

KASA celebrates 68th Foundation Day, honours sports personalities

Former office-bearers, athletes and coaches felicitated at Diphu function

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 18: The Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) celebrated its 68th Foundation Day with a day-long programme at the Sarsing Teron (Langkung Habe) Multi-Purpose Sports Complex in Diphu on Saturday, honouring former office-bearers, veteran sports organisers and athletes for their contribution to sports in the district.

The programme began with the hoisting of the KASA flag by senior vice-president Jivan Chandra Pathak, followed by the National Anthem.

Chief Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and KASA president Tuliram Ronghang attended the main function, paid floral tributes at the memorial dedicated to departed members and sports persons, and inaugurated the KASA Heritage Photo Gallery, which showcases the association's history through photographs of former office-bearers, athletes and major sporting events.

Welcoming the gathering, KASA general secretary Dr Pankaj Teron traced the association's history, noting that it was established



in 1958 as the Mikir Hills Sports Association before being renamed following the district's name change.

He highlighted KASA's affiliation with the Assam Olympic Association and the Assam Football Association, and acknowledged the contributions of generations of administrators, coaches and volunteers in promoting sports in the district.

Former presidents, general secretaries and their family members were felicitated with traditional Karbi turbans and certificates of honour.

The association also honoured athletes and teams for their achievements during 2025-26, including medal-winning athletes, footballers, boxers, cricketers, referees and coaches.

KASA Girls FC and KASA

FCC were recognised for their participation in the AIFF Indian Women's League 2026 and the AIFF Elite Youth League 2026, respectively.

A special excellence award was presented to Kache Teronpi in recognition of her achievements in national and international Masters badminton competitions and her contribution to the promotion of

Karbi culture.

Addressing the gathering, Ronghang recalled the formation of the association in 1958 and highlighted the transformation of the sports complex over the years into one of Assam's leading sporting facilities, equipped with a modern football stadium, floodlights, an indoor badminton stadium, swimming pool, boxing facilities, gymnasium and accommodation for athletes.

He said Karbi Anglong has witnessed remarkable sporting progress in recent years, with several athletes excelling at the state and national levels.

He also noted that Karbi Anglong Morning Star FC is currently competing in the second division of Indian football and has received an invitation to participate in the 2026 Durand Cup.

Member of Parliament Amarsing Tisso, who also addressed the function, praised the efforts of Dr Ronghang in promoting sports in the district and said he had taken up the matter of securing additional sports development schemes for Karbi Anglong with the Union Sports Minister.

AJYCP stages protest over flooding, erosion and poor roads in Margherita



HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, July 18: Activists of the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP), Margherita Regional Committee, staged a three-hour sit-in protest at Ledo Railway Rangamancha under the 83rd Margherita Legislative Assembly Constituency in Tinsukia district on Saturday, demanding immediate action on a range of civic and infrastructure issues.

The protest began at 11 am and focused on demands for a permanent solution to the recurring artificial flooding at Ledo College and within the Margherita Municipal Board area, measures to prevent erosion caused by the Tirap and Buridhing rivers, and repair and renovation of dilapidated roads across the constituency.

A large number of AJYCP mem-

bers and local residents participated in the demonstration, which was led by Kanchan Bora, vice-president of the AJYCP Tinsukia district committee and Bimal Singh, president of the AJYCP Margherita Regional Committee.

During the protest, participants raised slogans against both the State and Central governments over what they alleged was a failure to address long-pending public issues.

Addressing the gathering, Kanchan Bora said the organisation was demanding immediate resolution of the problems and warned that AJYCP would launch a stronger democratic movement against Margherita MLA Bhaskar Sharma and the Margherita Co-District Administration if the demands were not addressed at the earliest.

DC attends seed distribution programme, reviews farm demonstrations at Gossaigaon

Farmers receive quality seeds and planting materials to boost scientific farming



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 18: Kokrajhar District Commissioner Pankaj Chakravarty on Saturday attended a seed and planting material distribution programme organised by the Assam Agricultural University (AAU), Gossaigaon Campus, to promote scientific farming, crop diversification and sustainable agricultural practices.

