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● Cong ncluded Ambedkar's shameful cartoon in NCERT book in 2012: Pradhan

Assam Police nab 8 'fundamentalists'

Arrested persons planning subversive activities: Police ● Arrests made in Assam, West Bengal and Kerala



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 19: The Assam Police have apprehended 8 fundamentalists with the active assistance from West Bengal and Kerala police thereby busting an attempt to carry out subversive activities across the country, a top official said on Thursday.

'Cong forcibly tried to enter Raj Bhavan'

GUWAHATI, Dec 19: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday alleged that Congress leaders had attempted to enter Raj Bhavan here forcibly during protest and the authorities have ordered an inquiry into the incident.

Oppn, BJP MPs jostle in Parliament premises

Two Saffron party lawmakers injured ● Rahul refutes woman MP's slur ● Kharage accuses BJP members of injuring his knees



NEW DELHI, Dec 19: The acrimonious face-off between the opposition and ruling NDA over alleged insult to B R Ambedkar took an unprecedented ugly turn in Parliament premises on Thursday.

Rajya Sabha against each other. BJP MPs Mukesh Rajput and Pratap Chandra Sarangi sustained injuries and were admitted to the RML hospital.

remarks on Ambedkar and accused the BJP of slighting the architect of the Constitution. BJP MPs claimed that Gandhi tried to push his way inside Parliament through the middle of the stairs where they were standing.

HT BRIEFS

Women empowerment

GUWAHATI: The Assam Government has launched the second phase of the distribution of 'No Dues Certificates' under the Assam Micro Finance Incentive and Relief Scheme, 2021.

Supporting farmers

GUWAHATI: In a significant move towards enhancing agricultural productivity and supporting local farmers, Assam Chief Secretary Ravi Kota held a crucial meeting with officials from the Department of Agriculture.

CBI files supplementary chargesheet against three accused in trading scam

GUWAHATI, Dec 19: The CBI has filed a supplementary chargesheet against three accused persons in connection with an on-line trading scam in Assam.



the supplementary chargesheet, the CBI said in a release. The CBI had filed an instant case on October 14 after taking over the investigation of the case.

Das and seven-eight employees of the firm. It was alleged that the accused persons took money from several clients by convincing them guaranteed returns.

BJP govt asked 'X' to delete Amit Shah's RS speech: Cong

NEW DELHI, Dec 19: Citing an email, the Congress on Thursday claimed that the BJP government has asked social media platform 'X' to remove the speech of Home Minister Amit Shah.

Digital Platforms Supriya Shrinete claimed that Congress leaders, its MPs, and the party's official handle, including herself, had received an email from the 'X', saying the government of India had asked it to delete Shah's speech.



Closely monitoring situation: India on attacks on minorities in B'desh

NEW DELHI, Dec 19: India on Thursday said it is concerned over incidents of violence against Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh and asserted that the primary responsibility to protect their life and liberty rests with the interim government in Dhaka.

The comments by minister of state for external affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh in Rajya Sabha came days after foreign secretary Vikram Misri travelled to Dhaka and conveyed New Delhi's concerns on the matter to the top political brass of Bangladesh's interim government.

and puja mandaps also came to light during the recent Durga Puja festival in Bangladesh," he said. The government had expressed its serious concerns regarding the attack on a Pujya mandap in Tantibazar, Dhaka and theft at the Jeshoreshwari Kali temple at Satkhira during Durga Puja.

'Tobacco-related diseases place an unsustainable burden on health system'

Experts call for higher 'Sin Tax' on tobacco to curb consumption

NEW DELHI, Dec 19: Ahead of a crucial GST Council meeting on tax rationalisation health and economic experts have called for a higher 'Sin Tax' on tobacco and similar harmful products to curb their consumption.



and fund preventive healthcare initiatives. "Tobacco-related diseases place an unsustainable burden on India's health system. Tax hikes have proven globally effective in reducing tobacco consumption," said Dr

harmful alternatives. The GST Council, chaired by Bihar deputy chief minister Samrat Chaudhary, is scheduled to meet on December 21 to deliberate on the GoM's proposals.

