

Talking drum of Mewat, twin flutes of Thar: Meet the Rajasthani folk artistes honoured with Padma Shri award

Hamza Khan
Jaipur, January 25

RAJASTHANI FOLK artistes Gafuruddin Mewati Jogi and Taga Ram Bheel were on Sunday announced as recipients of the Padma Shri awards in the 'unsung heroes' category.

Gafuruddin, 68, is known for folk and traditional music, particularly the bhang. Also known as the 'talking drum', bhang is a rhythmic percussion instrument made of a hollow dry pumpkin shell mounted with goatskin.

Hailing from the Mewati Jogi community, Gafuruddin received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award last year from

President Droupadi Murmu. In its citation, the Akademi said that Gafuruddin "also happens to be the last surviving folk artist who knows and performs all the 2,500-plus dohas of Pandan ka kada (Mahabharata)".

"I learnt bhang from my father, Budh Singh Jogi. We used to perform together; he used to play jogiya sarangi, and I would play bhang alongside him. One of my uncles used to be on harmonium, another on dholak," Gafuruddin told *The Indian Express*.

Gafuruddin traces his lineage to Ismail Nath Jogi, said to be a disciple of Gorakhnath, one of the nine Navnaths; Ismail recited the kalma and became a



(L-R) Gafuruddin Mewati Jogi and Taga Ram Bheel

Muslim. "We are Muslims, but we sing Shivji ka Byavla, Pandan ka Mahabharat... Lok Ramayan is known as Lanka Chadhai here locally; we sing all this and go to temples and also pray at mosques," he said.

Over a career spanning six decades, Gafuruddin has many

commendations to his name for playing and promoting bhang. He has also travelled extensively to perform in India, as well as in Australia, Canada, France, England, Germany and Japan. He said he performed before Prime Minister Narendra Modi, too, just before the

Covid lockdown.

Like Gafuruddin, Taga Ram Bheel, in his early 60s, plays a unique instrument, the algoza. A double flute made of bamboo, the algoza works on the same principle as a bagpipe; one of the two flutes usually plays a continuous drone while the other plays different notes.

As per Anahad Foundation, a non-profit organisation dedicated to empowering folk artists and preserving the vibrant folk music of India*, Bheel lives in Mool Sagar town, just outside of Jaisalmer, and learnt the instrument when he was a child by stealing his father's algoza in his absence. He has been playing the instrument since he was

10 years old and has spent 30 years of his life in the jungles of Ranthambore.

Taga Ram bought his first algoza when he was 11 and learnt it by himself by coordinating the tunes. In 1981, at the age of 18, he gave his first stage performance in Jaisalmer. Renowned folk musician who has been performing at Rajasthan's Desert Festival since 1981, Bheel has featured in several programmes for All India Radio, Jaisalmer. Honoured with invitations from Nehru Yuva Kendra Sansthan and Rajasthan Tourism, he has toured across India and abroad, performing in over 15 countries, including France, the US, Japan, and Russia.

{MARK TULLY • 1935-2026 }



BBC's 'Voice of India', a personification of credibility and empathy, falls silent

Anusree KC
New Delhi, January 25

was the level of his personal credibility."

Jalil attributed this trust to "his (Tully's) completely non-judgmental attitude towards India and Indians." That non-judgmental empathy was forged on the ground. Tully travelled relentlessly, preferring trains and village conversations over cups of *chai* to official briefings. "He belonged to a generation who sat down with people and listened. That ear to the ground is something journalism is losing," Jalil added.

Historian S Irfan Ali, who met Tully frequently at the India International Centre, said: "He always said, 'Irfan, we will talk in Hindustani'." Tully especially loved the dialect of western Uttar Pradesh, he said.

Former broadcaster and former India Habitat Centre director Sunit Tandon recalled:

"He had a wonderful sense of humour and a very acute understanding of Indian society." Tully's long-running BBC Radio 4 programme "Something Understood" revealed that dimension – reflective, philosophical and spiritually curious. "Those were beautiful programmes," Tandon said, "...dealing with poetry, music and philosophy. They showed his intellectual and spiritual side." Importantly, Tandon added, "he could criticise without being unkind – an art that is lost nowadays."

Ratish Nanda, CEO, Aga Khan Trust for Culture, met Tully almost every day at the Sunder Nursery during the pandemic. "...Over the past six years, whenever he was well, Mark would be found in the park enjoying – nature, birds and visitors."

