

Continued from page 20

tempting to personalise the national flag for all Indian citizens, bringing it home irrespective of their social or economic status. "The idea behind the initiative is to invoke the feeling of patriotism in the hearts of the people and to promote awareness about the Indian National Flag," it has said.

And so, local civic bodies, like the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation in Mumbai, have been distributing machine-made polyester flags to citizens for free, urging them to hoist these between August 13 and August 15.

Busy folding and dispatching the polyester flags at his Naigaon-based manufacturing unit, managing director of Flag Company, Amarjit Singh Negi feels proud of delivering the "best and most durable product."

In the world, he says, 100 per cent spun polyester flags are used.

"All over the world, including on ships, 100 per cent spun polyester flags are manufactured, bought and sold. It is the best and most durable material to withstand time and weather. The government has made the right decision of allowing the material to be used for our Indian national flag and I completely support it," he tells mid-day in between a busy day of last minute churning out of orders. "With this amendment, we are only moving towards the best," he puts it.

The giant-sized show of nationalism however, could be hurting some. Two days ago, a video of a fair-price shop in Dadapur village of Haryana, showed people being forced to buy the flag for ₹20 if they wanted free ration under the Public Distribution System. The shop owner's license was suspended and a Union Ministry of Culture official clarified that buying a flag was "purely voluntary".

India celebrated National Handloom Day on August 7, an occasion earmarked by PM Narendra Modi in 2015 to commemorate the 1905 Swadeshi Andolan.

The irony isn't lost on Pattar. "If they wanted to give out the Tiranga en masse, they should have placed an order with us last year itself. That 2022 was going to be the 75th year of Independence, was not a fact that emerged out of the blue. We could have produced the best BIS-standard flags for the country if told so in time. Polyester flags being sold for as low as ₹20 is nothing but being disrespectful to the whole ideology," he says.

This, believe those who are critical of the government's initiative, will be a further blow to India's khadi industry already reeling under losses due to the pandemic. A large order from the government could have helped thousands with their job, they say.

Textile designer, saree advocate and handloom revivalist Rta Kapur Chisti calls khadi a staple, offering the widest base of employment there could be in the country. "We can only justify taking that base away by enhancing both the skill and



Great grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, Tushar A Gandhi, with his khadi flag manufactured by Karnatak Khadi Gramodyog Samyukta Sangh. PIC/TUSHAR A GANDHI

earning of an artisan in whatever other vocation he goes to. The change should be an upgrade."

The move has also received criticism by the Opposition parties with the Congress calling out the BJP for not "understanding" the ethos of the freedom struggle. At a press conference addressed earlier in July, Congress spokesperson Ajay Kumar said that the shift from khadi will only facilitate mass import of polyester Indian flags from China at a time when the neighbouring country is transgressing unabashedly into Indian territory.

Supporting the Centre's move is BJP MLA from Ghatkopar Ram Kadam. He tells mid-day, "The Opposition should understand the concept [behind the campaign] and not oppose patriotism for their political vendetta. It is a noble initiative that all Indians should support. By displaying the Tiranga in our homes, we will uphold the love for our nation, for our flag, and for our martyrs. We are not promoting China. If Indians do not hoist our flag, will the Pakistanis or Chinese do it?"

This argument is going to be tough for Tushar A Gandhi to stomach. Mahatma Gandhi's great grandson explains that India's freedom struggle was deeply entwined

It is after all, just a patterned piece of cloth. Why do we treat it with utmost reverence and are emotional about it? Ultimately, it is all about the sentiment attached to the freedom movement of which hand-spun khadi was an integral part

Tushar A Gandhi

All over the world, including on ships, 100% spun polyester flags are manufactured, bought and sold. It is the best and most durable material to withstand time and weather

Amarjit Singh Negi

₹7,550

Price in rupees of the Indian Tricolour measuring 9 x 6 feet available at Khadi Bhavan

What's the flag code of india?

The Flag Code of India came into existence in 2002 and was amended vide an order dated December 30, 2021. As per the amendment, national flags made of polyester and machine-made flags were allowed to be hoisted. Through another amendment dated July 19, 2022, the flag displayed in open or on a house can now be flown day and night. Earlier, it could only be done from sunrise to sunset. The flag can be of any size, as long as it is rectangular in shape, is not disheveled and the ratio of the length to the height (width) is 3:2.

with the propagation of khadi and Babu was determined to promote village and khadi industries on the world stage.

