

MPC's 3-day meeting begins amid expectations of status quo on interest rates

MUMBAI, Aug 3: The three-day meeting of the Reserve Bank of India's rate-setting panel started on Monday amid expectations of a status quo on the benchmark repo rate, with the Monetary Policy Committee slated to announce its decision on August 5.

As global uncertainties and inflation risks persist, most experts expect the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to adopt a cautious approach despite resilient domestic economic growth.

In June, the Reserve Bank had kept its key policy rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent and adopted a cautious wait-and-watch stance as policymakers assessed the fallout of the West Asia conflict.

The central bank had raised the retail inflation estimate for 2026-27 to 5.1 per cent from its earlier estimate of 4.6 per cent, largely due to mounting input costs, triggered by the pass-through of higher global energy prices to retail rates of petrol and diesel.

It lowered its GDP forecast for FY27 to 6.6 per cent from the 6.9 per cent estimated in April.

RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra will announce the outcome of the bi-monthly meeting on August 5.

Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda, said the credit policy comes at a time when global uncertainty still exists and there is little clarity on when the war will end. Therefore, crude oil prices and currency will remain volatile and rather hard to conjecture. "At the same time, we have



seen inflation inching upwards and it does look like that it will continue to move in the upward direction as food prices have started rising partly due to the season effects as well as monsoon.

"Growth on the other hand, going by high frequency indicators, is steady. Against this background, the MPC is likely to maintain status quo on repo rate as well as the stance," Sabnavis said.

Dipti Deshpande, Senior Director and Principal Economist, Crisil Ltd, too expects the central bank to keep policy rates unchanged during its August review meeting.

"While the MPC may acknowledge emerging inflationary risks, we believe it will prefer to wait for greater clarity on the implications of two key shocks, namely the prolonged conflict in West Asia and ongoing monsoon uncertainties, for the growth-inflation dynamic."

"Both factors pose risks to the

growth and inflation outlook, presenting policymakers with an increasingly delicate trade-off," Deshpande said.

D K Srivastav, Chief Policy Advisor, EY India, said the first quarter growth is expected to be in the range of 7.1 to 7.3 per cent. At the same time, average CPI inflation during April-June remained close to the MPC's mean target level of 4 per cent.

"...the monetary policy committee is likely to keep the repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent in its August 2026 monetary policy review... Going forward, RBI's decisions regarding the policy rate will remain data-dependent given the continuing uncertainty regarding crude oil prices linked to the Middle-Eastern situation," Srivastav said.

Vinay Sai, MD and Head of Fixed Income, Equirus Capital, expects the upcoming monetary pol-

icy to primarily be guided by domestic inflation, liquidity conditions and economic growth rather than mirroring global monetary policy developments.

"However, if elevated global yields persist and portfolio debt inflows moderate, the RBI is likely to maintain a neutral and cautious policy stance rather than aggressively ease rates," Pai said.

Pradeep Aggarwal, Founder and Chairman, Signature Global (India), said the MPC meeting comes at a time when the global economy continues to face heightened uncertainty due to geopolitical tensions, trade disruptions, and volatile commodity prices.

He further said the accommodative interest rate environment has encouraged many first-time as well as end-use homebuyers to enter the market.

"Maintaining this supportive policy stance will help sustain housing demand, strengthen allied industries, and continue contributing meaningfully to India's economic growth," Aggarwal said.

Mandar Pitale, Head, Financial Markets, SBM Bank (India) said that current growth-inflation dynamics point towards risks to growth with a manageable inflation trajectory in the immediate future.

"This coupled with elevated global uncertainties, may result in MPC not considering the rate hike option in a hurry during the forthcoming MPC meeting in August," he said. (PTI)

Logitech launches affordable Bluetooth keyboard and mouse combo in India

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 3: Logitech has expanded its wireless accessories portfolio in India with the launch of the MK250 Bluetooth Mouse and Keyboard Combo and the K250 Bluetooth Keyboard, aimed at offering affordable and reliable wireless solutions for everyday users.

The company said the new products are designed for first-time wireless users, combining Bluetooth connectivity, compact design and long battery life for work, study and daily multitasking.

The MK250 Combo pairs the K250 Bluetooth Keyboard with the M196 wireless mouse, which features optical tracking, line-by-line scrolling and an ambidextrous design.

Logitech said both devices offer up to 12 months of battery life and will be available in Graphite, Off-White and Rose colour options, subject to regional availability.

The standalone K250 Bluetooth Keyboard supports Windows, macOS and ChromeOS and is certified to Work With Chromebook (WWCB).

It features a full-sized layout with a numeric keypad, shortcut keys, adjustable tilt legs, spill-resistant construction and a body made partly from recycled plastic.

The MK250 Bluetooth Mouse and Keyboard Combo is priced at ₹2,195, while the K250 Bluetooth Keyboard is available at ₹1,395 in India.

According to the company, the project is expected to generate significant employment opportunities. The company is a flagship company of Amit Alliance, a Rs 2,000-crore revenue group engaged in the steel, mining, and infrastructure sectors. (PTI)

The proposed integrated steel project is expected to expand the company's manufacturing capabilities, it said.

It claimed the facility will feature integrated steelmaking operations supported by advanced manufacturing technologies and sustainable infrastructure.

The Grey Panther Scrambler is powered by the 334 cc KATAR engine, delivering 30 PS, 30 Nm of torque and a claimed fuel efficiency of 30 kmpl.

Boman Rustom Irani, Co-Founder of Classic Legends, said the new line-up reflects feedback from Yezdi riders and continues the brand's focus on purpose-built motorcycles. Co-Founder Anupam Thareja said Kerala was chosen for the national launch because of its strong motorcycling culture and its significance in the mid-capacity motorcycle segment.

As part of its expansion strategy, the company has partnered with dealers to establish 20 and counting touchpoints across Kerala, describing it as one of its largest single-state network expansions.

Bookings for the new colour variants are now open across India.

The company also continues to offer its Ownership Assurance Programme, which includes a four-year/50,000-km standard warranty, extendable up to six years, roadside assistance, annual maintenance package options and nationwide sales and service support.

Radisson Blu Guwahati hosts North-South culinary festival

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 3: Radisson Blu Guwahati is hosting 'Uttar Dakshin - Jab North Met South', a food festival celebrating the culinary traditions of North and South India, at The Great Kebab Factory from July 31 to August 16.

The festival features a specially curated menu showcasing regional delicacies, including Malabari Kalmi Kabab, Mathania Paneer, Dhungar Adraki

Chaahein, Mutton Pulusu, Andhra Masala Prawns, Haryali Badami Tangdi Kabab and Amritsari Fish with Gunpowder Aioli, along with a range of vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes inspired by India's diverse cuisines.

The dining experience has been designed to reflect the country's cultural heritage through traditional presentation, regional décor and authentic serving styles, including dishes served on banana leaves.

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Govt taking 'multi-faceted

to help the people by opening every possible avenue to give them cash in hand, the CM added, "Through releasing @PMSuryaGhar state subsidy, we have utilised another instrument to help those affected by #AssamFloods."

Sarma later visited parts of Sivasagar district and oversaw the relief and rehabilitation operations, while also interacting with the affected people.

The latest fatalities in the deluge were reported in Sivasagar, one of the most-affected districts in the current wave of floods in the northeastern state.

A total of 1,36,200 people remained affected by floods in Charaideo, Dhemaji, Golaghat, Jorhat and Sivasagar districts. On Saturday, almost 1.8 lakh people were affected across five districts.

Sivasagar remained the worst-hit with over 55,000 people affected, followed by 40,000 people in Charaideo and 22,000 in Jorhat.

Chief Secretary Ravi Kota, in a post on X through his official handle, shared details of the relief measures being pursued by the state government.

"Based on assessments carried out by the respective district administrations, the Government of Assam has initiated the first tranche of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) for nearly 75,000 eligible flood-affected families across the four districts. An amount of ₹15,000 per family, involving a total outlay of approximately ₹112 crore, is being extended to support immediate post-disaster recovery needs," it said.

The package includes ₹2,500 each for clothing and utensils, ₹3,000 as gratuitous relief for livelihood support under the SDRF and an additional ₹7,000 provided by the state government.

The chief secretary mentioned the various measures already announced, like exemption of land tax for one year and waiving off electricity charges for up to 300 units consumed during July 2026 for domestic and 'Jeevan Dhara' consumers in Sivasagar and Charaideo districts.

Eligible households in the flood-affected districts will receive financial assistance of ₹1.20 lakh, in accordance with SDRF norms, for the restoration of damaged houses, besides funds for loss of livestock, installation of hand tube wells, damaged looms and finished handloom products. "The state government is also taking urgent steps to provide financial assistance for crop damage and other livelihood losses in accordance with prescribed norms, and damage assessment work for this purpose is being initiated," the chief secretary said.

He also shared details of assistance announced for restoration of Anganwadi centres, schools and 'Namghars', and organising health camps for flood-affected people and veterinary camps. He mentioned steps initiated for expedited settlement of insurance claims with minimum documentation for the worst-hit locations.

Ex-gratia assistance of ₹9 lakh per deceased person is also being extended to the next of kin, while ₹5.64 crore has already been released for debris clearance from roads, public places, homes, schools and other affected locations.

"While natural disasters test our resilience, they also remind us of the power of unity, compassion and collective action. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the district administrations, disaster response forces, volunteers, civil society organisations and all those who have worked tirelessly to support the affected communities throughout this crisis," Kota said. "The Government of Assam remains steadfast in extending every possible support, both in cash and in kind, and is fully committed to ensuring timely assistance and facilitating the speedy recovery of the affected communities," the top official added. (PTI)

Flood relief: Himanta takes

Sivasagar district, the Chief Minister dismissed criticism over the amount, asserting that the government would continue extending support to affected families until rehabilitation is completed. "Those who are making fun of us do not know us. The people of Nazira and Sivasagar know that the government stands with them and will continue to help them for a long time," Sarma added.

He further said it would be incorrect to judge the government's flood response solely on the basis of the interim relief amount. "Those who feel ₹15,000 is too little have a very limited understanding. This is not the end of the government's assistance. The people know that we are with them and that is why they are not questioning our intentions," the chief minister said.

Sarma stressed that the government's immediate focus remains on assisting flood-hit families rather than responding to political criticism. "This is the time to stand beside the people. They will judge us by the work we do on the ground and by how effectively we help them rebuild their lives," he said.

The chief minister also announced the next phase of the state's rehabilitation programme, stating that special training sessions for damage assessment teams will be organised in Jorhat on August 7 and Nazira on August 8.

Following the training, teams comprising teachers and government officials will conduct door-to-door surveys in flood-affected areas to prepare a comprehensive assessment of damage to houses, property and livelihoods. The survey will form the basis for determining compensation and rehabilitation assistance.

No cause for concern

the dam structure, reservoir, control room and the Early Warning System installed at the project. He also held discussions with NHP engineers and officials regarding the operational mechanisms and flood management measures being followed at the hydroelectric facility.

According to the minister, the 116-metre-high dam currently has its reservoir filled up to 92 metres while maintaining a 15-metre flood cushion to absorb excess inflows during the monsoon and help moderate downstream flooding. He said around 3,800 cubic metres of water per second (cumecs) is presently being released downstream in a regulated manner. Pegu noted that the project recorded its highest inflow of nearly 13,800 cumecs during the recent spell of heavy rainfall on July 13. Of this, approximately 12,500 cumecs was discharged in a controlled manner, while the remaining water was retained in the reservoir to reduce the intensity of floods downstream.

"After personally inspecting the project and interacting with the engineers, I am convinced that the Lower Subansiri Dam is safe. The release of water is carefully regulated and all operations are being carried out under the prescribed safety protocols," the minister said.

He added that reservoir levels are under continuous surveillance and the dam is being operated in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the National Dam Safety Authority. Reassuring people living in downstream districts such as Dhemaji, Lakhimpur and Majuli, Pegu said there was no reason for panic, as the project has the capacity to temporarily store excess monsoon inflows and release water in a calibrated manner to help mitigate flood risks.

He reiterated that the safety of downstream communities remains the government's foremost priority and that all agencies are working in close coordination to ensure the responsible operation of the project.

Centre has extended

Choudhary said the Central Water Commission (CWC) issues short-range flood forecasts with a lead time of up to 24 hours and also provides inflow forecasts for identified reservoirs.

At present, the CWC issues flood forecasts at 360 stations across the country, including 53 stations in the northeastern region -- 15 inflow forecast stations and 38 level forecast stations -- in accordance with the standard operating procedure, he said. The minister said the CWC has also developed a basin-wise rainfall-runoff mathematical model to issue seven-day advance flood forecast advisories, giving local authorities more lead time to plan evacuation of people and take other remedial measures.

The advisories are disseminated through a dedicated website. "CWC's flood forecasting services are also integrated with the integrated alert dissemination platform common alert protocol (CAP) issued to the state disaster management authority (SDMA) of the respective States/UTs. The flood information is also uploaded to various social media platforms such as Facebook, X, and the Flood Watch India mobile app," he added. On long-term flood mitigation, Choudhary said the Brahmaputra board has prepared 52 master plans for the northeastern states, incorporating short, medium and long-term structural as well as non-structural measures for flood management.

The minister said the Ministry of Jal Shakti has continuously impressed upon the states the need to adopt flood plain zoning (FPZ) as a non-structural measure of flood management and circulated technical guidelines on the subject to all states and Union territories in August 2025.

He also said hydrological and meteorological data are shared by neighbouring countries for effective river basin management and flood forecasting in the northeastern region.

State governments assess flood damage and provide relief from the state disaster response fund, while additional assistance from the national disaster response fund is extended for disasters of a severe nature under the prescribed procedure, the minister added. (PTI)

Tech platforms help connect

operations, delivering relief materials, rehabilitation support and long-term recovery.

The application has been developed by Dikshit Rajkhowa, a technology professional based in New Delhi and originally from Assam.

Rajkhowa said, "We built the first version of the application in less than a week because we understood the urgency of the situation in Assam, but the architecture has been designed to scale for disaster response anywhere in India." Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, co-founder of Firingoti, stressed the initiative is entirely humanitarian and said, "Helpmonk is completely free to use. Firingoti does not earn any revenue from this platform."

She added that the platform can also become a valuable resource for journalists, researchers, policymakers and relief agencies by providing real-time information from the ground, helping improve situational awareness and response planning during disasters.

Another platform seeking to connect affected people with relief providers is Banpani.org. Sharing its details, senior journalist-author Mrinal Talukdar said it is a community-built, community-run flood platform developed by Partha Borthakur, working with North East Agriculture Technology Entrepreneurs Hub, an agri-tech business incubator of Assam Agriculture University.

Talukdar said the crowd-sourced data may be incomplete at times, but it is striving to fill a gap of linking those in need with those coming forward to help in a swift manner.

Banpani is a free, community-run live map to coordinate flood relief in Assam so no area is left stranded, and no two convoys collide in the same village, the official website of the platform said. It stressed that while it belongs to no one and has been built by volunteers, it is not a replacement for official rescue. (PTI)

Shah must explain in Parl lathicharge-

Sanjay Raut and Arvind Sawant, JMM's Mahua Maji, CPI(M)'s John Brittas and CPI's P Santhosh Kumar, RSP's NK Premchandran, among others, participated in the meeting.

