greek player Sappho Sakellaridi, winning her first-round qualifying match in straight sets. The 22-year-old Shravalli caused the biggest upset of the day, defeating the Greek player, ranked 117th in the world and seeded second in the qualifying round, 6-3, 6-2 in the WTA 125K event. PTI

ISL: Kolkata derby ends in a 2-2 draw

Kolkata: Mohun Bagan Super Giant drew 2-2 with East Bengal FC as the first Kolkata Derby of the 10th season of the Indian Super League (ISL) presented an all-time classic at the Salt Lake Stadium here on Saturday night. Mohun Bagan Super Giant and East Bengal FC will face Hyderabad FC and NorthEast United FC for their respective next fixtures on February 10. In another match, Punjab FC scored three past Bengaluru FC to secure a comfortable 3-1 win to move to ninth position in the table. PTI

Iran stun Japan 2-1 in Asian Cup QF

Al Rayyan: Alireza Jahanbakhsh's last-minute penalty gave Iran a 2-1 win over Japan on Saturday and a place in the Asian Cup semi-finals for just the second time since 2004. Jahanbakhsh kept his cool in the 96th minute to keep Iran on course for a first title since 1976 and fourth overall. Ko Itakura had been whistled for the foul and Jahanbakhsh gave goalkeeper Zion Suzuki no chance. AP

eye



ARTS ETC, PAGE 2

'Art is on an upswing'

Kiran Nadar, who was recently awarded the Padma Shri, on setting a record for Indian art and showing MF Husain at Venice in April

BOOKS

- Review of Raj Kamal Jha's *The Patient in Bed Number 12*
- Review of Sohini Chattopadhyay's *The Day I Became a Runner*



WHO STOLE MY BUTTER CHICKEN?

Rinku Ghosh



THE MELODIC hum of the evening *azaaan* at Jama Masjid wafts into the courtyard of Moti Mahal restaurant at Daryaganj. The silver-haired Vinod Chadha raises his hands in prayer, looking up at the wall that has a quote from the Quran alongside photos of Shiva. "I always say a small prayer when I hear the *azaaan*, ever since I have known this place," says the 72-year-old legacy keeper of one of Delhi's first Punjabi restaurants as he asks his chef to stir up the charcoal in the huge clay oven. The jaded chandeliers from a time gone by flicker back to life as he waits to give a final, ritualistic stir to what has become our greatest comfort food, a reason to eat out and our best gastronomic export — the butter chicken.

The butter chicken and the dal makhni that have brewed in these clay ovens of Moti Mahal for 76 years are now at the centre of a lawsuit between descendants of the restaurant's original business partners. Little would Chadha, who bought the restaurant from them in 1992, have known that he would be the outsider left to answer a crucial question — who invented the butter chicken and dal makhni? As one of the gatekeepers of Delhi's culinary history, Chadha has kept the place as it used to be, a neatly preserved time capsule of the 1950s that has hosted late US President Richard Nixon, India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Nikita Khrushchev, Bollywood stars from Raj Kapoor to Amitabh Bachchan, and now Michelin chefs like Gordon Ramsay besides G20 delegates.

Walking past huge vats of tomato gravy, he says, "We have slow-cooked ripe tomatoes, simmered them over the embers for 36 hours with spices, pulped and sieved them through a giant mesh strainer, then reduced them over a fire to the consistency we want." Though he doesn't mention the composition or the ratio of spices, the smooth gravy holds hints of coriander, ginger, garlic and turmeric but vouches it is as close to the original as can be.

The tandoori chicken or the skewers is lusciously red, its marinade smoked and charred

butter chicken here and became familiar with it. So when there was a fallout between Jaggi and Gujral after Mago's death, Rajkumar asked me to buy it out, given my experience in working at Gaylord in CP and the Taj before that. I bought the rental rights to this place in 1991 and whatever was left of the establishment. My butter chicken recipe is informed by my memory and smells of the old kitchen as there was no cookbook, nor staff," he says.

Now both Gujral's and Jaggi's grandsons have set up their own restaurant chains and are staking ancestral rights as inventors of the two best-selling dishes. Long after the original Moti Mahal at Daryaganj was sold to Chadha, in 2003, Kundan Lal Gujral's grandson, Monish Gujral, decided to draw on family tradition and create a new brand, the Moti Mahal Delux, a restaurant chain with 150 franchises in India and abroad. Both Chadha and Monish Gujral co-existed without conflict, each acknowledging — in bold lettering at their entryways — Kundan Lal Gujral as the inventor of their best-selling dishes, the butter chicken and dal makhni.

Until Kundan Lal Jaggi's grandson, Raghav Jaggi, arrived on the scene. He decided to revive the old recipes of Moti Mahal through a restaurant chain called Daryaganj that he set up with chef and restaurateur Amit Bagga. Since Kundan Lal Jaggi had partnered with Gujral to open Moti Mahal in 1947, the owners of Daryaganj claimed they also had the right to its culinary heritage. They then trademarked themselves as the "inventors of butter chicken and dal makhni" and featured in the OTT show *Shark Tank* based on that plank.

Jaggi contests this, saying the dish was invented when his grandfather set up the first Moti Mahal in Peshawar in 1927, which he sold during Partition and revived in Delhi. "There are customers from that era who have been recorded by the media of its time and testify to him preparing the tandoori chicken and the gravy to go with it. So this is infringement of a legacy and an unfair trade practice. Even ITC Hotels, while marketing Dal Buhkara, declared that it was inspired by the original dal makhni of my grandfather; I do not have problems with people setting up restaurants and doing inspired dishes but give credit where it is due. He is the OG. Besides, Kundan Lal Jaggi and Thakur Das Mago.

