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RS passes MSME amendment bill amid oppn sloganeering; house adjourned for the day

New Delhi, Aug 3 (UNI): The Rajya Sabha on Monday passed the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (Amendment) Bill amid continuous sloganeering and protests by Opposition members, who demanded the presence of the Home Minister in the Upper House and raised issues related to the recent alleged police atrocity and violence during student protests in Delhi.

The Bill, which seeks to amend the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Act, 2006, empowers courts to order payment of at least 50 per cent of the awarded amount to MSME suppliers if an application to set aside an order remains pending for more than six months. When the House reassembled at 2 p.m., Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh asked MSME Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi to move the motion for discussion on the Bill. As the discussion began, Opposition members immediately demanded that Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge be allowed to speak first. The Deputy Chairman declined, stating that a ruling had already been given by the Chairman earlier. Following persistent sloganeering, Kharge was permitted to speak. He began by saying, "Kya aasman gir jayega agar mujhe paanch minute sun lenge…" and then referred to the Ram Janmabhoomi issue. Before he could complete his remarks, Leader of House J.P. Nadda intervened, asserting that the minister had already initiated the discussion and that it should continue.

Congress member Ajay Maken was then called. He expressed surprise that the Leader of Opposition was not being allowed to speak, noting that such a situation had not arisen during his long tenure in both Houses of Parliament.

When Maken linked the Bill discussion to the alleged torture of youngsters and students, the Deputy Chairman warned him that remarks not related to the Bill would not go on record. Nadda demanded that Maken's comments be expunged.

Given another chance, Maken assured the Chair he would stick to the Bill but pointed out the absence of the Home Minister.

Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijiju then stated that the member had failed to speak on the Bill despite being given three opportunities. This triggered fresh slogans from the Opposition benches, "Grih Mantri Sadan mein aao (Home Minister should come to the House)".

Military-Civilian integration key to national security: Rajnath

New Delhi, Aug 3 (GNS): Union Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday underlined the need to deepen integration between the military and civil components of the Ministry to foster greater synergy within the defence ecosystem. Addressing the 85th Armed Forces Headquarters (AFHQ) Civilian Services Day celebrations in Delhi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh emphasised that both the uniformed and civil services share the same commitment of 'Nation First'. He said that when the objective of both the military and civil components of the Ministry is singular, every element of the system transforms into national strength.

He said deeper integration between the military and civil components of the Ministry of Defence will help to tackle evolving security and technological challenges, while ensuring institutional memory, stability, and the effective application of rules and regulations. He said that military and administrative integration cannot proceed along separate paths as there will be a need for continuity and expertise across all areas – policy, administration, human resource management, financial processes, logistics, and institutional knowledge.

Rajnath Singh highlighted the importance of further enhancing structured cross-exposure between civilian and military officers, suggesting joint training programmes and developmental assignments for both sides to learn from each other's experiences.

"Military officers bring operational experience, a command perspective, and an understanding of warfare, while civilian officers contribute through administrative continuity, policy experience, an understanding of government processes, and institutional memory. When these strengths combine, decision-making becomes more informed, balanced, and effective," stated Rajnath Singh.

Explaining with the example of 'cyber warfare', the Defence Minister stated that if officers of the AFHQ Civilian Services develop defence-specific common cyber tools leveraging their expertise, it could prove beneficial to the Defence Forces. Rajnath Singh called upon the AFHQ Civilian Services to evolve into the "strategic brain" of India's defence management architecture by developing a comprehensive understanding of the defence sector.

Record 20,000 organ transplants achieved in 2025: MoS Health Anupriya Patel

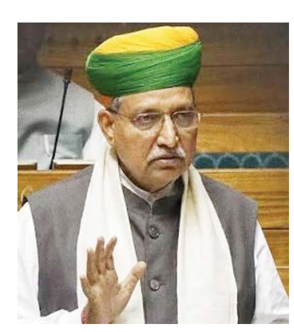
New Delhi, Aug 3 (GNS): Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Anupriya Patel said on Monday that the country has made significant strides in organ transplantation, with the number of transplants increasing from 4,990 in 2013 to over 20,000 in 2025, the highest ever recorded in a single year.

Speaking at an event organised by the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) to mark the 16th Indian Organ Donation Day (IODD), the Minister of State said India now ranks third globally in the total number of organ transplants, after the US and China. She highlighted that deceased donor transplants have increased from 837 in 2013 to more than 3,500 in 2025, while acknowledging that a substantial gap still exists between the demand for organs and their availability. She emphasised that addressing this gap remains a national priority.

The Minister of State called for strengthening the organ donation movement but observed that misconceptions surrounding organ donation continue to be a major challenge. She stressed that no major religion prohibits organ donation; rather, all faiths uphold the values of compassion, service and saving lives, making organ donation a noble humanitarian act.

Referring to the initiatives launched on the occasion, she said that the National Brain Stem Death Certification Guidelines and the National Guidelines on Swap Transplantation would help standardise practices and strengthen policy implementation across the country.

Lok Sabha Clears SC Judges Expansion Bill

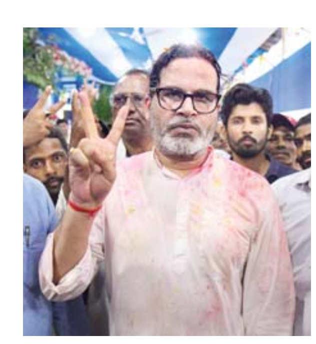


New Delhi, Aug 3 (GNS): The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026, was passed in the Lok Sabha through voice vote on Monday. The House resumed its proceedings after a brief adjournment at noon, even as noisy protests by the Opposition members continued to disrupt parliamentary business. Union Law and Justice Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal tabled the legislation in the House amid loud sloganeering from Opposition MPs, who continued to demand answers from Union Home Minister Amit Shah over the police action during the Jantar Mantar protests. Despite repeated appeals by Krishna Prasad Tenneti, who was presiding over the proceedings, asking members to maintain order and allow the House to function, the protests continued.

The Bill was however passed by a voice vote. When the disruptions showed no signs of easing, the Chair eventually adjourned the Lok Sabha for the remainder of the day.

The SC (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026, seeks to replace the ordinance promulgated, earlier this year, to enhance the sanctioned strength of judges in the apex court in view of the growing pendency of cases and the increasing workload before the judiciary. Under the proposed legislation, the sanctioned strength of judges in the Supreme Court would be increased from 33 to 37, excluding the Chief Justice of India, thereby taking the total strength of the court from 34 to 38 judges.

Prashant Kishor wins bankipur bypoll, BJP loses stronghold



Patna, Aug 3 (GNS): Jan Suraaj Party founder Prashant Kishor made a historic electoral debut on Monday, winning the bypoll 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 bypoll 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 bypoll 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.