The INDIA bloc has vowed to corner the government on issues of alleged donation theft and the use of "brutal force" against students during their protests over the NEET paper leak. (PTI)

KOLKATA, Aug 3: Century Plyboards (India) Ltd, riding on a major consumer campaign around what it claimed is India's first comprehensive plywood warranty covering the entire furniture cost, is targeting a topline of ₹12,000 crore by 2030-31 from ₹5,400 crore in 2025-26, a top company official said.

The company on Monday launched 'Total Cover', a warranty programme that reimburses not only the cost of plywood but also laminates, veneers, adhesives, labour and transportation arising from a covered defect.

Executive Director Keshav Bhajanka said the initiative, backed by a nationwide campaign featuring brand ambassador Amir Khan, is not expected to have any material financial impact on the company. "We are growing strongly as our

topline has tripled since COVID-19. We will continue to grow at a 20 per cent CAGR and aim to reach a topline of ₹12,000 crore by 2030-31 as our consumer-centric focus remains a top priority," Bhajanka said.

Bhajanka said CenturyPly remains optimistic about its particle board business despite reporting losses in the segment over the past few quarters, describing the weakness as temporary.

"The ₹600-crore investment in particle board will drive higher production and sales. The business will return to profitability as demand remains strong and we are stabilising operations with the new investment in this segment," he said.

Executive Director Nikita Bansal said it took the company nearly two years to develop the of-

fering of a 10-year warranty covering not only its two premium plywood variants but also the entire furniture cost.

She said the company's new Hoshiarpur manufacturing facility is on track to become operational by September. Land is being acquired for a new plant in Uttar Pradesh, while another project is being planned in Odisha, where the company is scouting for land.

On the new warranty programme, Bhajanka said the company does not foresee any significant financial impact from extending warranty coverage to the entire furniture cost, calling it the first such consumer-centric initiative globally. Bansal said the company decided to introduce the programme after studying customer complaints over the past two-and-a-half years. (PTI)

HDFC Bank launches tailored savings accounts for seniors, women

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 3: HDFC Bank on Monday launched two new savings account variants — 'Max for Seniors' and 'Max for Her' — offering customised banking benefits for senior citizens and women under its flagship Savings Max account.

The bank said the new products have been designed to meet the evolving financial and lifestyle needs of the two customer segments.

Both accounts include features such as cyber fraud insurance, hospitalisation cover of up to ₹1 lakh, auto sweep facility for higher returns on surplus savings and complimentary airport lounge access. The 'Max for Seniors' account also offers an additional 0.5 per cent interest on fixed deposits, doorstep banking, a complimentary health check-up, waiver of the first year's annual maintenance charge on Demat accounts, lifestyle vouchers and personal accidental death cover of up to ₹3.19 crore on the debit card.

Amit Metaliks to lay foundation stone for ₹4,000 crore steel project in Bengal

KOLKATA, Aug 3: Amit Metaliks Ltd on Monday said the foundation stone of its proposed Rs 4,000 crore integrated steel manufacturing project at Raghunathpur in West Bengal's Purulia district will be laid on August 17, with Chief Minister Suvenudh Adhikari scheduled to preside over the ceremony, the

company said in a statement.

The proposed integrated steel project is expected to expand the company's manufacturing capabilities, it said.

It claimed the facility will feature integrated steelmaking operations supported by advanced manufacturing technologies and sustainable infrastructure.

Jawa Yezdi unveils 2026 motorcycle range, expands dealer network

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 3: Jawa Yezdi Motorcycles has unveiled the 2026 Yezdi range, introducing three new motorcycles under the 'Untamed Trinity' line-up while announcing a major expansion of its dealership network, beginning with Kerala ahead of the festive season.

The new range comprises the Yellow Falcon Adventure, Green Mamba Roadster and Grey Panther Scrambler, each designed to cater to different riding preferences. The national rollout has commenced from Kerala, coinciding with the onset of the festive season beginning with Onam.

The Yellow Falcon Adventure features new cross-spoke tubeless wheels, one of the most sought-after upgrades by riders, along with a new grey-and-yellow colour scheme. It is powered by a 334 cc liquid-cooled Alpha2 engine producing 29.6 PS of power and 29.9 Nm of torque and comes equipped with traction control and multiple ABS modes.

The Green Mamba Roadster sports a matte green finish with a quilted Arabica-brown seat and copper accents, while retaining the 334 cc Alpha2 engine,

AFFIDAVIT
I, Prasanjit Majumdar son of Nirmal Majumdar resident of Village Dakshin Jamuhan-dalai, Hojai would like to mention that in my Aadhaar Card my date of Birth wrongly recorded as 15-04-2004 instead of correct DOB 15-03-2026.

AFFIDAVIT
I, Mohammed Sahel Ahmed, S/O- Mohammed Fakrul Islam, vill- Islam nagar, P.O.-Nailbagan, P.S.-Hojai, Dist-Hojai (Assam) That, my actual and correct name is Mohammed Sahel Ahmed and my father's actual and correct name is Mohammed Fakrul Islam which is recorded in my Aadhaar Card, Elector Photo Identity Card and my Pan Card. That, HSLC Marks Sheet Admit Card and Certificate wherein my name has been inadvertently recorded as Sahel Ahmed and also my father name has been inadvertently recorded as Fakrul Islam. That, Mohammed Sahel Ahmed and Sahel Ahmed same & one person and Mohammed Fakrul Islam and Fakrul Islam same & one person i.e my father name. *Mohammed Sahel Ahmed*

AFFIDAVIT
My father name Milungneing Riambe have been inadvertently recorded as R. James Humtsoe and K. Ruby Humtsoe in my Aadhaar card bearing no. 7509 3058 5887. I, Herarampeung Riambe do hereby declared that my father's name is Milungneing Riambe vide an affidavit at Notary Public, Dima Hasao and shall be record as the same in future. Herarampeung Riambe S/o Milungneing Riambe, Vill- Laisong, Dist- Dima Hasao.

District Day celebrated in Sonitpur

Medical camps, martyrs' tribute and cultural programmes mark day-long celebrations

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Aug 3: The Sonitpur district administration on Monday celebrated District Day with a series of programmes across the district, including a yoga session, walkathon, medical camps, tributes to freedom fighters, the inauguration of a food street and cultural performances.

The celebrations began with a Yogasana-Surya Namaskar session at Ananda Chandra Agarwala Park in Tezpur, organised in collaboration with the Sonitpur District Yoga Association.

The programme was inaugurated by District Commissioner Ananda Kumar Das in the presence of senior administrative officials, students, NCC cadets, Civil Defence personnel, teachers, police and paramilitary personnel.

A walkathon, flagged off by Barchalla MLA and Assam Olympic Association Vice-President Ritu Baran Sarma, saw the participation of more than 1,000 people.

The event featured perform-



ances of Jyoti-Bishnu songs and cultural presentations highlighting Sonitpur's heritage.

At Dhekiajuli, a tribute programme was organised at the Martyrs' Column to honour the 13 martyrs of the 1942 Quit India Movement.

The ceremony was inaugurated by Health and Family Welfare

Minister and Dhekiajuli MLA Ashok Singhal, who, along with public representatives and officials, paid floral tributes to the martyrs.

As part of the celebrations, the Indian Red Cross Society's Sonitpur district unit organised a free advanced medical camp for senior citizens in Tezpur.

The camp, inaugurated by Tezpur MLA Prithiraj Rava, provided free medical consultation and treatment to more than 100 elderly people.

Another mega health camp was held at Bhalukpong under the Naduar constituency and inaugurated by Naduar MLA Padma Hazarika.

More than 200 people from remote areas received free medical treatment, while the Agriculture Department conducted farmer registration at the venue.

The Tezpur Municipal Board also inaugurated 'Khaon Goli', a food street comprising 18 food stalls near the ISBT in Ward No 16. The facility was inaugurated by MLA Prithiraj Rava in the presence of District Commissioner Ananda Kumar Das, Municipal Board President Ramen Tamuly and other dignitaries.

The day-long celebrations concluded with a cultural programme at the District Library auditorium, showcasing the rich heritage and cultural traditions of Sonitpur district.

District administration urges citizens to complete online process between August 2 and 16

Cachar launches self-enumeration for Census 2027



HT Correspondent

SILCHAR, Aug 3: The Cachar district administration launched the Self-Enumeration phase of Census 2027, urging residents to complete the online census process between August 2 and August 16 as part of India's first fully digital Census.

The launch programme, held at the District Commissioner's office in Silchar, was chaired by District Development Commissioner Rajib Roy, while Additional District Commissioner-cum-District Census Officer Raktim Baruah outlined the district's preparedness for the exercise. Addressing the gathering, Roy described the Census as a vital national exercise that forms the basis for development planning, public service delivery and policy formulation. He urged citizens to provide accurate information and cooperate with enumerators during the verification process. Baruah said Census 2027 would be conducted entirely in digital mode.

He informed that Cachar has eight Census charge of-

fices, 3,031 enumerators and 512 supervisors for the exercise, with training of field staff having commenced on July 20 at various centres across the district.

He said citizens can complete self-enumeration through the official portal, se.census.gov.in, between August 2 and 16. Enumerators will subsequently visit every household from August 17 to September 15 to verify submitted information and collect data from households that have not completed the online process.

The second phase, Population Enumeration, will be conducted in February 2027.

Referring to the 2011 Census, Baruah noted that Cachar's population stood at 17,36,319, adding that accurate data collected during the current exercise would help governments formulate better development plans and improve public service delivery.

Speaking at the event on Sunday, Silchar MLA Rajdeep Roy appealed to citizens to complete self-enumeration well before the deadline, stating that reliable population data is essential for planning schools, hospitals, roads, housing and other public infrastructure.

Sonai MLA Aminul Haque Laskar also urged residents to participate actively and encourage others to do the same, describing the Census as a national responsibility. The programme was attended by senior district officials, including CEO of Cachar Zilla Parishad Dorothy Suchiang, Additional District Commissioners, charge officers, assistant commissioners and representatives of the media. The district administration reiterated its appeal for public participation to ensure an accurate and comprehensive Census.

Awareness programme guides SC/ST entrepreneurs on government schemes

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 3: More than 150 SC/ST entrepreneurs from Nagaon, Hojai, Rupahihat, Barhampur and adjoining areas participated in an Entrepreneur Awareness and Special Vendor Development Programme (EASVDP) organised at Khagarijan College recently.

The programme was organised by the National SC-ST Hub (NSSH), implemented by the National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) under the Ministry of MSME, in association with the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI).

Addressing the participants, Siba Barua, In-Charge of NSSH, outlined the objectives and benefits of the National SC-ST Hub Scheme and urged entrepreneurs to take advantage of government support and procurement opportunities.

Officials from MSME-DFO, KVIC, DIC Nagaon, GeM, BSNL, Engineers India Ltd (EIL), Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL), Food Corporation of India (FCI), banking institutions and other

agencies highlighted various central and state government schemes, procurement opportunities, vendor registration procedures, financial literacy, skill development and e-tendering.

Eligible participants also availed on-the-spot Udyam and Government e-Marketplace (GeM) registration facilities during the programme.

The event began with a welcome address by A. Tovi Choppi, Chair, NER, PHDCCI, followed by a screening of a film on the National SC-ST Hub.

The sessions were moderated by Meghmala Choudhury, Assistant Resident Director and In-Charge, NER Chapter, PHDCCI, while Dr Ramesh Nath, Principal of Khagarijan College, proposed the vote of thanks.

Organisers said the programme provided a platform for SC/ST entrepreneurs to interact with government agencies, central public sector enterprises and financial institutions while exploring business and procurement opportunities under various government schemes.

Health Minister reviews facilities at Tezpur Medical College

Ashok Singhal stresses stronger healthcare delivery, target-based approach to reduce maternal and infant mortality



HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Aug 3: Assam Health, Family Welfare and Medical Education Minister Ashok Singhal reviewed healthcare and medical education facilities at Tezpur Medical College and Hospital (TMCH), emphasising the need to strengthen healthcare delivery, improve medical education infrastructure and adopt a target-based approach to reduce maternal and infant mortality.

During a review meeting with heads of departments and faculty members, the Minister discussed healthcare delivery, patient care, hospital infrastructure, medical education and future development plans.

The meeting was attended by Barchalla MLA Ritu Baran Sharma, Health Commissioner-Secretary Dr P Ashok Babu, Sonitpur Deputy Commissioner Ananda

Kumar Das, Director of Medical Education Dr Manoj Kumar Choudhury, Joint Director of Health Services Dr Achyut Hazarika and TMCH Principal Dr Gunajit Das, among others.

Singhal later inspected various hospital departments, reviewing emergency and specialist care facilities, cleanliness, the availability of medicines and equipment and the functioning of doctors and other healthcare personnel on Sunday. He also interacted with patients to understand their grievances and assessed the college's academic infrastructure, teaching facilities and ongoing construction works.

The Minister highlighted the importance of Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) IDs and digital healthcare, besides promoting the State government's Health Club initiative to encourage health awareness, physical fitness, mental well-being and nutrition among young people.

Reviewing Sonitpur's health indicators, including maternal and infant mortality rates, Singhal directed officials to focus on the timely identification of high-risk pregnancies, improve maternity care and increase institutional deliveries.

He reiterated the State government's commitment to providing accessible, quality healthcare while strengthening medical education and healthcare infrastructure across Assam.

NEC member Longki Phangcho calls on Kerala Governor



HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 3: Longki Phangcho, a retired IAS officer and Member of the North Eastern Council (NEC), called on Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar at Lok Bhavan in Thiruvananthapuram during a courtesy meeting.

On the occasion, Phangcho presented the Governor with a traditional Karbi tunic (Chongchongthor) as a mark of respect.

The meeting focused on regional development and strategic policy issues, with discussions covering key infrastructure projects under the NEC aimed at improving connec-

tivity and accelerating development across the Northeast.

The two also exchanged views on the effective implementation of Central Government welfare schemes in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat.

They further discussed strengthening inter-state cooperation and fostering closer ties between the northeastern states and other parts of the country, including Kerala.

Governor Arlekar appreciated the issues raised by Phangcho and expressed his support for future collaborative initiatives between the Northeast and Kerala.

World Breastfeeding Week launched across Golaghat

HT Correspondent

GOLAGHAT, Aug 3: The District Health Society, Golaghat, recently launched World Breastfeeding Week 2026 with a series of awareness programmes across all five Block Primary Health Centres (BPHCs) in the district.

The inaugural programme was held at Halmira Tea Garden under Charingia BPHC, where the District Programme Manager (DPM), District Community Mobiliser (DCM) and District Media Expert (DME) participated in an awareness session for lactating mothers and pregnant women. Health officials highlighted the importance of breastfeeding and optimal infant and young child feeding practices.

Participants were counselled on initiating breastfeeding within the first hour of birth, ensuring exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and avoiding harmful traditional practices that may hinder successful breastfeeding.

The district-wide campaign will continue till August 7 under the theme, "Breastfeeding for a Sustainable Start in Life: Strengthen What Works."

Woman pilgrim killed in wild elephant attack in WKA

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Aug 3: A woman devotee was killed in a wild elephant attack while participating in the Kanwar Yatra in West Karbi Anglong district late Sunday night.

