

# ROWING INDIA

— 2022 —

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## SECRETARY GENERAL'S MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to connect with you all through, yet another edition of our Newsletter.

Hope you and your families are doing well and wish you the best always.

So much has happened in the Rowing Front from the last time we interacted with you all.

Our National Rowers were preparing very hard for the Asian Games at Hangzhou, China in the National Coaching Camps at Bhopal and Hyderabad. Then the news flashed out that Asian Games in China was postponed due to outbreak of the Virus yet again.

So RFI immediately had to redraw our coaching plans due to the changed ground realities.

However, as part of our plan, In May 2022 our team participated in the World Cup 1 at Belgrade, Serbia from the 27th to the 29th of May 2022 and achieved some very good results.

Our Men's Coxless Fours (M4-) did one of the best timings and was placed 9th in the Championships.

Our Lightweight Men's Double Sculls (LM2x) was placed 11th in the Championships.

And our Men's Quadruple Sculls (M4x) finished 10th in the Championships.

On the whole this exposure at the 2022 World Cup 1 at Belgrade, Serbia was very satisfying.

As we go to print, our team is in Poznan for the second exposure races at the World Cup 2, Poznan, Poland from the 13th to 20th June 2022.

Please look out for our Women and Para Rowers who are in Action in Poznan along with our Men.

Planning for our next big National Championships, the 23rd Sub Junior National Rowing Championships is on course, on the picturesque Dal Lake, Srinagar from the 20th to the 26th June, 2022. Along with these races the 05th Inter State Challenger National Rowing Championships will also be held.

The J&K Association for Rowing & Sculling, along with the various Government Agencies, is working very hard to make this Maiden National Rowing Championships a great success.

Please follow us on social media to see the latest updates, as they evolve.

So, till our next update, cheers and happy rowing.

MV Sriram  
Secretary General



# RAJESH KUMAR

## The masterstroke from UP

**With an excellent record of gold medals in his repertoire, coach Rajesh Kumar has set a high standard for rowers**

Rajesh Kumar's trajectory is exemplary – both as a rower and as a coach. His multiple-medal wins have set a high benchmark for any rower. From winning two silvers in his debut rowing championship at the national level in 2006 to bagging three golds at the 31st National Rowing Championship in 2012, Uttar Pradesh-born Kumar has had a spectacular stint as a rower. And as a coach he is his own competition training young men to break his record. Recipient of Yash Bharti Award and a qualified National Umpire the 37-year-old extremely humble human tells us he is 'zero without rowing'. "Rowing is everything for me. It has given me everything. It has made me who I am today. And I thank each and every one who stood by my side and helped me succeed," enthuses Kumar who is presently working as an Assistant coach with Rowing National Coaching Camp for Asian Games 2022. Excerpts of the interview.

**What is it that got you into rowing?**

There were a couple of factors that made me opt for rowing but the most important one was my father. He was a State-level wrestler and I just wanted to make him proud. And I am so happy that I did it.



**What was the feeling like when you earned your first medal?**

It was exhilarating to say the least. I had zero knowledge of rowing when I first opted for it but I surprised my coach and myself when I won not one but two silver medals at my debut competition - the 11th Challenger National Rowing Championship held in Kolkata. And most importantly, I made my father proud by winning at the nationals and then later in international regattas as well. I have won a total of 5 gold, 4 silver and 4 bronze medals as a rower between 2006 to 2012.

**Your last stroke as a rower was spectacular when you bagged three golds. Tell us about that masterstroke?**

Honestly speaking, I wanted to row more. I didn't want to stop at just three golds, though this had been my best scoresheet. However, destiny had other plans for me. Injury kept me away from my game and then I opted for coaching.



In your six-year long stint, do you have any particular favourite moment?

There are many. In fact, each championship left a mark in my career and was a turning point for me. However, I would like to mention my Olympic camp with Bajrang Lal Takhar. I used to give him a good fight in light-weight doubles.