"Why do we respect the flag?" Gandhi asks rhetorically. "It is after all, just a patterned piece of cloth. Why do we treat it with utmost reverence and are emotional about it? Ultimately, it is all about the sentiment attached to the freedom movement of which hand-spun khadi was an integral part. Babu was keen on the village-industry model based on the principles of spinning khadi. Khadi was not just a sentiment, but a school of economics, which gave livelihood to thousands. The pre-Independence flag also had the charkha [spinning wheel] which symbolised the cottage scale industries. When the flag was altered [to include the Ashok Chakra], the fabric was retained as khadi since it is symbolic of the freedom movement," he shares.

Recalling an instance from the Mahatma's life, Gandhi says that it was because of his love for khadi that all machine-made gifts handed to his youngest son, Devdas, on his wedding day, were returned and only khadi products were accepted. "Khadi was at the helm of every juncture of the freedom struggle, whether it was during the Swadeshi movement or when the Congress began to celebrate Independence Day on January 26, 1930, by hoisting the khadi national flag until the occasion was moved to August 15. The khadi flag is a gesture of defiance against the British and foreign-made material. It has now been trivialised." Gandhi shares an anecdote about the quality of machine-made flags dotting Mumbai's homes. "My neighbour hoisted a polyester flag and in just about a day, I see that the colour is fading and the cloth is threadbare."

yusra.husain@mid-day.com



The Jindals did it first

JANE BORGES

While PM Modi's new campaign hopes to have every Indian fly the national flag this weekend, a business family that has been displaying the Tiranga daily for the last 18 years, tells us what it takes to keep it flying high

AT the white-washed Jindal Mansion at Pedder Road, the Tiranga shines like a superstar, especially on the rare occasion where Indian patriotism is being celebrated. Like last year in July, when weightlifter Saikhom Mirabai Chanu won the silver at the Tokyo Summer Olympics. Tomorrow, when Independent India turns 75, a similar spectacle will be on display. And at the centre of it all, will be the iconic India flag, hoisted from the third floor of the mansion, flying high since 2004.

The Jindals, in a way, have been frontrunners in instilling patriotic fervour. Long before, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Har Ghar Tiranga campaign under the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, encouraging every household to hoist the flag, industrialist and former Parliamentarian Naveen Jindal had set the wheels in motion to bring the Tiranga home.

Naveen won a decade-long legal battle when the Supreme Court of India delivered the historic judgement on January 23, 2004,

Continued on page 22



A staff of Jindal Mansion seen adjusting the Tiranga, which is hoisted from the third floor of the premises. PICS/ASHISH RAJE



Continued from page 21

three days before Republic Day, enabling all Indians to display the National Flag with "respect, dignity and honour". "Soon after the judgement—in fact the very same year—my elder brother Sajjan Jindal and bhabhi Sangita Jindal took the initiative to hoist the flag at Jindal Mansion," says Naveen, whose concerted efforts also led the home ministry in 2009, to allow Indians to fly the flag in the night, provided the "flagpole is really tall and the flag itself well-illuminated".

Today, the India flag has a pride of place at the mansion, which houses several offices of the Jindals; the JSW Centre in BKC, as well as the three offices of Jindal Steel and Power Limited in Delhi-NCR.

But both Sajjan and Naveen admit that hoisting the Tiranga comes with great responsibility.

Naveen's own motivation to make the flag accessible to all began in 1990, when he was a student in the United States of America. "I was studying at The University of Texas

in Dallas, and I remember all the students displaying the American flag... I wanted to do the same as an Indian," recalls Naveen over a video call. A few days later, an American friend gifted him a large Indian flag, and he says, "it was the first time, I ever held the national flag in my hand... and that too, in America. I cannot even begin to express how happy that made me". Later, as president of the Student Government, he was given an office, where he was allowed to display the India flag. "After I returned to India, I remember this one time on January 26, 1993, when we decided to hoist the flags at our steel plants in Chhattisgarh [then part of Madhya Pradesh]. The following day, it was brought down, and I was told that the protocol meant that I could only fly the flag on Republic Day and August 15. That to me was strange. I decided to continue to display the flag," says Naveen, who is currently chairman of Jindal Steel and Power Limited. "But a year-and-a-half later, when senior police officials happened to visit

Bringing the flag down or pulling it up also requires a lot of strength, and that's usually because of the wind. Which is why, we use a high power motor... its horse power depends on the height and the weight of the flag

Maj Gen Ashim Kohli,
CEO, FFOI

one of the sites, they immediately asked it to be removed," he shares, adding that it's what compelled him to eventually knock the doors of the court in 1994.

