



**Paddle up** A growing number of tennis players are now championing pickleball with more venues opening up.  
B VELANKANNI RAJ AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



between the sports and I see many tennis players getting involved in Pickleball as it's a fun sport."

#### Making the switch

Several professional tennis players have already made the switch to pickleball. Andre Agassi, the former world No. 1, has become a global ambassador for pickleball, which is starting to take off in a big way in India, China and the rest of Asia.

Tennis legends John McEnroe, Steffi Graf, Andy Roddick, Michael Chang and Maria Sharapova among others have also been known to play the game.

Mukund Sasikumar, current Indian Davis Cup Player and India No. 2, says, "Retired tennis legends have a lot of time and definitely want to stay active with something less physical than tennis. The features of both tennis and pickleball are quite similar because the body motion is mostly from down to up, both games are feel-based and both require hand eye coordination."

#### The future of pickleball

"I hope pickleball and tennis can complement each other," Ramesh Krishnan says, adding that pickleball can be an ideal starting point for youngsters who will then "hopefully graduate to tennis".

**Chennai Picklerss by Sports Den**, at Kimberly Garden, Palluram Road, Kolapakkam, will be open through the day with two indoor pickleball courts and a store for equipment and accessories. Call 9840294518.

## The great racquet swap

Reji Varghese

When four of Chennai's leading club tennis players Vikram Seshasayee, Sooraj Viswanathan, G Rajesh and B Venkateshwar met up in November 2024, it was not to discuss tennis. The four of them were in final discussions about putting up Chennai Picklerss by Sports Den, a state-of-the-art indoor pickleball facility at Porur that would be open to the public round-the-clock.

Tennis players, from professionals to recreational enthusiasts, are increasingly trading in their tennis rackets for pickleball paddles. One revealing statistic is that out of 144 players currently listed on the Professional Pickleball Association Tour, 130 of them have some level of tennis background.

Indian tennis legend Ramesh Krishnan says, "There is plenty of excitement around pickleball and it is certainly on its way up." Ram Sukumar, CEO, Indium and veteran tennis player in the Chennai club circuit states that having played tennis for 37 years, he was initially sceptical about pickleball.

"When discussions started 18 months ago to add pickleball

### The launch of Chennai Picklerss by Sports Den demonstrates a growing trend in the world of racquet sports

courts at our club, I found the sport intriguing but a little odd — a mix of tennis and table tennis that I thought was mostly for older players."

However, after playing it regularly for the past six months, Ram says, "While I will always remain a tennis purist at heart, I've come to appreciate pickleball for what it is: a sport with low entry barriers, fun to play, and accessible to people

#### Less physical impact

Tennis is a high-intensity sport that requires quick movements, rapid changes of direction, and explosive power. Pickleball, on the other hand, is generally less physically demanding, making it an attractive option for tennis players who may be looking to reduce the impact on their bodies.

Vikram Seshasayee, captain of the

the Madras Club tennis team says, "Over the last many decades, we have seen many of our tennis buddies completely stop playing tennis due to injuries or because they found the sport too tiring as they got older."

Current Davis Cup Player and India No. 3, Ramkumar Ramanathan says he has played pickleball a couple of times. He adds, "Touch and feel is the common factor



## Strumming on heart strings

Bluebirds keeps classic rock alive with a tribute to Billy Joel and Eric Clapton at Bay 146 this Valentine's Day



**Retro notes**  
Bluebirds band, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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When the Bluebirds take the stage for 'The Piano Man' and 'The Guitar Man' at Bay 146 on Valentine's Day, they will do more than play music. They will revive an era when love ballads and rock anthems shaped romance and relationships. The Chennai-based band, with roots stretching back to 1969, is set to perform a tribute to Billy Joel and Eric Clapton — two musical giants who defined what it meant to love, lose, and live.

"We grew up listening to Billy Joel and Eric Clapton," says Rajan Muthukrishnan, the band's bassist. "Their music is absolutely mesmerising. A piano man and a guitar man — it's a rare combination, but a beautiful one."

Jesudasan Rajasekaran, the band's lead vocalist says, "I discovered Billy Joel in 1978 when my American girlfriend gave me two of his songbooks. That was my introduction to Valentine's Day. Since then, his music has been a part of my life."

For drummer Shyam Rao, the tribute is also about legacy.

"Music evolves, but the roots matter. As an older band, it's our job to keep that fire alive," he says.

**Through the ages**  
Originally founded in Madurai in 1969 by an Anglo-Indian family, the band is now a mix of old and new members.

The Valentine's Day setlist is deeply personal. Each song is tied to a memory. At Bay 146, an intimate venue with a devoted music-loving crowd, Bluebirds expect an audience that spans generations.

Rajan is in his 60s, Rajasekaran in his 70s, and Shyam in his 50s. But as they talk about music, memories, and love, they seem ageless. Their laughter is easy, their enthusiasm infectious. T Rajasekaran says it best: "The day I stop singing, that's the day I start ageing."

On February 14 at Bay 146, Royapettah. For tickets, call 9710976826 or visit district fly Zomato or Insider.