As a coach too you have a stupendous record in both Nationals and International regattas. How does it feel when you see your protégés winning medals?

It's extremely rewarding. And whoever I train I prepare them with the intention that they should break my record of medals and go beyond me.

In your nine-year-old career as a Coach, which year would you regard as memorable?

It should be the 2018 Asian Games held in Jakarta. I was the Assistant coach of the national camp back then and we had prepared our boys really well. They brought home one gold and two bronze medals making us all proud.

What are your future targets?

The aim is now to better the 2018 result. We are all aiming to win more than two golds at this year's nationals. And the kind of support that we get from the federation, especially from our President who is so involved in the game, only encourages us to pursue our goals without any hindrances.





# DUSHYANT CHAUHAN

## Setting high standards

**Dushyant Chauhan has a total of 14 medals to his name and the count will increase in future in a fast pace**



Celebrated Persian poet and philosopher Rumi once said, 'What you seek is seeking you.' This holds true in the case of Haryana boy Dushyant Chauhan. While at the Army Bengal Engineering camp at Roorke he was seeking for a strong purpose in life and when he chanced upon rowing his life changed forever. He has that competitive spirit and the penchant to reach to the top of the game that are required to propel the boat forward. With that unmatched zeal Chauhan had a stupendous start with two golds at the Senior National Rowing Championship held in Kerala in 2013. His impressive streak continues and so far, the young rower's medal list shines bright with 5 golds at the nationals and an equally impressive graph at the international regattas. We caught up with the rower who is presently gearing up for the Asian Games and focusing on the upcoming Olympics. Excerpts:

You have had an impressive start in rowing. Tell us about your early days in the game. My height, which is 6.1 ft, and my indomitable spirit guided me to choose rowing. I had other options as well to choose from like discus and kayaking but I chose rowing because I just fell in love with the game. Also, I was not scared of water which worked in my favour. Within six months of the training, I bagged two golds at the Nationals held in Kerala in 2013. That gave a huge boost to my confidence and I realized that this is what I have been looking for and this is where my heart and soul lies. In the same year I participated in the Asian Rowing Championship held in China and World Rowing Championship in South Korea. Though I didn't score a medal there, the exposure made me feel I am limitless. In 2014, I participated in the International Rowing Regatta, Italy where I scored a silver and a bronze. The same year I earned bronze at the 17th Asian Games in South Korea.



When did you win your debut gold at the foreign shores?

It was in 2015 at the Asian Indoor Rowing Championship in Thailand.

Why did you switch from outdoor to indoor category? The switch was suggested by my coach as my ergometer score was excellent. It was 6.21 in the lightweight category.

You mostly rowed singles. Why is that so? All my life I have rowed single and I have succeeded in competitions. In the single category I have full control of my boat which helps me perform better.

Tell us something about your coach. What is it about him that inspires you?

Ismail Baig sir has strong leadership qualities. He is a keen observer and he recognises the talents of the player so well. Most importantly, his vision is not restricted to the immediate, rather he can see the future and train a player for the future. That's what makes him a great coach.

You haven't rowed at the Olympics yet. Why is that so? You can call it my bad luck. Despite having such good scorecard injuries made the Olympics elusive for me both in 2016 and 2020. However, I am waiting desperately for the 2024 Olympics and I am sure I will make my country proud.

### Favourite Colour:

Black

### Favourite food

Roti and ghee

### Favourite film

KGF

### Favourite Actor:

Akshay Kumar

### Favourite Actress:

Jhanvi Kapoor

### Favourite Web Series:

Money Heist and Witcher



# 39TH SENIOR NATIONAL ROWING CHAMPIONSHIP

## They've got Gold

The 39th Senior National Rowing Championship was a stellar show with the passion for the sport riding high in the water of Pune. Hosted by the Army Rowing Node, the regatta saw a total of 434 rowers from 23 associations competing in 2000m race in seven categories. The regatta was declared open by Lt Gen PP Malhotra, VSM, Comdt CME. Proceeded by exciting heats and repechage the able participants fought for the finals with all their might to secure their positions in the forthcoming National Games. ASCB and SSCB had all the attention of the rowing enthusiasts at the venue while Maharashtra and Haryana also did pretty well giving tough competition. The jury was presided by Smt. Smita Shirole.





