

Papa Looking Down Proudly At His Beautiful Sonia: Rahul's Emotional Note On Mother's Memoir

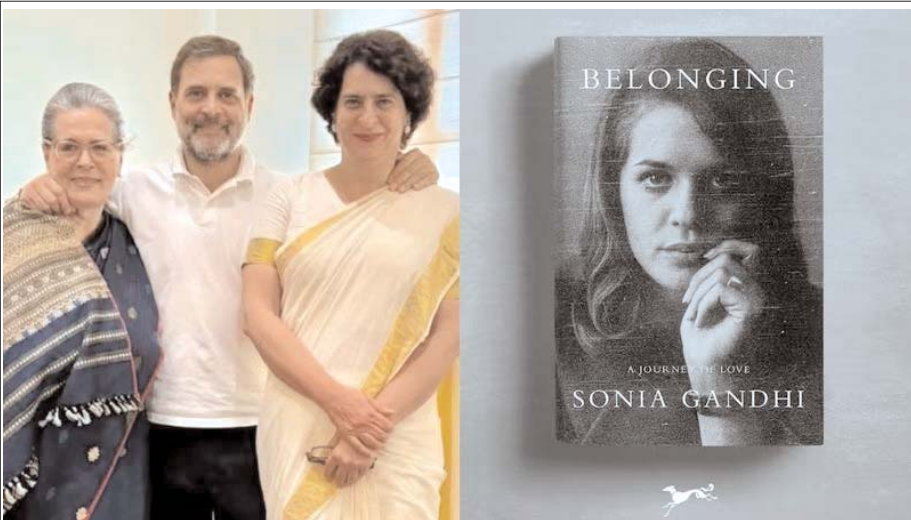
NEW DELHI, AUG 20: With his mother Sonia Gandhi's memoir set to hit the stands later this year, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said he is proud that it would be read by the millions who love her and he knows how hard it was for someone as private as her to tell the world her beautiful story.

Sonia Gandhi will come out with her memoir this November in which she will be sharing her intimate story of marrying into one of India's most powerful political families, the tragedy of losing her husband Rajiv Gandhi that threw her into the "public world of politics" and turning down prime ministership in 2004, among other things.South Asians & Diaspora

"Belonging: A Journey of Love" will hit stands on November 10, publisher Alfred A Knopf, an American imprint of Penguin Random House, announced on Tuesday. Penguin Random House India, however, has not confirmed the date of release of the book in India.

In his message posted on X, Rahul Gandhi said, "Mama, I last saw you and Papa together more than 35 years ago. Since the day Papa left, I have watched you face everything life threw at you with never-ending courage and dignity."

"Only Priyanka and I really know what you have been through, and how difficult your life after Papa truly



was," Rahul Gandhi said. "I am happy, and so proud, that your story -- 'Belonging: A Journey of Love' -- will finally be read by the millions of people who love you. I know how hard it was for someone as private as you to tell the world your beautiful story," he said.

On his birthday, Rahul Gandhi said he can see "Papa smiling and looking down proudly at his beautiful Sonia".

Rajiv Gandhi was born on this day in 1944.

According to the Alfred A Knopf website, the memoir begins in Cambridge, England, where in 1965, 19-year-old student Sonia Maino "falls in love at first sight with the handsome young man she's destined to marry: Rajiv Gandhi".

Sonia Gandhi, 79, who has rarely shared her private life in public forums, narrates her life, "from her childhood

in post-war Italy, to the romance that brings her to India, to the shattering losses that will reshape not only her own future but also that of her adopted home".

The book also mentions how Sonia Gandhi declined to become prime minister after the Congress-led alliance won the 2004 elections and instead chose Manmohan Singh to lead the government.

Among other things, she writes about her introduction to her "formidable mother-in-law" and India's first female prime minister, Indira Gandhi.

She recalls learning to speak Hindi, wearing saris and relishing Indian cuisine. In her early years as the wife of Rajiv Gandhi, then a commercial airline pilot, and the mother of two young children, Sonia Gandhi witnessed the death of brother-in-law Sanjay Gandhi in a

plane crash, followed by the assassination of Indira Gandhi.