Close on heels of the SC's judgement, Naveen, along with wife Shalu Jindal, started the Flag Foundation of India (FFOI), a non-profit body, with a vision to popularise the display of the Tiranga by every Indian. It has helped setup nearly 100 monumental

flags across India, maintaining the upkeep of around 15 to 20 of them, including the one installed at Central Park, Connaught Place, New Delhi, shares Naveen, president of the foundation.

Maj Gen Ashim Kohli, CEO of the FFOI, who is tasked with the responsibility of ensuring the upkeep of "monumental flags"—a tall flag that is visible by a larger population of people—says everything depends on where a flag is located. "If the flag is hoisted in an area, where there are high winds, there is a chance of it tearing. And that means you have to change the flag very frequently. Bringing the flag down or pulling it up also requires a lot of strength, and that's usually because of the wind. Which is why, we use a high power motor... its horse power depends on the height and the weight of the flag," he explains. Another thing to keep in mind is that the flag should be placed at a location that is well lighted, "so that

Continued on page 23



Naveen Jindal's unrelenting legal and political campaign led to a revision of the Flag Code of India, which now grants every private citizen the right to fly the Indian National Flag

State Resource Associate at IIM Lucknow, Sidrah Naiyer, gets clicked with a few fellows she mentors. She is discerning about whom to befriend and what to post on social media



'Teachers have a personal life'

In view of a Kolkata professor being sued for her private social media feed, academics argue that you can't impose a code of conduct beyond the classroom

NIDHI LODAYA AND YUSRA HUSAIN



A PROFESSOR at Noida-based private university, who requested not to be identified for this story, quit her job last year when the faculty was asked to behave like 'mothers' to the students. "I am unmarried and probably don't want children of my own. Why should I be jag ki mata?" she asks. Loss of respect, restrictive lifestyle, an archaic code of conduct for life in classrooms and out of them and on social media, overbearing parents are some of the reasons that led the 33-year-old to quit her well paying job.

The professor had the privilege to be able to excuse herself from her claustrophobic role; the assistant

professor from St Xavier's University Kolkata, currently mired in a controversy over her social media feed, was not so lucky. She was allegedly forced to resign after a parent complained about his child looking at her swimsuit-clad pictures on her private social media account.

Many teachers and academics live two separate lives: One for their students and their parents; and the other for their inner circle, which allows them to be who they are. This comes at a cost, like it has for the Kolkata professor who is now being sued by the university for ₹99 crore on the charge of damaging its reputation.

"If I teach somewhere, I can't wear shorts at a beach? Is that an offence?" questions Yogesh Kamdar, course head of Journalism and Mass Communication at Mumbai's Xavier Institute of Communications (XIC). He is also a trustee and honorary secretary at Mani Bhavan Gandhi Sangrahalaya, and believes



Anushi Dwivedi has dealt with enough infatuated male students, and feels teachers need to establish boundaries. But, she allows former pupils to befriend her on Facebook

Archana Mehra is active on social media and lets her students follow her. Her Instagram feed is a wholesome mix of pictures of her family and dog, and selfies. PIC/ANURAG AHIRE

that your religion, political ideology and choice of clothes, outside of classrooms, has no bearing on your professional life. Most teachers we spoke to agreed.

"Teachers do have a life of their own," says Anushi Dwivedi, who teaches at a convent school in Lucknow. "The life we live in school is quite different from the real one. Students get to see that aspect of us when we go on school trips, but not otherwise."

Archana Mehra, visiting faculty at SVKM's Usha Pravin Gandhi College of Arts, Science and Commerce in Vile Parle, was shocked by the Kolkata incident. "I put up whatever I feel like on social media," says Mehra, "If I am comfortable posting a picture of me dressed differently, or holding a drink or a cigarette, that is entirely up to me."

Mehra has been teaching for 18 years, and her private Instagram feed is a wholesome mix of funny and motivational quotes, family pictures, photos of her dog, selfies with friends and colleagues. She is approachable on social media and that is how Sunday mid-day first got in touch with her. She doesn't mind accepting 'follow requests' from students and also follows them back.

Contrary to her, Shreya Shetty discourages her students to connect with her on social media during her teaching tenure. Shetty is an openly queer person who has an open profile. She began teaching photography at a South Bombay college during the pandemic. "What

Continued on page 23