GUWAHATI, Dec 19: A male Ganges river dolphin in Assam was tagged and released with the aim to understand their seasonal and migratory patterns and habitat utilisation, particularly in fragmented or disturbed river systems.



existing knowledge gaps for the long-term conservation of the species, it said. The Ganges river dolphin, the national aquatic animal, is unique in its ecology, being nearly blind and relying on echo location for its biological needs.

Approximately 90 per cent of the species' population resides in India, historically distributed across the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli river systems.

Sharmila Tagore, Mohan Agashe on new film 'Outhouse': It talks about aging and companionship

NEW DELHI, Dec 19: "Outhouse" co-stars Sharmila Tagore and Mohan Agashe's friendship dates back to the '90s when they worked on Mira Nair's "Mississippi Masala".

The two actors have reunited for Sunil Sukthankar's light-hearted family comedy, which was written by late Sumitra Bhavne and releases in cinemas on Friday.

Recalling how they shot "Mississippi Masala", Nair's crossover romance drama, also featuring Sarita Choudhury and Denzel Washington, Tagore said the whole cast and crew were put up in the same hotel and had a great time.

"It was equal for all of us. We had so much fun after work. Mohan Agashe was there and everybody... And there are also a lot of women in that film. The wardrobe, the screenplay writer, and the director were all women. So it was great fun working in the film," Tagore

told PTI in an interview.

Agashe shared that his co-star, who was already famous globally for her roles in Satyajit Ray's films "Apur Sansar" and "Devi" as well as several Hindi hits, used to be scared of "lizards". Tagore corrected him, saying "cockroaches".

The actor said his job was to make the creepy crawlies leave her room.

"And in exchange, I would get a nice breakfast. Since we were there in 1990, she has always been a star but much more of a star in the migrated Indian community and their town. So every evening, she had some invitation for a wonderful dinner and she never went alone. She always took us along, myself and Mohan Gokhale. We thoroughly enjoyed our stay there," Agashe recalled.

The friendship has grown over the years and now whenever Agashe visits Delhi, Tagore calls him over for din-

ner.

"I get one dinner from her and she comes and makes it a point to see my plays, films and she enjoys them. And not only



her but also her daughter, Soha, had come with her daughter for my play 'Par Hame Khelna Hai'... So every time I was there, I enjoyed being there with them," the 73-year-old actor said.

"Outhouse" explores unexpected companionship, inter-

generational connections, and the transformative power of trust and empathy through the story where Tagore plays an animator who is roped in by her grandson to find their missing dog who has befriended a recluse man, Agashe.

The 80-year-old actor, who was last seen in OTT film "Gulmohar", said she was able to visualise the story of "Outhouse" when she heard the script.

"In this film, we are not really pouring anybody with the message, so it's a very delightful film. It talks about aging and the need for companionship, how a lot of older people are living alone and there is nothing really wrong about it. It's wonderful, we like to be alone.

"At the same time, we are connected with the world. It says all these things, there is a child, there is a dog... It was a lot of fun and we had a lovely time shooting for it in Pune." (PTI)

Was reminded of Amitabh Bachchan's 'Hum' while playing dual roles in 'Baby John': Varun Dhawan



MUMBAI, Dec 19: Bollywood star Varun Dhawan on Wednesday said he drew references from megastar Amitabh Bachchan's cult film "Hum" while preparing to play dual roles in the upcoming action feature "Baby John".

Dhawan, known for "Badlapur", "October", and "Bhediya", said Bachchan continues to inspire the newer generation of actors.

Directed by Mukul Anand, "Hum" followed a dock worker called Tiger, who renames himself as Shekhar to safeguard his family from his violent past. The 1991 film also starred Rajinikanth, Govinda, Kimi Katkar, and Shilpa Shirodkar.