Bihar NEET aspirant's death: New evidence points to foul play

Himanshu Harsh
Patna, January 25

FRESH FORENSIC evidence has emerged in the case of the 17-year-old NEET aspirant from Bihar's Jehanabad, who died earlier this month after being found unconscious in her Patna hostel room, indicating the presence of semen on the undergarments she was wearing.

The teenager, who had cleared NEET in her first attempt last year but missed an MBBS seat by two marks, had been staying in Patna while preparing to retake the examination. She was found unconscious in her hostel room on January 6 and died during treatment on January 11. Patna police had initially said there was no evidence of a sexual assault, but a postmortem report that came out later opined that "sexual assault cannot be ruled out".

According to a senior police officer, clothes belonging to the deceased, which were handed over by her family on January 10, were sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) following due legal procedure. "The FSL examination has detected human semen residues on one of the undergarments that the girl was purportedly wearing at the time of the incident. A DNA profile is currently being prepared," he said.

The officer added that the DNA profile would be matched with that of the detained accused as well as other suspects identified by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) as part of the ongoing probe.

The forensic finding comes more than two weeks after the teenager was found unconscious in her hostel room, with the investigation yet to reach a conclusion.

Patna police have now suspended Chitrupat Nagar police station house officer, Sub-inspector Roshni Kumar, and Kadambuan assistant station house officer, Sub-inspector Hemant Jha, with immediate effect.

"The action was taken during a review of the case, which indicated failure in intelligence gathering and timely action on their part," a senior officer said.

Police had initially treated the case as a suspected suicide, citing alleged consumption of sleeping pills and maintaining that there was no evidence of sexual assault.

From the outset, the victim's family have alleged sexual assault and foul play in her death, claims that police had initially rejected. Patna City SP (East) Parichay Kumar had earlier told the media that a private gynaecologist who examined the girl on the first day of her hospitalisation "had not found any evidence of sexual assault".

He had also said CCTV footage from the hostel did not indicate foul play and that the girl's urine report showed consumption of sleeping pills.

However, the postmortem report conducted by a medical board at Patna Medical College and Hospital later stated that "sexual violence cannot be ruled out", prompting police to acknowledge a change in medical opinion. The autopsy noted injuries, including nail abrasions on the neck and bruises on the shoulder, arm and forearm, and preserved viscera for further examination.

Police had then arrested the owner of the hostel building, Manish Kumar Ranjan. However, the medical samples and evidence were sent to Patna AIIMS for a second postmortem examination and opinion. Officials had said that conclusions would be drawn only after all reports are received.

The Bihar Director General of Police (DGP) had also ordered formation of an SIT last week under the supervision of IG Central (Patna), which has been investigating the matter from all angles in Patna as well as in Jehanabad, where the victim is originally from.

In an FIR lodged on January 9, the girl's father had expressed suspicion of sexual assault, citing injury marks on her body and head.

The family has also alleged lack of cooperation in accessing hostel CCTV footage earlier after the incident and raised concerns about the impartiality of the investigation. They have been demanding a CBI probe.

Jaishankar holds talks with Gor, US lawmakers on trade and security

Shubhajit Roy
New Delhi, January 25

E. EXPLAINED
Meeting amid tariff tension

The visit by the high-powered US Congressional delegation to India comes as both sides are looking to strike a trade deal and bring bilateral relations back on track after a blitz of tariffs and repeated claims by US President Donald Trump that he brokered peace between India and Pakistan during Operation Sindoor.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday met a three-member US Congressional delegation, comprising two Republicans and one Democrat, along with US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor.

All three US Congressmen had condemned the Pahalgam terror attack in April last year and have expressed empathy for India as a victim of terror attacks.

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E-Auction Sale Notice - Subsequent Sale

Pursuant to taking possession of the secured asset mentioned hereunder by the Authorized Officer of Piramal Finance Ltd (Formerly Piramal Capital and Finance Ltd.) under the **Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002** for the recovery of amount due from borrower/s, offers are invited by the undersigned for purchase of immovable property, as described hereunder, which is in the possession, on 'As Is Where Is Basis', 'As Is What Is Basis' and 'Whatever Is There Is Basis', Particulars of which are given below:

