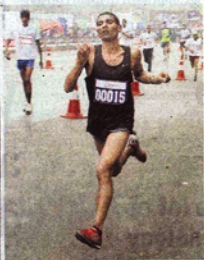


Arvind Yadav and Nilam Kadam win



Nilam Maruti Kadam (left) and Arvind Kumar Yadav, who won. - PHOTO: S. SUBRAMANIAM

Principal Correspondent

NEW DELHI: On a rainy and cold Sunday morning, Uttar Pradesh's Arvind Kumar Yadav reigned supreme in the men's event at the 24th Mawana Sugars Indian Open Marathon here.

Yadav, who finished second last year, defeated his nearest challenger Budha Ram by 39 seconds. The 24-year-old runner clocked two hours, 21 minutes and 44 seconds.

"I never lost the belief that I would win this race. After winning the silver medal last year, I worked hard at the Guru Gobind School under my coach Srijesh Bhatia. The cold weather helped me since it's tougher to compete in hot conditions," said Yadav.

Yadav failed to beat the meet record of 2:17:53, set by Satya Prakash in 2007. He had timed 2:20:02 while coming second in the event last year behind Lyngkhai Binning.

In the women's section, Nilam Maruti Kadam from Maharashtra claimed victory in three hours, one minute and

two seconds. Three minutes and 22 seconds later, M. Sudha earned the runner-up spot.

Kadam had finished second in last year's half marathon here and was supposed to compete in the same format, until a sudden change of heart led to her participation in the full marathon.

"I decided to compete in the full race only on Saturday night. It wasn't a tough decision to make since my training regime includes running 37 kilometres (25 in the morning and 12 in the evening) every day. I was level with Sudha for the first three rounds but pulled away in the fourth" said the 23-year-old Kadam.

Arvind Yadav and Kadam earned two and a half lakh rupees each for winning.

The results (winners only): Marathon: Men: Arvind Kumar Yadav 2:21:44. **Women:** Nilam Maruti Kadam 3:01:02. **Veteran: Men:** B.L.I. Bosco 3:11:34.

Half marathon: Men: Vishram Meena 1:06:31. **Women:** Kiran Tiwari 1:20:36. **Veteran: Men:** Jawahar Prasad 1:20:57. **Women:** Neelu Gupta 1:24:37.