"Jaggi's son Rajkumar Jaggi was my batchmate at the hotel management institute we went to. That's how I was exposed to the

butter chicken — with its tangy tomatoes and in all its velvety fullness — is one of India's best gastronomic exports and, for many, a reason to eat out. The dish now lands in the soup of its own making — over the seemingly unappetising question of who invented it



LEGACY KEEPERS

(Clockwise from top) The butter chicken prepared by chefs at Daryaganj, DLF Mall of India, Noida; Monish Gujral of Moti Mahal Delux, Raghav Jaggi and Amit Bagga of Daryaganj; Vinod Chadha of Moti Mahal, Daryaganj and Kundan Lal Gujral

Jaggi became an investor-partner only after my grandfather opened the Daryaganj outlet," says Gujral, who is seeking about Rs 2 crore in damages and an injunction on Daryaganj using the "inventor" tag.

"Both butter chicken and dal makhni were created at the old Moti Mahal in Daryaganj. There are Kundan Lal Jaggi's own accounts and photos with VIP guests and mentions of how he served them. As a partner, he owned these recipes too," counters Bagga, who has based his chain's legitimacy on the basis of a partnership document of 1949.

The story of a bestseller

Any food usually has plebeian origins but if you knew the inventor or not?

their oral storytelling builds a romance. Butter chicken emerged as a convenience food, an idea that Kundan Lal Gujral toyed with when he apprenticed at an eatery in Peshawar in the early 1900s and its owner asked for a light meal diluted with gravy. Years later, when he set up his own restaurant with Rs 12,000 and named it Moti Mahal (palace of pearls), he refined the dish as part of the menu.

Says Monish Gujral, "Without refrigeration, the leftover chicken roasts would shrivel up if they weren't rehydrated. The brown gravy with onions and spices was pungent and killed the chicken's taste and its smoky aroma. Tomatoes are tangy, not overpowering, earthy and can juice up the chicken. And to give it a rich finish, he used our home-made butter and malai. And the butter chicken was born." He also mentions how Gujral thought of the dal makhni by chance when the tomato gravy of a curry dribbled into the regular dal on his plate. "He liked the flavour so much that he added butter and made it look like a new creation for his customers," he adds.

In one of his interviews to *The Indian Express* in 1988, Gujral details how his Muslim friends helped him flee Peshawar, requesting the pilot of a Delhi-bound plane to let his family sit on the floor as seats were full. He claimed he made his first tandoor at his Moti Mahal restaurant in Daryaganj, building an above-ground version that would work in a restaurant kitchen. He mentioned how Khrushchev had told him that his visit to India was for "Taj Mahal and Moti Mahal", how he was the official caterer during the signing of the Shimla Agreement, how his food was always about "chapati and chicken" and how Moti Mahal was "his club and social life" as it allowed him to interact with people.

Bagga's version of this story — somewhat less documented — has Jaggi as the hero, creating butter chicken "by chance" one night when a group of hungry guests showed up and he had to rustle up something filling with leftover tandoori chicken. "Jaggi even gave a twist to the regular maa ki dal at the request of one of the guests he was attending to. He decided to slow cook the dal on the tandoor with tomatoes, fresh white butter and his choice of herbs and spices, simmering it overnight and we got the wholesome and creamy dal makhni," he says.

Can we ever claim a recipe?

Oral historian Sohail Hashmi, an authority on Old Delhi, says food history is much like spinning a yarn based on hearsay and some local myth-making. "One story has it that Gujral was left with a cancelled order of tandoori chicken because of a death in the family of the customer and so he tossed pieces in tomato puree with spices, cream and butter to preserve them. The customers liked it so much that he made it a regular dish on his menu," says Hashmi. Moti Mahal in Daryaganj soon became a restaurant that catered to the well-heeled. "There were European restaurants, eateries for migrant labour and some shops selling Mughlai dishes. But Moti Mahal, which opened its courtyard to culture soirees, with live acts by India's first woman qawwali, Shakila Bano Bhopali, was the first restaurant that kept the North West Frontier cuisine alive. Eating out became an experience in an independent capital," adds Hashmi.

The search for an original recipe, especially one that has existed since the 1930s, and has a million reinterpretations around the world and in every home, is a bit of a wild goose chase. "Everything is according to the cook's *andaz* and that can't be quantified," says Hashmi. And without a written recipe, it certainly cannot be patented. "If a consumer can easily identify the ingredients of your product and can derive a process, then a patent is a far cry. But it is possible to trademark your own food item if you intend to use it for branding," says IPR lawyer Safir Anand.

Although a food trademark does not prevent competitors from using the recipe, it does prevent them from marketing it and calling it by its given name. "Besides, an inventor tag is all about a factual determination of evidence. There is of course a partnership document," says Anand. But the rest of it is purely circumstantial as both parties rely on testimonials from guests who can link the brand to the dish they consumed years ago. Meanwhile, both dishes have evolved enough for the three outlets to have loyalists of all ages. The Daryaganj Moti Mahal is a haunt of expats and foreigners who find the food easy, light and non-greasy. Chadha even uses milk instead of cream in his dal makhni. Monish Gujral's Moti Mahal Delux chain has a cult following while Daryaganj's Bagga and Jaggi have packaged tradition with modernity, what with their kulfis coming with portable anti-drip trays.