## Turtle walk across the 38th Parallel

In a laudable marriage of theatre, art and spoken word, Limits of Change by Parvathi Nayar and Nayantara Nayar, narrates a lesser-known chapter of Indo-Korean history

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How often does an art gallery turn into a stage, blurring the lines between memory and myth, fact and fiction, personal and collective histories?

On a bright Tuesday morning, Curator P and her zealous assistant guide their guests through a narrative that sits at the sweet spot between fact and fiction, a mammoth physical maze that embodies an often overlooked chapter of Indo-Korean history. The story of the Custodian Force India (CFI), who were peacekeepers at the Korean Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) during 1953-54 following the signing of the Armistice of the Korean War, comes alive through the personal



anecdotes of a certain Captain N. It traces the first peacekeeping mission undertaken by independent India.

In a 70-minute interactive experience designed to challenge the audience, Limits of Change, part-art exhibit, part-performance and

part-history lesson, by Parvathi Nayar and Nayantara Nayar, is an ambitious project rooted in personal history. Here art installations, videos, spoken word and text merge seamlessly.

A six-year-long sojourn that involved years of meticulous research and a post-pandemic

trip to the DMZ, Limits of Change is Parvathi's personal quest to piece together her late father Major-General TNR Nayar's time and experiences at the CFI. His letters, diary entries, photographs and videos form the cornerstone of this experience.

Spread across Lalit Kala Akademi, in rooms titled the archive room, helicopter room, tattoo room and forgiveness room to name a few, different pieces of the puzzle come together in performance, lending a well-researched, text-heavy exhibit that exists on its own. Curator P and her assistant's narration is the cherry on the top.

"This is a work of storytelling. When Nayantara and I were researching, we realised that most people did not even know that there was this lovely piece of Indo-Korean history that started from Chennai and finished in Chennai," says Parvathi, adding, "They say that fiction tells our truest history. So to create a work of fiction, we didn't invent history, but it's enmeshed in history. The emotional charge for it is my father's life. Who he was as a person influences and informs this piece."

The idealism of the newly independent India, and the self-proclaimed duty of care, all set context to the project rooted in autobiography. "We

book-end the piece with history and then let fiction take over. I think personally, I find these hybrid spaces very exciting," adds Parvathi.

Limits of Change is also a large collaborative exploration. Rathi Jafer, director, Inko Centre, who produced the show, says, "We are always looking for access points between the countries through the arts. The inter-cultural dialogue between India and Korea is emphasised by this project."

While Yog Japee helms the dramaturgy, the excellent stop-motion videos that narrate the fairytale of Miss P are conceptualised by CP Satyaji. The exhibition design is by Sindhu Vannamalai Sowmithri and the art installations are created by students from various educational institutions in the city.

In each room, there is a different emotion to tackle. Says Yog, "We wanted the audience to get as close to the human experience as possible. Ultimately, in such stories, it is the human experience that is paramount. That's what you take back."

Shows are on till February 20 at 11.30am, 3.30pm and 6.30pm. Registration is on a first-come, first-serve basis and can be done at inkocentre.org.

## Tamil pride

A discussion on Tamil identity was the crux of the conversation between author Nirmala Lakshman and former Union Minister Jayanthi Natarajan



**Beyond language** Author Nirmala Lakshman and former Union Minister Jayanthi Natarajan at Amethyst, 8, KANNAM

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During the Indian struggle for freedom, family members of the Chairperson of The Hindu Group, Nirmala Lakshman and Union Minister Jayanthi Natarajan, took to the streets to register dissent against oppressive colonial forces. Back then, these households full of journalists, politicians, and nationalists, were rife with conversations about Gandhi, mutiny, and the march towards independence.

"I grew up in a house where nearly all my family members went to jail around that time," says Natarajan. "When my great grandfather [CN Kanakasabayathi Mudaliar] was on his deathbed, he told my grandfather [M Bhaktavatsalam] this in the context of a struggle for a linguistic state: 'Remember, Bhaktavatsalam, from Tiruvengadam [another name for Tirupathi] to Kanyakumari, it is nothing but Tamilakam, Tamilakam, and only Tamilakam.' We lost Tiruvengadam but held onto Kurnool. That was how conversations were back then," she says.

The Tamil commitment to the freedom struggle took shape not just in people pledging gold to Gandhi,

but also in its erudite leaders who reached across bipartisan lines to strive for better lives for the Tamil people, said Lakshman.

A conversation about this and several other layers of the Tamil identity including its secular nature, alluring poetry and advanced civilisation, took place on Tuesday between the politician and the author at Amethyst's Purple Turtles.

Centred around Lakshman's latest book *Tamils - A Portrait of a Community*, part of a series brought out by the Aleph Book Company, the discussion went over passionate women of Tamil's glorious Sangam age, Jain and Buddhist influences before an established and unified Hindu identity, as well as early nationalists, as well as early nationalists. The author read out Sangam poetry translated by poet AK Ramanujan that captured the essence of women who yearned for their lovers, often in battle and, hero worship.

Lakshman said that there is a need to amplify the South Indian contribution towards the Indian freedom struggle. She recounted the story of Sivaganga queen Velu Nakiyar, the Marudhu brothers, who were early freedom fighters, and the sepoymutiny at Vellore in 1806, that predated the Meerut mutiny in 1857.