The programme was attended by MLA Sabharam Basumatary, Md Ashrafur Islam Sheikh, Dr Manoranjan Neog, Director of Extension Education, AAU, L Nelson Mangangcha, SDO (Civil), Gossaigaon, B B Narzary, Director of Agriculture, BTC, Dr Kameswar Das, Chief Scientist of AAU's Zonal Research Station, Gossaigaon, M N Das, District Agri-

culture Officer, Kokrajhar, along with scientists, officials and progressive farmers.

During the programme, 100 progressive farmers were provided with blackgram seeds (SBC-40), arecanut seedlings, Assam lemon cuttings and black pepper planting materials to encourage improved farming practices and enhance agricultural productivity.

Farmers were also urged to register themselves to avail benefits under various Central and State government schemes.

Later, the District Commissioner visited the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Gossaigaon, where he, along with AAU scientists and KVK officials, reviewed ongoing agricultural activities and field demonstrations.

The team interacted with farmers, assessed field conditions and discussed challenges faced by the farming community.

They also deliberated on the adoption of improved technologies, scientific crop management practices and horticultural interventions aimed at increasing farm productivity and farmers' income.

KVK Karbi Anglong holds training on scientific mandarin cultivation

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 18: The Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Karbi Anglong, under the All India Coordinated Research Project on Forage Crops & Utilisation, organised a one-day farmers' training programme on the scientific cultivation of mandarin orange in Diphu on Saturday.

The programme was inaugurated by Dr Monuj Kumar Doley, Senior Scientist and Head of KVK, Karbi Anglong, who highlighted the importance of adopting scientific cultivation practices to improve orange productivity, enhance fruit quality and increase farmers' income. He stressed the need to move beyond traditional farming methods to ensure sustainable horticultural development in the region.

The training was conducted by experts from Assam Agricultural University (AAU), Jorhat, including Dr Sujai Bora Neog, Principal Scientist (Plant Breeding

and Genetics), Dr Bhadesh Deka, Scientist (Horticulture), and Pranjit Bharali, Scientist (Agronomy).

Technical sessions were led by Dr Bhadesh Deka and Shourav Dutta, Subject Matter Specialist (Horticulture) at KVK Karbi Anglong.

The experts discussed scientific orchard management practices, including citrus classification, grafting techniques, nutrient and fertiliser management, training and pruning methods, as well as the identification and management of major diseases and insect pests affecting mandarin orange plantations.

A total of 29 farmers participated in the programme and interacted with the experts on practical cultivation challenges and their possible solutions.

The programme concluded with the distribution of participation certificates and quality mandarin orange saplings to the participants to encourage the adoption of improved orchard management practices.



programme. Kalpojita Basumatary, Extension Officer, Department of Sericulture, highlighted the present status of sericulture in the district

and the challenges facing the sector.

BTC Executive Member for Sericulture Karmeshwar Roy, who

attended the programme as the chief guest, stressed the need for coordinated efforts among all stakeholders to promote the growth of the sericulture sector.

Experts from the Central Silk Board and the Department of Sericulture shared technical inputs and discussed district-specific priorities for the effective implementation of MRMA 2.0.

The programme concluded with an address by Bhanulata Musahari, Director of the Department of Sericulture, BTC.

The meeting finalised key recommendations that will form the basis of the district action plan for the sustainable development of sericulture in Kokrajhar.

PhysicsWallah students shine in NEET 2026, Guwahati achievers felicitated

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 18: Education technology company PhysicsWallah (PW) has announced the performance of its students in NEET (UG) 2026, with several candidates securing top ranks in the national medical entrance examination.

Among the top performers were Ravikant Diwakar (AIR 55), Shivansh Anand (AIR 152), Divyansh Jaiswal (AIR 173) and Sakshi Kumari (AIR 192).