SC Says Catastrophically Injured Child Loses Childhood, Dignity And Future, Enhances Compensation

New Delhi, Aug 3 (GNS): The Supreme Court on Monday observed that a child who suffers catastrophic injuries loses far more than physical abilities, as such trauma robs them of the ordinary joys of childhood, dignity, independence and an entire future, as it enhanced compensation from Rs 45.40 lakh to Rs 83.38 lakh for a girl who suffered permanent disability in a road accident at the age of six months.

A bench of Justices Ujjal Bhuyan and N.V. Anjaria said courts dealing with compensation claims involving severely injured children must adopt a "realistic, humane" approach, keeping in mind that the consequences of catastrophic injuries extend far beyond physical impairment and continue throughout the victim's life.

"Injuries suffered by children have consequences which extend far beyond the immediate physical disability. Such injuries accompany the victim throughout her life and affect every stage of her development. The loss suffered is not temporary. It is lifelong, continuing and irreversible," the Justice Bhuyan-led Bench said.

"A child who suffers catastrophic injuries loses much more than physical abilities. The child may lose the joys and experiences ordinarily associated with childhood itself. Activities which other children take for granted, like playing, running around, attending school, interacting with friends, participating in social functions and enjoying ordinary pleasures of life may become permanently inaccessible," it added. The apex court observed that the impact of such injuries goes beyond bodily impairment.

"Human dignity forms an inseparable component of life. When a catastrophic injury deprives a child of the ability to perform the ordinary functions independently, the resulting loss transcends the realm of physical disability and assumes the character of a continuing deprivation of dignity. Therefore, the injury affects not merely the body but the very manner in which life itself is experienced," the bench said.

The Supreme Court stressed that while determining compensation, courts must remain conscious that "what has been taken away is not merely physical capacity but the child's entire future life."

The case arose from a motor accident in Odisha that occurred on June 16, 2015, when the infant, Shreejita Pattnaik, was travelling with her parents. A tanker coming from the opposite direction allegedly swerved onto the wrong side of the road and collided head-on with their vehicle.

India's China policy at a crossroads

DIPAK KURMI

Nearly five years after the violent clash in Galwan Valley ruptured diplomatic trust between India and China, signs of a tentative thaw have begun to emerge. The prolonged estrangement caused by the 2020 border incident marked one of the lowest points in bilateral ties since the 1962 war. However, recent high-level engagements suggest a recalibration is underway. The meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping on October 23, 2024, during the 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan, offered more than just a photo-op—it became a symbolic turning point, steering the bilateral relationship back from the brink and offering new direction to a fractured dialogue.

This renewal is being felt in tangible terms on the ground. One of the most important developments has been the resumption of patrolling and traditional grazing rights in the remaining friction points of eastern Ladakh. These practical measures are crucial confidence-building steps, pointing toward de-escalation and disengagement, without which normalcy cannot be restored. India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, during their recent visits to China for Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meetings, reiterated that peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) are fundamental preconditions for any broader normalisation in the relationship.

Complementing these security-level efforts is the restoration of cultural and religious exchanges. The resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra in 2025, after a five-year suspension, has been widely welcomed by Indian pilgrims and spiritual communities. Its symbolic value cannot be overstated; it reflects a willingness to rebuild people-to-people ties long neglected in the wake of diplomatic tensions. Yet, it would be naïve to view these developments as indicative of a full strategic rapprochement. Deep fault lines remain unaddressed, many of them structural in nature. For instance, core issues such as direct air connectivity, reciprocal visa arrangements for business and journalists, and data sharing on upper riparian rivers have not seen substantial progress. Furthermore, Beijing's initial silence and later equivocal statements following the April 22, 2025, terrorist attack in Pahalgam were seen as dismissive by New Delhi. That moment underscored the fragility of trust and how strategic interests still trump mutual empathy.

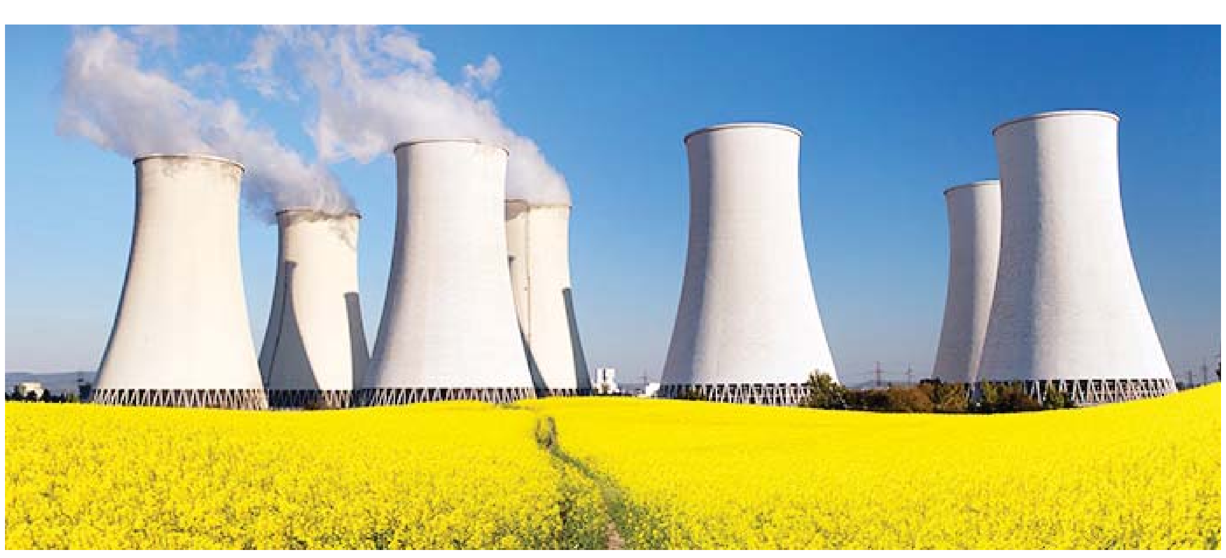
Nonetheless, in a significant diplomatic victory for India, the BRICS Joint Declaration issued after the 2024 Kazan summit did condemn the Pahalgam terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir, marking the first time a BRICS statement specifically referred to a terrorist incident in J&K. The language was clear—terrorism, its safe havens, and the global double standards in countering it were roundly rejected. This was a diplomatic milestone not merely for its text but for the multilateral consensus it reflected. Just over a decade ago, the 2009 BRIC Leaders' Joint Statement failed even to mention the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, restricting itself to a generic condemnation of terrorism "in all forms." It wasn't until the 2017 Xiamen BRICS Declaration that Pakistan-based groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad were named. In that sense, the 2024 declaration is both evolution and vindication—an outcome of sustained Indian diplomacy and global outreach campaigns such as Operation Sindoor and the dispatching of all-party delegations to friendly capitals.