"I liked 'Hum' and it featured Rajinikanth sir, Govinda ji, and Mukul Anand is one of my favourite directors. When he made the film, it was ahead of its time. The way he had shown the past and present of Amit ji, it was great.

"Amit ji has done so many iconic films, there's so much to learn from him, the newer generation of actors should not forget that bible. There's a shot in 'Hum' where he fights and then runs. I thought of that scene while doing this film," the actor told reporters here at the press conference of "Baby John".

The film, directed by Kalees, will see Dhawan play a cop named Satya Verma and John, his alter ego.

The actor said "Baby John" was the most emotionally challenging film of his career. "There were certain scenes where I felt emotionally drained. Kalees sir would tell me not to get emotional but sometimes I would just break down," he added.

Dhawan also thanked singer Diljit Dosanjh for lending his voice to the song "Nain Matakka" in the film. They are also set to share screen space in upcoming war drama "Border 2".

"Working with Diljit was so easy, we had so much fun together. He is a pure artist, it's beautiful to see him perform. I'm going to be working with him as a co-star in 'Border 2'. I'm thankful to Diljit paaji for the song." (PTI)



Veteran Malayalam actress Meena Ganesh passes away at 81

PALAKKAD (KERALA), Dec 19: Veteran Malayalam film-cum-serial actress Meena Ganesh died on Thursday at a private hospital in Shornur in Palakkad district where she was undergoing treatment for the last five days, Film Employees Federation of Kerala (FEFKA) said. She was 81.

FEFKA general secretary B Unnikrishnan, in a statement, said that Meena Ganesh acted in over 200 films, 25 serials and several plays in her long acting career.

He said that she was undergoing treatment at the private hospital following a stroke.

She made her debut in 1976 in P A Backer's film 'Manimuzhakkam' and her roles in movies like 'Nandanam', 'Meeshamadhavan' and 'Karumadikuttan' attracted audience attention, the FEFKA Directors Union said in a Facebook post.

She is the wife of Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award winner and famous playwright and director N N Ganesh and her son is Manoj Ganesh, a well known serial director and FMTV Directors Union member, the post, paying tributes to her, said. (PTI)

KARAN AUJLA DELIVERS ELECTRIFYING PERFORMANCE IN DELHI-NCR

NEW DELHI, Dec 19: It was an evening filled with music and madness as Karan Aujla mesmerised fans with an electrifying performance in the Delhi-NCR region that turned out to be star-studded affair with Varun Dhawan, Badshah and Nora Fatehi joining in the fun on the first two days of the Punjabi sensation's India tour.

The singer, who gave voice to the viral Vicky Kaushal song "Tauba Tauba", performed in Gurugram's Airia Mall on December 15 and 17 as part of his "It Was All A Dream" tour, will take to the stage once again on December 19.

While the first show drew over 12,000 concert goers, the second concert drew a bigger crowd with over 15,000 fans turning up to listen to the musician, also known for chartbusters "Softly", "Wavy" and "Making Memories".

The crowd went "Aujla, Aujla" when the singer made a dramatic entry through a trap door in the middle of the stage and greeted them with an enthusiastic "Aur Dilliwalon!" Aujla may have become a sensation for many post "Tauba Tauba", but his true fans have followed the Canada-based singer for years. "I have been listening to Karan Aujla since 2016. I have listened to almost all of his songs. He is a great artist, and I am excited that I got a chance to come to his concert," a fan said.

Then, there were those who wanted the singer to croon their favourites like "Softly" and "Bachke Bachke". (PTI)



Oscar-shortlisted films 'Universal Language', 'Hollywoodgate' to headline Red Lorry Film Festival

NEW DELHI, Dec 19: The Red Lorry Film Festival is set to screen Academy Award hopefuls "Universal Language" and "Hollywoodgate" at its upcoming second edition, set to be held between March 21 and March 23 in Mumbai and Hyderabad.