According to the company, the students achieved their results through its online learning platform and offline PW Vidyapeeth centres.

To mark the occasion, PhysicsWallah organised a felicitation programme in Guwahati, where successful candidates from the city were honoured.

Among them were Aayyang Pegu (AIR 2180) and Emran Hussain Choudhury (AIR 3999).



In a statement, Alakh Pandey, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of PhysicsWallah, congratulated all NEET aspirants for their dedication and perseverance.

He encouraged students who did not achieve their desired results to view the examination as one milestone in their academic journey rather than a measure of their potential.

The company said its NEET preparation programme combines online and offline learning with technology-driven features, including daily practice questions, mock tests with video solutions, round-the-clock doubt resolution and AI-assisted personalised revision tools.

According to official figures, nearly 20 lakh candidates appeared for NEET (UG) 2026, of whom about 11.21 lakh qualified for admission to undergraduate medical programmes across the country.

Jorhat DC cancels doctor's Scheduled Caste certificate

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, July 18: The Jorhat District Commissioner has cancelled the Scheduled Caste (SC) certificate of Dr Pollov Bora, an Associate Professor of Anaesthesiology at Lakhimpur Medical College and Hospital, following a recommendation by the State Level Scrutiny Committee (SLSC) under the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Assam.

According to district administration officials, the SC certificate issued to Dr Bora by the Jorhat Deputy Commissioner's office on October 3, 1986, was cancelled after the SLSC concluded that he did not belong to the Scheduled Caste community. The committee initiated proceedings after receiving inquiry reports from the Directorate of Welfare (SC and BC) and the CID, Assam Police.

Dr Bora appeared before the SLSC for a hearing on April 24, 2025, where, according to the committee, he failed to produce conclusive evidence supporting his claim of belonging to the SC community.

Based on its findings, the SLSC issued a notification on May 27, 2025, recommending cancellation of the certificate.

Assam University Diphu Campus celebrates 19th Foundation Day

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 18: Assam University Diphu Campus (AUDC) celebrated its 19th Foundation Day on Saturday with a series of academic and cultural programmes at its permanent campus along the Diphu-Lumding Road, marking nearly two decades of its contribution to higher education in the hill districts of Assam. The celebration began with the hoisting of the university flag by Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Sivasish Biswas, followed by a plantation drive across the campus.

The main function, held at the campus auditorium, was attended by faculty members, students, university officials and other invited guests.

Delivering the welcome address, Prof Biswas reflected on the institution's growth since its establishment in 2007, noting that it has expanded from six academic departments into a centre for postgraduate education and research serving students from across the region.

He also acknowledged the continued support of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) in facilitating infrastructure development and land allocation for the campus.

The programme focused on the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP), with speakers highlighting the need for holistic, skill-based education and stronger integration of academic learning with regional priorities such as tribal studies, biodiversity conservation and resource management.

University authorities also outlined plans for further expansion, including proposals to introduce new academic departments such as Education, Mass Communication and Environmental Studies, upgrade classrooms with digital teaching facilities, and strengthen campus infrastructure through the construction of boundary walls and permanent buildings.

The celebrations concluded with cultural performances by students featuring Karbi and Assamese folk dances and music, followed by the presentation of awards recognising excellence in academics, research, community service and extracurricular activities.

Assamese film Yakasik Omede selected for Indian Film Festival Melbourne

Debut feature by Jorhat director Jayanta Madhab Dutta to premiere in Australia

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, July 18: Yakasik Omede (Yakasik's Daughter), the debut feature film by Jorhat-based filmmaker Jayanta Madhab Dutta, has been selected for its premiere at the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM) in Australia. The 75-minute film, centred on the Mising community, portrays the struggles and aspirations of one of Assam's oldest indigenous communities.

It follows the story of Jariyum, a 14-year-old school dropout living on a remote river island in Upper Assam, who dreams of escaping poverty and the hardships endured by her mother, Yakasi.