However, consensus at multilateral forums does not always translate to bilateral convergence. India remains wary of China's persistent shielding of Pakistan-based terrorists at the United Nations, often placing technical blocks on listings. With Pakistan being a full SCO member, it is unlikely that the forthcoming SCO declaration will mirror the firmness of the BRICS document on terrorism. This underscores the continuing dichotomy in China's multilateral versus bilateral posturing—a contradiction India has long grappled with.

Trade and economic relations, once seen as a stabilising factor in the India-China equation, have also come under strain. The structural imbalance in bilateral trade—where India imports nearly five times what it exports to China—has been exacerbated by non-tariff barriers and lack of reciprocal market access. Fresh concerns have emerged in recent months as China imposed restrictions on exports of critical technologies to India, including rare earth magnets essential for electric vehicles (EVs), wind turbines, tunnel boring machines, and certain fertilisers.

Collapse of nuclear grammar

Lt Gen SS Mehta (Retd)



The nuclear age has always had its own language. From the Cold War's deterrence and mutual assured destruction to later euphemisms like 'credible minimum deterrent' and 'no first use', every phrase was carefully weighed. Grammar itself became an instrument of restraint. The assumption was that words could discipline weapons and prevent their use.

Even adversaries understood that in nuclear affairs, words were kinetic — capable of mobilising, intimidating or escalating without a single missile moving. Public discourse was integral to deterrence; statements were crafted, cleared and channelled through measured voices because a careless phrase could move troops or trigger alerts.

That discipline is fraying. The grammar of restraint has been coarsened. Where the nuclear discourse was once confined to deliberate communiqués, it now seeps into campaign rallies, press conferences and television soundbites. The podium, once a place for statecraft, has been weaponised for domestic theatre. In a nuclear context, such theatre is not harmless; it is rehearsal for miscalculation, an unravelling of the very norms that have kept the world away from nuclear conflict for decades. The danger lies not only in what is said but in what is left unanswered. When a host nation's silence, the UN's absence and the indifference of other nuclear powers combine to let a nuclear threat pass unchallenged, they bypass accountability and erode nuclear norms. Nuclear deterrence rests on a paradox: weapons are kept to prevent war, not to wage it. That paradox survives only through restraint, in posture, deployment, and above all, in language.

Thomas Schelling, the Nobel laureate strategist, warned that deterrence is not merely about weapons but about "the manipulation of risk". Language, therefore, is part of the arsenal. Careless words can tilt the balance as dangerously as careless deployments. Admiral Arun Prakash, our former Chief of Naval Staff, has cautioned that nuclear dialogue is as critical as nuclear posture. India's credibility, he notes, has long rested on disciplined restraint in both. To dismiss reckless rhetoric as mere domestic theatre is a perilous misjudgment in the nuclear age. A stark case illustrates this decay. On the soil of a major democracy, a nuclear-armed Army Chief declared: "If we think we are going down, we'll take half the world down with us." This was not whispered in a bunker but spoken into a microphone, to both domestic and global audiences. The host nation did not challenge it. The UN stayed silent. Other permanent members of the Security Council looked away. It signalled that nuclear blackmail could be voiced in broad daylight without diplomatic cost.

Every unchallenged threat lowers the threshold for the next, rewriting restraint into recklessness.

This danger extends beyond treaties like the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The real threat lies not only in possession but in how nuclear weapons are spoken of, threatened and normalised. When a defeated military chief, standing over his own Prime Minister, threatens both a democratic neighbour and half the world from the soil of another democracy, and the world stays silent, it creates a precedent more corrosive than any treaty violation. It tells authoritarians everywhere that nuclear blackmail can be practised openly without consequence. It hollows out the very grammar of restraint. Some argue that such rhetoric is for domestic consumption. But in the nuclear age, perception can be as potent as capability. A misread signal can push a rival toward a pre-emptive stance. An ambiguous phrase can be mistaken for intent. And when crises run in parallel, from contested borders to cyber incidents — the margin for error narrows dangerously. The international community has shown that restraint can be codified not only in arsenals but in principle.

The Ottawa Landmine Treaty of 1997 proved that when the world agreed that certain weapons were unacceptable, the stigma itself carried weight.

The Chemical Weapons Convention established that some threats cross a universal red line, regardless of circumstance. Even reluctant powers have felt compelled to justify or conceal transgressions rather than openly defy the norm. These cases show that restraint can be institutionalised not merely through possession treaties but through shared conviction that some weapons, and the rhetoric around them, must be delegitimised altogether. Alarmingly, the nuclear discourse is moving in the opposite direction. Instead of strengthening taboos against threat and use, silence and indulgence are hollowing them out. What landmines and chemical weapons were spared by stigma, nuclear weapons may lose through the normalisation of recklessness.

A Futile Battle Against Ideas

In an age when the world's knowledge is a click away, banning books is like trying to dam a river with your bare hands futile, messy, and bound to fail. And yet, on August 5, as the Chinar Book Festival in Srinagar backed by the Union Culture Ministry was meant to celebrate the written word, the Jammu and Kashmir administration under Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha decided to pull 25 titles from shelves. These works, by noted authors like AG Noorani, Sumantra Bose, Arundhati Roy, and Victoria Schofield, were declared dangerous under Section 98 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, accused of "promoting false narratives" and "secessionism." The order warned of prison terms ranging from three years to life for possessing or distributing the books. Among the banned were Noorani's The Kashmir Dispute 1947–2012 and Roy's Azadi, with the Home Department claiming they "distort history, glorify terrorists, vilify security forces, and foster grievance, victimhood, and terrorist heroism." Police fanned out to Srinagar's bookstores, though so far there are no confirmed reports of seizures. What is striking is that most of these titles have been in circulation for years, published by respected houses like Penguin and Routledge. Their presence was neither new nor secret. Which makes one wonder: Why now? The timing is suspicious. August 5 marked the sixth anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370. Since 2019, Jammu and Kashmir has been governed as a Union Territory, with the L-G's powers enhanced under the J&K Reorganisation Act 2019. Amendments to the Transaction of Business Rules in July 2024 granted Manoj Sinha sweeping authority over police, public order, the Anti-Corruption Bureau, and prosecution sanctions — powers that supersede those of Chief Minister. Omar Abdullah, who has opposed the ban, points out that he has never banned a book and never will. However, in a set-up where the real power resides with the Raj Bhawan, his opinion is more symbolic than decisive.

The official reasoning — "systemic dissemination" of secessionist literature — was presented without transparency or judicial review. It fits a long tradition of governments using censorship as a blunt instrument, often with counterproductive results. History, in fact, reads like a graveyard of failed book bans. Renaissance Italy saw the moral fury of Girolamo Savonarola, who in 1497–98 led the "bonfires of the vanities" in Florence, burning "immoral" books and artworks. A year later, he was excommunicated, executed, and his ideals forgotten — while the very literature he sought to destroy flourished across Europe.

