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NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS IN INDIA: NAVIGATING THE CHANGING REGULATORY LANDSCAPE



CA Babu Abraham Kallivayalil

Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) occupy a distinct and indispensable position in India's socio-economic landscape, complementing Government efforts by addressing a wide range of social, educational, cultural, healthcare and developmental needs—especially for underprivileged and vulnerable communities. Collectively, these organisations serve key public-interest areas such as education and early childhood care, arts, culture and heritage, rural development, healthcare and nutrition, and livelihoods and skill development, among many others. NPOs have historically supplemented governmental efforts and facilitated community participation in development. Top of Form Bottom of Form

The term “NPO” does not, by itself, denote a single legal form or registration in India. An organisation pursuing charitable or not-for-profit objectives may be constituted as a public charitable trust, a society registered under the applicable Societies Registration law, or a Section 8 company under the Companies Act, 2013. As per the NGO Darpan database, India had 5,94,478 active NPOs as on July 30, 2026, comprising 2,96,452 Trusts, 2,44,261 Societies and 53,765 companies registered under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013 (earlier Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956). Kerala alone accounted for 16,781 active NPOs—9,525 Trusts, 6,458 Societies and 798 Section 8 companies—figures that highlight both the scale and the significance of the sector.

Funding and Taxation of NPOs

The sustainability of the non-profit sector depends largely on its ability to mobilise financial resources. In India, Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) are funded through voluntary donations, philanthropic contributions, grants, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, government assistance, membership subscriptions, income from permissible activities and, where permitted, foreign contributions.

From a taxation perspective, charitable and religious institutions are eligible for tax exemptions subject to registration and compliance with prescribed condi-



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tions. Under the Income-tax Act, 1961, exemptions were available under the Section 11/12AB and Section 10(23C) regimes. The Income-tax Act, 2025 has reorganised this framework by providing for registration of eligible NPOs under Section 332.

Cap on Commercial Receipts

Although NPOs may earn income from activities incidental to their charitable objects, organisations engaged in the “advancement of any other object of general public utility” (GPU) may lose the benefit of tax exemption if receipts from trade, commerce or business exceed 20% of their total receipts during the relevant tax year. This restriction does not apply to religious institutions.

The exemption regime is accompanied by a robust compliance framework. NPOs must maintain registration, apply at least 85% of their income during the year, comply with conditions relating to accumulation and investment of funds, maintain proper books of account, undergo statutory audit where applicable, and file the prescribed returns. Organisations seeking to enable donors to claim tax deductions must also obtain approval under Section 80G(5) of the Income-tax Act, 1961 (corresponding to Section 354 of the Income-tax Act, 2025).

Thus, although NPOs do not operate with a profit-distribution motive, they function within a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework that places considerable emphasis on financial accountability, tax compliance, transparency and good governance.

Foreign Contribution and the FCRA Framework

Unlike domestic funding, foreign contributions are governed by a separate and highly regulated statutory framework. Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) cannot receive foreign contributions without registration or prior permission under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA). The receipt, utilisation, banking, accounting and reporting of such contributions are subject to strict compliance with the Act and the Rules framed thereunder.

The FCRA framework has progressively become more stringent. The original FCRA, 1976, enacted to regulate foreign contributions in the national interest, was strengthened by the 1984 amendment, which made registration with the Ministry of Home Affairs mandatory. The FCRA, 2010 replaced the earlier law with a more comprehensive compliance regime, which was further tightened through the 2020 amendments by introducing mandatory Aadhaar/passport identification of office-bearers, routing all foreign contributions through a designated SBI branch in New Delhi, prohibiting sub-granting of foreign contributions, reducing the administrative expenditure limit from 50% to 20%, and extending the suspension period. The 2022 Rules also increased the reporting threshold for contributions received from relatives abroad from ₹1 lakh to ₹10 lakh.

The Government has also adopted a rigorous approach towards FCRA reg-

istration. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, 22,496 registrations have been cancelled and 15,220 have expired or were not renewed. As on July 30, 2026, only 14,440 organisations hold valid FCRA registrations, including 1,013 organisations in Kerala, reflecting the increasingly compliance-driven administration of the law.

The regulatory framework has undergone another significant reform in 2026. While the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, is presently under consideration in Parliament, the FCRA Rules, 2026, notified on June 22, 2026, are already in force. The Rules introduce activity-specific and State/UT-specific registration, expand the definition of “key functionary”, prescribe additional disclosures in Form FC-4, require organisations to specify their approved geographical areas and activities, and make renewal contingent upon utilisation of at least ₹10 lakh of foreign contribution during the preceding two financial years. Existing FCRA-registered organisations have also been given time until June 21, 2027 to file Form FC-6F specifying their approved purposes and operational areas.