The narrative explores whether her hopes for a better future are realised after she elopes with her fi-



ancé, Migam.

The film has previously been screened at several national and international festivals, including the 4th World Film Festival, Kolkata, the 11th Jaffna International Cinema Festival in Sri Lanka, the 11th Ajanta Ellora International Film Festival, the Luleå International

Film Festival in Sweden, and the Goa International Film Competition.

Yakasik Omede also won the Best Feature Film Award at the 1st Dharti Aaba Tribal Film Festival 2025, held in Ranchi, Jharkhand.

Speaking about the production, Dutta said the film was made on a modest budget and the team faced financial challenges throughout the project. He acknowledged the support of Amrit Pritam, the film's sound designer, and Debajit Changmai, the sound mixer, both of whom are from Assam and are currently based in Mumbai.

The duo co-produced the film and completed the sound design and mixing without charge, helping bring the project to completion.

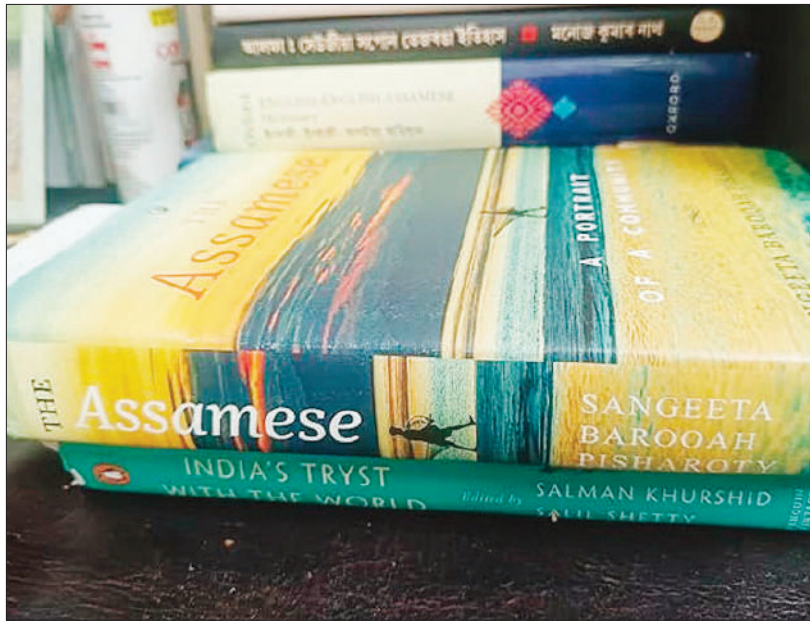
Future of Assamese Book Publishing Industry

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The future of the Assamese book publishing industry stands at a decisive moment where long-established traditions are meeting the realities of a rapidly changing world. For decades, printed books have served as the foundation of Assam's literary culture, preserving history, language, folklore, social thought, and creative expression for successive generations. Every major literary movement in Assam has depended upon a vibrant publishing ecosystem consisting of writers, editors, publishers, printers, booksellers, libraries, and readers. Together, they created an intellectual environment that nurtured new ideas while safeguarding the state's cultural identity. That ecosystem, however, is experiencing one of the most difficult transitions in its history. The challenges confronting the industry are no longer confined to rising production costs or fluctuating book sales. They now extend to changing reading habits, digital technology, online retailing, shifting consumer preferences, limited investment, inadequate distribution networks, and growing competition for people's time and attention. Traditional bookstores across Assam no longer witness the steady flow of readers that once defined literary life. Many publishers hesitate before investing in new manuscripts because the commercial risks have increased significantly. Writers frequently struggle to find publishers willing to support original works, while independent authors often finance their own publications without any assurance of meaningful distribution or financial recovery. At the same time, the cost of paper, printing, binding, transportation, and marketing has risen steadily, making book production substantially more expensive than it was only a decade ago. These developments have undoubtedly created uncertainty, but they should not be interpreted as evidence that the publishing industry has reached its end. Instead, they indicate that Assamese publishing has entered a period of structural transformation in which survival will depend less on preserving old business models