## Para Men Single Scull: SSCB

**K Narayana's** show at the MIXF1 was a spectacular one with strong nail-biting moments keeping the teams on the edge of the game. With his focus on the first spot Narayana finished the race in 8 min 45.2 sec while Pawan Rajesh from the Army finished the race just six seconds later, which was 8 mins 51.1 sec. Kuldip Singh from Haryana took home the bronze for finishing the game at an equally competing time – 8 mins 55.5 seconds.



## Lt Weight Men Double Sculls: ASCB

**Arwinder Singh** and **Ajay Tyagi's** partnership is marked by trust and it's this factor that helped them cling on to the first position at the LightWeight Double Scull category. "Having practiced with him for a long time, he has become a great partner for me. I trust him a lot. I know that he will not give up or slow down at any point of the race. And that's what works for us because I also remain focused on the game from start to end," says Ajay who is eyeing for gold in Asian Games.

Talking about his partnership with Ajay, 22-year-old Arwinder says, "It's my first Nationals and I am very proud of the win. Ajay has been a constant support and if we work on our skills more under the guidance of our coach then we can score big at bigger events like Asian Championship and Olympics." The duo completed the race in 7 minutes and 7.07 seconds.

## Open Men Double Sculls (Civilian): Orissa

Rowers **Karanbir Singh Bhinder** and **Shagandeep Singh** from Odisha paddled their way to the first position. Shagandeep, 21, who is a gold medalist at the 2019 Asian Indoor Championship, tells us, "We practiced together for a few months and worked on our shortcomings. We were pretty sure of gold."



## Coxless Fours (Civilians): Chandigarh

In 7 minutes and 1 second, team Sukhdeep Singh, Sahil Moudgil, Gulshan Kumar and Aditya Singh parked themselves in the first position. Maintaining a healthy lead, the winning quartet had a time difference of 10 seconds from the first runners up – Madhya Pradesh. Rajasthan came in third while Haryana settled for the fourth position.





## Men Single Sculls: SSCB

It's a packed schedule for **Arvind Singh** with back-to-back championships. The Olympian is however, not deflecting from his medal spree winning gold in every game. Fresh out of a stupendous performance at the Asian Championship, he won Gold in Single Scull (2km) and missed the first spot in the 500m game by a whisker. "500 metre is a tricky game. At this compact game a good start works wonders. And unfortunately, the wind did not favour me at this game. I play light-weight and the head wind proved to be a hindrance," says Arvind who is preparing for two more regattas at the international level.

## Men Double Sculls: ASCB

The partnership between **Dushyant** and **Sukhmeet Singh** proved to be a successful one with the young guns giving a tough competition to rowing heavyweights like Arjun Lal Jat and Ravi. Talking about the strategy that helped them win the race with a time of 7 minutes and 02.5 seconds Dushyant informs, "Our focus was the second half of the game which is the last 1000metres. Sukhmeet is also an experienced player and it worked in our favour."

Sukhmeet who started his rowing career in 2015 and plays in both double and quadruple tells us, "Dushyant was back after a sabbatical of two years due to a back injury and he performed really well. We gave our best without thinking anything and focusing just on our game." Dushyant is preparing for the World Cup.



## Men Coxless Pairs: SSCB

It was a treat to watch **Punit Kumar** and **Gurmeet** in the finals. The duo maintained a healthy lead and finished the race without any difficulty. Punit who won three golds this time says, "It was my fourth Senior Nationals and I am very happy with my performance. I was quite confident of my skills and also Gurmeet who helped me equally on the boat."