The deceased, Nomika Sangma, was travelling with a group of women devotees from Barmatikhol village to Kheroni during the holy month of Shravan when a wild elephant suddenly attacked the group.

Sangma died on the spot, while the other pilgrims managed to escape unhurt. She was taken to Kheroni Model Hospital, where doctors declared her dead.

The incident has triggered concern among local residents, who expressed grief over the tragedy and urged the authorities to address the growing problem of human-elephant conflict in the region.

Golaghat holds 287 medical camps in flood-hit areas

HT Correspondent

GOLAGHAT, Aug 3: The District Health Society, Golaghat, has organised 287 free medical camps across flood-hit areas and relief camps to ensure uninterrupted healthcare services and prevent the outbreak of communicable diseases during the recent floods.



Medical teams comprising doctors, Community Health Officers, ANMs, MPWs, surveillance workers, sanitary inspectors, health educators, ASHAs and programme officials have been providing emergency healthcare services in relief camps and affected villages under challenging conditions.

According to the Health Department, 3,463 patients have so far been screened and provided with free medicines.

Mobile Medical Units have also been deployed to deliver essential healthcare services, with special focus on pregnant women, children, senior citizens and other vulnerable groups.

As part of preventive measures, fogging operations have been carried out in relief camps and flood-affected villages across the district to curb the spread of mosquito-borne diseases.

NFR revises train schedule on Lumding-Badarpur section

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 3: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has announced fresh changes to train services on the Lumding-Badarpur Hill Section as restoration work continues near New Harangajao following the settlement of railway tracks on Lines 1 and 2.

According to an official statement, train operations are currently being maintained through Line 3 with enhanced safety measures in place.

NFR has cancelled Train No 15615 Guwahati-Silchar Express scheduled to commence its journey on August 4 and Train No 15616 Silchar-Guwahati Express scheduled to depart on August 5.

Several other trains have been

rescheduled.

These include Train No 15650 Narangi-Agartala Express, 15649 Agartala-Narangi Express, 15609 Guwahati-Sairang Express, 15610 Sairang-Guwahati Express, 15611 Rangiya-Silchar Express, 15612 Silchar-Rangiya Express and 15628 Silchar-Coimbatore Express, with revised departure timings ranging from late night on August 4 to early morning on August 5.

In addition, Train No 15625 Deogarh-Agartala Express, commencing its journey on August 3, will be regulated en route.

NFR said the temporary changes have been made to facilitate restoration work while ensuring safe train operations through the affected section.

Students level irregularity, fake degree allegations against Ham-One Group Institute

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 3: Serious allegations of irregularities, including the issuance of alleged fake degrees and large-scale collection of money from students, have been levelled against the Ham-One Group Institute at Kaoimari in Nagaon by members of the student community.

Addressing a press conference, law student Shivarjan Baruah and Nagaon University Students' Union president Himanka Sarma alleged that the institute was misleading students by offering programmes through correspondence, online and non-class modes, while prioritising financial gains over academic standards.

The student leaders claimed that the institute was illegally offering LLB programmes through online and non-class modes, despite the Bar

Council of India (BCI) not recognising such courses under the Advocates Act, 1961.

They further alleged that the institute is involved in an ongoing legal dispute with the BCI and claimed that law degrees awarded by the institute would not be considered valid by the Council.

They also alleged irregularities in undergraduate and B.Pharm programmes and claimed that the institute was collecting up to ₹3 lakh from students seeking admission to B.Ed courses.

The student body announced that it would move the Gauhati High Court against the institute over the alleged irregularities and corruption.

The allegations have been made by student representatives. There was no immediate response from the Ham-One Group Institute to the claims.

BTC leaders complete Census 2027 self-enumeration

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 3: BTC Executive Member Moon Moon Brahma and MCLA Kampa Borgoyari on Monday completed their Census 2027 self-enumeration through the official Census portal, joining public representatives across the country in supporting the nationwide exercise.

Urging residents of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) area to complete the self-enumeration process within the stipulated period, the two leaders said accurate population data is essential for informed planning and inclusive development.

The self-enumeration facility under the first phase of Census 2027 began on August 2 and will remain open until August 16.

East India Supply Centre extends relief to 200 flood-hit families

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 3: East India Supply Centre, a Guwahati-based business establishment, distributed relief materials to 200 flood-affected families in Sivasagar district as part of a humanitarian initiative.

The relief drive covered the flood-hit areas of Nazira-Rajapool, Duarah Gaon, Handique Gaon, Joysagar-Pani Gaon and Magarahat, where each family received mosquito nets, first-aid kits and drinking water bottles to help them cope with the aftermath of the recent floods. Speaking on the initiative, Mrinal Ganeswar, proprietor of East India Supply Centre, said social responsibility has remained a core value of the organisation since its establishment in 1974.

He said the organisation has consistently participated in community welfare and disaster relief activities and would continue to stand by people affected by natural calamities.

The organisation said the initiative reflects its continued commitment to supporting flood-affected communities and contributing to humanitarian and community welfare efforts across Assam.



Drug Dealers' Association, Samay Gogoi, the All Assam Barbers' Association, All Assam College Librarians' Association, actor-philanthropist Randeep Hooda, Hussain Mansury, the Akshaya Patra Foundation, Assam Sahitya Sabha, Assam State Journalists' Union, AASU, former Bokakhat MLA Jiten Gogoi, ATASU, Natyapith, Sivasagar, Ujoni Asom Muslim Kalyan Parishad, Bagh Hazarika

Suvarani Mancha, All Assam United Brahmin Council, the Majuli unit of ACTA, and more than a hundred other organisations and individuals.

More than 300 RSS volunteers have been working round the clock in Nazira, Nepali Basti, Sonali and Sivasagar, distributing relief materials and constructing temporary bamboo houses for families whose homes were destroyed in the floods.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

If you want a thing done well, do it yourself.
- Napoleon Bonaparte

Gaza disarmament deal

US President Donald Trump has declared a "historic" deal for Hamas to fully disarm in Gaza, brokered by his Board of Peace. But Netanyahu calls it inadequate, Hamas ties disarmament to a full Israeli pullout, and Washington simultaneously reads fresh strikes on Iran - exposing how unsettled the region truly remains. On the night of July 30, Trump took to Truth Social with characteristic bravado. "Today, the Board of Peace reached a HISTORIC agreement for the COMPLETE DISARMAMENT of Hamas and all other armed groups in Gaza. This is a monumental step toward lasting PEACE and SECURITY," he wrote. It was framed as the long-delayed second act of the ceasefire he brokered in October 2025, and as vindication of his 20-point Gaza peace plan. Within hours, the celebratory mood curdled. Hamas negotiators had indeed signed a disarmament framework with the US-led Board of Peace in El-Alamein, Egypt - the first time the group has ever put its signature on any agreement to give up its weapons. But Netanyahu's office almost immediately issued a statement saying the Board of Peace's 15-point disarmament proposal did not meet Israel's demands for Gaza's complete demilitarisation, leaving the path forward murky. An Israeli official was blunter still, telling reporters that despite "various publications" reporting diplomatic progress, there would be no withdrawal from Israel's current positions before "the genuine disarmament of Hamas."

The Board of Peace - a Trump-chaired body that gathered 40 countries at its inauguration in February, including Israel and Arab states but no Palestinian representatives - says the agreement is essentially a roadmap for implementing the ceasefire deal struck last October. The board called it "a historic breakthrough," saying that for the first time Hamas has committed to an actionable plan for relinquishing all its weapons, to be followed by Israeli withdrawal. Under the plan, Hamas would gradually hand over its weapons over an eight-month period to the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, a Board of Peace-overseen panel of Palestinian technocrats, with police weapons transferred first and personal weapons surrendered last. As disarmament is completed, Israeli forces are to withdraw, with an International Stabilisation Force working alongside a new Palestinian police force to secure Gaza.

Trump described a Palestinian government that would "work closely with the Board of Peace to help the Palestinian people," even as regional officials noted that the Palestinian Authority still "needs to carry out reforms before we consider integrating them." Crucially, the geography is contested. The deal envisions the IDF immediately returning to the "Yellow Line" that divided Gaza roughly into eastern and western halves - but Netanyahu had earlier ordered the army to take over 70 percent of the Strip, in violation of the original ceasefire, leaving Israel in control of 53 percent of the enclave at the time.

Assam's tea economy stands at a decisive moment, shaped by opportunity and uncertainty in equal measure. For nearly two centuries, tea has defined the state's agricultural identity, supported millions of livelihoods, generated export earnings, and built a globally respected brand associated with strong, malty black tea. Yet the future cannot depend solely on tradition. Climate variability, rising production costs, labour shortages, fluctuating international demand, quality concerns, and changing consumer preferences are steadily altering the foundations on which the industry was built. At the same time, new possibilities are emerging through premium teas, geographical branding, sustainable cultivation, value-added products, tea tourism, digital marketing, and expanding markets beyond conventional buyers. Tea Board data show that Assam remains India's largest tea-producing state, contributing more than half of the country's annual production, while recent production estimates indicate continued growth despite periodic weather-related disruptions. Export performance has also improved significantly, with India recording its highest-ever tea exports in 2025 and Assam contributing substantially to that achievement. However, production alone will not guarantee prosperity. International buyers increasingly demand traceability, lower pesticide residues, sustainability certification, and consistent quality standards. Recent warnings from tea factories regarding pesticide residue in green leaves highlight the seriousness of quality compliance for both domestic and export markets. Climate change presents an even greater structural challenge. Scientific research conducted in Assam's tea-growing districts has shown that changing rainfall patterns and temperature fluctuations are affecting soil biology, a

critical factor in long-term productivity. Extreme floods have repeatedly damaged plantations, disrupted harvesting schedules, and affected thousands of workers, particularly in Upper Assam. The future therefore depends less on expanding acreage and more on increasing productivity, improving resilience, and creating higher value from every kilogram of tea produced. Assam's tea economy must move beyond the traditional model of bulk commodity production towards a diversified ecosystem where premium orthodox tea, specialty green tea, organic cultivation, matcha, handcrafted teas, wellness products, and direct-to-consumer branding receive equal importance. The emergence of Assam's first commercial matcha production illustrates that innovation is no longer a distant possibility but an immediate business opportunity capable of attracting younger consumers and premium international markets.

Another defining feature of Assam's tea economy will be the growing role of small tea growers, who today account for almost half of the state's production. Their contribution has transformed the structure of the industry, but it has also exposed weaknesses in extension services, quality monitoring, access to finance, and bargaining power. Small growers often depend on bought-leaf factories, making them vulnerable to price fluctuations and input costs beyond their control. Recent concerns regarding pesticide residues underline the urgent need for stronger technical support, better farmer education, and wider adoption of scientific cultivation practices. Mechanisation can improve productivity where labour shortages are becoming acute, but technology



DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

should complement retail channels. Digital commerce offers tea producers the ability to sell directly to consumers worldwide, reducing dependence on traditional auction systems and intermediaries. Tea tourism can create another source of income by integrating plantations with heritage experiences, local cuisine, wellness retreats, golf tourism, and cultural attractions. Recent plans to combine Assam's tea gardens with tourism initiatives reflect this broader economic vision. Such diversification spreads risk while strengthening the global image of Assam as more than a producer of raw tea. If value addition, branding, tourism, research, and sustainable cultivation advance together, Assam can capture a much larger share of the value generated by its own tea rather than exporting bulk leaves that earn higher profits elsewhere through blending, packaging, and marketing.

The future of Assam's tea economy will ultimately depend on whether policymakers, plantation companies, small growers, researchers, workers, and entrepreneurs embrace structural transformation instead of relying on historical success. Global competition from Kenya, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and emerging producers will continue to intensify, while consumers will increasingly judge tea by sustainability credentials, ethical sourcing, health benefits, and premium quality rather than price alone. Assam has every natural advantage required to remain a global leader, including fertile soil, favourable climate, skilled workers, and a heritage recognised across international markets. Yet competitive advantage must now be earned through innovation, not inherited through history. Stronger research institutions, closer collaboration between universities and plantations, wider adoption of climate-smart agriculture, improved labour welfare, investment in worker housing, healthcare and education, greater participation of women in leadership, and better infrastructure connecting tea-growing districts with ports and logistics hubs will determine long-term competitiveness. Recent production figures demonstrate that Assam retains remarkable productive capacity,

with output rising significantly during 2025 while exports also strengthened. Those achievements should inspire confidence but not complacency. Weather-related disruptions, volatile global prices, compliance requirements, and changing consumer behaviour demand continuous adaptation. Assam's tea industry cannot afford to compete only on volume when premium markets increasingly reward quality, authenticity, and sustainability. The next generation of tea entrepreneurs has an opportunity to redefine the industry through branded products, specialty teas, e-commerce, agro-processing, carbon-conscious cultivation, and global storytelling built around Assam's unique heritage. If those opportunities are matched by consistent public policy, scientific innovation, responsible business practices, and skilled human capital, the tea economy will remain not merely a symbol of Assam's past but one of its strongest engines of economic growth, rural prosperity, export expansion, and international recognition throughout the decades ahead.

freedom from discrimination are equally important. The encouraging news is that competitive pressures may ultimately favour better labour standards. Apple, whose global reputation depends heavily on responsible sourcing, has steadily tightened oversight of suppliers following previous controversies involving working conditions. International investors increasingly evaluate environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices before committing capital, making workforce policies a strategic business issue rather than merely a legal obligation.

The larger picture remains overwhelmingly positive. Across southern India, daughters of farmers, daily-wage labourers and small shopkeepers are becoming part of global supply chains.

Many are first-generation industrial workers. Some are first-generation graduates. Many become the highest earners in their families before turning twenty-five. Their salaries finance siblings' education, household improvements, motorcycles, health insurance and even small entrepreneurial ventures back home.

This ripple effect is perhaps the greatest measure of empowerment. Economists have long argued that no society transforms faster than one where women enter formal employment in large numbers. Factory wages create bank accounts. Bank accounts create financial identity. Financial identity creates economic independence. Economic independence gradually reshapes families and communities. The same southern states that once led India's information technology revolution may now be leading its manufacturing revolution as well—this time powered not by software engineers alone, but by thousands of women on factory floors producing some of the world's most sophisticated consumer electronics.

Every iPhone assembled in India tells two stories. One is about geopolitics, supply chains and multinational investment. The other is about a young woman leaving her village, boarding a company bus before dawn, entering a clean-room assembly line and quietly participating in India's emergence as a global manufacturing powerhouse.

That second story may ultimately prove to be the more important one. For the future of Indian manufacturing will not merely be measured by export figures or factory output. It will be measured by how many millions of women find dignity, independence and opportunity through productive employment. If India succeeds in marrying industrial growth with inclusive labour practices, the country's manufacturing boom could become not just an economic miracle but one of the most significant chapters in the history of women's empowerment in independent India.

In a country where female foeticide incidence is high because it involved paying high dowries, girl child, was considered a burden, especially in rural hinterland, particularly in north and western India. Women were not encouraged to study. But with the Modi government launching Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, slogan, the scenario is changing. The slogan means Save the girl child, educate the girl child, meaning a girl child is as important as a boy child capable of earning bread and bringing prosperity to the family. (IPA Service)

Why is it necessary to take action against 'fake religious leaders'?