While the FCRA seeks to safeguard national interest and ensure transparency and accountability in the utilisation of foreign contributions, its increasingly rigorous compliance framework has also generated concerns among genuine charitable organisations. It is often felt that strict procedural requirements may, in some cases, adversely affect organisa-

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EDITORIAL



NGOS: DO NOT BREAK THE BRIDGES

In a democratic country, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) form an indispensable network of public service. They work alongside government institutions to protect people's rights and address their needs. In times of emergency, they often step in to provide essential services that public institutions are unable to deliver. In this sense, NGOs serve as vital bridges between the government and the people. There are numerous examples of NGOs becoming sources of comfort, hope and support to communities in distress. Some of their initiatives are carried out in partnership with government agencies, while others are undertaken independently, particularly where public institutions are absent or unable to respond adequately.

NGOs therefore play a crucial role not only in social welfare but also in strengthening social cohesion within a democratic system. Although the Catholic Church is primarily a spiritual community offering pastoral leadership to millions of believers worldwide, it also sustains one of the largest networks of non-governmental humanitarian service. Organisations such as Caritas International are outstanding examples of this commitment.

Administered by dioceses, religious congregations and other Church institutions, the NGOs represent the charitable face of the Church. Many function as registered charitable trusts and societies in fields such as education, healthcare, social welfare and community development. They are often at the forefront of providing care, dignity and hope to persons with disabilities, older people and other vulnerable sections of society. Humanitarian service, however, is not confined to Christian organisations. NGOs affiliated with other religions and social movements also make invaluable contributions to society. These organisations function within the legal framework of the country and are registered as trusts or societies in accordance with the law. Recent amendments to the FCRA have caused considerable concern among NGOs, including Church-related organisations engaged in charitable work.

There is also a widespread apprehension that some of these measures may form part of a deliberate attempt to weaken independent service organisations. Individuals and organisations are undoubtedly obliged to comply with the laws of the country. Regulation is necessary, and there can be no dispute about that. Laws, however, must be just, proportionate and transparent. Regulations that unnecessarily obstruct humanitarian service or curtail legitimate freedom do not strengthen democracy. Wrongdoing must certainly be prevented and punished, but organisations that operate lawfully and serve the public good should not be subjected to unreasonable restrictions. When a government imposes excessive burdens on legitimate NGOs, it risks weakening the very bridges that connect it with ordinary citizens. We often see warning signs on bridges prohibiting overloaded vehicles from entering. Such restrictions are intended to prevent the bridge from collapsing under excessive weight.

In the same way, NGOs burdened with disproportionate regulations may eventually cease to function effectively. As a result, countless people may be deprived of essential services, legitimate rights and the protection they deserve. The inevitable result will be greater inequality and injustice. A government genuinely committed to the welfare of its people must therefore ensure that regulation does not become obstruction and that accountability does not become suppression. The public, irrespective of caste, religion or political affiliation, must remain vigilant against measures that unjustly weaken organisations dedicated to human service. NGOs are vital bridges in a democracy - and those bridges must not be broken.

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A DAY TO REMEMBER

August 1: Fifteen-Day Fast Begins

St. Alphonsus Liguori

August 4: Episcopal Ordination of Mar Lawrence

Mukkuzhy (1999)

St. John Mary Vianney

August 6: Transfiguration of Our Lord

Death Anniversary of Mar Paulinus Jeerakathil (1990)

August 8: St. Dominic

August 11: St. Clare

August 14: St. Shmoni and Her Seven Sons

St. Maximilian Kolbe

August 15: Solemnity of the Assumption of the

Blessed Virgin Mary, Independence Day of India

Episcopal Ordination of Mar Joseph Pallikaparampil (1973)

August 21: St. Simeon Barsaba and the Co-Martyrs

Pope St. Pius X

August 23: Death Anniversary of Mar Joseph

Irimpan (1997)

August 24: St. Bartholomew the Apostle

August 28: St. Augustine

August 29: St. Euphrasia

August 10



Mar Lawrence
Mukkuzhy

FESTAL GREETINGS

MAR SHEMAYON BARSABA



Rev. Dr. Alex Sebastian Kollamkalam

Following the death of Papa Bar Aggai, Mar Shemayon Barsaba became the Bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon and the Patriarch of the vast Christian community in the Persian Empire. The responsibility of representing the Christian faithful before the Sasanian rulers rested with the Bishop of Seleucia.