Chadha says that when he bought Moti Mahal, he didn't ask Kundal Lal Gujral or Kundan Lal Jaggi for recipes. He gently throws his hat in the ring, saying, "By the 1990s, restaurateurs had begun replication. I had a memory of the original but tweaked it for the contemporary palate. In that sense, I, too, am an inventor of my kind of butter chicken."

In the end, all that matters is the velvety fullness of the chicken and dal, one that always leaves a lasting taste that's hard to forget and makes a memory. Does it really matter then if you knew the inventor or not?

DOWN IN JUNGLELAND

RANJIT LAL

Author, environmentalist and bird watcher



STILL WATERS

Carambolim Lake was once a man-made water storage tank to irrigate paddy fields, a purpose it still serves today

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

An Avian Caravan

From grinning white-throated kingfishers to paradise flycatchers, the Carambolim lake is a spot of calm

LOATED VERY near Old Goa, this placid blue lake was reputed to attract large flocks of migratory waterfowl every winter, so a visit was in order. Apparently, it started life as a man-made water storage tank, way back at the times of the Kadambas who ruled Goa from the 10th to 14th century CE, to irrigate paddy fields, a purpose it still serves. Entirely rain-fed, its maximum depth is six metres, (normally between 1.5 to 3 metres) and it plays host to some 35,000 waterfowls every winter. (The maximum tally was 75,000 birds in 1987-88, when the rains failed in most of the country except Goa.)

Alas, all of which were MIA (missing in action) on the morning we visited the place. The lake is around 40 hectares and at the Western edge the Konkan railway nudges its shores and you can hear the announcements made at the Karmali railway station over the water, as trains sporadically arrive. As we thread our way down to the edge via a nature trail, a

um... ducking, there were other birds to occupy our attention. Grinning white-throated kingfishers have bagged nearly every stalk sticking out of the water, but then just ahead of us on one such stalk, blue-tailed bee-eaters give us a demo of peak-eye coordination. Snazzily masked, they have burnished chestnut throats, olive green bodies and turquoise tails out of which their tell-tale pin feathers stick out like antennae. They cock their heads this way and that, their eyes bright, then are off, in twisting turning in topsy-turvy flight and within seconds are back on their perches with something juicy in their beaks. Just think of the instant and complex computations their brains must make to achieve the manoeuvre: insects fly like they've had six pegs too many, and to anticipate where one will be when you intercept it... well, try catching flies with a pair of tweezers or chopsticks and you'll get the idea.

There are viewpoints and watchtowers, too, along the banks, under one of which we settle to watch our bee-eaters. Here, the Forest Department keeps a register of visitors (there is no fee), the majority are locals, but there are British, European and Australian visitors, too. They have the semi-

blance of a rescue centre here and in one cage, an injured Brahminy kite sits huddled, hopefully recovering from whatever ails it.

We walk down the forest trail, and a movement in the canopy catches our eye. A pair of sleek black birds seemingly being followed by two black paddles, which we realise they are attached to - racket-tailed drongos. But they have competition. A paradise flycatcher, in white suit and tails, twisting and turning like a dervish among the leaves, its silky ribbon-like tail sketching the double helix and whatnot amid all those leaves.

Only the gents have the tail ribbons:

a case of sexual selection scoring over natural selection - really, girls can be so demanding sometimes! Normally in cases like this, the showy male is excused from parenting duties because he'd attract unwanted attention and can go philandering, but alas, gentlemen paradise flycatchers are not granted such liberties.

So, no waterfowl hordes perhaps but serenity and calmness in spades on the banks of Carambolim Lake.

While the ducks were obviously,

Goa tourism mentions around 92 bird species at the Lake while various birders mark it at 297

calmness and quietness envelopes us. The canopy above is broad-leaved and shady, the lake pristine, fringed with water hyacinth. There was another invasive floating weed here, going by the name *Salvinia molesta* aka Giant *Salvinia*, whose thick waterproof leaves formed a choking mat that prevented other water plants from photosynthesising. It had to be removed with the help of machinery, though all of it could not be removed. It's not an entirely evil plant because it also sucks up pollutants from the water and is being used for research in cancer: extracts from *Salvinia* can apparently destroy cancer cells without harming healthy ones.

But there we are scanning the lake for 35,000 pintail, shoveler, whistling teal, etc. and come up with zilch. Birding scores (such a favourite pastime of birders) range from 92 species (17 migratory) mentioned by Goa tourism to a whopping 297 species ticked off by various birders over the years, on eBird, an online database of bird observations.

While the ducks were obviously,



COURTESY: KIRAN NADAR MUSEUM OF ART

'In art, investment can't be only goal'

Kiran Nadar, who was recently awarded the Padma Shri, on setting a record for Indian art with Amrita Sher-Gil's *The Story Teller* and showing MF Husain at Venice this year

Vandana Kalra

ONE of India's foremost art collectors and chairperson of the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA), India's first private museum of modern and contemporary art, Kiran Nadar, 72, owns some of the most spectacular works, including SH Raza's *Saurashtra* and FN Souza's *Birth*. Wife of industrialist Shiv Nadar, she has supported several landmark exhibitions at international institutions and is now set to open a new museum and culture centre in Delhi in 2026. Edited excerpts from an interview:

What prompted you to start collecting art? Your mother was also interested in art, I believe.

My mother did her masters in microbiology and we were posted in Chandigarh when she met artist Balraj Khanna who got her interested in art. She started painting and also acquired some works but she wasn't a major collector. I got interested in buying art when I was building a home. One of the earliest works I bought was a Rameshwar Broota monochromatic male nude. We (she and Shiv Nadar) also bought two MF Husain works — *Mother Teresa* and *Mahabharata*, the latter is still in my house. We also got a Manjot Bawa.