By: Dr Satyawan Saurabh

India has always been known as the land of saints, sages, and spiritual wisdom. For centuries, holy men and women have inspired others to live lives of compassion, truth, self-discipline, and service. The principles of various reformers and saints have profoundly influenced Indian society, inspiring people to rise above ignorance, superstition, and social constraints. Faith holds a paramount place in the lives of millions of Indians, for it is purity that is the ultimate reality. But the country has seen the rise of individuals who exploit religious sentiments to satisfy their personal needs, labeled "religious gurus." They leverage so-called "spiritual language" to establish empires of wealth, influence, and unquestioned power. In numerous cases in India, such women have been accused or convicted of serious crimes such as sexual exploitation, defrauding property owners, illegal land acquisition, intimidation, and other crimes. This not only makes these practices illegal but also tarnishes the reputation of those who practice spiritual practices religiously.

Therefore, any action taken by any authority against someone who uses religion as a cover for criminal acts should be considered part of justice and the rule of law, not an act of persecution against someone's religion. In a constitutional democracy, no citizen is above the law. There should be no free rein for wrongdoing, and no one should be exempt from the law based on their religious identity.

The Constitution of India recognizes the right of all its citizens to practice religious faith, religious customs, and their propagation as a privilege. This freedom is also subject to other constitutionally recognized limitations of public order, morality, and health. The Constitution provides for religious freedom, but does not permit criminal activities under the guise of religion. Therefore, the government has a constitutional duty, not an obligation, to ban the activities of most unauthorized spiritual leaders, self-proclaimed or "spiritual" leaders, and to investigate cases of financial irregularities or other illegal conduct in their activities.

Religious exploitation poses one of the greatest threats to people by hypocritical religious leaders. Suffering from serious illnesses, struggling with emotional or mental stress, or facing financial hardship, unsuspecting individuals are drawn to charismatic figures who promise miraculous cures, sudden wealth, and miraculous, supernatural solutions to life's problems. This exploitation can result in financial loss, emotional distress, or worse, lifelong suffering for victims and their families.

Unfortunately, people aren't the only ones who spread superstition. Society, in fact, is also responsible for fostering a reluctance to question and think critically. Faith is not opposed to reason. True spirituality fosters humility, empathy, and introspection, while blind obedience stifles critical thinking. The problem with a healthy democracy is that it requires citizens who are discerning when it comes to spiritual guidance and manipulation. This has become even more difficult with modern technology. Nowadays, a self-proclaimed religious leader can garner millions of followers on social media, who fall prey to carefully crafted stories, emotional manipulation, and absurd claims. Many people equate popularity with credibility. Videos, testimonials, and sensational content can create the illusion of divinity without any evidence or

testimony. Therefore, digital literacy, along with traditional education, is becoming increasingly important to protect citizens from being fooled.

The media bears a tremendous responsibility. Over the past few years, investigative journalism has played a crucial role in exposing several high-profile cases of abuse of power by self-proclaimed spiritual leaders. At the same time, media organizations must exercise extreme caution in presenting fair, balanced, and emotion-free reporting. When journalism is based on evidence rather than speculation, it further strengthens public trust.

The police must also be impartial and neutral. All allegations must be investigated, and every accused has the right to due process of law. Public pressure and politics should not influence action; it should be based only on credible evidence. Similarly, innocent religious leaders and religious institutions should not be attacked or harassed simply because of their beliefs and popularity. There must be a balance between punishing the guilty and protecting the innocent.

It is also noteworthy that thousands of religious and spiritual organizations in India are doing commendable work in areas such as education, healthcare, disaster management, environmental protection, and helping the underprivileged. They have established schools, hospitals, community kitchens, and charitable programs that benefit millions. These are valuable contributions and deserve recognition. This is not a fight against religion or spirituality—it is a fight against crime and exploitation in the name of religion or spirituality.

Schools have a significant responsibility to inculcate scientific temper, constitutional values, and moral values in children. Indonesia and India have included scientific temper as one of the fundamental duties of citizens in their respective constitutions. Encouraging critical thinking does not cast doubt on any religion; rather, it increases sensitivity to selfish and distorted individuals who misuse religion for their own selfish ends. Civil society organizations, responsible spiritual teachers, religious scholars, community leaders, and others can also play a vital role in ensuring greater transparency, accountability, and integrity in spiritual organizations. Greater openness, better regulation, and increased income will increase trust and maintain the authenticity of genuine spiritual organizations. In any case, the problem is not limited to hypocritical "religious leaders." It is a broader issue involving faith, freedom, accountability, and the rule of law. A tolerant and constitutionally conscious society is better, broader, and stronger. On the other hand, if crime is fueled by the spiritual activities of believers and these believers are allowed to become criminals, both democracy and faith are weakened.

India's spiritual heritage has endured for ages because it is based on truth, compassion, and moral accountability, not fear, deceit, and cult of personality. Preserving this heritage is essential, and it requires the courage to challenge those who derive personal power from the misuse of sacred symbols.

A healthy democracy must not only make it clear to the public that their religion is held in the highest regard, but also clearly communicate to them that the rule of law must prevail. In a just society, where every one is treated equally regardless of social status, political power, or religious belief, both democracy and spirituality will flourish. Therefore, India must continue on this journey.

India's young women power MNC factory revolution

By: T N Ashok

Women in the age group 18 to 30 are the rising work force in India representing the strongest demographic powering an unprecedented revolution of the fairer sex working at the shopfloor level in India, particularly the south, with aggressive hiring by MNCs for their quality work and efficiency.

Every hour, hundreds of smartphones roll off production lines in southern India, destined for stores across America, Europe and Asia. Behind the gleaming aluminium frames and precision-engineered chips are rows of young women dressed in anti-static uniforms, their fingers moving with astonishing speed and accuracy. A trained operator can assemble, inspect or process nearly 500 smartphone units in an hour, a feat of dexterity that global electronics manufacturers say has become one of India's biggest competitive advantages.

The story unfolding across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh is not merely one of industrial growth. It is rapidly becoming one of the biggest stories of women's economic empowerment in modern India.

For decades, India's manufacturing sector struggled to absorb women into its workforce. Today, that equation is changing dramatically as multinational corporations diversify production away from China and build massive new facilities across southern India. At the centre of this transformation stands Taiwanese electronics giant Foxconn, Apple's largest manufacturing partner.

Its sprawling campuses near Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu and Devanahalli near Bengaluru resemble modern industrial townships more than traditional factories. Thousands of women arrive every morning in company buses from villages and towns across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Others live in purpose-built hostels equipped with round-the-clock security, biometric access, medical facilities, transport services and supervised accommodation designed to reassure anxious parents sending daughters hundreds of kilometres from home.

For many of these young women, the job represents something unprecedented. A regular salary. Financial independence. The confidence to support parents, educate siblings and delay early marriage. The migration of women into India's electronics manufacturing hubs represents a quiet social revolution.

Unlike construction or heavy engineering, electronics assembly demands patience, precision, concentration and consistency rather than physical strength. Global manufacturers have increasingly concluded that women excel in such environments because of lower error rates, better process discipline and superior fine-motor skills required for assembling miniature electronic components.

This preference is hardly unique to India. Electronics factories across Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia and China have historically relied heavily on female workers. India is now witnessing a similar transition. The numbers are striking.

As Apple expands manufacturing in India, Foxconn, Tata Electronics (which acquired Wistron's India operations), Pegatron and other suppliers

have collectively hired tens of thousands of workers, with women forming a substantial share of assembly-line employees. Apple has steadily shifted more iPhone production to India as part of its "China Plus One" strategy, while Foxconn continues investing billions of dollars in new campuses across southern India. Foxconn's new Bengaluru campus alone is expected to become one of the world's largest iPhone manufacturing facilities over the next few years. But Foxconn is only one chapter in a much larger story. The global manufacturing map is being redrawn.

Rising wages in China, geopolitical tensions between Washington and Beijing, supply-chain disruptions following the pandemic and the desire of multinational corporations to diversify production have encouraged companies to build alternative manufacturing bases. India has emerged as one of the principal beneficiaries.

Electronics majors, semiconductor companies, automobile manufacturers, consumer appliance makers and medical-device firms are expanding rapidly across southern India. Among those increasing their footprint are Apple suppliers Foxconn, Pegatron and Tata Electronics, while companies such as Samsung, Dell, HP, Lenovo, Flex, Jabil, Sanmina, Bosch, Siemens, Hyundai, Kia, Volvo, Schneider Electric and several Japanese and Taiwanese manufacturers have expanded manufacturing capacity or supplier ecosystems in India over the past few years. Many of these companies openly acknowledge that women constitute an increasingly important part of their manufacturing workforce, particularly in electronics, precision engineering, medical devices and component assembly. The transformation is visible beyond factory gates. Entire local economies are changing. Small restaurants, transport operators, hostels, tailoring shops, banks, coaching centres and retail outlets flourish around industrial corridors. Parents who once hesitated to educate daughters beyond school increasingly encourage them to pursue diplomas in electronics, mechanical and industrial engineering. Yet this inspiring story carries uncomfortable contradictions.

Foxconn has also faced criticism over labour practices. A Reuters investigation reported that recruiters working for Foxconn's main iPhone plant in Tamil Nadu had systematically discouraged or rejected married women from assembly jobs, allegedly because managers believed family responsibilities, pregnancy and absenteeism could affect productivity.

The allegations prompted scrutiny because both Apple and Foxconn's supplier codes prohibit discrimination based on marital status. Indian authorities examined the matter after the report, while Foxconn stated that it had removed the practice were identified and that the vast majority of women employed at the facility were married.

The controversy highlights an important question confronting India's industrial future. Can rapid manufacturing growth coexist with inclusive employment? Human-rights advocates argue that genuine women's empowerment cannot stop at providing employment alone.

Equal opportunity, maternity protection, workplace safety, career progression, fair wages and

The Culture of Dialogue and the Pathways to Solutions in Mahavira's Philosophy

By: Swami Devendra Brahmachari

Today, human civilization stands at the pinnacle of unprecedented scientific and technological advancement. Ironically, however, while technology has connected the world at an extraordinary pace, it has also distanced people from one another. Means of communication have multiplied, yet genuine dialogue has diminished. Information has exploded, but understanding has failed to expand. As a result, individuals are burdened with stress, families are disintegrating, societies are becoming increasingly fragmented, nations are entangled in ideological conflicts, and the world continues to grapple with war, terrorism, violence, and a deepening crisis of mistrust. If we seek the root cause of these challenges, one truth becomes unmistakably clear: the absence of meaningful dialogue. This is precisely why "Dialogue for Solutions" is not merely a programme but one of the greatest necessities of our time. Initiated by the Mahavirayatan Foundation, this visionary national movement is both timely and far-sighted. By bringing together Governors, policymakers, spiritual leaders, educationists, social reformers, and eminent thinkers from across the country on a common platform, it seeks to revive the culture of constructive dialogue and reaffirm the very soul of Indian philosophy. In this series, the "Dialogue for Solutions" programme, to be held in Dehradun, the capital of Uttarakhand, in August 2026 under the chairmanship of Governor Lieutenant General Gurmit Singh (Retd.), is far more than an event—it is a powerful declaration in favour of social harmony, national integration, and global peace.

The entire philosophy of Lord Mahavira is founded upon the spirit of dialogue. He never imposed his views upon others. Instead, he inspired humanity to perceive truth from multiple perspectives. His doctrine of Anekantavada (the Principle of Non-Absolutism) teaches us that truth cannot be monopolized by any one individual, ideology, or viewpoint. Every person perceives only a fragment of truth through the lens of his or her own experiences and understanding. Genuine dialogue begins only when we listen to others with respect and sincerely strive to understand their perspectives. This is the practical

essence of Anekantavada. The greatest crisis confronting the modern world is that people wish to speak, but not to listen. Everyone tends to regard his or her own opinion as the ultimate truth. Consequently, differences of opinion evolve into differences of heart, and emotional alienation eventually gives rise to conflict. Lord Mahavira cautioned that ego is the greatest enemy of truth. Where ego prevails, dialogue cannot flourish; and where dialogue is absent, solutions remain impossible.

The family offers the most natural illustration of this principle. The generation gap between parents and children ceases to be a problem as long as they continue to communicate openly. Most conflicts between husband and wife arise not from differences in opinion but from the absence of dialogue. Whether between siblings, parents and children, or grandparents and grandchildren, every enduring relationship is sustained by love enriched through meaningful communication. When people stop talking to one another, misunderstandings inevitably multiply. Silence is not always a sign of peace; often, it signals the gradual death of relationships. The same reality is reflected in society. Rising tensions based on caste, class, language, region, or ideology are fundamentally rooted in the lack of dialogue. If different communities regularly came together, listened to one another's concerns, and sought common solutions, many social conflicts could be resolved naturally. Society needs dialogue even more than it needs laws, because while laws can maintain order, only dialogue can build trust.

Dialogue occupies an equally vital place in politics. The soul of democracy lies not merely in elections but in continuous dialogue. Parliaments, legislative assemblies, and public forums exist to facilitate the healthy exchange of ideas. When political parties begin to regard one another as enemies and replace dialogue with accusations and hostility, democracy itself begins to weaken. A truly healthy democracy is one where differences may be profound, yet the doors of dialogue are never closed. The same principle applies to international relations. History bears witness that even the longest and most devastating wars have ultimately concluded at the negotiating table. Whether disputes concern territorial boundaries, economic interests, or strategic con-



flicts, lasting solutions emerge not from weapons but from dialogue. War leaves behind only destruction, whereas dialogue builds the future. Bombs and missiles may alter borders, but they cannot unite hearts. Only dialogue possesses the power to bridge hearts and foster lasting peace.

Many of the world's greatest leaders have affirmed the transformative power of dialogue. Mahatma Gandhi dedicated his life to truth, non-violence, and constructive dialogue, never abandoning communication even with his strongest opponents. Nelson Mandela, after enduring decades of injustice, chose reconciliation over revenge and dialogue over conflict, thereby saving South Africa from civil war. Even the United Nations ultimately serves as a global platform for dialogue among nations. These examples reaffirm that humanity's greatest achievements have emerged not from confrontation, but from communication. Lord Mahavira

spoke not only of dialogue with others but also of dialogue with oneself. A person who does not engage in self-reflection cannot engage meaningfully with others. Self-introspection, self-awareness, and self-purification constitute the very foundation of Mahavira's philosophy. When individuals recognize and overcome their own anger, ego, greed, and hatred, their conduct naturally becomes gentle and compassionate. Such individuals create an atmosphere of harmony rather than conflict.

In today's age of social media, genuine dialogue is often displaced by arguments, accusations, and hostility. People are more interested in defeating others than in understanding them. Civility in language is eroding, and sensitivity toward one another is steadily diminishing. At such a critical juncture, Lord Mahavira's message of disciplined speech, non-violent thought, and Anekantavada has be-

come more relevant than ever before. If we think before speaking, listen before reacting, and strive to understand before judging, countless disputes can be prevented before they even arise. Viewed from this perspective, the Mahavirayatan Foundation's "Dialogue for Solutions" initiative assumes profound significance. It is not merely a platform for discussion but a bridge of trust connecting diverse sections of society. When spiritual leaders, policymakers, administrators, intellectuals, and representatives of civil society come together to deliberate upon issues concerning the nation and humanity, new pathways and meaningful solutions are bound to emerge. This culture of dialogue represents a renaissance of India's timeless civilizational tradition that has, for centuries, offered the world the ideals of tolerance, harmony, coexistence, and mutual respect.