The rapid growth of Christianity within the Persian Empire aroused the jealousy of the pagan population, who joined forces with certain Jewish groups and persuaded the Persian Emperor Shapur II to persecute the Christians. Since the Roman Empire, which Shapur regarded as his sworn enemy, had become a Christian empire, he viewed the Christians within his own dominion with increasing suspicion. The emperor imposed a double tax upon the Christians and initiated a severe persecution against them. Although, during the Sasanian period, it was the Patriarch's responsibility to collect and remit the taxes levied on Christians, Mar Shemayon firmly refused to collect this unjust double tax.

The emperor interpreted this refusal as an act of defiance and rebellion. Consequently, Mar Shemayon was arrested and brought to trial. Refusing



either to renounce his Christian faith or to worship the sun, the central object of Zoroastrian veneration, Mar Shemayon courageously proclaimed the sovereignty of the one true God during his interrogation. When ordered to adore the sun, he boldly declared: *"I have but one soul, and it belongs to the immortal God, the Creator of heaven and earth."* Before his very eyes, many of the faithful who had been condemned to death received his blessing and embraced martyrdom with remarkable courage. Even Usthazanes, a royal eunuch and tutor to the emperor, was deeply moved by the holy life of the imprisoned Patriarch. He openly professed his faith in Christ and willingly accepted martyrdom.

While in prison, Mar Shemayon continued to strengthen his clergy and faithful with

unwavering courage. On 14 April 345 A.D., in the midst of a large gathering of priests and believers, he was beheaded and crowned with the glory of martyrdom. Together with him, countless Christians also laid down their lives for the sake of their faith in Christ.

Accounts of his martyrdom are preserved in the ancient works *The Martyrdom of Shemayon* and *The History of Shemayon*, composed towards the close of the fourth century or the beginning of the fifth century. The Assyrian Church of the East, the Syriac Orthodox Church, and several other Christian traditions venerate him as one of their most revered saints. In the East Syriac liturgical tradition, the Sixth Friday of *Kaitha* is observed as the Feast of Mar Shemayon Barsaba and his Companion Martyrs.



From the Heart of
the Father and Head

Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil



The contribution made by the Catholic Church and the voluntary organisations (NGOs) functioning under its leadership to the making of modern India

and to the nation's holistic development is written in golden letters in history. Inspired by the mission of translating Christ's love and compassion into concrete action, the Church has authored a remarkable chapter in the rebuilding of the nation through selfless service. Both before and after India attained independence, the Church brought the light of knowledge and hope to remote villages where even basic infrastructure was absent. This sincere commitment laid a strong foundation for the country's progress.

The transformation brought about by Catholic institutions in the field of education has been extraordinary. By establishing schools, colleges, and technical training institutes even in the most underdeveloped regions of the country, the Church has ensured access to quality education for all, irrespective of caste, creed, or social background. This has

contributed significantly to the advancement of knowledge and employment opportunities throughout society. Equally noteworthy is the Church's contribution to healthcare. From large multi-specialty hospitals to dispensaries in remote villages, Church institutions have become centres of healing and hope for the poor and the destitute. During times of crisis, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the unwavering dedication shown by the Church's charitable institutions and volunteers proved to be a tremendous support to the nation. Furthermore, hundreds of homes for the destitute and palliative care centres continue to serve abandoned children, elderly persons neglected by their families, persons with disabilities, and those afflicted by leprosy. Even during times of epidemics, the Church's willingness to risk its own safety in order to wipe away the tears of the marginalised and care for the suffering remains a shining testimony to the love and compassion of Christ.

Bringing the marginalised, especially Dalits and Indigenous communities living on the fringes of society, into the mainstream has always remained one of our foremost priorities. The various initiatives undertaken to safeguard their human dignity and improve their quality of life have transformed the lives of countless families. At the same time, Catholic organisations have successfully empowered women socially and eco-

nomically through self-help groups and microfinance initiatives. By enabling women to stand on their own feet, these efforts have strengthened families and, consequently, contributed to the peace and prosperity of society as a whole.

Today, however, the voluntary sector is facing an unprecedented crisis. The recent amendments to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) have placed severe obstacles before charitable activities and the smooth functioning of voluntary organisations. Stringent laws and restrictive regulations that effectively tie the hands and feet of voluntary organisations amount to denying essential assistance to those who need it most. The people who suffer the gravest consequences of these amendments are poor patients, underprivileged children who depend on educational assistance, and large sections of the marginalised population. Such harsh legal provisions can therefore only be regarded as an intrusion upon the rights and welfare of the poor.

No matter how great the challenges or adverse circumstances before us, the Catholic Church can never retreat, even by a single step, from doing good and showing compassion to fellow human beings. Rather than becoming discouraged by the growing restrictions imposed upon the voluntary sector, we shall continue with renewed determination to share Christ's compassionate love

with the world. For bringing consolation to the poor and embracing the marginalised is an integral part of the Church's spiritual mission. Undeterred by challenges, we remain firmly committed to proclaiming the Gospel through love and selfless service.

