

Foreign asset files: How Amarinder & son’s setback in HC could put a ‘frozen’ a probe in motion

NEW DELHI: The Punjab and Haryana High Court Wednesday upheld a Ludhiana court’s order allowing the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to inspect files related to overseas assets of former Punjab chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh and his son Raninder Singh—a shot in the arm for the agency.

Disposing of petitions filed by Amarinder Singh and his son, the high court observed that being an organ of the state, the ED has the right to inspect additional documents obtained by the Income Tax (I-T) Department from foreign authorities, besides the prosecution complaint.

Amarinder and his son moved the high court in 2021, saying that allowing the ED to inspect income tax documents was a violation of a double taxation treaty with France, as the information was confidential and could only be shared with persons or authorities involved in the assessment or collection of taxes. They obtained a stay on the ED inspection, pending further trial.

Hearing the matter on Wednesday, the high court questioned Amarinder and his son’s position



in challenging a lower court’s orders and allowed the ED access to the documents, stating it is the I-T department’s responsibility to oppose the order if it considers the inspection of the papers to be a violation of the terms of the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement between India and France.

“Information regarding the foreign assets concerning the petitioners has been placed on record in the form of documents before the magistrate by the I-T department, which has been sought by another government department/ED for the purpose of investigation. It is not a case that the in-

formation has been demanded for public dissemination; rather, it is only for carrying out investigation against the petitioners,” Justice Tribhuvan Dahiya observed in his judgment.

“They have no right to object to it by alluding to the Avoidance of Double Taxation Agreement. It is the Government of India which has entered into this agreement with the French Republic, where under the information has been handed over to the I-T department,” Justice Tribhuvan Dahiya said. “The ED is permitted to inspect the record of the complaints before the magistrate and access

the information/documents; however, the same shall not be disseminated publicly unless permitted in accordance with law,” he added. An ED official said the judgment would allow them to take the FEMA case forward.

“The judgment will finally allow the agency to take the case initiated under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) to a logical conclusion. It would expedite the case that otherwise was left frozen due to a lack of access to potential incriminating materials. The judgment sets the precedent for inter-agency coordination on information-sharing in the future as well,” the ED official, who is privy to the matter, told ThePrint. However, inspection of the documents, along with allegations of the I-T department of tax evasion, alone cannot justify a probe against Amarinder Singh and his son under FEMA provisions.

“For a FEMA probe, illegal outward remittance of foreign currency, or any illicit management of foreign currency, has to be there. Mere evasion of tax does not make one an accused under FEMA, even while the suspect could be liable under the Income

Tax Act,” another ED official privy to the application of FEMA provisions told ThePrint. Both Amarinder Singh and his son, Raninder, have denied the charges against them before IT officials and the Ludhiana court in the past. The saga began in June 2011, when the I-T department received what it called “credible information” from French authorities in the form of master-sheets in a pen drive, containing details of overseas assets, allegedly controlled by Amarinder and Raninder, in Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates. The assets allegedly included bank accounts maintained with HSBC Private Bank (Suisse) S.A., a subsidiary of HSBC Private Bank Holdings in Switzerland, and HSBC Financial Services (Middle East) Limited. The documents allegedly further revealed that Raninder was a signatory to the Jacaranda Trust, which held ownership of business entities like Chillingham Holdings Limited, Allworth Venture Holdings Limited, Limerlock International Limited and Mulwala Holdings Limited, and Amarinder Singh was one of the beneficiaries of the Jacaranda Trust and its holdings.

Smart teachers more important than smart classrooms and blackboards: Prez Murmu

NEW DELHI: Smart blackboards, smart classrooms and other modern facilities have their own importance in schools and higher education institutions but the most important thing is smart teachers, President Droupadi Murmu said on Friday.

Recalling her time as a teacher, she described it to be a very meaningful period of her life.



Murmu was speaking at the National Teachers Awards ceremony at Vigyan Bhawan where she conferred the awards upon over 60 educators for their exemplary contribution to teaching and learning.