The book aims to offer an insider's perspective on the country's economic and social changes over 60 years.

Sonia Gandhi has said that writing about her life meant opening herself up and sharing experiences that she had kept deep inside, as she reflected on the heartbreak and loss that drew her into politics.

It was heartbreak and loss that threw her into the public world of politics.

"Up till then, I had guarded my privacy fiercely," Sonia Gandhi said in a statement issued here on Tuesday by publisher Alfred A Knopf.

"Writing about my life did not come easily to me. It meant opening myself up, sharing moments and experiences I had always held deep inside," she said. (PTI)

PM Chairs Third High-Level Meeting with Secretaries to Government of India

NEW DELHI, AUG 20: Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi chaired the third high-level meeting with Secretaries to the Government of India at his residence at 7, Lok Kalyan Marg earlier today. He discussed the future action agenda of Ministries and Departments dealing with Infrastructure and Connectivity, Security and External Affairs, and Governance.

Noting that deliberations had already been held with two groups of Secretaries, Prime Minister said that Secretaries, in addition to thinking about immediate issues and statistics, should also think with a long-term perspective on how the country's future should be shaped.

Discussing the challenge of overcoming silos, Prime Minister stressed that silos are not merely an organisational problem but also a problem of mindset. He said silos can be both horizontal and vertical. He stressed that officials must take ownership of their responsibilities and work with a spirit of belongingness.

Emphasising the importance of collective effort, Prime Minister cited the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic and the West Asia crisis, when officials across departments worked together effectively. He said that such coordination mechanisms should become a natural part of the government's work culture.

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Prime Minister emphasised that data is a national asset and a resource for the future. He noted that the government invests resources in collecting, storing and managing data, but its full potential is not always realised because of departmental silos and fragmented systems. He pointed to differences in the manner in which data is collected and managed for various purposes, and called for finding solutions that enable greater interoperability and effective use of data.

Prime Minister called for greater engagement between government departments, universities and young people to bring fresh perspectives in policymaking. He said wider engagement with universities and young people can bring new and unconventional ideas.

Prime Minister also called for greater focus on research and innovation, including in the defence sector. He emphasised the need to further strengthen India's defence industry and make it more competitive at the global level. He stressed the importance of developing innovative defence courses and strengthening human resource development in the defence sector.

Prime Minister also discussed the need for a comprehensive approach to strengthening India's maritime sector. He recalled that shipbuilding was accorded infrastructure status and called for assessing whether the intended objectives are being achieved in mission mode. He reiterated the need for India to move from port development to port-led development.

CBSE's Three-Language Policy: Don't Want Children To Come Under Any Pressure, Says SC

NEW DELHI, AUG 20: Observing that children should not come under any kind of pressure, the Supreme Court on Thursday stressed the need to find a solution to issues arising out of the CBSE policy mandating the study of three languages by Class 9 students.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joy

malaya Bagchi and V Mohana observed there was nothing wrong in introducing the policy but the only concern raised by the petitioners was about the manner in which it was being introduced.

"Some of these problems, you may revisit. There is no doubt that sooner or later, it has to be introduced. There is nothing wrong with that. But how it is to be streamlined so that whatever impediments or blockades are coming up, you may find a solution to those," the bench told Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati.

The bench said one of the aspects that was required to be considered was how to build adequate human resource infrastructure with regard to the language options available.

"If you have chosen Class 6 as the starting point, you may consider giving a reprieve to Class 6 students of this year. You can introduce it from next year," it said.

"Another thing which needs to be looked into is where do you draw the line. Whether it is Class 6, Class 4 or Class 3. You can take a call depending on the curriculum and where the choice between two and three lan

guages is first introduced," the bench said.

"As the Union of India, you will also have to see that other than the CBSE, what is happening in other boards," the bench told Bhati, adding that it has to be ensured that the roll-out of the policy is appropriately undertaken.Geographic Reference

Bhati said she would take instructions on the suggestions and get back to the court.