and more on embracing innovation, professional management, technological adaptation, and closer engagement with readers. Every major publishing industry across the world has experienced similar transitions during the digital revolution. Many have emerged stronger by expanding beyond conventional publishing into electronic books, audiobooks, online sales, digital subscriptions, educational publishing, and multimedia content. Assam now faces the same opportunity. The future of Assamese publishing will ultimately depend upon its willingness to evolve while continuing to preserve the linguistic and cultural values that distinguish Assamese literature from every other literary tradition.

One of the defining features of this transformation is the changing relationship between readers and books. Younger generations consume information in ways that differ fundamentally from those of previous decades. Smartphones, tablets, social media platforms, podcasts, video streaming services, and artificial intelligence have altered the manner in which knowledge is discovered, shared, and remembered. Readers increasingly expect instant access, searchable content, interactive experiences, and flexible reading formats that fit into demanding daily schedules. This does not necessarily imply that printed books have become irrelevant. Rather, it suggests that printed books now compete with numerous alternative sources of information and entertainment that were unavailable to earlier generations. The challenge before Assamese publishers is therefore not simply to protect printed books but to redefine their value in an increasingly digital society. Printed books continue to offer intellectual depth, sustained concentration, emotional engagement, and cultural permanence that short digital content rarely provides. Research across many countries has consistently shown that long-form reading improves comprehension, analytical thinking, vocabulary development, and memory retention. These strengths should become central to the future identity of Assamese publishing. Simultaneously, publishers must invest



in professionally designed electronic books, high-quality audiobooks, accessible digital archives, and mobile-friendly reading platforms capable of reaching readers living both within Assam and across the global Assamese diaspora.

Digital publishing should not be viewed as a competitor to printed books but as an extension of the publishing ecosystem. Many readers may first encounter an author through digital platforms before eventually purchasing printed editions. Social media can become an effective promotional tool when used strategically to introduce new titles, organize author interactions, and build long-term reading communities. Print-on-demand technology also offers practical advantages by reducing warehouse expenses and minimizing financial risks associated with unsold inventory. Instead of printing thousands of copies without certainty regarding demand, publishers can produce books according to confirmed orders while maintaining continuous availability. Such approaches enable smaller publishers to remain financially sustainable without compromising literary quality. Equally important is the need to im-

prove editorial standards, book design, typography, translation quality, and production values so that Assamese books remain competitive alongside publications produced in larger publishing markets.

The future of the industry will also depend upon strengthening every institution that supports reading beyond commercial publishing itself. Libraries, educational institutions, literary organizations, universities, community reading groups, and government agencies all possess responsibilities that extend beyond the publication of individual books. Reading habits cannot develop automatically in an environment dominated by constant digital distraction. They require deliberate encouragement from early childhood through adulthood. Schools should introduce students to contemporary Assamese literature alongside classical works while encouraging independent reading rather than limiting literary engagement to examination requirements. Public libraries require modernization through improved collections, digital catalogues, comfortable reading environments, internet connectivity, and regular literary events capable of attracting young readers. Dis-

tribut-level book festivals, author interactions, translation workshops, creative writing programmes, children's literature festivals, and community reading campaigns can collectively strengthen the culture of reading throughout Assam. Government support also remains significant. Transparent book procurement policies for libraries, financial assistance for translation projects, grants for research publications, incentives for digitization, and support for regional publishers can strengthen an industry that contributes directly to linguistic preservation and cultural continuity. Universities and research institutions should collaborate more actively with publishers to produce scholarly works, reference books, and academic publications in Assamese, thereby expanding the intellectual scope of regional publishing. Translation deserves particular attention because it enables Assamese literature to reach national and international audiences while simultaneously bringing important global works into Assamese. Such exchanges enrich literary culture and expand commercial opportunities for publishers. Copyright awareness, fair royalty agreements, transparent contracts, and professional editorial practices will also help rebuild trust between authors and publishers, creating an environment in which creative talent receives appropriate recognition and financial respect.