The poor and the suffering constitute the true soul of every nation. Instead of weakening the movements that wipe away their tears, those entrusted with governance must adopt policies that are more compassionate and more responsive to the welfare and survival of the poor. Laws and constitutional systems exist to safeguard the well-being and security of even the last and least among the citizens. Legislation that places chains upon the hands of compassion and fraternal charity ultimately wounds the poor and the marginalised themselves. While transparency and accountability are indeed essential, they should never diminish the zeal of those who serve nor deprive the hungry, the sick, and the vulnerable of the assistance they rightfully deserve. Rather than constraining voluntary movements that work shoulder to shoulder with governments in promoting national development and alleviating poverty, public policy should embrace them with greater understanding, appreciation, and compassion. Laws, therefore, must never become barriers to the flow of mercy; instead, they should serve as instruments that enable greater relief, hope, and dignity to reach the least and the most vulnerable among us. ■

THE REVOLUTIONARY FACE OF NONVIOLENCE: JESUS' "THIRD WAY"



EXPLORING BIBLE QUESTIONS

Rev. Dr. Tom Olikkarott

The passage in Matthew 5:39-44 has long occupied a central place in Christian moral teaching. Yet Jesus' exhortation, "If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also," has often been misunderstood as a call to passivity or to a surrender that compromises one's dignity. However, as the renowned theologian Walter Wink argues, Jesus is not advocating either violent retaliation or cowardly submission. Rather, He proposes what may be called "The Third Way"—a form of creative nonviolent resistance.

Only when these verses are interpreted against the backdrop of the Roman occupation and the socio-cultural oppression of the first century does the profound social and political significance of Jesus' teaching become fully evident.

Three Possible Responses: An Analysis

When confronted with injustice and violence, human beings generally respond in one of two ways:

- **Submission:** Silently enduring violence and humiliation out of fear or helplessness.
- **Violent retaliation:** Responding to violence with violence, seeking to overcome evil by means of force.
- **Jesus' Third Way:** Refusing to submit to violence without becoming violent oneself; preserving one's dignity while exposing the injustice of the

oppressor through creative, nonviolent resistance.

Historical and Cultural Interpretation

1. The Blow on the Right Cheek and Human Dignity

"If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

In first-century Jewish society, the left hand was regarded as ritually unclean; consequently, only the right hand was used in public interactions. To strike someone on the right cheek, one would ordinarily have to use the back of the right hand. Such a backhand slap was not intended merely to inflict physical pain but to communicate social inferiority and humiliation.

Among social equals, a blow was normally delivered with the open palm or a clenched fist. The backhand slap, however, was employed by masters against slaves, by Romans against Jews, and by the powerful against those considered socially inferior.

When Jesus instructs the victim to turn the other cheek, the message conveyed to the oppressor is unmistakable: "Treat me not as your slave but as your equal." Such an action places the aggressor in a moral dilemma and challenges the very structures of domination. Far from being an act of weakness, the victim boldly rejects fear and publicly affirms his own dignity and equality.

2. The Tunic and the Cloak: Unmasking Injustice (Matthew 5:40)

"If anyone wishes to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well."

In Jesus' time, wealthy creditors frequently took impoverished debtors to court and seized their inner garment (tu-

nic) as repayment of debts. Yet according to the Mosaic Law (Exodus 22:26-27), a person's outer cloak had to be returned before sunset because it served as protection against the cold during the night.

Jesus therefore says, "If he demands your tunic, surrender your cloak as well."

In doing so, the debtor would stand completely naked before the court. Within Jewish culture, shame did not primarily fall upon the person who was stripped naked but upon those who exposed another's nakedness or permitted such humiliation to occur (cf. Genesis 9:20-27).

This dramatic action publicly exposes the cruelty of both the wealthy creditor and a judicial system willing to deprive the poor even of their last garment. Jesus thus transforms the victim's apparent helplessness into a powerful act of social protest.

3. The Second Mile: Regaining Control (Matthew 5:41)

"If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles."

Under the Roman military code (*Lex Militaris*), a Roman soldier could legally compel a passer-by to carry his military pack for one mile, but no farther. To require more than one mile was itself a violation of Roman law.

When, after completing the required mile, the Jew willingly continues to carry the load for a second mile, the balance of power suddenly changes. Control passes from the soldier to the oppressed person. Fearing disciplinary action for violating military regulations, the soldier is compelled to plead for the return of his baggage.