In 1933, Nazi Germany staged public book burnings, targeting works by Albert Einstein, Franz Kafka, Sigmund Freud, and other intellectuals. The Third Reich is now remembered as a cautionary tale, while Kafka's Metamorphosis is studied in classrooms worldwide. India too has had its share of literary bans — Rama Retold (1954) for allegedly hurting religious sentiments, The Da Vinci Code (2006) for similar reasons, and bans on Lady Chatterley's Lover, Lolita, Ulysses, and even The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. None of these ever truly disappeared; they are easily available online. Attempts at suppression only stoked curiosity and widened readership.

As the saying goes, you can silence a writer, but you cannot bury a book. In the modern context, the futility of such acts is even starker. Today's world operates on an "information superhighway," where banning a printed copy in one territory means nothing when e-books, PDFs, and scanned versions circulate freely across borders. You can ban the ink, but you can't ban the idea. The Kashmir ban, ironically, seems even more hollow because it applies only within the territory. Anyone outside Jammu and Kashmir — or with basic internet literacy — can access these books in minutes. The result? Locals who might never have heard of them now know their titles, authors, and "dangerous" themes. Far from suppressing the material, the ban is an unpaid advertising campaign.

There is also a special irony in banning books in a region that has a proud reading tradition. Sheikh Abdullah, long before he became the "Lion of Kashmir," served as secretary of the Fateh Kadal Reading Room Party — later the nucleus of the National Conference. The idea that Kashmiri society is somehow unable to handle differing viewpoints insults not just readers' intelligence but also the history of political literacy in the Valley. Censorship of this kind has a peculiar side effect: It elevates otherwise obscure works into symbols of resistance. The Comstock laws in the United States, for example, attempted to regulate morality by banning "obscene" literature in the late 19th century a movement so extreme it gave us the term "Comstockery." The result? The banned works became must-reads for anyone wishing to challenge the establishment. The current ban is more than a matter of free expression; it's a test of whether India's democracy can tolerate dissenting narratives, especially in sensitive regions. The state can —and should challenge ideas it disagrees with through debate, scholarship, and counter-publications. But to wield Section 98 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita like a club against inconvenient books is to abandon persuasion for coercion. And coercion rarely changes minds; it only pushes them underground.If the goal is to keep the peace in Kashmir, history suggests a different approach. Reading rooms, literary festivals, and open libraries have a better track record of diffusing radicalism than bans do. They create spaces for dialogue, allowing communities to confront ideas in the open rather than letting them fester in secrecy. When people are trusted with the responsibility to read and decide for themselves, the social fabric is strengthened, not weakened. The state's heavy-handedness is also strategically flawed. Since the revocation of Article 370, the Government has repeatedly claimed that normalcy and progress are returning to J&K. Literary festivals funded by the Centre were meant to showcase this openness. But the contradiction between celebrating literature on one hand and banning it on the other is glaring. It risks undoing the credibility such festivals are meant to build.

As every failed censor in history could testify from Caligula to Savonarola to Goebbels — the surest way to make people read something is to tell them they can't. The larger question is not whether a government has the legal authority to regulate publications under exceptional circumstances, but whether such restrictions meet the test of necessity, proportionality, and transparency. Democracies derive their strength from the ability to accommodate competing interpretations of history and politics. When controversial books are removed without an open process or independent scrutiny, it risks creating the perception that uncomfortable ideas are being suppressed rather than challenged on merit.

Internationally, mature democracies have often responded to contentious literature by encouraging debate instead of prohibition. Universities, public libraries, and academic institutions routinely preserve works with conflicting viewpoints, allowing scholars and readers to evaluate them critically. The belief that citizens are capable of distinguishing fact from opinion is fundamental to an informed society. Restricting access may instead deepen mistrust and encourage speculation about the reasons behind the ban. For Kashmir, where competing historical narratives have shaped public discourse for decades, open engagement with ideas may ultimately prove more constructive than censorship. Books, whether one agrees with their conclusions or not, provide opportunities for discussion, rebuttal, and research. Countering a disputed narrative with documented evidence and rigorous scholarship is often more persuasive than removing it from public view.

Samsung expands manufacturing of advanced tech devices in India: Ashwini Vaishnaw

New Delhi, Aug 3 (GNS): South Korean giant Samsung continues to expand manufacturing of its advanced technology devices in India, including laptops, according to Union Minister for Electronics and IT, Ashwini Vaishnaw. In a major fillip to the 'Make in India' initiative, India's electronics production has surged from $31 billion to $133 billion in a decade beginning 2014-15. The electronics exports have also seen a surge of over 47 per cent in Q1 of 2025-26 over the same quarter in 2024-25.

"Samsung continues to expand manufacturing of its advanced technology devices in 'Bharat', driven by talent and innovation," Vaishnaw said in an X post. "Its research unit in 'Bharat' has more than 7,000 engineers," he added. The government has created several enablers for making India Aatmanirbhar in manufacturing. As a result, India has moved from having 2 mobile manufacturing units in 2014 to over 300.

In the first quarter of current fiscal (Q1 FY26), India's traditional PC market, which includes desktops, notebooks, and workstations, saw a 7.1 per cent increase in shipments, reaching 3.39 million units, according to IDC. The market experienced a 7.1 per cent year-on-year growth in shipments, indicating a positive trend in the PC market. Meanwhile, Samsung India said recently that its newly-launched, 'Made in India' Galaxy Z Fold7, gained significant traction from not only tier 3 markets, but also tier 4 and beyond, amid a resilient economy and rising aspirations across the country. "The unprecedented demand has made us allocate stocks of the Galaxy Z Fold7 across the deeper pockets of Bharat. We are immensely encouraged by the new demand surfacing from tier 4 and beyond and will continue to serve these markets in the best possible manner," said Raju Pullan, Senior Vice President and Head at Samsung India.

The company said it is witnessing unprecedented demand for the Galaxy Z Fold7, with the smartphone being 'out-of-stock' in select markets across the country. The company is taking necessary steps at its manufacturing factory in Noida to meet the unprecedented demand.

Industry experts said Samsung's continued expansion of manufacturing operations reinforces India's emergence as a preferred global electronics production hub. Government incentives under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme and improvements in the manufacturing ecosystem have encouraged multinational companies to increase local production. The growth in domestic manufacturing has also strengthened India's electronics supply chain by boosting local value addition, generating employment opportunities and reducing dependence on imports. Increasing investments in component manufacturing are expected to further enhance the country's competitiveness in the global market. The government has been focusing on developing a robust semiconductor and electronics ecosystem through policy support, infrastructure development and skill enhancement initiatives. Officials believe these measures will help position India as a major destination for advanced technology manufacturing in the coming years.