Loan Code/Branch / Borrower(s) / Co-Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)	Demand Notice Date and Amount	Property Address _final	Reserve Price	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (10% of RRP)	Outstanding Amount (23-01-2026)
Loan Code No.: 27400000225, Delhi (Branch), Gauri Shankar (Borrower), Laxmi Devi (Co Borrower 1)	Dt: 22-02-2022, Rs. 1018569/-, Ten lakh Eighteen Thousand Five Hundred Sixty Nine Rupees	All the piece and Parcel of the Property having an extent - Unit No 318 3rd Floor, Tower L 1 Krishi City Phase 2 Alwar Bypass Road Tapukara Bhiwadi Rajasthan-301019	Rs.549000/-, (Rs. Five lakh Ninety Thousand Rupees)	Rs. 1870350/-, (Rs. Seventeen lakh Eighty Thousand Three Hundred Fifty Rupees)	
Loan Code No.: 27400000172, Delhi (Branch), Amit Kumar (Borrower), Menaka (Co Borrower 1)	Dt: 27-10-2023, Rs. 8524283/-, (Rs. Eight lakh Fifty Four Thousand Two Hundred Eighty Three Rupees)	All the piece and Parcel of the Property, having an extent - OMPL/ 301 Third Floor Marigold Panorama City Homes Om Max City Homes Bhiwadi Rajasthan Alwar Rajasthan -301019	Rs. 603000/-, (Rs. Sixty Three Thousand Rupees)	Rs. 12642471.72/-, (Rs. Twelve lakh Forty Nine Thousand Seven Hundred Forty Two Paise)	
Loan Code No.: 27400000173, Delhi (Branch), Amit Kumar (Borrower), Menaka (Co Borrower 1)	Dt: 27-10-2023, Rs. 873152/-, (Rs. Eight lakh Seventy Three Thousand One Hundred Sixty Nine Rupees)	All the piece and Parcel of the Property having an extent - Unit No 318 3rd Floor Marigold Panorama City Homes Om Max City Homes Bhiwadi Rajasthan Alwar Rajasthan -301019	Rs. 612000/-, (Rs. Sixty Two Thousand Rupees)	Rs. 12662471.72/-, (Rs. Twelve lakh Sixty Six Thousand Two Hundred Forty Three Rupees)	
Loan Code No.: 1960041729, Delhi (Branch), Manoj Kumar (Borrower), Barkha Oberoi (Co Borrower 1)	Dt: 22-04-2024, Rs.38994/-, (Rs. Three lakh Ninety Two Thousand Six Hundred Forty Two Paise)	All the piece and Parcel of the Property having an extent - Flat No D 3 1203 12th Floor, Tower D, Delight Residency Apara Ghari Buildwell Block D 3 Alwar Bypass Road Alwar Rajasthan-301019	Rs. 110000/-, (Rs. Eleven lakh Ten Thousand Rupees)	Rs. 529624.46/-, (Rs. Five lakh Two Hundred Sixty Nine Thousand Rupees)	
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DATE OF E-AUCTION: 12-02-2026, BEFORE 11.00 A.M. TO 1.00 P.M. (WITH UNLIMITED EXTENSION OF 5 MINUTES EACH), LAST DATE OF SUBMISSION OF BID: 11-02-2026, BEFORE 4.00 P.M.

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The above-mentioned Borrower/Guarantor are hereby noticed to pay the sum as mentioned in section 13(2) notice in full with accrued interest till date before the date of auction, failing which property will be auctioned/sold and balance dues if any will be recovered with interest and cost from borrower/guarantor.

Borrowers attention is drawn towards sub-section 8 of section 13, of the act, in respect of the time available, to redeem the secured asset. Borrowers in particular and public in general may please take note, that in case the auction scheduled herein fails for any reason whatsoever then the secured creditor may enforce its security by the way of private treaty.

DATE : 26.01.2026 | PLACE : RAJASTHAN

Authorised Officer, Piramal Finance Limited.

Jaipur

US Ambassador Sergio Gor said the talks were "productive" and the focus was on strengthening the bilateral partnership in the domains of security, trade and critical technologies.

The visit of the US Congressional delegation to India, comprising Jimmy Patronis, Mike Rogers and Adam Smith, came as both sides are looking to move forward in the negotiations for a bilateral trade deal.

In a social media post, Jaishankar described the meeting as a "good interaction". "Discussed various aspects of India-US ties, Indo-Pacific and Ukraine conflict. Congressional interactions have always been an important facet of our relationship," he said. On his part, Gor said on X: "Just wrapped a productive meeting with EAM @DrSJaishankar, @RepMikeRogersAL, @RepAdamSmith, and @JimmyPatronis on ways to strengthen US-India partnership for stronger security, expanded trade, and cooperation on critical technologies."

The discussion between Jaishankar and the bipartisan US Congressional delegation is a significant step towards mending ties between the two nations.