



PHOTO OP: (From left)
Wrestlers at a local akhada;
devotee at the Ganga in
Varanasi; street-food
vendor in Delhi

India Unbound

IT'S unusual for a first-time writer to put together a coffee-table book that contains over 300 photographs, 250 pages, weighs 3.5 kg and is priced at Rs 8,500. But Sumant Batra, 43, a well known Delhi-based lawyer, was determined to pursue his second passion, writing, and the result is *The Indians: Interesting Aspects, Extraordinary Facets*, a beautifully packaged book, full of vivid pictures of prevailing traditions and customs in India. "I wanted to showcase the ordinary Indians who are carrying the weight of this country on their shoulders," says Batra, also a consultant for the

World Bank, IMF and OECD. His charity work with the Loomba Trust, an India-based international trust that works for children of widows, brought him in touch with Cherie Blair, the international president of the trust who has written the foreword to the book.

The Indians is divided into 21 chapters, each dealing with a certain aspect of life in India. "The book is about the common man's life, the traditions he follows and the sights and sounds of his life in this country," says Batra who has worked closely with the photographer Son-

hal Nichani who shot all the photographs for the book. Beginning with "Rituals and Ceremonies", the book traces the lives of people around us, like presswallahs, dhobis, street-side cooks, eunuchs, wrestlers, children and more. "We tend to overlook the beauty of the ordinary and this deserves recognition as well," says Batra.

Now preparing for a launch in Mumbai, Bangalore and Chandigarh, Batra will soon head West to launch his book abroad. *The Indians* are going places.

(EFS)