Looking ahead, the Assamese book publishing industry possesses far greater potential than current circumstances might suggest. Assam has a rich literary heritage shaped by centuries of cultural evolution, beginning with the contributions of Srimanta Sankardev and Madhavdev and continuing through successive generations of poets, novelists, historians, dramatists, scholars, journalists, and social thinkers. That intellectual inheritance remains one of the state's greatest strengths. The challenge today is to connect this heritage with twenty-first-century publishing practices capable of serving both traditional readers and digitally connected audiences. Publishers must increasingly view themselves not merely as producers of printed books but as creators of

knowledge across multiple formats. Authors must engage more actively with readers through public discussions, educational programmes, digital platforms, and literary festivals. Booksellers can transform their establishments into cultural spaces where conversations, workshops, exhibitions, and book launches encourage regular public participation. Private investment in publishing technology, professional editing, digital marketing, metadata management, and online distribution can significantly improve commercial competitiveness. Collaboration rather than competition among publishers, booksellers, educational institutions, technology companies, and literary organizations will become essential for building a resilient publishing ecosystem. Most importantly, society itself must recognize that books are not ordinary commercial products. They preserve collective memory, strengthen language, encourage critical thinking, and shape informed citizenship. Every thriving civilization has invested in its publishing institutions because books record knowledge that outlives generations. Assamese publishing therefore carries responsibilities extending far beyond commercial success. Its future will be determined by the collective choices of writers who continue creating meaningful literature, publishers who invest in quality despite uncertainty, governments that recognize cultural industries as public assets, educational institutions that nurture lifelong readers, and citizens who choose books despite the endless distractions of the digital age. The present challenges are undoubtedly serious, but they also provide an opportunity to rebuild the industry on stronger, more innovative, and more sustainable foundations.

If Assamese publishing successfully combines literary excellence with technological adaptation, professional standards, reader engagement, and institutional support, it will not merely survive the coming decades but emerge as a dynamic force capable of preserving Assam's cultural identity while expanding its intellectual presence far beyond regional boundaries.

The Need for Wall Climbing Infrastructure in Guwahati: An Assam Perspective

By: Mowsam Hazarika

Guwahati, often described as the gateway to Northeast India, is undergoing a rapid urban transformation. With expanding infrastructure, rising aspirations, and increasing youth participation in sports and fitness, the city stands at a critical juncture in redefining its sporting identity. While Assam has made notable strides in athletics, football, boxing, and traditional games, adventure sports—particularly wall climbing—remain an underdeveloped frontier. Developing structured wall climbing infrastructure in Guwahati is not merely an addition to the city's recreational landscape; it is a strategic investment in youth development, tourism diversification, and a modern sporting ecosystem for Assam.

The global rise of sport climbing, especially after its inclusion in the Olympic Games, has brought renewed attention to this dynamic discipline. Combining strength, endurance, mental focus, and problem-solving, wall climbing is uniquely positioned to engage today's youth. For Assam—a state known for its resilient people and diverse terrain—this sport aligns naturally with both geography and spirit.

A Natural Fit for Assam's Landscape

Guwahati is surrounded by hill systems such as Nilachal Hill, Narakasur Hill, and the foothills extending towards the Khasi ranges. These natural formations provide an ideal backdrop for developing a climbing culture. However, natural rock faces are often inaccessible, weather-dependent, and potentially unsafe for beginners. In this context, artificial climbing walls—both indoor and outdoor—become essential. They offer a controlled, safe, and scalable environment where beginners can learn, and professionals can train systematically.

