

Reflections India: Lyndon's letter from India number one



INDIA

I am currently visiting India, officially the Republic of India, and a country in South Asia. It is the seventh-largest country by area, the second-most populous country (with over 1.2 billion people), and the most populous democracy in the world. It is bounded by the Indian Ocean on the south, the

Arabian Sea on the southwest, and the Bay of Bengal on the southeast. It shares land borders with Pakistan to the west; China, Nepal, and Bhutan to the northeast; and Myanmar (Burma) and Bangladesh to the east. In the Indian Ocean, India is in the vicinity of Sri Lanka and the Maldives. India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands share a maritime border with Thailand and Indonesia. Its capital is New Delhi; other metropolises include Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Ahmedabad.

Home to the ancient Indus Valley Civilisation and a region of historic trade routes and vast empires, the Indian subcontinent was identified with its commercial and cultural wealth for much of its long history. Four religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism—originated in India, whereas Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam arrived in the first millennium CE, and they also played a part in shaping the region's diverse culture. Gradually annexed and brought under the administration of the British East India Company from the early 18th century and administered directly by the United Kingdom after the Indian Rebellion of 1857, it became an independent nation in 1947 after a struggle for independence that was marked by non-violent resistance led by Mahatma Gandhi.

In 2015, the Indian economy was the world's seventh largest by nominal GDP and third largest by purchasing power parity. Following market-based economic reforms in 1991, India became one of the fastest-growing major economies and is considered a newly industrialised country. However, it continues to face the challenges of poverty, corruption, malnutrition, and inadequate public healthcare. A nuclear weapons state and regional power, it has the third largest standing army in the world and ranks sixth in military expenditure among nations. India is a federal constitutional republic governed under a parliamentary system and consists of 29 states and 7 union territories. It is a pluralistic, multilingual and multi-ethnic society and is also home to a diversity of wildlife in a variety of protected habitats.

Sports

Sport in India

In India, several traditional indigenous sports remain fairly popular, such as kabaddi, kho kho, pehlwani and gilli-danda. Some of the earliest forms of

Asian martial arts, such as kalaripayattu, musti yuddha, silambam, and marma adi, originated in India. **Chess, commonly held to have originated in India as chaturaṅga, is regaining widespread popularity with the rise in the number of Indian grandmasters. Pachisi, from which parcheesi derives, was played on a giant marble court by Akbar.**

The improved results garnered by the Indian Davis Cup team and other Indian tennis players in the early 2010s have made tennis increasingly popular in the country. India has a comparatively strong presence in shooting sports, and has won several medals at the Olympics, the World Shooting Championships, and the Commonwealth Games. Other sports in which Indians have succeeded internationally include badminton (Saina Nehwal and P V Sindhu are two of the top ranked female badminton players in the world), boxing, and wrestling. Football is popular in West Bengal, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and the north-eastern states. India is scheduled to host the 2017 FIFA U-17 World Cup.

Field hockey in India is administered by Hockey India. The Indian national hockey team won the 1975 Hockey World Cup and have, as of 2016, taken eight gold, one silver, and two bronze Olympic medals, making it the sport's most successful team in the Olympics.

India has also played a major role in popularising cricket. Thus, cricket is, by far, the most popular sport in India. The Indian national cricket team won the 1983 and 2011 Cricket World Cup events, the 2007 ICC World Twenty20, shared the 2002 ICC Champions Trophy with Sri Lanka, and won 2013 ICC Champions Trophy. Cricket in India is administered by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI); the Ranji Trophy, the Duleep Trophy, the Deodhar Trophy, the Irani Trophy, and the NKP Salve Challenger Trophy are domestic competitions. The BCCI is also responsible for conducting an annual Twenty20 competition known as the Indian Premier League.

India has hosted or co-hosted several international sporting events: the 1951 and 1982 Asian Games; the 1987, 1996, and 2011 Cricket World Cup tournaments; the 2003 Afro-Asian Games; the 2006 ICC Champions Trophy; the 2010 Hockey World Cup; and the 2010 Commonwealth Games. Major

international sporting events held annually in India include the Chennai Open, the Mumbai Marathon, the Delhi Half Marathon, and the Indian Masters. The first Formula 1 Indian Grand Prix featured in late 2011 but has been discontinued from the F1 season calendar since 2014.

India has traditionally been the dominant country at the South Asian Games. An example of this dominance is the basketball competition where Team India won three out of four tournaments to date.

The Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna and the Arjuna Award are the highest forms of government recognition for athletic achievement; the Dronacharya Award is awarded for excellence in coaching.

In terms of chess according to the FIDE website India has 43 grandmasters with former world champion Vishy Anand the highest rated at 2786 followed GM Harikrishna at 2766. A number of Indians have won world titles in various age groups and later on I will go into their history in later letters.

Regards

Dr Lyndon Bough