Today, dialogue must not remain confined to conferences or public forums. Every home should nurture dialogue; every school should encourage dialogue; every workplace should practice dialogue; every village council and Parliament should strengthen dialogue; and every nation should uphold dialogue as the foundation of international relations. If dialogue survives, trust will survive. If trust survives, relationships will endure. And if relationships endure, humanity itself will remain secure. The present age calls not merely for studying Lord Mahavira's philosophy but for living it. His doctrine of Anekantavada teaches us the art of coexistence amidst differences. His principle of non-violence nurtures compassion and sensitivity. His ideal of self-restraint cultivates humility and discipline. Together, these three pillars constitute the foundation of meaningful dialogue.

The world today does not need new weapons—it needs a new spirit of dialogue. It does not need greater competition—it needs deeper understanding. It does not need new conflicts—it needs stronger cooperation. If humanity truly seeks lasting peace, social harmony, and sustainable progress, it must embrace Lord Mahavira's timeless message: "Where there is dialogue, there is solution. Where there is a solution, there is peace. And where there is peace, there lies the bright future of humanity." (Swami Devendra Brahmachari is a distinguished Jain saint and the Founder of the Mahavirayatan Foundation.)

A commendable initiative by the Maharashtra government Beyond Junk Food: Building a Healthier Childhood, a Stronger India

By: Lalit Garg

The dream of a Developed India cannot be realized merely through modern infrastructure, rapid economic growth, artificial intelligence, digital innovation, or world-class technological advancement. The true strength of any nation lies in its children. When childhood is healthy, value-oriented, energetic, and mentally resilient, the future of the nation is naturally secure. Conversely, if children grow up burdened by obesity, diabetes, malnutrition, and unhealthy eating habits, the very foundation of national development becomes fragile. Therefore, children's health is not merely the responsibility of the Ministry of Health; it is a matter of national development, educational progress, economic sustainability, and social responsibility. The Maharashtra Government's decision to prohibit the sale, distribution, and promotion of junk food in all schools and within their surrounding areas is a significant reflection of this broader vision. It is not simply an administrative directive but a profound declaration of responsibility toward future generations. It courageously acknowledges that the health of children is far more valuable than commercial profits. If implemented effectively, this policy has the potential to become a model for the entire nation.

The greatest concern today is not that children are eating less food, but that they are consuming less nutrition and far more ultra-processed foods. Colourful packaging, persuasive advertising, cartoon-brand marketing, social media influence, and the easy availability of fast food in every neighbourhood have transformed children's food preferences to such an extent that wholesome home-cooked meals often appear dull and unattractive. This shift is not merely a change in dietary habits; it is gradually affecting children's physical growth, cognitive development, and behavioural patterns. Scientific studies consistently demonstrate that foods high in unhealthy fats, excessive salt, and refined sugar significantly increase the risk of obesity, hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, hormonal disorders, and impaired concentration among children. Even more

alarming is the fact that diseases once associated with middle age are now emerging during adolescence and even childhood. This is not only a public health crisis but also a serious threat to the nation's future productivity and human capital.

During childhood, nutrition—not taste—is the most essential requirement. It is the period when both the body and the brain undergo their fastest development. A balanced diet rich in fresh fruits, green vegetables, milk, pulses, whole grains, and other natural foods supports optimal physical and mental growth. Junk food, by contrast, may satisfy momentary cravings but fails to provide the essential nutrients required for healthy development. Consequently, many children who appear healthy externally may actually suffer from hidden nutritional deficiencies. Unfortunately, junk food today is no longer just a category of food; it has evolved into an aggressive commercial culture. Through sophisticated marketing strategies, children are made to believe that packaged and processed foods symbolize modernity and status. Popular athletes, film stars, and digital influencers, often unintentionally, encourage children to consume products that are detrimental to their long-term health. Under such circumstances, it would be unfair to place the entire responsibility on families alone. Governments, industries, schools, parents, and society must all share accountability.

Schools are not merely centres of academic learning; they are laboratories where lifelong habits and values are shaped. If schools provide nutritious meals, integrate nutrition education into the curriculum, establish kitchen gardens, and encourage children to cultivate plants while understanding the value of natural food, the impact will be both meaningful and enduring. Mere prohibition cannot solve the problem. Healthy alternatives must also be made appealing, affordable, accessible, and enjoyable. India's traditional food culture is widely regarded as one of the most balanced and scientifically sound dietary systems in the world. Millets such as bajra, jowar, and ragi, along with pulses, buttermilk, curd, sprouted grains, seasonal fruits, fresh vegetables, and home-cooked meals, have long been the pillars of

healthy living. Rather than abandoning this rich culinary heritage in the name of modernity, we must reintroduce it to children in innovative and attractive ways. School cafeterias offering nutritious regional and traditional dishes can gradually help children develop healthier food preferences. The issue of junk food extends beyond health; it also carries profound economic implications. An unhealthy childhood translates into increased healthcare expenditure, reduced workforce efficiency, diminished productivity, and long-term economic losses. Investment in children's nutrition should therefore be viewed not as expenditure but as one of the most rewarding investments in nation-building. Every rupee spent on child nutrition today yields multiple returns in the form of healthier, more capable, and innovative citizens tomorrow. Parents also play an indispensable role. If homes are regularly stocked with packaged snacks, sugary beverages, and highly processed foods, children will naturally consume them. Children imitate what they observe. When families embrace balanced diets, eat together, and involve children in preparing meals, they cultivate lifelong appreciation for wholesome eating and healthy living.

Governments, too, must adopt a comprehensive strategy extending beyond school campuses. Strict regulation of misleading advertisements targeting children, clear front-of-pack nutrition labelling, easy identification of foods high in sugar and salt, expansion of playgrounds and sports facilities, regular health screenings, nutrition awareness campaigns, and active community participation are all equally important. A coordinated effort between the health and education sectors can produce far more effective and sustainable outcomes. The challenge posed by junk food should not be addressed merely through restrictions; it must evolve into a nationwide movement promoting healthy lifestyles. Just as the Swachh Bharat Mission transformed cleanliness into a people's movement, healthy eating and nutrition should become a national public awareness campaign. Children must understand that true energy and vitality do not come from attractive packets but from foods that are fresh, natural, and close to nature.

The Maharashtra Government's decision deserves special appreciation because it recognizes that children's health must take precedence over political and commercial interests. It is now imperative for all states across India to demonstrate similar courage and foresight. The foundation of a developed nation is not only smart cities or advanced technologies but healthy children. If childhood is protected, the nation's future is protected. If every child's plate is filled with nutritious food, the country's progress will also be balanced and sustainable. The India of tomorrow will be defined not merely by technological excellence but by a generation that is healthy, disciplined, responsible, and enlightened. The greatest national commitment of our times should therefore be to create an environment where every child learns to value health over taste, nutrition over convenience, and long-term well-being over momentary temptation. That is the true path to an enriched childhood—and the strongest foundation for a truly Developed India.

Electric Mobility can power a new economic future for Assam and the Northeast

By: Akash Ali

India's electric vehicle transition is often discussed through sales figures, subsidies and climate targets. For people deciding whether to switch, however, the questions are far more immediate: Can I afford the vehicle? Where will I charge it? Who will repair it? Will spare parts be available? Can it withstand local road and weather conditions? These questions carry particular weight in Assam and the rest of Northeast India. The region's cities are growing, fuel costs affect household and business budgets, and dependable mobility remains essential for education, healthcare, trade and employment. Electric vehicles can address several of these concerns, but vehicles alone will not produce a successful transition. The Northeast needs an EV ecosystem built close to the people it intends to serve.

Delhi offers useful lessons. Its EV push combined purchase incentives, road-tax and registration-fee waivers, charging and battery-swapping infrastructure, public awareness, and support for commercial vehicles. The larger lesson is not that the Northeast should copy Delhi. It is that adoption rises when governments treat electric mobility as a connected system rather than a vehicle category.

Assam already recognised this in its Electric Vehicle Policy of 2021. The policy aimed for battery electric vehicles to account for 25% of new registrations by 2026. It also proposed model electric-mobility cities, including Guwahati, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Tezpur and Silchar, alongside charging facilities, manufacturing, research, skills and employment. The intent was evident. The next task is to convert those ambitions into visible infrastructure and economic activity.

Build hubs where people live and work. In the Northeast, an EV hub should serve several purposes. It can provide charging or battery swapping, maintenance, spare parts, roadside support, vehicle demonstrations and guidance on finance. For delivery workers and other commercial users, it can reduce the time a vehicle remains off the road.

This is crucial because down-

time means lost income. A delivery rider cannot wait several hours for charging or days for a replacement component. A small business cannot adopt an electric cargo vehicle if dependable servicing is located hundreds of kilometres away.

The hub model can also take EV access beyond state capitals. Guwahati may serve as an important starting point, but the transition must reach district headquarters, commercial centres and smaller towns. A distributed network will give buyers the confidence that support will remain available after a vehicle is sold.

Public land at transport terminals, markets, parking areas and government facilities can be considered for charging or swapping infrastructure through transparent partnerships. State governments should also identify routes where commercial demand is already strong. Infrastructure placed according to daily usage will deliver greater value than installations selected primarily to meet numerical targets.

Turn EV adoption into a local employment programme.

The strongest case for electric mobility in the Northeast may be economic. A wider EV network can create jobs in retail, fleet operations, charging-station management, battery handling, diagnostics, software support, financing, insurance, maintenance and recycling.

Many of these roles require new technical capabilities. Industrial training institutes, polytechnics and universities should work with EV manufacturers and operators to develop short, practical courses. Young people need hands-on instruction in battery safety, electrical systems, vehicle diagnostics, charging equipment and emergency response.

Training should also cover existing mechanics. The region already has a large network of technicians who understand two-wheelers and small commercial vehicles. Helping them acquire EV skills would be faster and more inclusive than building a completely separate service workforce.

Paid apprenticeships can connect classroom instruction with actual jobs. Women should be actively included in technical, sales and operational roles, while entrepreneurship programmes can sup-

port local operators who want to establish service centres, charging points or small fleets.

If the transition is designed properly, the Northeast will not remain a market where finished vehicles are sold. It can become a source of trained workers, service businesses and technical capability.

Move from vehicle sales to local value creation. Local manufacturing does not have to begin with a complete vehicle assembly plant. It can start with components, chargers, wiring systems, body parts, accessories, software services and battery-pack support. Over time, a cluster of suppliers and service providers can reduce logistics costs, improve the availability of parts and adapt products to regional conditions.

This local presence matters in an area where long supply routes can increase costs and delay repairs. Vehicles used in the Northeast must also account for heavy rainfall, hilly roads, humidity and varying power availability. Local testing and technical feedback can help manufacturers improve performance for these conditions.

Affordability must remain central. Electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers can lower daily running expenses, but the initial price still prevents many families and workers from purchasing them. Targeted incentives, affordable loans, battery-leasing options and transparent total-cost comparisons can make adoption possible without placing excessive financial pressure on buyers.

India's national EV programmes have created an important base through demand incentives, public transport electrification and funding for charging infrastructure. Assam and neighbouring states now have an opportunity to build upon that support with plans suited to their communities.

The Northeast should not be treated as the final destination of India's EV rollout. With the right hubs, skills, local production and financing, it can become one of its strongest centres, creating cleaner transport while keeping jobs, enterprise and economic value within the region. (Akash Ali is the Founder and CEO of GoBabyGo Cabs Private Limited, GBG EV, GBG X)



The opposition members have been demanding a Supreme Court-monitored probe

Oppn members led by Congress, SP raise issue of Ram temple donation theft in Rajya Sabha

NEW DELHI, Aug 3: Opposition members in the Rajya Sabha, led by the Congress and Samajwadi Party, on Monday targeted the BJP as they raised the issue of alleged theft in donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Several members of the Congress, Samajwadi Party, TMC, left parties and other opposition parties of the INDIA bloc raised slogans against the government and the BJP while raising the issue.

As soon as the House met in the morning and listed papers were laid on the table of the House, opposition members raised the issue of 'Ram Mandir Chanda Chori'.

The opposition members also sought Home Minister Amit Shah's presence in the House for his response on the issue of police actions against students protesting NEET exam paper leak.

The Upper House has been witnessing repeated adjournments



since the start of the monsoon session, with opposition parties demanding education minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation on

the alleged paper leak issue.

Opposition raised its pitch on the issue of Ram temple donation following the resignation of Pradhan.

The opposition members have been demanding a Supreme Court-monitored probe into the alleged theft of donations at the Ram Temple.

Meanwhile, DMK members were also on their feet, carrying placards in support of their claim on the Cauvery water issue.

As opposition members urged Rajya Sabha Chairman C P Radhakrishnan to allow Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge to raise their issue, the chairman asked them to return to their seats and assured that he will allow the LoP to speak only after that.

The members went back to their seats but continued raising slogans, prompting the chairman to adjourn the House. (PTI)

Tamil Nadu govt moves SC for release of its share of Cauvery water from Karnataka

NEW DELHI, Aug 3: Chief Minister Joseph Vijay led-Tamil Nadu government on Monday approached the Supreme Court seeking directions to the Karnataka government for immediate release of the share of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu.

Tamil Nadu government standing counsel B Karunakaran confirmed the filing of the petition that alleges that the quantum allocated to it by the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) as well as that released by its neighbour Karnataka was far less.

A CWRC meeting held on July 28 directed Karnataka to release 3,500 cusecs for 15 days starting July 29, an order which was upheld by the CWMA later.

However, the quantum of water released at Biligundlu ranged between 158-550 cusecs from July 29 to August 2, the state government said.

A press release issued by the Tamil Nadu government said that as of August 3, the combined total storage in the reservoirs in Karnataka -- KRS, Kabini, Harangi and Hemavathy -- stood at 77,537 TMC and Karnataka would face no difficulty in releasing Tamil Nadu's due share proportionately.

Following rains in the catchment areas in the KRS and Kabini dams in Karnataka recently, the proportionate water to be realised at Biligundlu should be 26,954 TMC, it said.

"Accordingly, the Cauvery Water Management Authority order allocating 4,536 TMC is very less," the release added.

Karnataka has "failed" to share with Tamil Nadu its due share of water and the quantum was 26,954 TMC, the press release said.

Earlier, the DMK, the main opposition party in Tamil Nadu, moved the top court seeking directions to the Karnataka government for the immediate release of the due share of Cauvery water to the state.

The party has submitted that Karnataka must strictly



follow the apex court's final 2018 verdict and comply with the directions issued by the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA).

"Direct the State of Karnataka / Respondent No. 1 to forthwith and fully implement the direction of the CWRC dated July 28, 2026, as affirmed by the CWMA on July 30, 2026, by ensuring a flow of 3,500 cusecs per day at Biligundlu for the period of 15 days commencing from date of the order passed by this Hon'ble Court, and to make good the shortfall in compliance from July 29, 2026 onwards," the DMK said in its plea.

