



Arvind Singh Mewar (left) with Eduardo Novillo Astrada (HT Photo)

He may be a man of many passions, from cricket (he represented his school, university and Rajasthan State in cricket tournaments) to aviation, to collecting antique cars and fine crystal, and of course, his role in making Udaipur, where he is chairman of the HRH Group of Hotels, a world-class tourist destination is well-acknowledged, but friends of Arvind Singh Mewar, custodian of the erstwhile House of Mewar, will tell you that their pal is not much for smiling for the camera. Day after day, as he goes about his duties as titular head of his people, Singh posts dour photographs of himself with the innumerable visitors he meets at his palace, and in not a single one does the fiercely-whiskered and exquisitely-dressed business- man so much as crack a smile. Belying his personal warmth and modern day outlook, Singh's portraits make him come across as an unsmiling and remote figure from another era. Which is why, when we chanced upon some relatively animated impressions of him at a recent meeting at his palace, we were curious. "It was a pleasure meeting Mr Eduardo Novillo Astrada, President of Polo Association of Argentina and his team, for cocktails at Shambhu Niwas," he said in response to our query. "Mr Astrada has won the Argentine triple crown, playing with his brothers in their family team. All four brothers have been +10 goals." Unlike fellow members of erstwhile royalty from houses of Jodhpur and Jaipur, though Singh has not been seen as a polo player himself, nonetheless, his role in encouraging the sport in India is strong. "The Mewar Polo team has been instrumental in transforming polo in India, from a time when it was predominantly played by the armed forces, to when we initiated bringing in foreign players to team up with local civilian players," says Singh, who went on to establish the Ramgarh Resort and Polo Complex,