Curated by BookMyShow, the line-up promises an exploration of world cinema offering over 120 titles, including critically-acclaimed films across languages, genres, and cultures up for the showcase.

"Universal Language", Canada's official entry to Oscars 2025 in the best international film category, and "Hollywoodgate", shortlisted in the best documentary feature film segment, are leading the pack at the film gala.

While "Universal Language" is billed as an absurdist comedy-drama film set in a mysterious and surreal

interzone somewhere between Tehran and Winnipeg, "Hollywoodgate" provides an intense and on-the-ground look at post-2021 Taliban-ruled Kabul.

English rom-com drama "This Time Next Year"; "To Die Alone", a powerful LGBTQ+ story of love and isolation; documentary "999: The Forgotten Girls"; "I'm Nevenka", a drama-based on real-life events; psychological horror film "Mom"; "When The Light Breaks", the opening film for the Un Certain Regard selection of the 2024 Cannes Film Festival; and "Filmlovers!", a French autofiction essay film are also part of the line-up of the Red Lorry Film Festival.

Ashish Saksena, COO - Cinemas, BookMyShow, said the success of the inaugural Red Lorry Film Festival has reinforced our belief in the grow-

ing demand for world cinema among Indian audiences.

"For our second edition, we've curated a powerful lineup of films that push the boundaries of storytelling, exploring themes of love, loss, identity and survival," Saksena said in a statement.

In the coming year, the film gala is also headed to Hyderabad for Red Lorry Film Festival: Parallel Verse.

"As we expand to Hyderabad and continue to receive love in Mumbai, our goal is to create unforgettable cinematic experiences that showcase the transformative power of storytelling. We remain committed to connecting audiences with the magic of cinema in its most impactful form," added Saksena.

Cinephiles can purchase their passes exclusively on BookMyShow, starting at just ₹ 750. (PTI)



Red Bull picks Liam Lawson as Max Verstappen's F1 teammate in 2025

MILTON KEYNES (ENGLAND), Dec 19: Liam Lawson will partner world champion Max Verstappen at Red Bull in 2025, the Formula 1 team said on Thursday. Lawson, a New Zealander, replaces Sergio Perez, who was dropped on Wednesday after months of poor results. The 22-year-old Lawson will switch from Racing Bulls, Red Bull's sister team, after racing as a replacement driver in 2023 and this year. He started in Red Bull's junior program. "There's no doubt that racing alongside Max, a four-time champion and undoubtedly one of the greatest drivers ever seen in F1, is a daunting task," Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said, "but I'm sure Liam can rise to that challenge and deliver some outstanding results for us next year." Lawson said it was a "lifelong dream" to be racing with Red Bull. "This is something I've wanted and worked toward since I was 8 years old," he said. "It's been an incredible journey so far." Perez's contract was terminated two years early, the Mexican ditched after being rarely competitive this season. He had not won a race since April 2023 and the last time he finished higher than sixth in a grand prix was in May. Meanwhile, Verstappen continued to dominate F1. Lawson joined Red Bull's junior program in 2019 and made his F1 debut at the Dutch Grand Prix in 2023 with Scuderia AlphaTauri — which was later rebranded as Racing Bulls — in place of the injured Daniel Ricciardo. He completed five races for the team that year. This year, Dawson had a points-scoring finish at the United States Grand Prix, again replacing Ricciardo. (AP)

MBSG are at top of the league leaderboard ISL: FC GOA AIM TO END MOHUN BAGAN'S UNBEATEN RUN