In this way, the victim transforms an

instrument of oppression into an instrument of liberation.

The Theology of the Third Way

The path of nonviolence proposed by Jesus is not merely a political strategy but one firmly rooted in divine love. Jesus neither calls His disciples to destroy their enemies nor to surrender before them. Rather, He invites them to break the cycle of violence through love, courage, and the preservation of human dignity.

This approach enables one to resist the evil present within the oppressor while still recognising the humanity of the oppressor himself.

The message of Matthew 5:39-44 is therefore not one of passive submission but of revolutionary spiritual courage. Jesus' Third Way reveals the extraordinary power to overcome evil without becoming a participant in it and to confront injustice without surrendering one's dignity.

The philosophy of nonviolent resistance proposed by Jesus profoundly inspired Mahatma Gandhi's movement of *Satyagraha* and Martin Luther King Jr.'s struggle for civil rights. The same principle was also manifested in the recent CJP protest movement in India. By reclaiming the derogatory term "cockroaches," which had been used to insult them, and transforming it into a symbol of their movement, while steadfastly maintaining a nonviolent stance before the forces of authority, the students publicly exposed the injustice of the prevailing system. By resisting oppression without resorting to violence and by safeguarding their own human dignity, the CJP protest became a striking contemporary example of the creative nonviolent resistance envisioned by Jesus. ■

FCRA AMENDMENTS 2026: FACTS AND CONCERNS



CA Johnney Pallivathukkal
Chartered Accountant, Kochi

Significant changes have been introduced to India's Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) with the objective of ensuring greater transparency in the utilisation of foreign contributions and preventing their misuse. The Ministry of Home Affairs has brought into force major amendments to the FCRA Rules, which were enacted in 2010 after replacing the 1976 legislation, with effect from 22 June 2026.

The following are the key changes that non-profit organisations (NPOs) including trust holding FCRA registration should become familiar for immediate compliance.

1. Definition of 'Key Functionaries' and the Administrative Expenditure Ceiling

Under Rule 2(1)(ca) of the amended Rules, individuals who play a decisive role in the governance of an organisation have now been explicitly defined as 'Key Functionaries.'

Who are included? Directors, trustees, members of the governing body, company officers, and other principal persons responsible for the management of the organisation are all included within this definition.

Changes in the expenditure ceiling: Under the revised Rule 5, salaries, travel allowances, and other remuneration paid to such Key Functionaries will now be treated as part of the organisation's Administrative Expenditure. Accordingly, these expenses must be accommodated within the statutory administrative expenditure limit of 20 percent.

2. State-Specific Registration and the Schedule of 105 Approved Activities

Previously, organisations could utilise foreign contributions anywhere in the country by declaring broad organisational objectives. However, under the newly introduced Rule 9(1B), this will no longer be permissible.

Disclosure of the area of operation: NGOs must clearly specify the States or Union Territories in which they intend to carry out their activities. For this purpose, Form FC6F must be submitted on or before 21 June 2027.

Schedule of 105 Approved Activities: Organisations may henceforth undertake only those activities included in the officially approved list of 105 activities, categorised under five sectors—Social, Educational, Cultural, Economic, and Religious. Expansion into new States or additional fields of activity will re-



while the amendments seek to strengthen transparency and accountability, their principal concern lies in the extensive powers they confer upon the Government to restrict the functioning of organisations and assume control & take over their assets where deemed necessary. It is therefore imperative that institutions holding FCRA registration ensure strict compliance with all statutory requirements and maintain comprehensive and accurate documentation at every stage

quire a resolution of the governing body, payment of the prescribed fee, and prior approval from the competent authority.

3. Restrictions on Foreign Nationals and the Utilisation of Funds

The amended provisions stipulate that foreign contributions shall be utilised exclusively for charitable activities carried out within India.

Organisations whose governing bodies include foreign nationals (except Persons of Indian Origin holding PIO cards) will not be eligible for fresh FCRA registration or Prior Permission. Furthermore, FCRA funds may not be utilised for any project undertaken outside India.

4. Stringent Action Against Non-Utilisation of Funds

Under the newly inserted Rule 14A, if an organisation receiving foreign contributions fails to utilise at least ₹10 lakh for its approved objectives during two consecutive years, the Government is empowered either to cancel its FCRA registration or to refuse its renewal.

This provision is intended to prevent foreign contributions from remaining idle in organisational bank accounts.

5. New Forms to Ensure Greater Transparency (FC3BB, FC3A and FC4)

Form FC3BB: Organisations receiving foreign contributions in instalments under Prior Permission must submit Form FC3BB, along with a Chartered Accountant's certificate confirming that the previous instalment has been properly utilised before the next instalment is released.