“Smart blackboards, smart classrooms and other modern facilities have their own importance. But the most important thing is smart teachers.... Smart teachers are the teachers who understand the needs of their students’ development. Smart teachers make studies interesting and effective with affection and sensitivity.

“Such teachers make students capable of fulfilling the needs of society and the nation.. Sensible teachers work to instill a sense of dignity and security in children,” she said.

Murmu noted building the character of students is the primary duty of a teacher. “Sensitive, responsible and dedicated students who follow moral conduct are better than those students who are only interested in competition, bookish knowledge and selfishness. A good teacher has both emotions and intellect. The coordination of emotions and intellect also impacts the students,” she said.

“Children from the poorest of backgrounds can touch the skies of progress with the power of education. Affectionate and devout

ed teachers play the most important role in giving strength to the flight of children. The biggest reward for teachers is that their students remember them throughout their lives and make commendable contributions to the family, society and country,” she added.

The president said that the National Education Policy aims to make India a global knowledge superpower. “For this, our teachers must be recognized as the best teachers in the world. Our institutions and teachers have to contribute actively in all three areas of education – school education, higher education and skill education. I am confident that our teachers will establish India as a global knowledge superpower with their crucial contribution,” she said.

From novel methods of teaching, dedication to students’ growth to attempts to enhance learning achievements in difficult environments, the awardees were recognised at the annual award ceremony.

Ranging from innovative pedagogy to inspiring first-generation learners, the awardees played a key role in shaping young minds across India.

Ahead of the awards, Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacted with the National Award-winning teachers.

Karnataka’s egg-soya swap at govt hospitals sees backlash ‘caste undertones, patients need animal protein’

BENGALURU: The Siddaramaiah government’s decision to replace eggs with soya chunks in Karnataka-run hospitals has come under sharp criticism from public health experts, who have questioned the science behind such a sweeping move.

“Unless soya has undergone a lot of processes, it is generally a more difficult food to digest. It might have protein content, but most of it is not bioavailable and definitely it’s not as nutritious as animal source foods,” Dr Sylvia Karpagam, an MD in community medicine and public health expert, told ThePrint. “Whether it’s senior citizens, breastfeeding mothers...all

those recovering... they all need better immunity and ability to regenerate tissues. Animal proteins have advantages for sick and recovering patients,” she added.

On Tuesday, Karnataka health minister, Dinesh Gundu Rao, announced a nine-month pilot programme to serve ‘nutritious’ food to patients in three of Bengaluru’s public hospitals. None of them will include eggs since the contracted party, ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness), is a Hindu religious organisation. The project will cost over Rs 1.37 crore.

To meet specific nutritional requirements, the govern-

ment introduced separate diet plans for general, therapeutic, pregnancy, post-natal and pediatric patients. Madhya Pradesh replaced eggs with milk in 2021. Karnataka has held out despite resistance to serving eggs from parents who want only vegetarian food for children. Experts argue the decision has caste undertones similar to the refusal to use Indian kitchen staples such as onions and garlic, which they say is an attempt to “homogenise” food habits and align them with those of so-called upper caste groups.

ISKCON’s Hare Krishna Food for Life (FFL) programme is the world’s largest vegetarian food distribu-

tion initiative with projects in over 60 countries. It serves food in about 23,978 schools (govt and govt-aided) across the country under the Akshaya Patra Foundation-led Mid-Day Meal. The organisation caters to 2.33 million children every day in various states. According to Union Human Resource Development Ministry (MHRD) guidelines, a mid-day meal for primary school children should provide 450 calories—12 grams of protein, 100 grams of food grains, 20 grams of pulses, 50 grams of vegetables, 5 grams of oil and fat, and salt and condiments as needed.

The protein quotient is



where most of the problem lies.

Karnataka health minister Dinesh Gundu Rao told ThePrint that this was only a pilot project in three government hospitals in Bengaluru and that its continuance would depend on

patient feedback.

“Earlier, a local contractor used to take it (tender) and they used to do it. The quality was not great, nor was the service. They (ISKCON) will serve, bring everything (utensils) and take it back as well.

Bhutan PM Tshering Tobgay, wife visit Ayodhya’s Ram temple



AYODHYA: Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay and his spouse Aum Tashi Doma on Friday visited the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya.