Analysts noted that rising demand from smaller cities and rural markets reflects increasing digital adoption and higher consumer spending on premium technology products. Improved retail penetration, financing options and wider internet connectivity have contributed to the growing demand for smartphones, laptops and

Govt cuts debt, targets 50% debt-to-GDP by 2031: FM Sitharaman

New Delhi, Aug 3 (GNS): Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday told Parliament that the government has reduced its debt burden over the last five years and the fiscal deficit targets are being aligned to reduce it further in the coming years. The government has steadily reduced the debt over the years from 61.4 per cent of GDP in 2020-21, after the Covid-19 pandemic, to 56.1 per cent of GDP in the Budget Estimate for 2025-26, the Finance Minister said in a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha.

"Further, the government aims to keep the fiscal deficit in each year in such a manner that the Central government debt is on a declining path to attain a debt to GDP level of about 50 (plus/minus 1) per cent by March 31, 2031," she said.

The government's outstanding debt at the end of FY 2024-25 is provisionally estimated at Rs 185.94 lakh crore. While internal debt accounts for as much as Rs 157.11 lakh crore of this amount, external debt comprises Rs 8.74 lakh crore, while the remaining Rs 20.09 lakh crore is made up of other public account liabilities, Sitharaman said. In answer to another question in the Lok Sabha, the Finance Minister said: "Despite an environment of unprecedented geopolitical uncertainty, supply chain disruptions, and a weak global growth outlook, the Indian economy has exhibited resilience, underpinned by prudent macroeconomic management, credible fiscal consolidation, a resilient external sector performance, and sustained structural reforms. India remains the fastest-growing major economy, registering a real GDP growth of 6.5 per cent in 2024-25." The fiscal deficit of the Union government has come down from 9.2 per cent of GDP in 2020-21 to 4.8 per cent of GDP in 2024-25, and is budgeted to further decline to 4.4 per cent of GDP in 2025-26. The average retail inflation rate, measured by the Consumer Price Index, stood at 4.6 per cent in 2024-25, the lowest in the last six years, and has eased further to 2.4 per cent in April–July 2025, she said.

Despite weakened global trade, India's export performance has demonstrated resilience, with the country's overall exports reaching an all-time high of $824.96 billion in 2024-25. This positive trend has continued into the current fiscal year, with overall exports registering an increase of 5.46 per cent during the first quarter. Furthermore, India's foreign exchange reserves provide a cover for more than 11 months of goods imports. This consistent macroeconomic performance underscores the Indian economy's ability to navigate global and economic uncertainties effectively, Sitharaman observed.

She also highlighted that the government has undertaken concerted measures aimed at protecting vulnerable sections of society from the adverse effects of economic volatility while sustaining the momentum of broad-based and inclusive economic growth. Flagship schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN), the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana, the Stand Up India Scheme, and the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission are being implemented to ensure access to the basic essentials,

India's ranking in Global Innovation Index improved consistently in last decade: Govt

New Delhi, Aug 3 (GNS): India's ranking in the Global Innovation Index (GII) has improved consistently over the last 10 years, the government informed the Parliament on Monday.

In a written reply to the Rajya Sabha, Rao Inderjit Singh, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for the Ministry of Planning, shared that "India was ranked 81 in 2015, which has improved to 39 as of 2024". The GII rank attempts to measure a country's performance by using data for more than 70 indicators, each of which represents different aspects of the socio-economic development of a country.

"The improvement in India's rank in GII may be seen as an indirect measure of positive changes in the overall socio-economic environment of the country," Singh said. He added that some of changes include India's recent strides in availability and affordability of applications and services in important sectors such as "space; renewable energy; defence, especially the indigenous development and production of defence equipment of various types; biotechnology sector, especially the indigenous development and production of vaccines and oxygen concentrators to combat the Covid 19 pandemic; online learning tools for affordable education; S&T clusters in different areas support structure for promoting innovation and startups". He also shared details on the funds spent by the government on science and technology-related research over the last five years. "The amount spent over science and technology-related research in the country increased from over Rs 63,974 crore in 2016-17 to more than Rs 80,992 crore in 2020-21," the MoS said, citing the latest R&D Statistics, 2022-23 brought out by the Department of Science and Technology.

"Further, during 2016-17, 2019-20 and 2022-23, India's rank in the World level in R&D expenditure (in Billion PPP $) is at seventh position", he added.

The minister said the government has been implementing several initiatives to strengthen the country's innovation ecosystem by promoting research, encouraging entrepreneurship and supporting collaboration between academic institutions, industry and research organisations. These efforts are aimed at translating scientific research into commercially viable technologies and products.

He noted that flagship programmes such as Startup India, Atal Innovation Mission, technology incubation centres and increased support for innovation-driven enterprises have contributed to improving India's global innovation profile. Greater emphasis on digital infrastructure and indigenous technology development has also enhanced.

Microsoft may ask employees to work from the office 3 days a week

Mumbai, Aug 3 (GNS): US tech giant Microsoft is planning to tighten its office attendance policy, potentially implementing changes as early as January for some employees. The new policy will likely require employees to work in the office at least three days a week. The implementation dates for this policy differ across regions. Employees at the Redmond, Washington, headquarters will be required to work from the office more consistently starting in January, according to multiple media reports. Microsoft spokesperson Frank Shaw confirmed the company is considering updates to its flexible work policies, but no final decisions have been reached. The tech giant has planned to announce the new policy by September.

Since late 2020, the tech major has implemented a flexible work policy, allowing employees to work remotely for nearly 50 per cent of the time without permission, providing them with greater flexibility. Meta and Google have also implemented a three-day work-from-office policy. Certain Microsoft teams, including the Corporate, External, and Legal Affairs (CELA) group, are working in the office more than three days a week. Other major tech companies have also recently proposed stricter work-from-office policies. Earlier this year, Microsoft's competitor, Amazon, enforced a work-from-office policy requiring employees to work in person five days a week. AT&T introduced a similar policy last year.

Microsoft's head of cloud and AI, Scott Guthrie, however, had told employees during an internal meeting last September that the company would only reconsider its flexible work policy if there was a clear decline in productivity. The tech giant had recently been in the news for allegedly cutting off access to its data and services abruptly to the Russia-backed oil exploration and marketing company Nayara Energy, but later restored its services. In July, it also announced laying off 4 per cent of its workforce, or around 9,000 employees, in yet another round of job cuts this year.

The proposed policy reflects a broader trend across the global technology industry, where companies are seeking a balance between workplace flexibility and in-person collaboration. Many firms believe regular office attendance can improve teamwork, innovation, mentoring and organisational culture while retaining some level of hybrid work. Microsoft has maintained that employee productivity and business outcomes remain the primary factors guiding its workplace decisions. The company is expected to consult employees and business units before finalising the revised attendance policy.

Only 1.69 pc of Rs 2,000 banknotes worth Rs 6,017 crore yet to return to RBI: Minister

New Delhi, Aug 3 (GNS): Only 1.69 per cent of the Rs 2,000 banknotes were yet to be returned to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) from circulation (as on July 31), the Parliament was informed. As per the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the total value of Rs 2,000 banknotes in circulation, which was Rs 3.56 lakh crore at the close of business on May 19, 2023, has declined to Rs 6,017 crore as on July 31. Before undertaking the exercise of withdrawal of Rs 2,000 banknotes, it was ensured that sufficient buffer stock of cash was available with banks across the country to meet the exchange/withdrawal requirements.