## Men Coxless Fours: SSCB

**Jasveer Singh, Bheem Singh, Neetish Kumar, Ashish** raised the flag of the Services team high by earning the gold spot. Their coordination, fighting spirit and passion showed itself explicitly in the field. "I dedicate this win to my coach who prepared us well and my teammates who gave their all to win the race," says Bheem who made his Nationals debut this year.





## Men Coxed Eights: SSCB

With ace players like **Punit** and **Jasveer** in the team, one can expect nothing but the best and that's what happened in the 8+ category. Cox **Mukul Kumar Roy**, 27, says, "We all thoroughly enjoyed the race and that's what matters the most. There's pressure in every game but if you enjoy it you will do it. And that's what we all did." The other participants of the winning team include **Harinder Singh, Jaswinder Singh, Bheem Singh, Neeraj, Jasmail** and **Gurmeet Singh**.



## Women Single Sculls: Madhya Pradesh

This Punjabi sportswoman who represented Madhya Pradesh gave her opponents a competition that they will remember forever. Utilizing her skills to the best of ability she completed the 2000m race like a star in 9 minutes 37 seconds. Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra had to settle for silver and gold respectively. "It was a good match. This was my second nationals and I wanted to up my game from bronze that I had earned last time and I am super happy to have won gold," says 24-year-old **Khushpreet Kaur**.



## Women Double Sculls: Haryana

**Avinash Kaur** and **Kiran** channelised their energy and enthusiasm in the Female Doubles and finished the race in 8 minutes 28 seconds. TH Priya Devi and H Tendenthoi Devi of team Manipur were the first runners up while Deepika Xess and Reshma Kumari Minz of Maharashtra were the second runners up.



## Women Coxless Pairs: Orissa

**Sonali Swain** partnered with **Ritu Kaudi** to fight in the Pairs and continued her medal spree. Just 19, the paddler has already played three Nationals and is a proud Asian Junior Championship medalist. The duo glided on the water like an alligator and kept their opponents much away from the finishing line. They finished the game in 8 minute 43 seconds.





## Women Coxless Fours: Kerela

**Archa A, Varsha B, Rose Mariya Joshy and Menakshy V S** made Kerala proud at the 39th Senior Rowing Nationals. Having practiced with each other for over a month in the camp under the able guidance of their mentors, the quartet employed swift moves and parked themselves at the finishing line before their opponents. Rose, 20, says, "I am quite happy with my performance however, there's always room for improvement and I plan to better myself in the upcoming regatta."

## COL SANDEEP CHAHAL, COMMANDING OFFICER, ARMY ROWING NODE

### Great Guide

#### Chahal is proud of his boys

The news of Nationals had everyone in the camp excited including Col Sandeep Chahal who was heading Senior Rowing National Championship. He tells us, "The last Nationals happened in 2019, all thanks to the pandemic. So when it happened this year all of us grabbed the opportunity with both hands. Though the players were practicing in a bio bubble that wasn't sufficient because emotionally and psychologically the players were affected. With things coming back to normal we were all excited that the Nationals were back."

The rowers performed as per the expectations of the coaches. Chahal who lauds the performance of Olympians Arvind and Arjun also appreciates the performance of other players who showed remarkable progress. Proud of the performance of the Services team, he says, "Services team performed well this year and had a clean sweep in almost all races. They only faltered in one event - 500mtrs which depends on other external conditions."





# HEROES OF THE 23RD SPRINT NATIONAL ROWING CHAMPIONSHIP

The gold winners of the 23rd Sprint National Rowing Championship look back at their big win



This year at the Army Rowing Node, College of Military Engineering in Pune, rowing enthusiasts witnessed a game that was class apart. A total of 327 rowers from 23 teams of various States and Associations locked horns in approximately 117 races over the course of four days. SSCB and ASCB had all the attention with their astounding score cards but ultimately with nail biting and photo finish matches, SSCB emerged as the champions this year. The regatta saw big names from the game including Olympians and Asian Games medalists like Arvind Singh, Arjun Lal Jat, Dushyant Chauhan among others. The closing ceremony saw Sri Rajesh Patil, Commissioner, PCMC as the Chief Guest along with Smt Usha Dhole, Mayor, PCMC and Sri Vikas Dhokne, Additional Commissioner, PCMC. The hurry was presided by Smt. Smita Shirole.