MARGAO, Dec 19: FC Goa will seek to snap a rampaging Mohun Bagan Super Giant's eight-match unbeaten streak in the Indian Super League (ISL) when the two sides square off in a 12th round match here on Friday. FC Goa, under India head coach Manolo Marquez, will also aim to improve their record against the Mariners, having lost five of their eight meetings in the ISL, including a narrow 0-1 defeat in their most recent fixture in February. Super Giant's unbeaten run has seen them win seven and

draw one of their last eight ISL games, and that has put them on top of the league leaderboard with 26 points from 11 matches, winning eight, drawing twice and losing once. On the other hand, the Gaurs are placed fourth with 19 points from the same number of games. Both these teams have been in equally efficient form upfront, with the Kolkata-based side netting 22 times in the competition thus far, as compared to the 21 of the Goa club. However, the visitors have

been comparatively better organized at the back, as they have conceded 10 goals as opposed to the 15 of FC Goa. Head-to-head, FC Goa have won twice, whereas Super Giant have emerged victorious five times in the eight times these two teams have faced each other in the ISL. FC Goa head coach Marquez admitted that the Mariners have a nice mix of international and domestic stars that make them a strong opponent. "I feel that we are playing one of the strongest teams in the

competition. Mohun Bagan have most of the top national team players, and they've spent a lot on getting good foreigners too," Marquez said. "We need to keep fighting to win" Super Giant head coach Jose Molina lauded his team for not giving up under any circumstance. "The mentality of Mohun Bagan Super Giant is to fight every game till the end. We have to attack and defend well, communicate properly, but most importantly we need to keep fighting to get the win," Molina said. (PTI)

Arsenal, Liverpool and Newcastle progress in English League Cup

LONDON, Dec 19: Arsenal, Newcastle and Liverpool advanced in the English League Cup on Wednesday to ensure a heavyweight lineup for the semifinals. Gabriel Jesus scored a hat trick — including a crucial second goal from an offside position — as Arsenal beat Crystal Palace 3-2 to reach the last four for the first time since the 2021-22 season. Liverpool kept alive its title defense by winning 2-1 at Southampton, with Darwin Nunez and Harvey Elliott the scorers in the first half for the leaders of the Premier League and Champions League. Newcastle defeated Brentford 3-1 mainly thanks to two first-half goals by Italy midfielder Sandro Tonali and progressed to the semifinals for the second time in three seasons. The Saudi-controlled club from the north east, which hasn't won a major trophy since 1955, lost in the League Cup final to Manchester United in 2023. United visits Tottenham on Thursday in the remaining quarterfinal match, guaranteeing that the semifinals will feature four of the biggest teams in the country. Jesus had previously only scored one goal in 20 appearances in all competitions this season — and that was also in the English League Cup at second-tier Preston in October. So the Brazil striker's first hat trick for Arsenal came as something of a surprise, as did the standard of his finishing. There was luck for Jesus, too, as replays showed that he was offside when running through to score his goal that made it 2-1 in the 73rd minute at Emirates Stadium. How-

ever, there is no video review until the semifinals of the competition so the goal wasn't ruled out. Jesus, who had equalized in the 54th with an excellently taken chip over goalkeeper Dean Henderson, completed his hat trick in the 81st by running through unmarked and smashing a low strike past Henderson. That gave his team a two-goal cushion but former Arsenal striker Eddie Nketiah ensured a nervy finish by heading home a cross in the 85th to make it 3-1. Jean-Philippe Mateta had put Palace ahead in the fourth minute. Liverpool has now gone 20 games unbeaten within a single season in all competitions for the first time since 1996, according to Premier League stats supplier Opta. Things could hardly be going any better for Arne Slot, who fielded a weakened, heavily rotated team — featuring Japan midfielder Wataru Endo at center back — that still had not taken Tottenham. Nunez particularly enjoyed his goal, which came after he had been jeered by Southampton fans for missing an early chance. After putting Liverpool ahead, he put his finger to his mouth in a "shush" gesture to the home crowd. Interim coach Simon Rusk took charge of Southampton, the last-place team in the Premier League, following the dismissal of manager Russell Martin on Sunday — hours after a 5-0 loss to Tottenham. Slot sat in the stands for the match at St. Mary's stadium as he was serving a touchline suspension after getting booked for the third time this season last weekend. (AP)