Expanded reporting requirements: Through Forms FC3A and FC4,

organisations are now required to disclose their official website, social media accounts, details of the Ultimate Donor, project utilisation reports, and the Unique Document Identification Number (UDIN) certified by the Chartered Accountant.

6. FCRA Amendment Bill 2026: Designated Authority and Control of Assets

According to the proposed Amendment Bill introduced in Parliament, where the FCRA registration of an NGO is cancelled, expires, or is voluntarily surrendered, a Designated Authority will be constituted to take charge of and safeguard schools, hospitals, vehicles, bank balances, and other assets created through foreign contributions.

The Bill also contains stringent provisions prohibiting the transfer or sale of such assets during the period in which an organisation's registration remains suspended. In addition, it proposes separate penalties for minor procedural lapses and serious statutory violations (Section 35), while requiring prior approval of the Central Government before the initiation of investigations (Section 43).

Conclusion: Practical Challenges and Emerging Risks

Although the FCRA amendments of 2026 are intended to promote greater transparency in the utilisation of foreign contributions, they also present several significant practical challenges and potential risks.

Excessive powers relating to asset seizure: The proposal to establish a Designated Authority with the power to assume control over hospitals, schools,

bank accounts, and other assets of cancelled, surrendered, suspended & renewal rejection of FCRA registered organisations raises concerns that such provisions could potentially be employed as a political instrument against NGOs that hold views contrary to those of the Government.

Restrictions on operational freedom: The requirement that organisations function only within approved States and within the prescribed list of 105 authorised activities may create serious obstacles during emergencies, including disaster relief operations and unforeseen public health crises.

Impact on personnel and increased administrative burden: Including the remuneration of Key Functionaries within the 20 percent administrative expenditure ceiling may make it difficult for organisations to retain experienced professionals essential for their operations. Furthermore, the expanded compliance and reporting requirements are likely to make the functioning of ordinary charitable organisations considerably more complex.

In summary, while the amendments seek to strengthen transparency and accountability, their principal concern lies in the extensive powers they confer upon the Government to restrict the functioning of organisations and assume control & take over their assets where deemed necessary. It is therefore imperative that institutions holding FCRA registration ensure strict compliance with all statutory requirements and maintain comprehensive and accurate documentation at every stage. ■

FCRA AMENDMENT BILL AND AMENDED RULES 2026: NEW LEGAL CHALLENGES



Adv. Saju Jacob
(Advocate, Supreme Court of India)

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 proposes a comprehensive legal framework governing the supervision, protection, management, and control of assets created through foreign contributions. At the heart of this proposed amendment is the introduction of a new statutory authority known as the Designated Authority. It is important to note a significant legal distinction here. Section 15 of the existing Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 already contains provisions regarding the vesting of assets. However, the 2026 Amendment Bill introduces an entirely new Chapter IIIA, establishing a far more elaborate and stringent administrative mechanism governing both the temporary and permanent vesting of such assets.

Under the proposed amendments, where an organisation's FCRA registration is cancelled, voluntarily surrendered, allowed to lapse without renewal, refused renewal, or otherwise deemed to have ceased under the Act, its assets may initially vest temporarily in the Designated Authority. If the registration is not restored or a fresh registration is not granted within the prescribed period, those assets may permanently vest in the Government. At the same time, the Bill specifically recognises that places of worship must retain their religious character and purpose, and therefore contains a special provision protecting such institutions.

Following widespread concern that the proposed legislation could adversely affect schools, hospitals, convents, and other institutions established over several decades with foreign contributions, the leadership of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), together with several Metropolitan Archbishops, met the Union Home Minister. Media reports following the meeting indicated that assurances had been given that the proposed legislation would not have retrospective operation. While this assurance provides some temporary relief to Church institutions, the issue requires a much deeper constitutional analysis.

From the standpoint of constitutional jurisprudence, the absence of the word "retrospective" in the text of a statute does not, by itself, guarantee that previously acquired assets will remain unaffected. In legal interpretation, the nature of legislation is determined not merely by its wording but by its legal effect and practical consequences.

Practical Retrospective Effect

For example, suppose a charitable institution legally received foreign contributions twenty or thirty years ago under the law then in force and used those funds to construct a building. If, under the new legislation, that institution subsequently loses its FCRA registration and the building becomes vested in the Designated Authority, the law would, in

practical terms, interfere with rights lawfully acquired in the past.

Constitutional Scrutiny

Even where legislation is not expressly retrospective, constitutional courts generally examine several important questions if it substantially affects vested rights:

- Does the legislation impose unreasonable restrictions upon legally acquired rights?
- Does it satisfy the constitutional doctrine of proportionality?
- Have the affected institutions been afforded adequate safeguards of natural justice?
- Does the legislation operate in an arbitrary or discriminatory manner?