"We don't want the children to come under any pressure," the CJI said.

The top court was hearing a batch of pleas challenging the CBSE's policy mandating the study of three languages, including two native Indian languages, for Class 9 students from July 1.

At the outset, senior advocate Anand Grover, appearing for some of the petitioners, told the bench that the issue relates to three languages and they were concerned with Class 6.

He said for Classes 6 to 8, the CBSE has no jurisdiction or authority to frame the curriculum as this has to be done by the NCERT. The CJI observed that learning any language is a big asset and something invaluable.

Grover said there have to be qualified teachers for this.

"If they are introducing a language, they will also have plan for teachers. It is their obligation," the bench observed, adding, it will take the schools to task if they are erring.

The bench observed that the CBSE has given options

of 23 languages.

"Let us not have any impression of inferiority complex with respect to regional languages. We should respect all these languages as much as any other language," it said.

The bench said whenever a new concept is introduced, it is natural to have some apprehensions.

"We can constitute an expert committee ourselves or ask the government to constitute an expert committee so that as and when the difficulties arise, they can make recommendations and find solutions," it said.

Bhati said, "We want to support our children in the best possible manner".

She said thousands of experts were consulted in the process.

"The CBSE is one of the boards in the country. There are 33,000 odd schools out of a total 7.5 lakh schools. Around 4.45 percent schools are CBSE schools in India and 99.19 schools are already compliant of the two native languages," she said, adding, "Language is a vehicle of a culture".

Justice Bagchi observed he personally had a serious reservation about the expression "native".

"It has a colonial connotation. It should be indigenous," he said, adding that framers of the policy should have been conscious of the words they have used.

It posted the matter for further hearing after 10 days.

On May 27, the top court had agreed to examine a plea challenging the policy and is

sued notices to the Centre, the CBSE and the NCERT seeking their responses.

According to a circular issued by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the study of three languages, including at least two native Indian languages, has been made compulsory for Class 9 students beginning July 1.

The move is part of the CBSE's alignment of its scheme of studies with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE), 2023.

According to the circular issued on May 15, students opting for a foreign language may do so only as the third language after studying two native Indian languages, or as an additional fourth language.

"With effect from July 1, 2026, for Class IX, the study of three languages (R1, R2, R3) shall be compulsory, with at least two languages being native Indian languages," the circular said.

The board said till the dedicated R3 textbooks are available, Class 9 students shall use the Class 6 R3 textbooks (2026-27 edition) of the chosen language.

The CBSE said to keep the focus on learning and reduce any undue pressure on students, no board examination shall be conducted for R3 at the Class 10 level.

The board also asked schools to update their R3 language offerings for Classes 6 to 9 on the OASIS portal by June 30. (Agencies)

BNP's Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir Elected As 23rd President Of Bangladesh

DHAKA [BANGLADESH], AUG 20: Former Secretary General of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir was on Thursday elected as the country's 23rd President, securing 255 votes in the presidential election held at the Jatiya Sangsad, the country's Parliament.

Alamgir defeated Oli Ahmed, the candidate backed by the 11-party opposition alliance led by the far-right Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami and the country's first major student-led political party, National Citizen Party (NCP), who received 88 votes.

A total of 343 members of Parliament cast their votes in the election, which was held from 2 pm to 5 pm (local time) under the supervision of Chief Election Commissioner ASM Nasir Uddin. The Chief Election Commissioner later announced the results declaring Alamgir as the newly elected President.

The election marked the first time in 35 years that more than one candidate contested the Bangladeshi



presidential election. In previous polls, opposition parties had not fielded candidates, leaving only a single candidate in the race.

Alamgir's election came after he was nominated by the BNP as its presidential candidate last week.

Following his nomination, he resigned as BNP Secretary General and as a member of the party's National Standing Committee.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi announced Alamgir's nomination after a meeting of the party's National Standing Committee held near the Bangladesh Prime Minister's Office at the Secretariat.