How did the museum start in 2010?

By that time I had more artworks than I had space. Many of them began going into storage and I felt it was more meaningful to let people see the collection. I began the museum with a collection of 500 works and today I have 13,000-odd works. Initially, the collection was largely concentrated on the Progressive Artists' but now I have many younger artists as well as major contemporaries. I also have miniatures. I have a deep fondness for Raja Ravi Varma, so there is a huge collection of his work. It is an encyclopedic collection now and I think I have man-



RICHARD BARTHOLOMEW/KNMA

aged to fill the gaps that once existed. At one stage, I would collect a little more randomly but now I am selective. I don't go after every work of every artist.

Have you ever sold a work?

I need to, but so far I haven't had the heart. A lot of collectors do sell, but I haven't sold a single work.

You buy a lot at auctions. Do you regret losing any bid? Also, you prefer phone bidding to being physically present in the auction room.

When you are in the room, you are conspicuous. Everyone knows it is you who is bidding; they might come to know later but being in that room can also be very stressful.

There have been works that I have missed at auctions but strange things have happened to me and many of them have somehow come to me later. For instance, I had bid for MF Husain's *Battle for Ganga and Jamuna* at an auction but lost as an underbidder. Much later, when the government was selling Nirav Modi's art collection, I realised that the work was there and I acquired it.

You set a record for Indian art with your purchase of Amrita Sher-Gil's *The Story*

CULTURAL MOSAIC

(Top) Art collector and chairperson of KNMA, Kiran Nadar, KNMA will present 'The Rooted Nomad', the first immersive exhibition on MF Husain in Venice, to coincide with the Biennale in April

Teller for Rs 61.8 crore. Did you have a figure in mind when you started bidding?

I had set a limit for myself which was lower, but being at an auction can be addictive and this was a major work. I have a good collection of Amrita, but I always regretted missing a particular work that was offered to me for Rs 1.70 crore around 2003. I had taken the advice of someone who said it was too much and I, personally, was a bit scared as I had never paid more than a crore for an artwork till then. So I let it go and the same work was later auctioned for Rs 6 crore. Missing that work pinched me and when I saw *The Story Teller* it was of a similar genre and I wanted it to be part of the collection.

Do you still maintain caution, choosing not to exhibit works that might be considered explicit. Some years ago, you refrained from including FN Souza's *Rape* in an exhibition for the same reason.

We are much more open today than we were five-six years ago, but some paintings I still wouldn't show. I get a little nervous and don't know if it would be a good idea to put banners like 'Do not Enter'. We have shown some Souza works that have been explicit, but *Rape* I still might not. That would be the case with some other works as well.

There were conflicting views over your involvement with the exhibition "Jana Shakti: A Collective Power" at National Gallery of Modern Art, that commemorated 100 episodes of PM Modi's radio show *Maan Ki Baat*. Any comments?

I was simply involved with the project in an advisory capacity.

KNMA is also exhibiting in Venice this year, coinciding with the Biennale.

We will be showing MF Husain. It will be at Magazzini del Sale in Dorsoduro. The exhibition is curated from the KNMA collection and includes his wooden toys and works such as *Yatra*. We also have an immersive exhibition on him.

One of the reasons you opened your museum at a mall in Delhi is because you thought it would be less intimidating for people to enter. At your stand-alone museum, do you think people will engage more with art?

I hope so. The art and culture centre is on a 100,000-square-metre site, with about 170,000-sq ft exhibition space, which is about the size of MOMA. It would allow us to show our permanent collection, curated exhibitions from the collection and also borg shows.

Where does Indian art stand now? Have the price of modernists peaked?

Art is on an upswing but we are still far away in terms of prices. After the 2007 crash, prices of Indian art also came down. They have certainly not peaked, as is evident with every auction where prices are going higher.

Many youngsters are now beginning to collect art as an investment. What would be your advice to them?

People should like what they are buying and investment should not be the immediate goal. One can hope it goes up, but that can't be a priority.

'Change is disquieting for those in positions of power'

The writer and diplomat on her debut novel, *Swallowing the Sun*, why young people should be politically engaged and the theatre that influenced her prose

Udbhav Seth

SET DURING the freedom movement, Lakshmi Puri's *Swallowing the Sun* (Rs 899, Aleph) is about the encounter of India's national story with unknown individuals, the constant tussle between revolution and reform, encapsulated in the gaze of Malati, a girl from a Maharashtrian village who grows up to know the cost at which independence – for herself and her country – comes. We speak to Puri on how the novel came about. Edited excerpts:

What inspired the novel?

This novel wanted to be written for years, if not decades. I was born to parents who were 45 years old when I was born, so they belonged to a much older generation. I was a post-Independence child. And they belonged to the British Raj period and had contributed their might to India's Independence struggle.

Their world and stories really fascinated me. I wanted to tell an epic story no one had told before, inspired by my parents' odyssey. They were extraordinary people and broke

so many boundaries as a generation. They dealt with the dilemma of how the Western liberal values they admired were not adopted by the British in India, and could be used to gain independence. Simultaneously, they had a fierce desire to reclaim their civilisational heritage and sense of the self. I wanted to write about what freedom and nation-building meant. I was in the United Nations and, within it, led a global organisation on women's empowerment. My passion and advocacy for the feminist cause resonates through the novel.

Did you know the story from the beginning or did it develop surprisingly?