## Mixed Double Sculls: Orissa

The first time **Shagandeep Singh** played at the Nationals, he ranked 4th. At that moment the 21-year-old made a promise to himself and he fulfilled that promise in the Senior Nationals held this year by winning a gold. Talking about what inspired him to join rowing, Shagandeep says, "Olympian Swaran Singh Virk was the one who inspired me to join rowing. He is from our village Dalelwala and I want to be like him." Continuing the rower says, "I have a simple formula in life. If I am playing, I will win." Shagandeep Singh partnered with **Sanjukta Dung Dung**, and represented team Odisha.



## Para Men Single Scull: SSCB

From the Services camp **K Narayana** impressed one and all with his strength and focus in the game. The young rower secured the first spot inspiring fellow rowers.



## Lt Weight Men Double Sculls: ASCB

Arwinder Singh and Sunil Attry representing Army earned gold in the LM2X category and their partnership was exemplary to say the least. They finished the race in 1 min 35.48 seconds. This was another high-charged game with the runners up losing the race with just 1 second.



## Men Single Sculls: Haryana

This year at the Senior Nationals, **Parminder Singh** bagged a gold and bronze in 500 meters and 2kms respectively. The medal count certainly matters but what's more significant for Parminder is the fact he got to practice and compete with Olympians. "I camped with Arvind who is an Olympic medalist and Jakar who though couldn't play but qualified for the Olympics. It's an honour to share space with them, compete with them as well," says Parminder who though lost to Arvind and Jakar in 2km and won bronze, he outperformed the star Olympian, Arvind in the 500m Single scull.



## Men Double Sculls: ASCB

**Dushyant** and **Sukhmeet Singh** surprised their coach and rowers when they beat heavyweights Arjun Lal Jat and Ravi. Dushyant and Sukhmeet's strategy seemed to have worked in their favour with the duo winning the race. "I trust him and his skills and he is very dependable. Also, our strategy and the conditions worked in our favour," tells us Dushyant.



## Men Coxless Pairs: SSCB

**Punit Kumar's** strike rate is remarkable. He won not one or two but three golds this time, setting a benchmark for many. The total count of medals stands at six gold and 1 silver as of now. Talking about his penchant for winning gold Punit says, "I derive motivation from everything around me – my life, my coach and my game. And I don't want to settle for anything less when I am giving my all to the game."

**Gurmeet Singh** increased the medal count of the Services Team by earning three gold medals. Singh, 28, participated in Men's Double 2km and 500m and Men's 8. He says, "I am very happy with my performance. The competition has increased so much. Interestingly, I used to play for the Army and at this game our team outplayed them."



## Men Coxless Fours: SSCB

The Services team showed great spirit on the water and secured the top position. The Men's four consisted of **Jasveer Singh, Bheem Singh, Neetish Kumar** and **Ashish**. While Bheem, 25 is elated about the win Jasveer made his coach proud by winning three golds this year. "Though back-to-back races become quite challenging I love taking challenges head on."

Teammate and Rajasthan boy Ashish who played for Army in 2019 and earned a silver, played for Services this year and gave a tough competition to his former team. "I had faith in myself and my skills."





## Women Single Sculls: Punjab

Punjab's **Navneet Kaur** is a shining star. The 26-year-old star rower is a pro at the game. Having played at the national level for eight times, her experienced oars cut the boat swiftly through the water and reached the finish line first with ease. A sub-inspector posted in Chandigarh her heart lies with this enigmatic water sport. "Since my school days I used to be in athletics then my coach introduced me to rowing and I have been in love with the game since then. My dad and husband inspire me a lot," says Kaur who has been a participant in the Asian Championship.