The same was augmented through regular supply of cash to various banks located across the country, Minister of State for Finance, Pankaj Chaudhary, said in a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha. The Rs 2,000 denomination banknote was introduced in November 2016, primarily to meet the currency requirement of the economy in an expeditious manner after the withdrawal of legal tender status of all Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 banknotes in circulation at that time, he added. The objective of introducing Rs 2,000 banknotes was met once banknotes in other denominations became available in adequate quantities. About 89 per cent of Rs 2,000 denomination notes were issued prior to March 2017 and are close to the end of their useful life, which spans from 4-5 years. Further, the stock of banknotes in other denominations continues to be adequate to meet the currency requirement of the public, said the minister. "In view of the above, and in pursuance of the 'Clean Note Policy' of the Reserve Bank of India, it was decided to withdraw the Rs 2,000 denomination banknotes from circulation on May 19, 2023," he added.

India's smartwatch market in consolidation phase, demand for Smart Glasses rises

New Delhi, Aug 3 (GNS): After witnessing explosive growth in 2022 and 2023, the smartwatch market in India is now consolidating, primarily due to saturation in the entry-level segment, a report showed on Monday. Despite declining volumes, average selling prices (ASPs) increased by 5.1 per cent (on-year), rising from $20.6 to $21.7 in the April-June quarter (Q2 2025), according to the International Data Corporation (IDC).

Smart Glasses shipments surged to 50,000 units in Q2 2025 from 4,000 a year ago, fuelled by new launches from Meta and Lenskart. The average selling price (ASP) stood at $134.0, reflecting the segment's premium positioning. Smart Rings shipments rebounded after its first-ever decline in Q1 2025, recording a modest YoY growth of 2.8 per cent with 75,000 units shipped in 2Q25. Ultrahuman, Gabit and Aabo continue to dominate with collective share of 65 per cent, the report mentioned.

Smart wristbands shipments jumped by 118.5 per cent YoY to 83,000 units in April-June period. Samsung accounted for 80.6 per cent share in the wristbands category in Q2. Within earwear, Truly Wireless Stereo (TWS) segment maintained its dominant position with a 71.2 per cent share. The over-the-ear segment recorded strong growth, with shipments surging 97.4 per cent YoY to 1.5 million units.

In the overall wearables category, boAt maintained its leadership, increasing its market share from 26.7 per cent to 28.0 per cent YoY. The first half of 2025 saw fewer smartwatch launches than anticipated.

GST reforms booster: Sensex surges 676 points, Nifty gains 245 points

Mumbai, Aug 3 (GNS): The Indian stock market ended the session in green on Monday after heavy buying in auto, banking and consumer durable stocks, amid the positive sentiment around upcoming GST reforms. Sensex closed at 81,273.75, up 676.09 points or 0.84 per cent. The 30-share index opened the session with a huge gap-up at 81,315.79 against last session's closing of 80,597.66. Buoyed by overall buying post the GST reform announcement, the index touched an intraday high at 81,765.77.

Nifty settled at 24,876.95, up 245.65 points or 1.0 per cent. "The proposed rationalisation of GST is a sentiment booster for the domestic market. Additionally, the recent conclusion of the US and Russia summit, without any escalation in geopolitical tensions, has helped ease investor anxiety," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited.

The automobile sector outperformed, emerging as a key beneficiary of the anticipated tax reforms. In H2 FY26, we expect the consumption-led sectors to show some traction on account of demand revival, he added. Maruti Suzuki, Bajaj Finance, Ultratech Cement, Adani Ports, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra and Mahindra, Hindustan Unilever, Trent, Asian Paint, Tata Steel, Tata Motors, Axis Bank and Bharti Airtel were among the top gainers from the Sensex basket., while ITC, Eternal, Tech Mahindra, L&T, NTPC, and Infosys were the top losers. Nifty Auto led the sectoral rally, surging 1,008 points or 4.18 per cent as the majority of sectoral indices settled the session with a decent gain. Nifty Bank surged 393 points or 0.71 per cent, Nifty Fin Services rose 275 points or 1.05 per cent, and Nifty FMCG ended the session 647 points or 1.19 per cent high. Nifty IT settled in negative territory. Broader indices followed suit as well. Nifty Next 50 rallied 888 points or 1.34 per cent, Nifty 100 soared 266 points or 1.05 per cent, Nifty Midcap 100 jumped 608 points or 1.08 per cent, and Nifty Small Cap 100 closed 242 points or 1.38 per cent higher.

Meanwhile, rupee gained 0.24 paise to close at 87.31. The GST reform move comes as policymakers look to cushion the economy amid lingering pressure on exports from US tariff issues. Rupee range can be seen between 87.00- 87.75," said Jateen Trivedi of LKP Securities. Market participants said sustained foreign institutional investor (FII) inflows and renewed buying in domestic consumption-oriented sectors also supported the rally. Analysts believe that expectations of lower tax rates under the proposed GST rationalisation could improve consumer spending .

Average daily UPI transactions reach Rs 90,446 cr by value in August, SBI top remitter

New Delhi, Aug 3 (GNS):The UPI transactions have expanded significantly and the average daily value has increased from Rs 75,743 crore in January to Rs 90,446 crore in August, with SBI as the top remitter member with 5.2 billion transactions, a report showed. Maharashtra emerges as the consistent leader in digital payments with 9.8 per cent share in July alone, followed by Karnataka (5.5 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (5.3 per cent), according to SBI Research.

"The share of peer-to-merchant (P2M) transactions in total value transactions has increased from mere 13 per cent in Jun 2020 to 29 per cent in July 2025. During the same period, the share in volume has increased to 64 per cent from 39 per cent, indicating robust growth in digital payments and financial inclusion," said the report.

Digital payments, led by UPI, have been increasing rapidly, which is much higher than the cash in circulation (CIC) number.

The monthly average UPI transactions is Rs 24,554 billion, while CIC monthly average growth is Rs 193 billion during April-July 2025.

In the retail demand for money (UPI+ATM withdrawal using debit cards), the share of UPI in value has increased from merely 40 per cent in Nov 2019 to 62 per cent in January 2021 to a whopping 91 per cent in May 2025. This is clear indication that people are replacing cash with UPI.

There are almost 300 major merchant category codes and NPCI has started with only 29 major MCCs.

"While NPCI has done a commendable job we believe that data for at least 100 major MCCs should be given by NPCI," the report noted. The top 15-merchant categories accounts 70 per cent in terms of volume and 47 per cent in terms of value in July 2025. The groceries account for 24.3 per cent of the transactions and 8.8 per cent in value and debt collection agencies category accounts for 12.8 per cent.

share in terms of value but only 1.3 per cent share in volume. "The debt collection agencies category transaction value has increased to Rs 93,857 crore in July 2025 from Rs 80,789 in April 2025, while the ticket size has declined to Rs 5,817 from Rs 5,952," the report mentioned.