I knew the kernel of three characters – Malati, Guru and Baba – and the rest grew around them like the silken threads of a cocoon. Everyone has a right to and potential for self-realisation, and it's up to us how we negotiate and eventually break the boundaries drawn for us.

How do your individual characters affect the freedom movement?

Young people even today know that



REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

(Above) Lakshmi Puri; the book cover

change happens in many ways, one of which is reform. Revolution doesn't happen out of nothing. I wanted to capture that snowballing effect with the freedom struggle as a transformational moment. Though my characters aren't Annie Besant, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, or BR Ambedkar, they were an integral part of achieving independence. It's a call to young people today.

The story is partly set among the quiet masses of the British Raj. Political scientists comment on how this sense of a "cultural insult" was used by freedom fighters – many of whom feature in the novel – to turn the tide against the Empire. Have you seen this kind of discourse change in Indian politics over the years?

Of course, it has changed. It had already begun to change in the post-Independence era I was born in. It has evolved for 75 years and we are in a different era altogether, an era of renewed self-confidence and assertion of our identity, while reclaiming our civilisational heritage and rightful place in the world.

Why did you want to explore theatre as resistance?

It's a very powerful medium. As a child, I was exposed to vibrant Marathi theatre. In Delhi I had met my father's friend Mama Warerkar, also a Rajya Sabha MP, whose iconoclastic plays like *Bhumikanya Sita* had deeply moved me. His revolutionary drama *Satte Che Gulam* (Enslavement of Power) is

used in the play to illuminate nationalistic and social justice themes. I thought theatre could be Guru and Malati's first act of patriotism, from which they get the zeal to plunge into the frenzy of *satyagraha*. It also encapsulates their love for each other and the country.

There is also opposition to intercaste, intergender and interclass mingling, in spaces which are fairly educated. Yet there is this hypocrisy.

Because it seems to be a perennial conundrum, a strain between the comfort of the same place and change. Change is ever disquieting for those in positions of power and complacency. Look at a feudal character like Malak. He is educated and educates his own daughter. But then, a patriarchal mindset somehow returns. When she leaves her husband, it's an earth-shattering moment for him. Perhaps he regrets even giving her the freedom he did. You see these tensions not just in those days, but today as well.

Should there be more introspection among educated classes about the positions they advocate? And why is it important to recall these contestations of the past?

A young person asked me, "Why should we be so interested in the independence movement after being so removed from it?" My answer is, to never forget and value what you have. The remembrance transforms you and makes you more self-aware.

MAROONED AT HOME

Reverie to nightmare, realism to fable, they all come together in Raj Kamal Jha's dazzling kaleidoscope of a novel that refracts the dark of a shattered society — as it looks for its light



COMMON GROUND

The novel is innovatively structured as a montage of stories connected both by continuity and by rupture even as it explores varied social milieu and emotional scenarios

Ranjit Hoskote

THE COVID-19 pandemic and its attendant cycle of lockdowns will be remembered as a global crisis of public health. We must remember this period, also, as one during which states everywhere took advantage of the crisis to strengthen their apparatus of surveillance and their cynically selective pattern of distributing scarce, crucial resources as oxygen, and to put in place far-reaching measures designed to curtail their citizens' power to organise, protest and resist. The citizen was reduced to bewilderment, helplessness, abjection and captivity. No one needed prisons, since hospitals served perfectly well. In the name of "isolation", Covid patients were incarcerated, for their own good and the good of their fellow citizens, of course — a justification that can be infinitely extended beyond its Covid-era application to cover a range of situations.

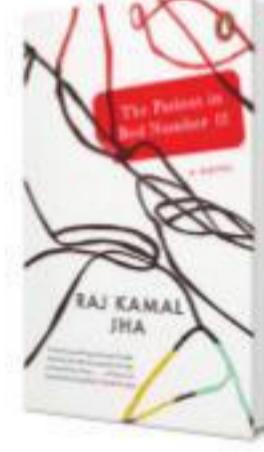
Marooned in our own homes, as we sat in our living rooms, or paced our terraces and gardens, attitudes of class asymmetry hardened. Strategies of identifying, stigmatising and exiling the Other were weaponised. We saw how elites, relatively cushioned against chaos by affluence, could abandon large numbers of subaltern workers in metropolitan India to their fate, condemning them to walk hundreds of miles home to their villages, with many dying along the way. Instead of strengthening their critical resolve, more and more citizens renounced their right to call the government to account, convincing themselves, against all the evidence, that officialdom knew best.

So preoccupied were we all in simply try-

ing to survive that we missed the import of remote processes of decision-making. The chambers of Parliament, the school room, the office conference room, and the project site were all equalised on Zoom. The absence of physical encounter allowed for a great many fine-print shifts towards opacity, at first imperceptible and now normalised, to be made in the way the affairs of countries and corporations are conducted. Emerging from the pandemic, all of us seem to have suffered some lapses of memory, a telescoping of time so that long-ago events appear vividly closer, while more recent events have receded into mist.

All these facets of our shared, universal experience of the years between 2019 and 2023 inform Raj Kamal Jha's bleak and visionary novel, *The Patient in Bed Number 12*. A deeply pensive, melancholic, superbly Sebaldian take on the grim period through which the human species passed during the pandemic, *The Patient...* is innovatively structured as a montage of stories connected both by continuity and by rupture. Through the montage runs a largely imagined or reconstructed epistolary exchange between protagonists sharply divided by their choices, yet seeking common ground. Speaking in multiple voices — and sometimes making surprising leaps, as when a video script suddenly communicates itself as a spare, stripped-down poem — *The Patient...* explores varied social milieu and emotional scenarios.