Intercontinental Cup: Real Madrid beat Pachuca in final

LUSAIL (QATAR), Dec 19: Real Madrid beat Mexican team Pachuca 3-0 in the Intercontinental Cup final Wednesday, making Carlo Ancelotti the most decorated coach in the club's history. Ancelotti lifted his 15th title with the Spanish powerhouse, surpassing the 14 trophies that he and Miguel Muñoz had won. Muñoz coached the team in the 1960s and 70s. "Very happy, it's a triumph," said the 65-year-old Ancelotti, who on Tuesday was named men's coach of the year at the FIFA's "The Best" awards. "We didn't get off to a good start but finished well, showing great attitude." Kylian Mbappé, Rodrigo and Vinicius Junior scored a goal each as Madrid became the most successful club in the competition with four titles. It also won in 1960, 1998 and 2002. Pachuca has never won the tournament, which brings together the champions of all six soccer confederations. The competition is being played in a new format after FIFA ex-

panded the Club World Cup to 32 teams for 2025. Madrid won the annual Club World Cup five times — in 2014, 2016, 2017-18 and 2022. Eleven of Ancelotti's titles with Madrid have come in his second stint with the club, which began in 2021. Four of them, including a Champions League title, came during his time with Madrid from 2013-15. Mbappé, who started after recovering from a left-thigh injury, opened the scoring after an assist by Vinicius in the 37th. Rodrigo added to the lead with a shot into the corner in the 53rd and Vinicius, named the men's player of the year on Tuesday, sealed the victory by converting an 84th-minute penalty kick. Madrid made it straight to the final without having to play any matches as the European champion, while Pachuca advanced by defeating South American champion Botafogo and Al Ahly of Egypt in the preliminary rounds of the tournament taking place in Qatar. (AP)

Atalanta dominant again with 6-1 win over Cesena in Italian Cup, Roma routs Sampdoria

MILAN, Dec 19: Serie A leader Atalanta continued its domination of domestic soccer this season with another hefty victory in the Italian Cup albeit against second-division Cesena. Charles De Ketelaere and Lazar Samardzic both scored twice as Atalanta cruised to a 6-1 win to book a place in the quarterfinals against Bologna. Marco Brescianini added a fifth early in the second half and Atalanta finally eased off the gas, although Samardzic doubled his tally in the 71st. Substitute Joseph Ceasay netted a consolation goal in the final minute for Cesena. Roma coach Claudio Ranieri steered his side to a morale-boosting victory over one of

his many former clubs and avoided a potential upset against Sampdoria, which had already knocked out two Serie A teams. Roma had lost in the league 2-0 at Como, which was one of the top-flight teams Samp had beaten on its cup run — the other being city rival Genoa. However, an early double from Artem Dovbyk and a delightful solo effort from Tommaso Baldanzi had Roma 3-0 up inside 25 minutes. Gerard Yepes pulled one back for Samp in the 61st but Roma restored its three-goal advantage through substitute Eldor Shomurodov, moments after he replaced Dovbyk. (AP)

showed no signs of easing up, even against lower league opposition. Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini opted for a surprisingly strong starting lineup and Atalanta was 2-0 up in less than 10 minutes and 4-0 up by halftime following goals by Davide Zappacosta, De Ketelaere's double and Samardzic's first. Marco Brescianini added a fifth early in the second half and Atalanta finally eased off the gas, although Samardzic doubled his tally in the 71st. Substitute Joseph Ceasay netted a consolation goal in the final minute for Cesena. Roma coach Claudio Ranieri steered his side to a morale-boosting victory over one of



Assam team departs for Kerala to compete in 27th Sub Jr Nat'l Sepak Takraw C'ship



HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Dec 19: The Assam team, selected by the Assam Sepak Takraw Association, will participate in the 27th Sub-Junior National Sepak Takraw Championship to be held at Trikarpur in the Kasaragod district of Kerala from December 22 to 26, according to a press release issued by the general secretary of the Assam Sepak Takraw Association, Bishnu Ram Nunisa on Thursday. A contingent of boys and girls,

comprising a total of 30 players and five match officials, departed for Kerala on Thursday. The team boarded the Vivek Express train from Guwahati Railway Station to participate in the championship, the release added. It is noteworthy that the two teams, comprising boys and girls, were selected during a coaching camp organized at Titabor, Jorhat, held from December 3 to December 17. Nunisa also extended his best wishes to the entire team participating in the competition.