During their visit, the Bhutanese dignitaries offered prayers at the temple and took part in rituals. They also inspected the temple premises.

Their engagements in Ayodhya followed their arrival earlier in the morning, when they were received at the airport by Uttar Pradesh minister Surya Pratap Shahi, who welcomed them on behalf of the state government.

The visit comes as part of Tobgay’s ongoing India tour, which underscores the close cultural and spiritual ties between India and Bhutan.

His spiritual engagements in Ayodhya are also aligned with the broader themes of his visit, where he has highlighted the enduring value of ancient learning and shared traditions.

Earlier, while addressing an event streamed live on Nalanda University’s YouTube channel, Tobgay emphasised that the “Nalanda spirit,” rooted in the ancient centre of learning in Bihar, must continue to thrive, while assuring that Bhutan will play its part in spreading and nurturing it.

Speaking at the event, Tobgay said, “I would like to thank the government of India for continuing the tradition of Nalanda Mahavira and continuing to spread the Nalanda spirit.

And, in that spirit, for giving Bhutan the opportunity to build a temple in Rajgir.”

He further expressed his appreciation, adding, “Thank you for giving us the opportunity to visit this historic city, Rajgir.”

Elaborating on the role of the institution, the Bhutanese Prime Minister stated, “Today, you have the Nalanda University continuing to carry on the Nalanda spirit.... Learn and grow in oneness with Nalanda. The Nalanda spirit must grow and we in Bhutan will do our part to propagate, to nurture this spirit.”

During an interaction with the audience, Tobgay was asked about Bhutan’s ties with Nalanda. In response, he said, “A lot is happening between Bhutan and Nalanda, especially when we have a temple now.”

Reflecting further on the connection, he added, “Nalanda is not just a university of the past — it is a timeless beacon of peace, unity and spirituality that continues to inspire the world. As only Vajrayana Buddhist kingdom, Bhutan deeply cherishes Nalanda’s role in shaping our spiritual and cultural traditions. Our future collaborations with Nalanda will be an extension of this historic bond.”

According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, along with his spouse Aum Tashi Doma, will be on an official visit to India from September 3 to 6.

Nitish launches projects worth Rs 1,159 Cr, inaugurates Bihar’s first cable suspension bridge

PATNA: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Friday launched projects worth around Rs 1,159.84 crore in Patna district.

The CM also inaugurated Bihar’s first cable suspension bridge, modelled on the iconic Laxman Jhula of Rishikesh (Uttarakhand). The bridge over the Punpun River has been built at a cost of Rs 82.99 crore.

A statement issued by the chief minister’s office here said, “The CM on Friday inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of 17 development projects in Patna district.”

These projects include the construction of a bridge and approach road over Punpun River between Samda and Gularia Vigha villages in Paliganj block at a cost of Rs 19.77 crore, development of tourism facilities at the Ular Sun Temple in Paliganj at Rs 14.99 crore and construction of a connecting road from Punpun station via Akona village to the Patna Ring



Road at a cost of Rs 88 lakh. Other projects include construction of a two-lane road linking Sohagi Mor of the Sadikpur-Pabheda-Masaurhi Road to Kandaap on Patna-Gaya Road at a cost of Rs 41.48 crore and construction of a cable suspension bridge at the Punpun Pinddaan site at a cost of Rs 82.99 crore, it said.

Besides, 12 projects related to the power sector and four of the tourism department were also launched by the CM.

The power projects include capacity enhancement of

power transformers at eight sub-stations, at a cost of Rs 10.20 crore, reconductoring of 20 new 33 kV power lines at a cost of Rs 26.02 crore, construction of 21 new 33 kV power lines at a cost of Rs 70.31 crore and capacity enhancement of power transformers at 18 substations at a cost of Rs 22.99 crore, the statement added.

The CM also interacted with a large number of pension beneficiaries and ‘Jeevika Didis’ at the venue in Punpun.

“Beneficiaries appreciated the government’s move to



provide 125 units of electricity free of cost to domestic consumers, which has enabled families to save and spend on other developmental needs.