The voice at the shifting, unstable centre of this kaleidoscope of a novel is a retired languages professor who is dying, confined to the ICU with its paraphernalia of saline drips, tubes, monitors and ventilators. He is estranged from his daughter, Nisha — her name means "night" — who, as we guess from her



The Patient in Bed Number 12
BY RAJ KAMAL JHA
Penguin Hamish Hamilton
272 pages
₹415

full name, Nisha Kumar Rehman, has married a Muslim, a life choice that did not receive paternal approval. There lies the professor, immobilised by the medication and machinery that are keeping him alive, attempting to reach out to his daughter across the gulf of estrangement, and to the granddaughter he has never met; his one wager on continuity. All he knows of this child is a glimpse of her face in a video. He is kept going by the robust encouragement of the good-natured Sister Shiny, the nurse who reminds him of the need to restore himself to a fullness of life, to remain alive for his daughter.

Other people and their stories get drawn into the narrative, mired in their predicaments yet holding on to some aspect of what was lost or what is wished for. Here, we make the acquaintance of a woman who runs an ice-cream store at a mall, in the business of bringing sweetness and delight to others, but desperately lonely herself. We come upon a security guard at the mall, who was once a teacher of mathematics in a village. There is the father who, with his job snatched away by the circumstances of the Covidocene, must prepare to walk home to his distant village with his son. And there is the kind-hearted ambulance attendant who does not allow the iron of bitterness to enter and corrode his soul.

Jha transits without warning from empirical description to reverie or nightmare, from realism to fable. Alongside the guards and attendants, we meet the children who toil in the *raat ka karkhana*, the "night factory" — shades of Dickens, working as a boy at a black-factory to pay off his father's debts. They fill night into jars that will be shipped out by day to destinations all over the planet. And meanwhile, Our Good Doctor, an avuncular figure who is part Santa Claus and part Josef

Mengele, flits through the ward and the world on his nocturnal mission, managing our dreams as we sleep, reformatting our worldviews by excising anti-national thoughts.

Jha's fabulosity does not offer an alternative to the anguished real, but rather, refracts it to a pitch of weapon-grade irony. Strikingly, he seems to belong, not to an Anglophone tradition, but to a Central European tradition of writers long attuned to dealing with crushing existential, psychic, political and cultural pressures: Kafka, Joseph Roth, Milan Kundera, Bohumil Hrabal and WG Sebald. What Jha builds up, skilfully, is a composite, if necessarily fragmented, portrait of a society shattered both by the crisis and by the official attempts to deal with the crisis.

This novel affirms, precisely by not dragging the narrative to a didactic or hortatory conclusion, the trauma and horror that individuals experience in such a society, robbed of agency and deprived of hope. Occasionally, the text is punctuated by photographs that are enigmatic in their everydayness.

We are left wondering whether these are visual accounts of normality, or of a world askew. Were there people here before, and is this now an abandoned stage? Or, is it a platform that awaits new forms of social relationship, new solidarities that have yet to be imagined, and for which we seem not to have the affective strength at this time. The tenor of *The Patient in Bed Number 12* is, throughout, one of epic unease. It is the tenor of our sinister present.

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SETTING THE PACE

Track and field athlete PT Usha

A Long Run

Sohini Chattopadhyay's book is a nuanced account of the obstacles sportswomen face, complemented by old-fashioned shoe-leather reporting and lucid writing

Nihal Koshie

AMONTAGE OF mini-biographies of India's woman runners bring to life some well-known stars like PT Usha, others lesser known or forgotten, such as Mary D'Souza, who competed in the sprints at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics and also played hockey for India. Author Sohini Chattopadhyay has taken the time to meet or talk over the phone to the women athletes and the book is littered with anecdotes and personal experiences.

One such nugget is about how Kamaljit Sandhu, the first Indian woman to win an individual gold (400m) at the Asian Games, made the government realise the potential of women athletes as medal winners. This happened after she became a qualified coach post-retirement, during a meeting chaired by the minister in-charge of the 1982 Asian Games in New Delhi. Sandhu said that India could double the medal count "if women do well". The minister bought into the idea and the country ended up doubling its medal count.

How the attitude of sports officials changed once Usha finished fourth at the Los Angeles Olympics is also an amusing tale. The only athletes officials spoke to were members of the hockey team. But Usha would go on to become the toast of the nation despite missing a medal by one-hundredth of a second. When an official came to let her know that the prime minister was on the telephone line to speak to her, he bowed down to convey the message.

The Day I Became a Runner is about the challenges women face — track stars from the current generation and from yesteryears — when they take up running and, through their stories, it pays a tribute to the obstacles they attempted to or did overcome.

Santhi Soundarajan, the 800m silver medalist of the Doha Asian Games, too, was at the receiving end of the don't-care-two-hoots attitude of officials. She was asked to undress and lie on a table by an unnamed Indian official, who left without uttering a word when four people entered and began to examine her. She was naked, could not communicate with the officials because they didn't speak Tamil and she didn't know a word of English. Soundarajan's struggles after her name was erased from the books is well detailed because the athlete opens up about her life post-Doha.