It also sought a direction to Karnataka to "make good the accumulated backlog of about 9.46 TMC due at Biligundlu as on July 26, 2026, computed on the pro-rata/ distress-sharing basis, by ensuring releases such that about 7,000 cusecs per day is realised at Biligundlu over a period of 15 days", it had said.

The plea has sought directions to the CWMA to monitor the water release from the reservoirs of Karnataka and the flows realised at Biligundlu on a day-to-day basis and to report compliance. (PTI)

Ex-WFI chief Brij Bhushan's acquittal: Maharashtra Cong dubs govt 'mute, deaf & blind'

MUMBAI, Aug 3: Maharashtra Congress chief Harshwardhan Sapkal on Monday took a dim view of the acquittal of former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh in a sexual harassment case, calling it the country's misfortune under a "mute, deaf and blind" government.

Talking to PTI Videos, Sapkal underscored the timing of the decision, remarking on the irony that the honour of the athletes who brought India respect at the just-concluded Commonwealth Games has been undermined.

A Delhi court on Monday acquitted former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh and co-accused Vinod Tomar in a sexual harassment case filed by women wrestlers.

The Delhi Police had filed a chargesheet against Singh, a six-time MP, on June 15 under sections 354 (assault or criminal force to a woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 354A (sexual harassment), 354D (stalking) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code.

Reacting to the court order, Sapkal said the law is "blind" (andha kanoon) in the country. These women have raised the country's honour; they are truly the pride and dignity of the nation, he said, adding that a person like Singh should have been dealt with strictly.

"He (Singh) needed to be

taught a strong lesson. But it is our country's misfortune that a mute, deaf, and blind government is in power," Sapkal charged.

If any worker, leader or person from the BJP does anything — even something as grave as rape — they can still be acquitted. Somewhere this decision appears to send that message, he claimed.

"The real face of the Bharatiya Janata Party is unfortunately before all of us. But while this face has been exposed, the dignity which women deserved, the dignity of the country, and the respect that should be there for athletes have been lowered a lot," Sapkal claimed. (PTI)

Kejriwal to march to PM residence over E20 petrol, alleges Centre 'yielded' to Trump

NEW DELHI, Aug 3: AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said he will march to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence Tuesday with 100 people to submit petitions against E20 fuel, alleging the Centre is pushing it under pressure from US President Donald Trump.

Kejriwal alleged that India has "yielded" to Trump to buy ethanol from the United States and said the government's continued push for ethanol-blended petrol suggested there was a "hidden agenda".

"I will go to PM's residence tomorrow along with 100 people to personally hand over the petitions signed by the public and discuss issues related to ethanol-blended petrol. People are facing several problems in their vehicles despite all that the government is continuing with this, which means there is a hidden agenda," Kejriwal said at a press conference.

"People are saying that PM Modi is under pressure from Trump to buy ethanol from the United States," he added.

Kejriwal said he would personally hand over the petitions to Modi after receiving no response to a letter he had sent to the prime minister last month seeking an appointment to discuss concerns over E20 petrol.

In his letter, Kejriwal had sought the availability of options for both pure petrol and E20 fuel at petrol stations, besides demanding a reduction in the price of ethanol-blended petrol.

"We did not get any response on the letter, so now we will personally hand over the petition to PM Modi. We had launched a petition campaign against ethanol-blended petrol. More than 2 lakh people have signed this petition," he said.

Kejriwal also said the "Ethanol Townhall" organised by the AAP last week was a "huge success", with several people joining the meeting virtually. (PTI)

MP: Cong retains Datia assembly seat; Ghanshyam Singh defeats BJP's Tiwari by 6,000 votes

DATIA, Aug 3: The Congress on Monday retained the Datia assembly seat in Madhya Pradesh, with the party candidate Ghanshyam Singh defeating his nearest rival Ashutosh Tiwari of the BJP by 6,016 votes in the byelection marked by differences in the saffron camp over the choice of candidate.

At the end of all 15 rounds of counting, Singh secured 66,757 votes, while Tiwari polled 60,741 votes. Azad Samaj Party candidate Damodar Yadav secured third position by bagging 22,527 votes, District Election Officer and Datia District Magistrate Swapnil Wankhade told PTI.

A total of 21 candidates were in the fray, including Ghanshyam Singh and Ashutosh Tiwari.

At one point, Singh's lead of 12,607 votes over his nearest rival appeared unassailable, but the BJP nominee managed to close the gap to an extent in the last rounds.

The byelection was necessitated after a Delhi court in April this year sentenced sitting Congress MLA Rajendra Bharti to three years' imprisonment in a cheating case, leading to the termination of his Assembly membership.

"This verdict marks the beginning of the end of the BJP," Ghanshyam Singh told reporters.

In Bhopal, celebrations broke out at the state Congress headquar-

Prashant Kishor wins Bihar's Bankipur, breaks BJP's three-decade hold



PATNA, Aug 3: Jan Suraj Party founder Prashant Kishor made a historic electoral debut on Monday, winning the by-poll for Bihar's prestigious Bankipur assembly constituency, in a big blow to the BJP, which had held the seat since 1995.

The defeat, coming days after the massive Gen Z protests across the country, was even more stinging because the seat was last held by BJP president Nitin Nabin, whose elevation necessitated the by-poll on August 30.

Kishor, who got 64,151 votes, defeated BJP's Neeraj Kumar by 19,324 votes. Kumar garnered 44,827 votes. Rekha Gupta of RJD was a distant third with 14,273 votes.

A little less than 3.8 lakh voters, including 2 lakh men and 1.79 lakh women, were eligible to vote in the polls. The by-poll recorded a voter turnout of 34.30 per cent, down by more than seven per cent from the 41.45 per cent registered in the last assembly elections, held just nine months ago.

"The victory is a wake-up call for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who must install a new Chief Minister in place of Samrat Choudhary, a man with criminal antecedents," said Kishor, for whom it was a satisfying reversal of fortunes. In the assembly elections, his party had failed to win any seats. Kishor had decided not to contest then.

The 49-year-old Jan Suraj founder had entered the fray, announcing that he saw the by-election as a "referendum" on the BJP-led government in the state.

Kishor, whose victory may help resurrect his fledgling outfit, also said, "On this occasion, besides thanking the common citizens, I would like to thank those who helped Jan Suraj despite not being in the party."

BJP had hurriedly fielded Kumar after its candidate Abhishek "Bunty" pulled out at the eleventh hour, citing "family reasons".

The by-poll to the assembly seat was necessitated by the resignation of BJP national president Nitin Nabin, whose late father, Navin Chandra Sinha, began the party's winning streak in 1995, when the seat was known as "Patna seat".

Nabin had vacated the Bankipur seat in April, upon election to the Rajya Sabha, six months after having won it for the fifth time on the trot.

State BJP president Sanjay reacted to the humiliating defeat, saying, "We bow down before the will of the people. We shall draw lessons from the debacle, unlike our opponents who tend to blame every electoral loss of theirs on EVMs and the Election Commission".

Commending Kishor, Chief Minister Choudhary said, "In the grand festival of democracy, the people have chosen Jan Suraj in the Bankipur Assembly bypoll. I respect the people's verdict and extend my heartfelt congratulations to Prashant Kishor ji on his victory."

Kishor, who had first shot to fame for managing Modi's 2014 Lok Sabha campaign, has been a vocal critic of Choudhary. (PTI)

Adityanath hits back at oppn on temple donation theft issue



LUCKNOW, Aug 3: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday said those raising questions on the handling of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya had earlier attempted to obstruct the temple's construction, and slammed their "double standards".

Talking to reporters before the commencement of the Monsoon Session of the state legislature, Adityanath also appealed to all MLAs to ensure a constructive discussion in the House and said the government had brought a supplementary budget aimed at strengthening welfare measures for various categories of frontline workers.

"The Ayodhya issue is being raised by those who had fired bullets at Ram devotees. They are the same people who used to resort to lathi-charge and firing when people raised the slogan of 'Jai Shri Ram'," the chief minister said without naming any party. (PTI)

ABVP to submit proposals to the High-Powered Committee on exam reforms

KOCHI, Aug 3: The pro-RSS student organisation, ABVP, here on Monday said that it would submit a comprehensive set of recommendations to the High-Powered Committee on exam reforms set up by the Centre, following the NEET paper leak row.

Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) leaders told this at a press conference here following the conclusion of their two-day Central Working Committee (CWC) meeting in Aluva near here on August 1 and 2.

ABVP expressed concern over recurring question paper leaks in examinations conducted by the Jharkhand Public Service Commission (JPSC), Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC), Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC) and recruitment examinations in Punjab, saying such incidents had undermined students' faith in the examination system.

The organisation extended its support to affected students and appealed to student organisations, educationists and civil society to strengthen the movement for examination reforms.

ABVP National General Secretary Virendra Singh Solanki said repeated question paper leaks in Jharkhand, Bihar, Karnataka and Punjab had raised serious concerns over the credibility of the examination system.

"ABVP fully supports the legitimate demands and democratic movements of students. Every student has the right to a fair, transparent, credible and error-free examination system," he said.

With this objective, ABVP will submit detailed recommendations before the High-Powered Committee constituted by the Government of India following the NEET examination irregularities, advocating the institutional reforms necessary to strengthen the country's examination framework," he said. (PTI)

Indian Museum joins hands with IIT-Kharagpur for use of 'AI-based restoration' of artefacts: Govt

Google Art and Culture is the cultural platform of the internet giant



NEW DELHI, Aug 3: The Indian Museum in Kolkata has joined hands with IIT-Kharagpur for the use of "AI-based restoration" of archaeological artefacts and digital preservation of its collections, the government informed Parliament on Monday.

Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, in a written response to a query in the Lok Sabha, also said the Indian Museum, in collaboration with Google Art and Culture, has prepared a virtual exhibition for promotion of heritage through digital interventions.

Google Art and Culture is the cultural platform of the internet giant.

The minister was asked whether any national framework has been developed for digital archiving, collection management and virtual public access to museum collections in the country.

"Indian Museum, Kolkata, aligning with the vision of 'Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi' and in accordance with its mandate of promoting and preserving cultural heritage, has undertaken collaborative initiatives with the academic institutions to strengthen heritage conservation and digital innovation," he said.

The Indian Museum has joined hands with IIT-Kharagpur for the use of "AI-based restoration of archaeological artefacts, for digital preservation of its collections", the minister said.

Also, the Indian Museum, in collaboration with Google Art and Culture, has prepared a virtual exhibition for the promotion of heritage through digital interventions. As part

of its modernisation, AI-based interactives and AR-based visitor engagement tools have been introduced to provide an immersive gallery experience to visitors, he added.

Besides, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has launched mobile-based applications for the archaeological museums at Hampi (Karnataka) and Nalanda (Bihar). The applications provide virtual tours of the museums and facilitate digital access to the artefacts displayed therein.

Delhi-based Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) has undertaken documentation, research, publication and digital preservation of various aspects of Mithila art, traditions and manuscripts through its regular academic and archival activities, he said.

The government also said the Ministry of Culture is taking different initiatives in digital archiving and collection management to preserve our cultural assets through digitisation with JATAN software, developed by C-DAC, Pune, for digitisation of museum

collections and archival resources.

A national digital repository has been created through the Museums of India portal, where digitised collections of eight national-level museums, two ASI site museums and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Museum, Pune are available.

In tabulated data, the minister also shared the status of digitisation of museum collections available on the website through JATAN software, according to which out of the total 4,78,971 artefacts at these eight national-level museums, 3,36,359 artefacts (or 70.23 per cent) can be digitally seen on their respective websites.

The individual figures for these museums stood at -- National Museum (total 2,06,169 artefacts) 51.15 per cent can be digitally seen on its website; Indian Museum (total 1,08,000 artefacts) 72.17 per cent can be digitally seen on its website; Victoria Memorial Hall (total 28,394 artefacts) 98.34 per cent can be digitally seen on its website. (PTI)

CBI's claim of 'non-cooperation' in probe into award of contracts SC seeks Arunachal top officials' response

NEW DELHI, Aug 3: The Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Arunachal Pradesh's chief secretary and principal secretary (Home) after the CBI's claim about "non-cooperation" by the state government in its inquiry into contracts awarded to firms allegedly related to the kin of Chief Minister Pema Khandu.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta said both these officers would remain present before it on August 24 along with their responses to the CBI's status report and also explain why there was non-cooperation.

On April 6, the apex court had directed the CBI to register within two weeks a preliminary enquiry into the allegations of preferential allotment of contracts for public works in Arunachal Pradesh to firms allegedly owned or related to the family members of Chief Minister Khandu.

The top court had directed the Arunachal Pradesh government and all its concerned departments, authorities and instrumentalities to cooperate fully with the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

On Monday, the bench perused the status report filed by the CBI.

Additional Solicitor General K M Nataraj, appearing for the CBI, said the probe agency has sought more time to complete the enquiry and the state authorities were not co-operating with it.

"We will call the chief secretary," was the bench observed, and said if there was non-cooperation then why a "long rope" was given.



Referring to the CBI's status report, the bench observed the probe agency has flagged certain discrepancies.

"Why do you need anything more for registering a RC (regular case)," the bench asked the law officer.

It said the agency had sought some details from the state authorities which they have not provided.

"We have perused the status report given by the CBI dated July 17, 2026. A perusal of

the same reflects that there is non-cooperation at the end of the state government in providing the necessary records..." the bench said.

It issued notice to the chief secretary and principal secretary (Home) of Arunachal Pradesh seeking their responses.

"Both the aforesaid officers shall remain present before this court along with their responses to the aforesaid report of CBI and also explain why there is non-cooperation

and non-compliance of the order of this court," the bench said, while posting the matter for August 24.

In its April 6 verdict, the top court had observed that the state and its instrumentalities cannot confer benefits according to the "whims of any political or administrative functionary".

It had said it was a fit case where an "independent investigation" was necessary.

"Accordingly, we deem it appropriate that CBI shall register a preliminary enquiry forthwith and shall conduct a time-bound investigation into the award and execution of the public works contracts and work orders which form the subject matter of this writ petition and the affidavits filed in these proceedings," it had said.

The top court had delivered its verdict on a plea filed by NGOs Save Mon Region Federation and Voluntary Arunachal Sena seeking a CBI or SIT probe into the matter.

During the hearing in the matter, the apex court was told that government contracts and work orders worth around ₹ 1,270 crore were awarded in the last 10 years in Arunachal Pradesh to four firms allegedly related to the family members of Khandu.

In its verdict, the top court had said the preliminary enquiry and consequential investigation, if any, shall cover the award and execution of public works contracts and work orders in Arunachal Pradesh from January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2025, including the works and compilations placed on record in the proceedings before it. (PTI)

Govt, citizens working together to restore lasting peace in Manipur: CM



IMPHAL, Aug 3: Manipur Chief Minister Y. Khemchand Singh on Sunday said his government and the people of the state were making sincere efforts to restore lasting peace and that encouraging signs of improvement were now visible.

He was speaking at the inauguration of the ₹ 10 crore Addition-Free Pledge Mega Campaign under the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan and Mission SPANDAN (Spiritual Partnership Against Narcotic Drug Abuse) at Pheidinga in Imphal West district.

Addressing the gathering, Singh said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has envisioned Viksit Bharat 2047 to make India one of the most developed nations in the world.

He said the vision could be achieved only if the country's youth remained free from the menace of drugs.