“Jeevika Didis praised the government’s initiatives for women’s empowerment and

expressed their gratitude to the CM. They said that loans were now available at just 7 per cent interest from banks, for which they were extremely thankful,” the statement said.

Others present on the occasion included Deputy Chief

Minister Samrat Chaudhary, state ministers Vijay Kumar Chaudhary and Bijendra Prasad Yadav, Development Commissioner S Siddharth, Director General of Police Vinay Kumar and other senior officials of the state government.

Why AYUSH secretary’s unprecedented 8-year run is facing legal challenge

NEW DELHI: Eight years after he was first appointed by the Centre as AYUSH secretary, lateral entrant Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha’s unusual eight-year run in the government has run into legal trouble.

Earlier this year, in March, a petition was filed in the Delhi High Court challenging Kotecha’s appointment in 2017 and the repeated extensions he has received since then, leading to his “indefinite continuance” in office.

His appointment, the petition contends, was done “without any recruitment notification, without adhering Govt. of India guidelines or rules allowing for a layman to be appointed to this high decision-making post”.

“He is neither an Officer of the Indian Administrative Ser-

vices nor he is retired senior officer and even does not have any special administrative expertise warranting his appointment as Secretary of the Ministry of AYUSH, a key and top-level post which was earlier headed by an IAS officer prior to his appointment in 2017,” the petition adds.

While the petition was filed in March 2025 at a time when Kotecha had received three extensions, the government gave him another extension of one year in May 2025.

The petitioner, Dr. V.P. Tyagi, a doctor and former president of the erstwhile Central Council for Indian Medicine, subsequently filed another petition stating that the extension granted to him yet again was arbitrary, and that while the retirement age for civil ser-

vants is 60, Kotecha turns 62 in July 2025.

In a hearing on 28 May, the Delhi High Court served a notice to the Centre on the plea. In its response, the Centre filed an affidavit on 17 July, in which it stated that Kotecha’s appointment was made in the “larger public and national interest” on a contractual basis.

“In the exercise of executive sovereign power, the government is primarily guided by larger public and national interest and thus for appointment to senior level positions such as Secretary to Government of India – the width of subjective satisfaction in taking a decision in respect of such high posts is not ought not to be fettered,” the Centre’s affidavit states.

ThePrint reached Kotecha

for comment via WhatsApp messages. This report will be updated if and when he responds.

According to the Centre’s lateral entry rules for the positions of joint secretary, which it had advertised through the UPSC in several batches since 2018, a lateral entrant was to be appointed on contract for a period of three years, which was extendable up to five years. However, in the case of Kotecha, an Ayurvedic practitioner, this period has been extended “indefinitely” for the last eight years, the petition states.

“An appointment to a public post, especially one which is at such a high-level, ought to follow the cardinal principles of transparency and fairness,” the petition states.

Charas valued at Rs 6.21 crore seized in MP’s Shivpuri, one arrested

SHIVPURI: Charas valued at Rs 6.21 crore was on Friday seized from a 38-year-old local resident in Madhya Pradesh’s Shivpuri, an official said.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team led by Dehat police station in-charge Jiten-dra Mawai intercepted one Sandeep Singh and recovered 60 packets of charas from two bags in his possession.

A newly purchased Kia car was also impounded in connection with the case, Superintendent of Police Aman Singh Rathore told reporters.

Singh told the police that he got 30.295 kg of charas, valued at Rs 6.21 crore, from a Lucknow-based truck driver, who had recently transported tomatoes to Nepal, the official said.

A case was registered against Singh under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

Singh, who was caught in Guna district with 650 grams of opium a few months ago, was out on bail. He also faces other serious offences, the official said.

According to officials, 17 kg of charas valued at Rs 3.49 crore was seized in Kolaras police station limits of the district last year.

Rathore said drugs and illicit liquor valued at about Rs 10.55 crore have been seized in Shivpuri district so far this year. The haul includes 30.29 kg of charas, 1,294.85 grams of smack, 903.86 kg ganja, 955 grams of opium, 12.15 kg of “doda choora” and 37,348 litres of illegal liquor.