Chattopadhyay writes with sensitivity about Soundarajan's hardscrabble life — her grandfather had to flee Sri Lanka because of anti-Tamil sentiments and the family started from scratch in Kathakurichi, Tamil Nadu. "As the eldest child, Santhi would spend hours lining up at temples, weddings and community feasts to collect leftovers they gave away. At feasts, she would wait with a large vessel until the guests were fed. When the organisers came to give away the leftovers, they would ask those waiting to put their vessels on the ground so they would not have to touch the vessels. Those lining up for food were often Dalits like herself." Running gave her solace and a modicum of dignity, till it was all taken away when she failed a gender test at the 2006 Asian Games.

Chattopadhyay, herself an amateur runner, begins the narrative with her own story — how she started running to deal with the grief of her grandmother's passing. She narrates her experiences of running in different places — from Kolkata, Delhi, Amman to Edinburgh and Calicut — on a beach near Usha's village. "There had been four of us running on the beach that evening. I took the photo — a Labrador, two of his handlers, both male, and me, the only woman. All three were graceful, sure-footed and swift — they seemed to know their way about the sand. Next to them, I must have cut a comic figure, slipping and threatening to fall over at any moment, a novice on sand. Yet, no one was looking at me." Not being stared at in Usha's village, the author concludes, is the legacy of the sprint queen.

At a couple of places, it seems like Chattopadhyay is trying too hard to link the news stories of the day to the lives of the women she writes about. But that is only a minor quibble. *The Day I Became a Runner: A Women's History of India through the Lens of Sport* is a well-researched book complemented by old-fashioned shoe-leather reporting and lucid writing.

A mammogram saved her in the nick of time

This breast cancer survivor is now a counsellor and educates patients on regular screening

Anuradha Mascarenhas

PERHAPS, IT was her mother's sixth sense that guided corporate lawyer Deval Patel to sign up for a mammogram, something that all women above 40 should do to prevent cancer. The year was 2016 and she was celebrating her 46th birthday with her friends in Dubai. Deval, who had just completed a half marathon, felt extremely fit and happy as her routine tests came out normal. But she got a rude shock when she did her mammogram. Her sonologist told her she could easily place a bet that the small lump in her right breast was a cancerous one.

"I remember hitting back at her out of sheer desperation as I hadn't felt anything. 'Is this the way you scare patients? I asked her,'" says Deval, who luckily had her friend around. "She immediately took me to another room, calmed me down and helped me find a way out of the crisis. I could not tell my mother either," Deval adds.

But that moment of calm was her turning point as she decided to fight back. Not only did she survive three surgeries, 30 chemotherapy,

LIFE POSITIVE



HER2-positive breast cancer accounts for 20-25 per cent of all breast cancers, says Dr Koppiker. Some of HER2 positive patients also have ER (estrogen receptor) and PR (progesterone receptor) positivity. If a cancer cell is ER+, it means it can receive signals from estrogen, instructing the cells to grow. If a cancer cell is PR+, these signals can come from the progesterone hormone. This triple positivity opens up several options for effective targeted therapies. Dr Koppiker says the prognosis with such targeted therapies has improved substantially for triple-positive breast cancers. "In fact, now this subtype can be considered as one of the most curable breast cancers. Patients with HER2-positive breast cancer respond well to targeted drugs like Trastuzumab and even more effective newer options," he adds.

Breast cancer accounts for 28 per cent of all cancers among women in India. That's why WHO's Global Breast Cancer Initiative aims at tackling the burden through health promotion, early diagnosis and comprehensive management techniques. As Dr C B Koppiker, oncoplastic breast surgeon and founder of Prashanti Cancer Care Mission, says, "Despite increasing awareness, women continue to come late for diagnosis. It is because of this fear of the unknown that several women pre-

tilated. But Dr Koppiker assessed her mammogram, mapped out the residual tumour, excised it and avoided mastectomy. Deval began with chemotherapy and targeted therapy. This was followed by surgery and radiation therapy, which was then followed up by further adjuvant targeted therapy for a year.

"I just feel it is better to consult a team of oncologists and medical oncologists, who can make a combined decision for an effective



therapeutic plan so that the treatment is tailored as per the patient's needs," she says.

THE BATTLE WITH INSURANCE

Trastuzumab (sold under the brand name Herceptin among others), a monoclonal antibody, is the gold standard for HER2 receptor positive patients. It blocks the ability of the cancer cells to receive chemical signals that tell them to grow and is administered as a drip

Who needs Trastuzumab?

EARLY BREAST CANCER: Can be had alone or with chemotherapy. You have it before or after surgery and chemotherapy. You usually have it every week or every three weeks. This continues for up to a year.

FOR ADVANCED BREAST CANCER: You might have it together with chemotherapy drugs or with hormone therapies called aromatase inhibitors. Trastuzumab is also used as a treatment on its own for people who

have had at least two types of chemotherapy and where hormone therapy has not worked. Had every three weeks for as long as it is working and the side effects aren't too bad.

FOR ADVANCED STOMACH OR GASTRO OESOPHAGEAL CANCER: Could be used as first treatment and then together with chemotherapy drugs. After six cycles, one can have Trastuzumab alone for the remaining cycles. Every three weeks.

saving biological and targeted therapies, especially for patients facing aggressive breast cancers. These treatments often represent the thin line between life and death. The stark reality is that unlike anywhere else in the world, insurance companies in India choose to deny them," says Dr Koppiker. However, when the targeted therapy is taken along with chemotherapy, then there is a likelihood of claims getting accepted. In the end, Deval could avail 50 per cent of the claim.

Going through Deval's trials, her mother Rashmi Patel set up a cancer care fund before she passed. Inspired by Dr Koppiker's work, Deval now utilises a majority of the funds to ensure that the drugs are easily accessible for poor patients. This support has helped at least 170 HER2-positive patients.