The report also highlighted that India's digital payments ecosystem continues to strengthen with rising merchant acceptance, improved banking infrastructure and growing smartphone penetration. The increasing preference for UPI across urban and rural markets reflects greater convenience, faster settlements and wider adoption of cashless transactions.

Manuguru PKOC-II block allotment a historic victory for Singareni: Bhatti Vikramarka

Hyderabad, Aug 3 (GNS) Telangana Deputy Chief Minister and Energy Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka on Monday described Singareni's successful acquisition of the Manuguru PKOC-II Dip Side coal block in the union Coal Ministry's online auction as a historic victory, saying it would strengthen the company's future and Telangana's energy security.

In a statement, he said the allotment was the result of the state government's sustained efforts over the past 30 months to secure new coal blocks for Singareni.

Bhatti noted that after operationalising the Naini coal block in Odisha and reviving the Tadicherla-II coal block, the acquisition of the Manuguru block marked another major achievement for the public sector mining company. The Deputy Chief Minister said the PKOC-II Dip Side block, with an estimated 120 million tonnes of G-8 grade coal reserves, is expected to produce 6 million tonnes annually for 20 years, provide long-term employment security to about 2,000 workers, and significantly strengthen Telangana's energy needs. Alleging that previous governments had failed to protect Singareni's interests, Bhatti said the present government was committed to securing additional coal reserves, strengthening the company and ensuring job security. He also expressed confidence that efforts would continue to bring back other coal blocks to Singareni and expand its operations into other states and critical minerals.

Uttam Sets 6-Month Deadline for Irrigation Clearances

Hyderabad, Aug 3 (GNS) Telangana Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy on Monday directed officials to adopt a time-bound strategy to secure environmental clearances for the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme, Sitarama Sagar, Dindi and Gouravelli projects, following the recent Supreme Court judgment on environmental-clearance procedures. At a high-level review meeting held at the Secretariat and attended by Ministers Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, Ponnam Prabhakar, and MP Balaram Naik, the Minister directed officials to complete all documentation and application processes within stipulated timelines and strive to secure project-specific environmental clearances within six months, wherever feasible.

He also ordered the strengthening of the department's Inter-State Wing to effectively pursue pending cases before the union Government, the National Green Tribunal and the Supreme Court.

Uttam Kumar directed engineers to keep the Gouravelli pump house ready for operation by completing inspections and repairs, while ensuring the Sitarama Sagar project was prepared for immediate resumption once approvals were obtained.

He also ordered dedicated teams to expedite clearances for the Palamuru-Rangareddy and Dindi projects. The meeting also reviewed the Polavaram backwater impact on Telangana, with the Minister directing officials to conduct scientific assessments of potential submergence and prepare detailed claims for compensation to be pursued with the Centre and the Polavaram Project Authority. He stressed that all legal and environmental documentation should be completed promptly to safeguard Telangana's interests, according to an official statement.

Bankipur Verdict Rejects BJP Arrogance: TPCC Chief

Hyderabad, Aug 3 (GNS) Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President Mahesh Kumar Goud on Monday said the outcome of the Bankipur Assembly by-election in Bihar was a significant political message against the BJP and reflected the people's rejection of what he termed the party's "arrogance of power." In a statement, Goud said the verdict was not confined to a single constituency but marked a turning point in national politics.

He claimed that the electorate had rebuked the BJP's governance over issues such as unemployment, rising prices, farmers' distress and divisive politics. Describing Bankipur as a BJP stronghold for nearly three decades and the seat vacated by BJP leader Nitin Nabin after his election to the Rajya Sabha, Goud said the loss was a major setback for the BJP leadership.

He alleged that the result demonstrated that public trust could only be earned through good governance and not by political campaigns alone.

Claiming that people across the country were looking for an alternative political path, Goud said the Congress was committed to addressing public issues, ensuring social justice, protecting constitutional values and promoting inclusive development.

He congratulated the people of Bankipur, saying that in a democracy, the ultimate victory always belongs to the people.

CS reviews preparations for Telangana's Independence Day celebrations

Hyderabad, Aug 3 (GNS) Telangana Chief Secretary Sanjay Jaju on Monday reviewed arrangements for the State-level Independence Day celebrations to be held at the historic Rani Mahal Lawns in Golconda Fort on August 15 and directed officials to ensure seamless coordination for the event.

Chairing a high-level review meeting at the Secretariat, the Chief Secretary said the Independence Day celebrations are among the state's most important official events and should be organised with meticulous planning and dignity.

He said Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy would begin the day's programme by paying floral tributes to martyrs at the Veerula Sainik Smarak at Parade Grounds, Secunderabad, before proceeding to Golconda Fort to unfurl the National Flag, inspect the ceremonial parade and address the gathering.

Jaju directed all departments concerned to make comprehensive arrangements for security, traffic management, venue preparedness, public convenience and emergency response to ensure the smooth conduct of the celebrations.

The Roads and Buildings Department was instructed to complete infrastructure works, including the stage, seating arrangements, barricading, approach roads and other civil works well in advance. The Police Department was asked to make elaborate security and traffic arrangements to facilitate smooth movement of dignitaries and participants, while the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) was directed to undertake sanitation, landscaping and beautification works at and around the venue.

The Health Department was instructed to deploy medical teams, ambulances and first-aid facilities, while the Fire Services Department was asked to position fire tenders and emergency response teams as a precautionary measure.The Energy Department was directed to ensure uninterrupted power supply with adequate backup arrangements throughout the programme.

Emphasising inter-departmental coordination, the Chief Secretary instructed all departments to complete the assigned works ahead of schedule to ensure the celebrations are conducted in a grand and befitting manner.

The meeting was attended by Special Chief Secretaries Vikas Raj, Navin Mittal and Vani Prasad, GAD (Political) Principal Secretary Ahmed Nadeem, Home Principal Secretary Shikha Goel, DGP (Law and Order) Mahesh Bhagwat, Hyderabad Police Commissioner C.V. Anand, Fire Services Director General Vikram Singh Mann, GHMC Commissioner R.V. Karnan, Special Commissioner, Information and Public Relations, Mukunda Reddy, and senior officials from various departments.

KIMS Hospitals holds organ donation awareness programme, urges public to pledge to save lives

Hyderabad, Aug 3 (GNS) Emphasising that organ donation can give a new lease of life to several people even after death, experts called for greater public awareness to dispel misconceptions surrounding organ donation during a special programme organised at KIMS Hospitals, Secunderabad, as part of the national "Angdaan Jeevan Sanjeevani Abhiyan."

The event, organised jointly by KIMS Group of Hospitals, the National Service Scheme (NSS), KIMS Educational Society and KIMS College of Nursing, was held on the theme "Organ Donation – Gift Life, Leave a Legacy on Monday. Doctors, nursing students and faculty members participated in large numbers.