He said the decision was taken following discussions with the Bangladesh Prime Minister and BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman, adding that Alamgir had been formally selected as the party's candidate for the presidency.

Acting President and Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad, Major (Retd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed and Rahman, along with other members of Parliament, also cast their votes in Thursday's election.

Although the Jatiya Sangsad has 350 seats, voting was conducted among 349 members as the election in one constituency had been suspended. Of the 349 MPs, 343 participated in the presidential election.

The election was necessitated by the resignation of Mohammad Shahabuddin, who stepped down from the presidency last month citing serious health complications.

Shahabuddin, 76, had served as President since April 2023 and submitted his resignation to then-Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmed on July 24. The Speaker accepted the resignation and assumed the duties of the President in accordance with Article 54 of the Bangladesh Constitution.

Shahabuddin had assumed office as the 22nd President of Bangladesh on April 24, 2023, after being elected unopposed as the nominee of the then-ruling Awami League. His five-year term was originally scheduled to run until April 2028.

Under Bangladesh's Constitution, when the office of the President falls vacant, the Speaker assumes the duties of the head of state until a new President is elected. The Constitution also requires Parliament to elect a new President within 90 days of the vacancy.

Visionary Leader Who Helped Prepare India For Promise Of 21st Century: Cong

NEW DELHI, AUG 20: The Congress on Thursday paid rich tributes to former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi on his 82nd birth anniversary, with party chief Mallikarjun Kharge saying his legacy lives on in the transformative changes he championed and in his enduring faith in India's youth, technological progress and the power of new ideas.

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi said the resolve to build the India of his father Rajiv Gandhi's dreams will always continue to guide him.

Kharge, Rahul Gandhi, Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra paid floral tributes to Rajiv Gandhi at his memorial Veer Bhumi here.

In a post on X, Kharge said, "Today, on Sadbhavana Diwas, we remember Rajiv Gandhi, a visionary leader who awakened hope in millions and helped prepare India for the promise of the 21st century."

Rajiv Gandhi's legacy lives on in the transformative changes he championed and in his enduring faith in India's youth, technological progress and the power of new ideas, Kharge said.

"Perhaps the most meaningful tribute to Rajiv Ji would be to strengthen India's timeless spirit of empathy, harmony and reconciliation, while nurturing intellectual freedom, innovation and the aspirations of our young people," the Congress chief said.

"We pay our deepest respects on his birth anniversary and remember his

tremendous contribution to the nation," Kharge said.

In another post, the Congress chief shared a quote of Rajiv Gandhi and said, "Rajiv Gandhi ji did not see only the future in India's youth, but the power to shape the future."

"On Sadbhavana Diwas, salutations to that youthful vision, that foresight, and that dream of India, which even today inspires every new generation to move forward, think anew, and dream big," Kharge said.

In a post in Hindi, Rahul Gandhi said, "Harmony among Indians, compassion in every heart, and equal rights to justice and democracy for every citizen - Papa, this teaching of yours is my strength and your memories are my courage."

LATUR, AUG 20: Cock

roach Janta Party (CJP) convenor Abhijeet Dipke on Thursday said Maharashtra School Education Minister Dada Bhuse should resign, claiming government schools are in a pitiable condition and that even "ministers' dogs get better facilities" than students.

Dipke, whose group launched the 'School Think Karo' (improve government schools) campaign last week, visited a Zilla Parishad school at Ujani village in Latur's Ausa tehsil.

Later, talking to reporters,



he said elected representatives and ministers must be held accountable for the condition of schools, many of which continue to lack basic

facilities such as proper classrooms, benches, toilets and safe access roads.

Students in some schools were being treated "worse

than animals", he alleged.

"It is a question of students' lives. When political leaders are not doing anything for students, why should people vote for them? Do people vote for them so that they can only travel in helicopters? People should see in what conditions their children are studying. The dogs of these ministers get better facilities than this," he said.

Dipke also asked people to force the leaders of political parties to work for education first and then come to seek votes. (Agencies)