HOW SHE INSPIRES OTHERS

The 53-year-old Deval, who was the first woman to be a partner at one of the oldest law firms in Asia – Crawford Bayley and Co – is now also a counsellor, reminding women not to miss out on screenings. "Just because you were clean last time doesn't mean that your tissues will continue to be normal with advancing years," she says. According to US trials, there was a 33 per cent decrease in death from breast cancer in women older than 40 who undertook regular mammograms for screening. As Deval says, "The best medicine is to simply stay positive."



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ADVERTORIAL

for its golden sands and crescent shape, offering breathtaking views of the bay and the city. Grande Plage, a beach in Biarritz is straight out of a postcard with its palace-styled casino, striped beach tents and beach clubs for children. Sopelana Beaches including Arrietara and Atxabiribil, are renowned for their surfing, beautiful cliffs, and paragliding opportunities.

For a cultural explorer, a historian, a romantic, or simply a food enthusiast, the Basque Country is an inexhaustible well of experiences, simultaneously complex, compelling, and most importantly, welcoming. It is said that the Basques are neither entirely Spanish nor French; they are Basque. This individuality is mirrored in their warm, welcoming spirit, which is an echo of the region's own distinctive identity. To know the Basque Country is to know its people. Whether it is a spontaneous conversation with a local at a Pintxos bar or the deliberate immersion in the festivities of the San Fermin festival, the hospitality extended is always genuine, always from the heart.

So that was our experience of Basque country. In one trip alone, we covered 4 different regions of Europe: Loire Valley, Basque Country, Nouvelle-Aquitaine, and Paris. Given its vastness, I believe Paris should definitely be considered its own region. Have you been to Basque Country yet? What did you think of it? I would love to know about your experience, so write to me at neil@veenaworld.com. All in all, I believe we are now at a point that along with counting the number of European countries that we have been to, I certainly think that we should have a separate region-based bucketlist of Europe. Until the next time, keep Celebrating Life!



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Have you heard of Europe's Basque Country?

Along with counting the number of European countries that we have been to, I certainly think that we should have a separate region-based bucketlist of Europe.



Neil Patil
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Pyrenees mountains, straddling the border between Spain and France along the Bay of Biscay. The Spanish part includes notable towns like Bilbao and San Sebastián, while the French part, known as the Northern Basque Country or French Basque Country, consists of cities like Bayonne and Biarritz. The region is characterized by its rugged coastline, mountainous terrain, and a distinct cultural and linguistic heritage, with the Basque language (Euskara) being a prominent feature.

When we travelled through Basque Country, it's undeniable that we noticed deep rooted traditions and unique customs. The Basques have long been custodians of their Euskara language considered one of Europe's oldest and most mysterious tongues, as its origins are still debated.

If you recall the 2011 blockbuster hit, *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, what do you remember from the last part of the movie? It's the Running of the Bulls festival. On our road trip, we had the great opportunity to witness this festival, also known as "Encierro," held annually in the city of Pamplona, Spain. A part of the San Fermín Festival, which takes place from July 6th to 14th, the bull run occurs each morning during this period. Participants, often dressed in white with red scarves, run ahead of a group of bulls all the way through the streets of Pamplona to the city's famous bullring. This tradition dates back to the 14th century and was originally a way to transport bulls to the market. If you ask me, it's more fun securing tickets for the bullring where the bull run ends, than waiting on the streets or paying top dollar to stand in the balconies of buildings along the bull run route, trying to get that two-second glimpse of the bulls running past you.

If you listen to my podcasts, Travel Explore Celebrate Life and 5 Minute Travel Tips on Spotify, you know that I love food. And this is where Basque

outstanding views of the city and Zurriola beach, Mirador left a lasting impression on us. Located at the top of Monte Ulía, it is run by chef Rubén Trincado, who perfectly blends tradition and innovation, and chooses the menu that best suits your tastes.

The culinary legacy of Basque Country doesn't end with its high end Michelin Star restaurants. Basque cuisine, like the culture it springs from, is a playground for culinary experimentation. At the heart of Basque gastronomy is the concept of 'Pintxos' (pronounce 'x' as 'ch' in chair) —small, flavourful bites that are often likened to gourmet tapas. We found these at every bar and these bites often reflected the area's specialization in fresh, seasonal produce and the sea. My personal favourites were: Tortilla Española Pintxo (Spanish omelette made with eggs, potatoes, and onions), Txangurro a la Donostiarra (baked spider crab meat mixed with onions, leeks, brandy, and tomato, stuffed back into the crab shell), Gambas al Ajillo (prawns sautéed in olive oil with plenty of

garlic) and Pimientos de Padrón (small green Padrón peppers fried in olive oil and sprinkled with coarse salt). As we witnessed all across Basque Country, savoring Pintxos is not just about indulging in a meal; it is an art form, a social activity that brings together friends and family.

No mention of the Basque Country's natural beauty is complete without a nod to 'Game of Thrones', which transformed locations like Dragonstone (Gaztelugatxe) and King's Landing's gardens (Plaza de Santa María, in Cáceres) into mythical realms. For fans of the series, a trip through this region is a chance to step into the shoes of their favorite characters; for all others, it's an opportunity to behold these vistas as they truly are—awe-inspiring in their raw, unscripted guises.

If that wasn't enough, the coastlines of Biarritz and San Sebastián, with their crescent-moon bays and renown for surfing, leave you in awe. La Concha Beach in San Sebastián is often rated as one of the best city beaches in the world, known