Assam's climatic conditions, marked by heavy monsoons, further strengthen the case for indoor climbing facilities. A well-designed indoor climbing gym can ensure year-round training opportunities, unaffected by seasonal disruptions.

Engaging Youth Beyond the Digital Sphere

One of the most pressing challenges today is the growing disconnect of young people from physical activity due to excessive screen time. Wall climbing offers an exciting alternative—blending adventure with discipline. It encourages problem-solving, builds confidence, and enhances physical fitness. More importantly, it fosters resilience, a quality deeply rooted in Assam's cultural ethos. Establishing climbing walls in schools, colleges, and community spaces can create structured engagement platforms. Institutions in Guwahati can integrate climbing into extracurricular programmes, thereby promoting holistic development among students.

Boosting Assam's Sporting Potential

Despite having immense talent, Assam



often faces infrastructural gaps in emerging sports. The absence of standard climbing facilities limits exposure and professional training for aspiring climbers. With proper infrastructure, coaching support, and alignment with bodies such as the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, Guwahati can nurture athletes capable of competing at national and international levels.

The development of climbing centres at Sarusajai Sports Complex or other key venues in Guwahati could serve as a starting point. Hosting regional competitions, training camps, and certification programmes would not only elevate Assam's presence in the sport but also inspire a new generation of athletes.

A New Avenue for Tourism in Assam

Tourism in Guwahati has traditionally revolved around religious and cultural landmarks such as Kamakhya Temple and the Brahmaputra riverfront. While these remain central attractions, there is a growing need to diversify the tourism portfolio. Adventure tourism is one such emerging sector with significant potential.

A modern climbing park—strategically located near the Brahmaputra waterfront or within eco-tourism zones like Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary foothills—could become a unique attraction. Such initiatives can complement Assam's broader tourism vision by offering experiential activities to visitors, especially younger travellers and international tourists seeking adventure.

Economic and Community Benefits

The development of wall climbing infrastructure can generate a ripple effect across the local economy. It can create employment opportunities for trained instructors, facility managers, and event coordinators. Ancillary sectors such as sports equipment retail, hospitality, and local transport can also benefit from increased activity.

Beyond economics, climbing centres can serve as inclusive community spaces.

The sport is accessible across age groups and genders, making it a valuable tool for social engagement. It can also be integrated into fitness programmes, corporate team-building activities, and even therapeutic rehabilitation.

The Way Forward: Policy and Partnership

Realising this vision requires a coordinated effort. The Government of Assam, through its Department of Sports & Youth Welfare, can play a catalytic role by incorporating adventure sports into its policy framework. Schemes under Khelo India and state-level youth programmes can be leveraged to fund and promote such initiatives.

Public-private partnerships (PPP models) can ensure sustainability and professional management. Educational institutions, private investors, and sports organisations must collaborate to design, build, and operate climbing facilities that meet international safety standards.

Equally important is awareness. Introductory workshops, school outreach programmes, and public demonstrations can help popularise the sport. Training and certification of instructors, along with strict adherence to safety protocols, will be essential in building trust and participation.

Conclusion

The case for wall climbing infrastructure in Guwahati is compelling and timely. It aligns with Assam's aspirations for a healthier, more dynamic youth population and a diversified economy. More than just a sport, wall climbing represents a mindset—of perseverance, courage, and continuous growth.

As Guwahati evolves into a modern urban centre, embracing such forward-looking initiatives will ensure that its development is not only infrastructural but also human-centric. The time has come for Assam to look beyond conventional boundaries and create spaces where its youth can quite literally climb higher—towards new horizons of possibility.

Road accidents: Not individual negligence, but a challenge to public health and good governance

By: Dr Satyavan Saurabh

India is among the world's most affected countries by road accidents. According to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, approximately 177,000 people died in road accidents in 2024. This number is no less than that of any natural disaster or epidemic. Every day, hundreds of families lose a loved one, thousands are permanently disabled, and the country suffers a loss of productive human resources and billions of rupees in economic losses. Therefore, limiting road accidents solely to driver negligence, speeding, or traffic violations is tantamount to a complete failure of public health, road infrastructure, law enforcement, emergency medical services, and administrative coordination.