Consequently, until Parliament enacts the final version of the legislation, it would be legally imprudent to arrive at definitive conclusions solely on the basis of governmental assurances without examining the final statutory text.

One of the most significant practical challenges posed by the proposed Amendment Bill and one that is likely to generate extensive future litigation concerns assets created through mixed funding. Most educational and health-care institutions in India have not been established exclusively with foreign contributions. Consider, for instance, a charitable hospital whose capital investment consists of 80% domestic donations and only 20% foreign contributions.

Legal Complexity of Mixed Funding

Reading the provisions of the proposed Amendment Bill suggests that even where only a portion of an asset has been financed through foreign contributions, the entire asset could, at least prima facie, become subject to temporary vesting. Consequently, institutions may have to establish, through proper documentary evidence, the proportion of domestic funds invested in each asset. This could potentially result in assets worth several crores of rupees, substantially financed through domestic contributions, becoming temporarily immobilised and giving rise to prolonged legal disputes.

Ambiguity Surrounding 'Proselytisation' and 'Religious Conversion'

The Amendment Rules, which came into force on 22 June 2026, introduce restrictive language concerning certain permissible religious activities by incorporating expressions such as "excluding proselytisation" and "excluding religious conversion." However, a serious legal ambiguity arises because neither the FCRA Act nor the new Rules define the crucial expressions "proselytisation," "religious conversion," or "attempt to convert."

This uncertainty gives rise to several important legal concerns.

Divergent Administrative Interpretations

In the absence of precise statutory definitions, different administrative authorities may interpret identical activities differently. Consequently, similar charitable activities may receive inconsistent treatment in different parts of the country.

Possibility of Divergent Administrative Assessments

Activities such as free educational assistance, medical camps, distribution of sewing machines, relief work, or other humanitarian programmes undertaken by Christian institutions or NGOs may, under certain administrative interpretations, be characterised as inducements for religious conversion. Such interpretations could adversely affect an institution's FCRA registration.

Constitutional Position

Article 25(1) of the Constitution of India guarantees to every person—not merely citizens—the freedom to profess, practise, and propagate religion. In the landmark judgment *Rev. Stainislaus v. State of Madhya Pradesh* (1977) 1 SCC 677, the Supreme Court held that while the constitutional right to propagate religion includes the right to disseminate one's religious beliefs, it does not include a fundamental right to convert another person.

At the same time, the distinction between legitimate religious propagation and conversion through force, fraud, or inducement depends upon the facts of each individual case. The ambiguity contained in the new Rules risks blurring this important constitutional distinction.

Major Changes Introduced by the FCRA (Amendment) Rules, 2026

The new Rules, effective from 22 June 2026, substantially restructure the regulatory framework governing NGOs. The principal changes include the following:

1. Purpose-Based and Geographic Licensing

At the time of application, organisations must specifically declare both their approved objectives and the States or Union Territories where those activities will be carried out.

2. Mandatory Filing of Form FC-6F

Every organisation presently holding FCRA registration must file Form FC-6F within one year of the Rules coming into force (on or before 21 June 2027), declaring the States and purposes for which it intends to continue operations.

3. Incremental Fee Structure

The basic registration fee applies only to one State and one approved purpose. Every additional State or purpose attracts an additional fee of ₹300.

4. Catalogue of 105 Permissible Activities

The Rules annex an extensive list of 105 permissible activities, classified into five principal categories:

Religious, Cultural

Economic, Educational, Social

5. Expanded Definition of "Chief Functionary"

The expression now extends beyond members of the governing body to include directors, trustees, office-bearers, and any person exercising substantial control or management over the organisation.

6. Restriction Relating to Foreign Nationals

As a general rule, organisations whose chief functionaries are foreign nationals of non-Indian origin will not ordinarily be granted FCRA registration or prior permission.

7. "Reasonable Activity" Requirement

For renewal of registration, organisations must demonstrate that they have spent at least ₹10 lakh during the previous two financial years on their approved objectives. Smaller organisations with limited funding may therefore face difficulties during renewal.

8. Seventy-Five Percent Utilisation Requirement

Recipients operating under prior permission must utilise at least 75% of the previously released funds before subsequent instalments are sanctioned. Applications must be made through Form FC-3BB.

9. Ultimate Donor Disclosure

Where funds are channelled through foreign funding agencies or Donor Advised Funds (DAFs), organisations must disclose in their annual return the identity of the ultimate donor from whom the funds actually originated.