Addressing the gathering, Dr B Bhaskar Rao, Chairman and Managing Director, KIMS Group of Hospitals, described organ donation as one of the noblest humanitarian acts and urged families to discuss the subject openly. Dr S Manimala Rao, Director of Medical Education (Academics), said donating organs after death could offer hope to many families. Dr Sandeep Gangaya Attawar, Programme Director and Chair, Thoracic Organ Transplantation and Assist Devices, explained that organs such as the heart, lungs, liver and kidneys can be retrieved after brain death, noting that one organ donor can save up to eight lives and benefit over 50 people through tissue donation.

Kidney transplant specialists Dr Saharia and Dr Uma Maheswara Rao stressed the need for greater awareness about organ transplantation, while Dr. Saurabh Lall, Chief Operating Officer of KIMS Hospitals, Secunderabad, encouraged nursing students to become ambassadors for organ donation.

Families of organ donors were felicitated during the programme in the presence of K. Manga Devi, President of the Organ Donation and Cadaver Transplant Service.

Students also took an organ donation pledge, and experts explained donor registration procedures and the medical process followed after brain death. The programme concluded with a renewed call to promote organ donation, with organisers reiterating that "Organ donation is the greatest donation; a single decision can save many lives."

TGSPDCL CMD Orders Quick Resolution of Solar Sector Issues

Hyderabad, Aug 3 (GNS) TGSPDCL Chairman and Managing Director Jitesh V Patil, on Monday, directed district-level officials to immediately resolve operational issues affecting the solar sector, stating that direct engagement with developers and farmers helps utilities understand ground realities, streamline approval mechanisms, improve grid integration and enhance service delivery.

He also instructed officials to begin implementing solutions on the same day and advised the Federation of Telangana Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FTCCI) to submit a consolidated representation on policy and regulatory issues requiring higher-level intervention.

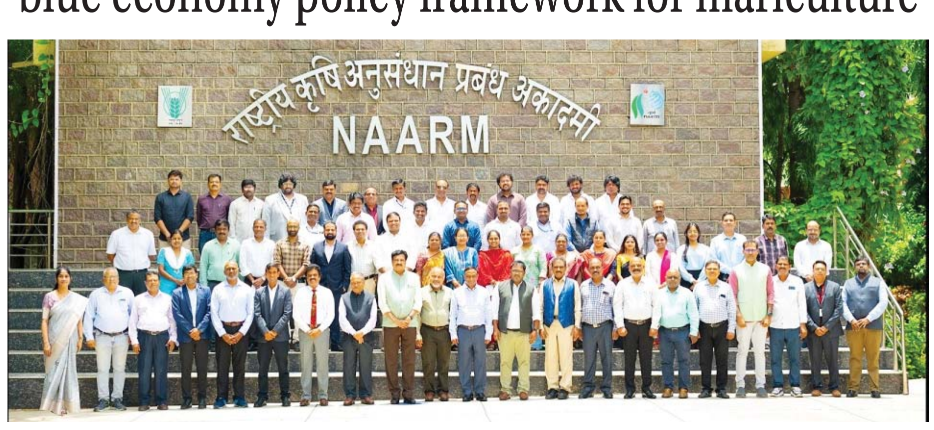
The directions were issued during a high-level virtual consultation facilitated by FTCCI, which brought together 95 stakeholders, including senior TGSPDCL officials, district-level Superintending Engineers, representatives of the Telangana Solar Open Access Developers Association, Telangana Solar Energy Association (TSEA), solar EPC companies, PM-KUSUM farmers and FTCCI members.

The meeting focused on addressing bottlenecks in rooftop solar projects, open-access projects, agricultural solarisation and grid connectivity.

Several immediate decisions were taken to improve project execution, reduce delays and strengthen coordination between the utility and the renewable energy sector.

Appreciating the proactive response of TGSPDCL, FTCCI thanked the CMD, senior officials and field engineers for their responsiveness and commitment to resolving issues faced by the solar industry.

ICAR-NAARM hosts national consultation on blue economy policy framework for mariculture



Hyderabad, Aug 3 (GNS) The National Flagship Consultation on the Blue Economy Policy Framework for Mariculture was inaugurated at ICAR–National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM), Hyderabad, on Monday, marking the launch of the ANRF Prime Minister's Early Career Research Grant (PM-ECRG) project to develop an AI-enabled framework for mariculture sector development. Speaking as the chief guest, Prof (Dr) A Biju Kumar, Vice-Chancellor of the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS), highlighted the importance of fisheries, aquaculture and mariculture in strengthening India's Blue Economy through economic growth, coastal livelihoods, exports and food security.

Dr Bijay Kumar Behera, Chief Executive of the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), stressed the need for an AI-enabled geospatial and techno-economic intelligence framework to improve mariculture productivity and support informed decision-making.

ICAR-NAARM Director Dr R M Sundaram said India, the world's second-largest fish producer with nearly 198 lakh tonnes of annual production and marine exports worth Rs 73,890.46 crore in 2025, needs sustainable and science-driven growth to match global leaders. Prof Gnana Prakash, Vice-Chancellor of PV Narasimha Rao Veterinary University, called for stronger collaboration among fisheries universities and research institutions. Dr Suresh Kumar Mojjada, Principal Investigator of the project, said the initiative aligns with the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision by promoting sustainable economic growth, employment, climate resilience and coastal prosperity. During the event, ICAR-NAARM and KUFOS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen knowledge sharing and skill development in fisheries education.

Hyderabad to host second BRICS Anti-Corruption Working Group meeting on August 4-5

Hyderabad, Aug 3 (GNS) India will host the Second BRICS Anti-Corruption Working Group (ACWG) Meeting and the Second BRICS Expert Network on Asset Recovery Meeting in Hyderabad on August 4 and 5 under its BRICS Presidency 2026. The event is being organised by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), Government of India, in line with the Presidency theme, "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability."

The meeting will be inaugurated by DoPT Secretary Rachna Shah and will bring together delegates from BRICS member countries, including senior policymakers, anti-corruption experts, practitioners and representatives of law enforcement agencies.

The Hyderabad meeting follows the first virtual ACWG meeting held in June this year and will focus on strengthening international cooperation in asset recovery, combating cross-border corruption, and enhancing transparency and accountability in governance. Key discussions will include strengthening informal cooperation to trace fugitive offenders and support extradition proceedings, enhancing information-sharing through the BRICS Expert Network on Asset Recovery, and sharing best practices to address corruption risks linked to FinTech, digital assets and emerging digital financial instruments.

A special side event, "Ethical Governance through Innovation and Tech-Driven Systems," will be held on August 5, where BRICS members will exchange experiences on technology-enabled governance, digital public procurement, citizen engagement, transparency and innovative measures to strengthen integrity in public administration.

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