The issue of road safety is directly linked to citizens' right to life, guaranteed by Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. If a citizen cannot even walk safely on the road, it not only reflects their individual negligence but also questions the state's responsibility and the effectiveness of governance. The Supreme Court has also directed governments in numerous cases to ensure safe road infrastructure, scientific road construction, and effective monitoring.

Poor road engineering is a major cause of most accidents in India. Black spots, inadequate signage, broken roads, unsurfaced curves, lack of lighting, and a lack of safe pedestrian access on many national and state highways contribute to accidents. Encroachment on sidewalks, illegal parking, and unplanned traffic management in cities also increase the risk of accidents. Neglecting quality and safety standards during road construction ultimately costs citizens their lives.

Another important reason is the lack of effective enforcement of laws. Despite the Motor Vehicles Act's stringent penalties, problems such as speeding, drunk driving, not using helmets and seat belts, and overloading persist. In many places, enforcement of traffic rules is limited only by the presence of police. If monitoring systems are technology-based and transparent, compliance with rules may increase automatically.

Road accidents are also considered a public health crisis because the lack of timely medical care after an accident results in a large number of deaths. Many lives can be saved if victims receive proper medical attention during the Golden Hour, but in rural and remote areas, the situation becomes critical due to a lack of ambulance services, a lack of trauma centers, and delays in reaching hospitals. Lack of coordination between the police and health departments often impacts relief efforts.

Even at the administrative level, road safety is a subject of fragmented responsibility among multiple depart-

ments. Road construction is handled by one department, traffic control by the police, health services are under another department, and local bodies have their own roles. This fragmented system prevents the development of a coordinated strategy for accident prevention. Consequently, accountability remains unclear.

To ensure road safety, it is essential to ensure scientific and safe road engineering. Safety audits should be mandatory for every road project, and accident-prone areas should be identified and remediated promptly. The needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and the disabled should also be integral to road design.

Technology-based monitoring systems should be expanded to ensure traffic law enforcement. Automated speed cameras, CCTV networks, artificial intelligence-based traffic management, and e-challan systems will reduce corruption and promote compliance. Repeat offenders need to be suspended for licenses and strict penalties imposed.

Strengthening emergency medical services is also crucial. Modern trauma centers should be established at regular intervals along national and state highways, ambulance services should be expanded, and all hospitals should be mandated to provide immediate treatment to accident victims. Effective implementation of "Good Samaritan" guidelines is also essential, so that citizens who assist an injured person are not deterred by fear of legal consequences.

Road safety is not just a matter of law, but also a question of social behavior. Road safety education should be included in the curriculum, from

schools to universities. A culture of responsible driving should be developed among citizens through public awareness campaigns. Active participation of parents, teachers, the media, and civil society can play a vital role in this direction.

Institutional reforms are also essential for long-term solutions. A coordinated road safety framework should be developed between the central and state governments, with clear policymaking, funding, monitoring, and accountability. District-level road safety committees should be given greater authority and resources. Accident data from the police, transport, and health departments should be integrated to create a reliable national database, enabling evidence-based policymaking.

If India is to progress towards becoming a developed nation, safe roads are a primary prerequisite. Road accidents are not a matter of fate or coincidence, but in most cases, are preventable. The need is to view them not as mere individual errors, but as a challenge to public health and good governance. Only through safe road infrastructure, strict and transparent law enforcement, modern emergency health services, public awareness, and effective administrative coordination can accidents be significantly reduced. Until the government makes road safety a core development agenda, millions of families will continue to suffer and the country will suffer irreparable losses every year. Safe roads are not just a convenience, but a constitutional and human right of every citizen.

(Dr. Satyavan Saurabh, PhD (Political Science), is a poet and social thinker.)