NEW DELHI, Dec 19: If ever there was proof needed that Manu Bhaker had prodigious talent, she provided it at the Paris Olympics with two bronze medals, scripting history in a year when shooting was as much about success as it was about missing medals by wafer-thin margins. Shooting is about individual glory and Manu took it to a different level by first finishing on the podium in 10m air pistol, and then combining with an equally happy-go-lucky marksman Sarabjot Singh to clinch a second bronze in 10m mixed team to become India's first woman athlete with two medals in the quadrennial showpiece. With a record 21 shooters in Paris, India finally ended nearly a decade-long medal drought in the sport, returning with three bronze, with the unassuming Swapnil Kusale, a TTE with Central Railways, finishing the campaign with a third-place finish in 50m rifle 3-positions. The spotlight, though, was firmly on Manu following her Tokyo Games dejection three summers back, where a pistol malfunction had ended her hopes. Manu confidently stepped into



Chateauroux range on the outskirts of Paris as she gave a performance befitting a champion to end the country's medal drought. The success was met with an outpouring of emotion for the champion and her coach Jaspal Rana, who had to go through nearly two years of trials and tribulations to achieve glory. From being told to leave the shooting range due to a National Rifle Association of India SOP, to being forced to coach his ward from the spectators' gallery, Jaspal had to endure barbs and insults, which in a way steeled the duo to tackle the challenge in Paris head-on. The champion summed up her Paris success by saying that Jaspal was like a father figure who gave her a lot of courage whenever she felt unsure about herself. The relationship seems to have come a long way since a misunderstanding separated the two before the Tokyo Olympics, and with the 2028 Los Angeles Games up next, it can only mean more success for Manu. Sarabjot too enjoyed phenomenal success following his share of injury travails, which left him down and out for more than six

months last year. There was a phase in the young Ambala shooter's career when he was not able to even lift his pistol, let alone repeat the exercise 60 times in competition. But careful planning and rehabilitation, saw him emerge from the career-threatening injury, which occurred in March last year, to become the joint bronze medalist with Manu. For Swapnil, it was an opportunity to give his coach, Deepali Deshpande, a dream redemption. The former shooter choked with emotions when her ward won the first-ever medal in 50m rifle 3-positions at the Olympics. Once a part of the national setup, Deepali was the scapegoat for Indian shooters' abysmal performance at the Tokyo Olympics. But Swapnil kept faith in her, hiring the veteran to once again reiterate the importance of personal coaches in achieving success, something which has been lost on the national federation. While Manu, Sarabjot and Swapnil took centerstage, some like rifle marksman Arjun Babuta and shotgun exponents Maheshwari Chauhan and Anant Jeet Singh Naruka found themselves heartbroken, finishing fourth in Paris but promising a glorious future for shooting sport. Babuta, missed the men's 10m air rifle bronze, while the mixed skeet team of Maheshwari and Naruka lost the medal to China in a tense showdown. Manu too missed a historic hat-trick, finishing fourth in the women's 25m sports pistol event after a heroic performance. The lead-up to the Paris Olympics was marred by selection issues with the national federation's Olympic Selection Trials (OST) at the centre of a litigation and discontent among top shooters. The court petition called into question the criteria for the OST with only five shooters being allowed in each category. Several shooters, who had earned quota places for the country but not performed well in the OST, asked the federation to rethink its decision. Shooters like men's 10m air rifle world champion Rudranksh Patil and women's 10m air rifle exponent Tilottama Sen missed out, while Sandeep Singh and Ramita took their place in the Paris-bound contingent. (PTI)