The chief minister said the nationwide drug-free campaign had started across the country and Manipur was proud to be part of the movement.

On the law and order situation in the state, Singh said Manipur continued to face several challenges, but the government and the people were making efforts to restore peace.

"Every ordinary citizen who has no interest in conflict desires only peace and normalcy," he said.

Singh recalled his visits to areas

such as Litan, where internally displaced people from different communities, including Kuki, Meitei, Hmar and Paite, expressed a common desire to return to their homes and live together peacefully.

The CM, however, expressed concern that acts of violence have repeatedly undermined efforts towards reconciliation.

Referring to incidents that disrupted the peace process, he said such acts benefit only those who seek to profit from conflict and asserted that these individuals do not represent any particular community but are driven by vested interests that oppose the restoration of peace.

Reiterating the government's commitment, Singh said restoring peace remains the government's foremost priority and that there will be no compromise in ensuring justice and taking action against those responsible for crimes.

He also appealed to every citizen to cooperate with the government in rebuilding trust, restoring harmony and creating a peaceful environment essential for achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

A pledge for a drug-free India was also administered during the programme, reaffirming the commitment of participants to stay away from intoxicants and spread awareness against substance abuse. (PTI)

Arunachal teenager bags 2nd runner-up title at Mr Teen India 2026

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Aug 3: Nabam Tukung, a 16-year-old from Bobia village in Arunachal Pradesh's Papum Pare district, has secured the second runner-up title at the Mr. Teen India 2026 pageant held in New Delhi on July 26.

Organised by Spark Event Management under the Bharat Iconic Awards, the national competition brought together contestants from across the country to showcase their confidence, leadership, talent and personality.

Representing Arunachal Pradesh, Tukung impressed the judges with his stage presence, communication skills and overall personality to finish among the top three contestants.

The son of Nabam Sera and Tachi Baby Nabam, Tukung said the achievement would motivate him to work harder and inspire young people in Arunachal Pradesh to pursue their dreams with confidence.

His achievement has been widely welcomed across the state, with well-wishers describing it as a proud moment for Arunachal Pradesh and an inspiration for aspiring youth.

Opium, brown sugar seized, 2 arrested

IMPHAL, Aug 3: Two persons have been arrested and opium and brown sugar worth lakhs of rupees seized from their possession in separate incidents in Manipur, a police statement said on Monday.

A 43-year-old man was arrested and 13.2 kg of opium seized from his possession in Churachandpur district on Sunday.

The man, identified as Seikhogin Mate, was nabbed from his residence in T Khuangkhai village in Sangaikot sub-division of Churachandpur district, it said, adding the opium was seized from his house.

In another incident, police arrested an Assam resident and seized 80 gm of brown sugar from his possession in Senapati district on Sunday.

The man, identified as Arun Dutta (50), a resident of Dibrugarh, was arrested during a frisking operation at T Khullen checkpoint.

Eight soap cases containing brown sugar weighing a total of 80 gm were seized from his possession, it added. (PTI)

Heavy rain to lash Arunachal till tomorrow

ITANAGAR, Aug 3: Heavy rain is likely to lash parts of Arunachal Pradesh on August 4 and 5, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast issued on Monday.

The IMD said thunderstorms with lightning and very heavy rainfall are likely at isolated places in Papum Pare district on Tuesday.

East Kameng is also likely to witness thunderstorms with lightning and heavy rainfall. Most other districts have been placed under a 'yellow' watch, indicating the possibility of adverse weather, while a few districts remain under an 'orange' alert, asking residents to stay prepared. On Wednesday, heavy rainfall activity is expected to ease further, with a yellow watch remaining in force for several districts, including Papum Pare, while no major warning has been issued for large parts of the state.

The ongoing spell of floods and landslides has so far claimed seven lives and affected 1,55,850 people across the northeastern state.

The monsoon has affected as many as 382 circles and 674 villages in 28 districts of the state so far. The forecast indicates a gradual reduction in rainfall intensity from this day onwards.

From Thursday, the weather is expected to improve significantly, with no warning issued for almost the entire state. Only a few western districts are likely to remain under a yellow watch as isolated spells of rain may continue. (PTI)

NE vital part of India's heritage: Manipur deputy CM

IMPHAL, Aug 3: Manipur Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dikho has said the Northeast is a vital part of India's heritage, endowed with rich traditions and immense potential that contributes to the country's progress, an official statement said on Monday.

Dikho made the remarks while laying the foundation stone of the 'Late Smt Jannabai Firodia North East India Bhavan - Rani Gaidinliu Girls' Hostel' in Pune on Sunday.

Named after Naga freedom fighter Rani Gaidinliu, the hostel aims to provide accommodation for girls from the Northeast pursuing higher education.

"The Northeastern region is a vital part of India's heritage, blessed with rich traditions, immense talent and immense potential that contributes to the nation's

progress," the Naga leader said.

He said the project was more than just a building and reflected a shared commitment to supporting students from all parts of the country.

"As India moves towards the vision of Viksit Bharat, every young person, irrespective of where they come from, should have equal access to quality education and opportunities," he said.

The deputy chief minister said the proposed Bhavan would provide a safe, secure and nurturing environment to support education, personal growth and long-term success.

"It will become a permanent sanctuary, especially for students from Manipur studying in Pune," he added. (PTI)

Petrol bombs hurled at MSPCB office; no casualty

SHILLONG, Aug 3: Two unidentified persons hurled petrol bombs at the Meghalaya State Pollution Control Board (MSPCB) office here on Monday afternoon, but there was no loss of life or damage to property, police said.

The attack came days after the board conducted a public hearing for a proposed limestone mining project in the state's East Jaintia Hills district against popular opposition to the project.

The attack took place between 12 noon and 12.30 pm when two masked men arrived on a scooter and lobbed two petrol bombs, officials said.

No injuries or damage to property were reported.

"We have lodged an FIR. Police and the forensic team visited the office and collected evidence," an MSPCB official said.

Superintendent of Police (City) Dangsang Khyriem confirmed the incident.

"Two petrol bombs were hurled. A case will be registered based on the FIR," Khyriem told PTI.

Asked whether the attack could be linked to the recent public hearing on the proposed limestone mining project at Lum Syman, Khyriem said it was premature to draw any conclusions.

Police are analysing CCTV footage from the area and have launched a manhunt to trace the two accused, officials added. (PTI)

Mizoram police seize drugs worth over ₹ 8 crore

AIZAWL, Aug 3: Mizoram police has seized heroin and methamphetamine tablets worth over ₹ 8 crore in three operations carried out in Champhai and Aizawl, an official statement said on Monday.

Four people, including a Myanmar national, have been arrested during the operations, the statement said.

The largest seizure was made by Champhai Special Task Force (STF) when a truck travelling from Champhai towards Aizawl was intercepted on August 1, it said.

A search of the vehicle led to the recovery of 9.79 kg of methamphetamine, packed in 10 bundles and valued at an estimated ₹ 7.83 crore, the police statement said.

The driver, identified as Vanlalruatsaka (32) of Melbuk village in Champhai district, was arrested.

Champhai police registered a



case under the NDPS Act, and further investigation is underway, it said.

Methamphetamine tablets, also called crazy drugs or party drugs, are banned in India.

Earlier in the same day, the Champhai STF intercepted a maxicab at the Khankawn check gate and recovered 118 gram of heroin worth ₹ 23.6 lakh from the possession of Vanlalnuana (27), a resident of Shanmyo village in

Myanmar's Tahan, it said.

The accused was booked under the NDPS Act and section 21 of The Immigration and Foreigners Act.

In another operation, a team from the Special Narcotics Police Station (SNPS) in Aizawl seized 241.21 gram of heroin, packed in 20 soap cases, at Zemabawk in the northeastern outskirts of the state capital on August 1.

The drugs were allegedly being transported in a pickup truck by two suspected traffickers identified as Hussain Ahmed Laskar (23) and Noor Ahmed Laskar (34), both from Cachar district in Assam.

They were arrested on the spot and booked under the NDPS Act, 1985.

Further investigation into the case is going on, the statement said. (PTI)

Arunachal Govt pitches for 'Zero Litter Itanagar Mission'

ITANAGAR, Aug 3: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (Retd) KT Parnaik on Monday called for launching a 'Zero Litter Itanagar Mission' with strict enforcement, waste segregation at source and a complete phase-out of single-use plastics, saying the state capital must aspire to become a clean, hygienic and sustainable tourism city.

He made the remarks while presenting the 'Land of the Rising Sun' medalion for excellence to Itanagar Municipal Corporation (IMC) mayor Likha Nari Tadar at Lok Bhavan here.

To achieve the vision of a cleaner capital, the governor suggested introducing strict anti-littering measures, including public awareness campaigns, CCTV surveillance, spot fines and citizen reporting mechanisms.

He also stressed the need to ensure that every household, institution, hotel, restaurant and market establishment segregates wet, dry and hazardous waste at source.

Calling for a plastic-free Itanagar, Parnaik advocated eliminating single-use plastics and promoting the use of locally available bamboo, cane and other eco-friendly alternatives. The governor congratulated the mayor for her dedicated leadership in improving urban infrastructure and strengthening civic services, sanitation and cleanliness in the capital region.

The award recognises her efforts to make the city cleaner, greener and more citizen-friendly, an official statement said here. (PTI)

Arunachal launches anti-drug campaign with 10-crore pledge drive

Minister Mama Natung calls for collective action to build an addiction-free society

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Aug 3: Arunachal Pradesh on Sunday launched the "10-Crore Addiction-Free Pledge Mega Campaign" under the theme "Nasha Mukta Bharat, Nasha Mukta Arunachal", with a call for collective action to combat substance abuse and promote healthy living.

Organised by the Brahma Kumaris at its RajYoga Centre in Itanagar, the programme brought together government officials, police, educators, students, youth in recovery, social workers and members of the public.

The campaign forms part of the nationwide Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan and Mission SPANDAN and coincided with the organisation's 90th anniversary celebrations, India's 80th Independence Day, International Youth Day and the Smriti Divas of Rajyogini Dadi Prakashmani.

Addressing the gathering, Home and Inter-State Border Affairs Minister Mama



Natung stressed the need for sustained public participation, family support and institutional coordination to protect the younger generation from substance abuse.

He said the fight against addiction requires a united effort involving government agencies, educational institutions, civil society and communities.

Director General of Police Shiv Darsan Singh Jamwal highlighted the impor-

ance of preventive awareness, community vigilance and responsible citizenship, while speakers from the Brahma Kumaris emphasised value-based education, RajYoga meditation and character-building as tools for de-addiction and social transformation.

Participants also took a pledge to remain free from addictions and support efforts to build a drug-free society.

NO.KDB/BTC/15th FC(T)/NIT/2026-27/869

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders affixing a non-refundable Court Fee Stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight & Twenty-Five Paise) only with a validity period of 180 (One Hundred Eighty) days, which will subsequently be converted and drawn up in the APWD's printed P-2 forms are invited from the registered contractors of Class-II and Class-I (A, B & C) category of Assam PWD (Roads & Building) and BTC, according to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the following works under 6th Finance Commission Fund for the year 2025-26. The Tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 2.00 P.M. on 24.08.2026 and will be opened on the same date & place at 2.30 P.M. against the scheme shown below-

Sl. No.	Name of Scheme	A.A. Amount	Earliest Money	Cost of Tender paper	Time of Completion
1	Const. of Community Toilet at Adabari Rwisumwi Club at Choto Adabari village (ID-128918002)	11,75,000.00	11750/- (1% for ST, SC & OBC) & Rs. 23500/- (Gen)	Rs. 360.00	3 Months
2	Const. of Community Toilet at near Kati Kr. Narzary house at Maorigaon (AC-128505885)	17,85,833.00	17860/- (1% for ST, SC & OBC) & Rs. 35720/- (Gen)	Rs. 540.00	3 Months
3	Const. of Community Toilet at near Balagaon Bazar Community Hall (ID-1192, Activity Code-127388032)	11,75,000.00	11750/- (1% for ST, SC & OBC) & Rs. 23500/- (Gen)	Rs. 360.00	3 Months
4	Const. of Community Toilet at near 7 No. Aflagaon Brahma Mandir (ID-1200, Activity Code-127388411)	11,75,000.00	11750/- (1% for ST, SC & OBC) & Rs. 23500/- (Gen)	Rs. 360.00	3 Months
5	Const. of Community Toilet at Haloadal VCDC Office (ID-1191, Activity Code-127387989)	11,75,000.00	11750/- (1% for ST, SC & OBC) & Rs. 23500/- (Gen)	Rs. 360.00	3 Months
6	Const. of Community Toilet at near Shiv Mandir at Balagaon Bazar (ID-1193, Activity Code-127388075)	11,75,000.00	11750/- (1% for ST, SC & OBC) & Rs. 23500/- (Gen)	Rs. 360.00	3 Months
7	Const. of Community Toilet Utlapani Labanyapur VCDC Office (ID-1194, Activity Code-127388128)	11,75,000.00	11750/- (1% for ST, SC & OBC) & Rs. 23500/- (Gen)	Rs. 360.00	3 Months

Details NIT may be seen in all working days during office hours in the office of the undersigned. Tender papers will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agent from 04.08.2026 to 24.08.2026 in the office of the undersigned on payment of cost of Tender paper in the form of demand draft/Banker Cheque from any Nationalized Bank, duly pledged in favour of Principal Secretary, BTC, Kokrajhar, payable at Kokrajhar.

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/1018

Sd/-
Block Development Officer,
Kokrajhar Dev. Block, Titaguri

India's rich cultural tapestry takes centre stage as Commonwealth baton heads to Ahmedabad

GLASGOW, Aug 3: As the curtain came down on the Glasgow Commonwealth Games, India offered the world a vibrant invitation to Ahmedabad, blending ancient philosophy, contemporary artistry and cultural grandeur in a handover presentation that officially launched the journey towards the centenary edition of the Games in 2030.

The emotional centrepiece of Sunday's closing ceremony at the OVO Hydro saw Glasgow formally pass the Commonwealth Games baton to India before a spectacular showcase of music, dance and storytelling projected India's identity as a nation where tradition and modernity coexist.

Prince Edward, Duke of Edinburgh, representing King Charles III, formally declared the Games closed.

"Thanks for the manner in which you have competed, officiated, supported, organised the Games. You have once again brought the spirit and value of Commonwealth tonight. Thank You Glasgow," he said.

"I call up on athletes of all countries and territories to come to Ahmedabad, India in four years time to celebrate the 24th Commonwealth Games in what will

be the centenary of the Games," he added.

Jaismine Lamboria carried India's flag at the closing ceremony after winning gold in the women's 57kg category boxing competition.

The formal handover began with the Commonwealth Games flag making its symbolic journey across the arena.

Led by bearers holding the Scottish and Indian flags, the procession lowered the folded Games flag. Glasgow's Lord Provost Jacqueline McLaren then passed it to Commonwealth Games Scotland vice-chair Susan Jackson, Scottish netball player Emily Nicholl, Commonwealth Sport president Dr Donald Rukare, two-time Olympic medallist Neeraj Chopra, Indian Olympic Association president PT Usha, and finally Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi. This marked the official transfer of hosting responsibilities from Scotland to India.

From that solemn moment, the atmosphere transformed into a celebration of India's civilisational ethos.