## Women Double Sculls: Haryana

In the Women's 2X category Avinash Kaur and Pooja displayed a spectacular race by giving their opponents a tough fight. Their endurance, stamina and strategy worked in their favour and helped them earn gold for their team.



## Women Coxless Pairs: Orissa

**Sonali Swain** is just 19 and has already played at the national level four times. Presently camping in Hyderabad, Sonali who played for Odisha with **Ritu Kudi** is a two-time Asian medal winner. "Everyday I strive to better myself. My dad knew about rowing and he made me join the game. It's his dream I am living and I want to make him, my coach and my country proud."



## Women Coxless Fours: Orissa

**Asmita Karketta, Jharna Hasti, Deepika Xess** and **Manjula Xess** raced on the crisp waters of Pune and etched their name as gold winners in the Women 4 Open Sprints. Among the lot Jharna, 22, sounded the most ecstatic. She says, "It was a team effort and I thank my teammates and my coach for helping us live our dreams. I competed with Kerala in two races and while they took gold in the 2km race we made them lose in 500mtrs."



# PROPELLING PARA ROWERS AHEAD



## Col Gaurav Dutta inducted at FISA Para Rowing Commission talks about making rowing more inclusive

When it comes to paralympic sports one name shines through. Col Gaurav Dutta, who has dedicated three decades of his life to the Indian Army has been instrumental in making the sport of rowing more inclusive. It was he who conceived and formed the Army Paralympic Sports Policy and the Army

Policy and the Army Paralympic Sports Node in 2017 that propelled para talents like never before. Under his leadership the Indian Armed Forces personnel have won nearly 50 Nationals and 10 international medals including Military World Games, Asian Paralympic Games and Rio Games. We caught up with the former triathlete who sheds more light on his vision and his plans for the para athletes. Excerpts:

**Tell us about your preparation for the 2022 Asian Para Games ?**

As per RFI development programme for Para Rowing, we selected four new female rowers, two each in PR2 & PR3 para rowing classes to join the existing five male rowers. A series of camps have been scheduled and the first camp concluded at Calcutta Rowing Club on May 22. All of us are very excited about the new opportunities that await us in the near future. Our aim is to have a crew each for PR2 Mix2x, PR3 Mix 2x and PR3 Mix4+ events. Unfortunately, the APG 2022 has been postponed to 2023 and the camps also have been pushed further in the calendar.

**How robust is our infrastructure for the Paralympians?**

Most venues in India sadly are not really accessible for persons with disability. However, at a few places like Hyderabad, ARN Pune and Kolkata pose minimal limitations especially for the PR3 & PR2 classes. PR1 being wheelchair users face major limitations. There is a requirement of a specially modified boat for PR1 & PR2 boats. PR3 class uses the same equipment as non-disabled rowers.

**What are the major challenges that the athletes face?**

Disability has been looked down upon for centuries. Though the thinking is now changing, persons with disability generally tend to remain behind the curtain due to social bias. Finding male rowers is not a problem, but it becomes pronounced in the case of women especially in the right age bracket of say 18-25.

**What is your vision for the para rowers?**

So far, our para rowers have competed in two events - World Cup II at Poznan and Asian Rowing Championships in 2019. We won bronze in both competitions. Two crews are once again going to World Cup II at Poznan and I am confident of a medal winning performance. Hopefully, we will once again get an opportunity in the 2022 Asian Rowing Championships to show our mettle.

Further, the mid-term goal is to be able to field a minimum of two boats in APG 2022 and one crew in the 2024 Paralympic Games. In the long term, we look to improve our numbers in the female para rowers.

**What can be done to make rowing more inclusive?**

Being a member of the FISA Para Rowing Commission & GEDI Commission has given me a brilliant opportunity to understand the inclusive development strategies of the world body and interaction with officials of the other countries has been a big learning. We hope to use this experience in furthering our own development initiatives. Providing opportunities to para rowers for training is the most important requirement and we need to work on that aspect a little more. Surely, given adequate time and resources, that will happen in the near future.



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