The Indian presentation unfolded over three acts, taking the audience on what organisers described as a journey celebrating shared values, culture and con-



nection.

The overarching message was rooted in the ancient Indian philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam -- "The World is One Family" -- a theme that resonated strongly with the Commonwealth's ideals of unity and friendship.

The opening act also commemorated 150 years of Vande Mataram, India's national song, with a sweeping choreogra-

phy led by actor Manushi Chhillar.

Set against immersive digital visuals, hundreds of dancers painted a vivid portrait of India's diversity while maestro Shankar Mahadevan's stirring score fused orchestral grandeur with Indian musical traditions.

The performance sought to portray India as a civilisation that welcomes the world through its plurality of languages,

customs and artistic traditions. A specially produced film introduced international audiences to Ahmedabad.

The film presented sport as an inseparable part of Indian life, tracing its evolution from ancient traditions of discipline and physical excellence to the aspirations of one of the world's youngest nations.

Gujarat was portrayed as a place where centuries-old heritage intersects with innovation and urban ambition, positioning Ahmedabad as a fitting venue for the Commonwealth Games' landmark centenary edition.

The visual narrative culminated with a message that sport has the power to unite people, celebrate diversity and bring the Commonwealth together in India.

The second act celebrated perhaps the strongest cultural bridge between the outgoing and incoming hosts - music.

Called "The Cultural Jugalbandi", the segment paired internationally acclaimed Indian sitar virtuoso Rishabh Sharma with celebrated Scottish musician Ross Ainslie.

The dialogue between Sharma's sitar and Ainslie's Scottish pipes and whistles became a symbolic conversation between

two ancient musical traditions. Moving seamlessly between meditative passages and energetic crescendos, the performance demonstrated how music can transcend geography and language while respecting cultural identity.

The finale belonged to one of India's most celebrated musical families.

Shankar Mahadevan returned to the stage alongside his sons Siddharth and Shivam Mahadevan for a concert that travelled through some of India's most recognisable songs, including "Suno gaar se duniya wala, Bhaag Milkha, Ae watan watan and Lehara Do."

Gujarati playback singer Bhoomi Trivedi added a special tribute to the host state, ensuring Gujarat occupied centre stage before welcoming the Commonwealth in four years' time.

The Indian showcase followed Glasgow's farewell celebration featuring Scottish music, poetry and dance.

Scotland's wheelchair racer Melanie Woods won the David Dixon Award, which is given to the outstanding athlete of the Commonwealth Games, based on their performance, fair play and overall contribution to their team's participation at the Games. (PTI)

Wrestlers will file appeal against decision to acquit Brij Bhushan: Vinesh

NEW DELHI, Aug 3: World Championships medallist Vinesh Phogat on Monday said that the women wrestlers who had filed a sexual harassment case against former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh will appeal against a Delhi court's decision to acquit him.

A Delhi court on Monday acquitted Singh and co-accused Vinod Tomar in the sexual harassment case filed by the women wrestlers.

"From the very beginning, the entire administration, the government, and the system have been engaged in protecting Brij Bhushan," Phogat posted on 'X'.

"We are deeply saddened that the court did not find Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh guilty of the allegations of sexual violence made by the women wrestlers.

"The women wrestlers have instructed their lawyers to appeal against this decision, and the appeal will be filed as soon as possible. We have not lost hope, and the wrestlers will continue their fight," Phogat said.

Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Ashwini Panwar acquitted ex-BJP MP Singh and Tomar, former WFI assistant secretary, in the



case.

Phogat, along with wrestlers Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia, was the face of the 36-day sit-in protest in April-May 2023 against Singh at Delhi's Jantar Mantar.

Punia also posted the same statement on his 'X' handle.

Phogat also alleged that Singh "intimidated several girls into withdrawing their names".

"We had to gather a lot of courage to come out onto the streets and get an FIR registered against a powerful leader of the ruling party. Using his influence and political power, Brij Bhushan intimidated several girls into with-

drawing their names.

"However, many women wrestlers stood firm and continued fighting against Brij Bhushan in court," she said.

Based on the complaints filed by the six wrestlers, Delhi police registered a first information report (FIR) against Singh on June 15, 2023.

The Delhi Police had filed a chargesheet against Singh, a six-time MP, under sections 354 (assault or criminal force to a woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 354A (sexual harassment), 354D (stalking) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal

Code.

One of the wrestlers, a minor, later withdrew her complaint.

In May last year, a Delhi Court accepted the Delhi Police's cancellation report, closing the POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) case filed by the minor.

The court on July 2 had reserved the order for August 3 after completion of the final arguments in the case.

Speaking to reporters outside the court, Singh said the court had "honourably" acquitted him and Tomar.

"On the first day, I had said that if any allegation against me was proved, I would hang myself. The court has now honourably acquitted me. I am happy and grateful to my lawyers," he said.

"For now, this is all I can say. I will comment further after going through the court's reasoned order," the ex-BJP MP added.

Public prosecutor Manish Rawat, however, said that after examining the detailed order, "appropriate action" would be taken before the higher courts.

The prosecution can challenge the magisterial court's verdict before the Delhi High Court. (PTI)

Boxing boom, judo show power India to strong Glasgow CWG campaign

GLASGOW, Aug 3: India overcame the absence of several traditional medal-winning sports to surpass expectations at the 2026 Commonwealth Games, signing off fourth with 39 medals on the back of a record-breaking boxing campaign, a historic showing in judo, and another strong performance by its para athletes.

With the Games reduced to just 10 sports, leaving out wrestling, shooting, badminton and hockey, India's chances of a top-five finish looked uncertain before the Games began.

However, the 122-member contingent returned with 13 gold, 17 silver and nine bronze medals, underlining the country's growing depth beyond its traditional strengths.

Boxing led the way. The Indian pugilists produced their best-ever Commonwealth Games campaign, collecting a record seven gold medals and 10 podium finishes overall. While the women lived up to expectations, the men also delivered consistently to make it India's most successful sport in Glasgow.

The performance, however, must be viewed in context. The absence of several European and Central Asian nations meant the competition was not as deep as at the Olympics or World Championships. Even so, India made full use of the opportunity.

Judo was another major positive. Long considered a fringe medal sport, it produced India's best-ever Commonwealth Games performance. Asmita Dey's gold, won months after losing her father, and Harsh Singh's title, reflected the steady progress the sport has made over the last few years.

Para sport continued its upward trajectory.

From powerlifting to athletics, Indian para athletes once again proved that their success at recent Paralympics was no coincidence. The medals across disciplines reflected the growing strength of the



country's para sports programme.

Athletics presented a mixed picture.

Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra, returning from injury, settled for silver and a few other medal hopefuls failed to meet expectations. At the same time, the sport produced some of India's most memorable performances.

Tejaswin Shankar fought back from a knee injury that ended his high jump campaign to win a decathlon medal. Gulveer Singh emerged as India's only double medallist with his distance-running exploits, while Murali Sreeshankar marked his return from a lengthy injury lay-off with another Commonwealth silver.

Weightlifting, one of India's most dependable medal-producing sports, had a quieter Games.

After returning with 10 medals, including three golds, in Birmingham four years ago, the lifters managed eight podium finishes but only one gold, won by Mirabai Chanu.

Competing with a reduced squad after quota cuts linked to previous anti-doping sanctions, the team still delivered a respectable haul but fell short of its own high standards.

There were disappointments elsewhere.

Lawn bowls could not build on the historic gold and silver won in Birmingham, while cycling and swimming continued to search for the breakthrough performances that have remained elusive.

Athletics, too, will believe it missed opportunities to add to the medal tally.

But India's overall performance suggested its medal prospects are no longer tied to just a few established disciplines.

The absence of wrestling and other sports could have significantly reduced the medal haul. Instead, boxing delivered in unprecedented fashion, judo emerged as a genuine medal-winning sport and para athletes continued to strengthen India's position.

Equally significant was the contribution from emerging athletes. With Chopra below his best and weightlifting contributing fewer gold medals than usual, India's overall tally remained healthy because newer faces stepped up across disciplines.

That will be the biggest positive for India as it prepares to host the centenary Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad in 2030. Glasgow showed that the country's medal base is widening, giving it more avenues for success than ever before. (PTI)

European soccer body UEFA warns FIFA of legal action over Infantino's failed World Cup sell-off plan

NYON (SWITZERLAND), Aug 3: European soccer body UEFA has threatened FIFA with legal action over Gianni Infantino's failed plan to sell a stake in future World Cup profits to private investors, and said any potential evidence should not be destroyed.

Infantino's secretive proposal to raise \$4.2 billion from investors including the New York investment firm of Joshua Kushner was dropped early Saturday, days after the revelation in media reports provoked a global furor.

UEFA led the backlash and on Thursday its 55 member federations met to agree boycotting all FIFA events and competitions while the proposal was active.

Now lawyers for UEFA have informed FIFA that the European body is "actively considering legal action, arbitration, and/or regulatory complaints ... arising out of and in connection with the FFE (FIFA Forward Enterprise) plan proposed by FIFA and all related matters."

The letter dated Friday from the legal firm Dechert in New York was seen Monday by The Associated Press.

The letter named 18 FIFA executives who it said should retain data, documents and electronic messages as potential evidence.

"UEFA puts you on formal notice that any destruction, deletion, alteration, concealment, or loss of relevant materials following receipt of this notice -- or following any earlier date on which you were, or reasonably should have been, aware that proceedings were anticipated -- may constitute spoliation of evidence," the letter said.

On Saturday, UEFA signaled it wants to end Infantino's decade-long presidency, saying he had lost the confidence of world soccer and that "no option should be off the table." Hours earlier, Infantino withdrew the divisive proposal that

offered FIFA's 211 member federations one-off payments of \$20 million each with a mid-September deadline to accept.

The FFE spin-off valued by FIFA at \$20 billion would have taken control of the soccer body's money-making commercial and tournament operations. The 211 members already effectively own the Zurich-based not-for-profit governing body.

It was the project of just one man, FIFA's chief operating officer Kevin Lamour said in a stinging statement Friday to the AP which said staff felt deceived by their boss Infantino. Legal proceedings are "reasonably anticipated," UEFA's lawyer Andrew J. Levander wrote, citing the belief of soccer stakeholders that the plan was "fundamentally incompatible with the proper governance of football."

Opposition to Infantino

UEFA has been most outspoken against its former employee Infantino while the Asian Football Confederation and CONCACAF, the North and Central American and Caribbean soccer body, also have made strong statements to oppose Infantino's plan.

Infantino has most support from his traditional base in Africa, while South America's CONMEBOL is relying on him to expand the 2030 World Cup to 64 teams from 48. That would give more hosting games to Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, the home country of CONMEBOL president Alejandro Dominguez.

The private equity plan has provoked a stunning turnaround in fortunes for Infantino who left New York after the World Cup final two weeks ago seemingly a lock to be re-elected unopposed next March for a fourth and final term in office through 2031. The spin-off operation could have created a commissioner-like role for him beyond 2031 paying much more than his current \$6 million annual salary and bonus deal as president. (AP)

Kamilla Rakhimova beats Venus Williams

TORONTO, Aug 3: Kamilla Rakhimova beat Venus Williams 6-4, 6-1 in a rain-delayed match to kick off the National Bank Open women's main draw.

Granted a singles wild-card entry at the WTA 1000 event, the 46-year-old Williams has lost 12 straight matches dating to July 2025.

"We play outside ... you can't control the weather," Williams said Sunday.

"But the fans were amazing. They were with me right in every point -- that was fantastic. I was just fighting to put the ball on the court."

The 24-year-old Rakhimova is from Uzbekistan. She's ranked 82nd in the world.

"Playing Venus is not an everyday experience," Rakhimova said.

"I'm very glad to actually get a chance to play against her. I was looking forward to that match. I knew it was going to be a center-court match. I was trying to enjoy my time on it, no matter what the result." (AP)

2030 CWG will set new benchmarks in accessibility, sustainability: Sanghavi

GLASGOW, Aug 3: Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi said the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad will set new benchmarks in accessibility and sustainability, while insisting that the city already possesses enough infrastructure to stage the centenary edition of the multi-sport event.

Ahmedabad will host the Commonwealth Games in 2030, marking the event's return to India after two decades. India last staged the Games in New Delhi in 2010.

Sanghavi, who also holds the sports portfolio in the state, said Ahmedabad's biggest focus would be on ensuring the Games are fully inclusive for para athletes.

"For para athletes, Ahmedabad will set a new example. We are already making all hotels accessible for para athletes. Our aim is to make it the most para athlete-friendly Commonwealth Games," he said on Sunday.

He also highlighted Gujarat's push towards green energy and sustainable urban transport, saying the Games would be built around environment-friendly infrastructure.

"Gujarat is India's largest producer of green energy. Ahmedabad will set the best standards in sustainability," he said.

"All local transportation, including the BRT system, will be electric. Right now it is around 90 per cent electric, but by 2030 it will be 100 per cent."

He asserted that the city already has the nec-



essary infrastructure to host the Games, with only limited upgrades required.

"We already have enough infrastructure to conduct the Commonwealth Games even today. If we refurbish around 20 per cent of the existing infrastructure, we will be able to conduct the Games," Sanghavi said.

"As part of our urban development plan, we are further developing our sports infrastructure, and that work will be completed by the end of 2028 or early 2029."

According to him, the investment will have long-term benefits beyond the Games.

"These stadiums will be utilised for training young athletes and for the development of sports science. The hostels built for the Games will later become facilities for students."

Sanghavi added that Ahmedabad already has sufficient hotel capacity and a well-connected public transport network.

"The hotel capacity is sufficient and it has been built on a sustainable model. Even today we can conduct the Commonwealth Games successfully if we want," he said.

"As far as transportation is concerned, all BRT routes are connected to the stadiums and we also have metro connectivity." He said both the Centre and the Gujarat government are fully committed to the project while private participation would also be encouraged.

"We will join hands with the private sector as well, but the Central government and the Gujarat government have assured full support for the Games."

On the possibility of cricket featuring in the 2030 edition, Sanghavi said discussions with Commonwealth Sport are continuing.

"We would like cricket to be part of the 2030 Commonwealth Games, but the final decision rests with Commonwealth Sport and we are in continuous dialogue," he said.

Commonwealth Sport CEO Katie Sadler added: "We are also working with our colleagues in India regarding the optional and additional sports programme." (PTI)

NFR hosts 72nd All India Inter Railway Table Tennis Championship

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 3: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) on Monday inaugurated the 72nd All India Inter Railway Table Tennis Championship (Men & Women) 2026-27 at the NF Railway Sports Association (NFRSA) Indoor Stadium in Maligaon.

The championship will continue till August 7.

Organised by the NF Railway Sports Association (NFRSA), the tournament has brought together 65 men and 31 women players representing various Zonal Railways and Production Units of Indian Railways.

Seventeen referees, along with two selectors and one observer appointed by the Railway Board, are officiating the event.

Additional General Manager of NFR Ramesh Kumar inaugurated the championship as the chief guest.

The opening ceremony featured the introduction of participating teams, flag hoisting, felicitation of officials and the formal declaration of the tournament open. The championship will feature competitions in both men's and women's categories, with NFR stating that the event reflects Indian Railways' commitment to promoting sporting excellence and fostering camaraderie among railway employees across the country.