10. Digital Footprint and Social Media Disclosure

Organisations must furnish details of their official websites and all social media platforms—including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and similar accounts—in the annual Form FC-4 return.

11. Monitoring of Publications

Details of books, articles, publications, media content, or other materials produced either by the organisation or by its chief functionaries, even in their personal capacity, must be disclosed to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

12. Mandatory UDIN in Audit Certificates

Audit certificates submitted by Chartered Accountants must now contain the Unique Document Identification Number (UDIN).

Practical Compliance Measures

Organisations presently registered under the FCRA should ensure that Form FC-6F is submitted on or before 21 June 2027, clearly identifying their approved purposes and geographical areas of operation.

Institutions should maintain meticulous accounting records distinguishing domestic funds from foreign contributions with respect to every immovable asset so that the source of funding can be clearly demonstrated if required.

Since the expressions "proselytisation" and "religious conversion" remain undefined in law, organisations receiving foreign contributions should exercise exceptional caution while drafting internal records, grant agreements, project reports, publicity materials, and social media content. Terminology capable of being misunderstood or misinterpreted should be carefully avoided, and all activities should be consistently documented as charitable, educational, humanitarian, or social welfare initiatives.

Organisations should also review the composition of their governing bodies. Where foreign nationals occupy positions that may now fall within the expanded definition of "Chief Functionary," the institution should carefully examine whether constitutional or administrative restructuring is required to ensure compliance with the amended Rules.

POTHUYOGAM AND PRATHINIDHIYOGAM IN THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH



CANON LAW

Rev. Dr. Joseph Mattathil

Throughout the history of the St. Thomas Christians of Kerala, the spirit of communion and the system of administration through the *Palliyogam* have always been distinctive features of parish life. According to the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO), suitable bodies are to exist, in accordance with the Particular Law of the Church *sui iuris*, for the administration of the pastoral and temporal affairs of the parish (CCEO c. 295). The responsibilities formerly carried out by the traditional *Palliyogam* are today exercised, according to the Particular Law of the Syro-Malabar Church, through the *Pothuyogam* and the *Prathinidhiyogam*. Accordingly, every parish is required to have these two forms of *Palliyogam*: the *Pothuyogam* and the *Prathinidhiyogam*. However, in smaller parishes, with the permission of the local hierarchy, the *Palliyogam* may function only as the *Pothuyogam*. Likewise, for grave reasons or in larger parishes, with the permission of the Eparchial Bishop, the *Palliyogam* may function only as the *Prathinidhiyogam*. In the latter case, the Particular Law of the Syro-Malabar Church, while explaining the structure, responsibilities, and duties of the *Palliyogam*, stipulates that the *Pothuyogam* must nevertheless be convened at least once every year for a general review.

Pothuyogam

Within the administrative structure of the Syro-Malabar Church, the *Pothu-*

◆ The procedural norms governing meetings and the other disciplinary regulations are the same for both the *Pothuyogam* and the *Prathinidhiyogam*. With the permission of the Eparchial Bishop, smaller parishes may function solely through the *Pothuyogam*, while larger parishes may function solely through the *Prathinidhiyogam*. Both bodies are expected to attend to every aspect of parish life and to work for its continual progress.

yogam plays a significant role in promoting the growth and communion of the parish. Its primary responsibility is to prepare and implement timely pastoral plans that foster the spiritual, social, cultural, biblical, catechetical, and liturgical renewal of the parish.

Many important decisions concerning the day-to-day administration of the parish are taken in the *Pothuyogam*. These include approving the annual financial accounts for submission to the Eparchial Bishop, determining the number of trustees, parish employees, and other personnel in accordance with the eparchial statutes, and discussing and approving the parish budget. In addition, the *Pothuyogam* identifies ways of raising funds, determines the contributions to be made by parish members, fixes the fees for the use of the cemetery and church articles, and takes important decisions concerning the construction of the church, chapels, and other institutions, as well as the purchase and sale of parish properties. The determination of the number of parish feast celebrations and the discussion of other important matters affecting the parish as a whole also fall within the competence of the *Pothuyogam*.

The Parish Priest serves as the President of the *Pothuyogam*. The Assistant Parish Priest, eparchial priests residing in the parish, priests belonging to that parish, and the superiors of religious houses are members of the *Pothuyogam*. In addition, the heads of families, trustees, and the members of the *Prath-*

inidhiyogam are also members of this assembly. At the same time, those who publicly oppose the faith and teachings of the Church, public sinners, those who are subject to ecclesiastical disciplinary measures, those who deliberately violate ecclesiastical laws, and those addicted to narcotic drugs are not eligible to participate in the *Pothuyogam*.

The *Pothuyogam* must be convened at least once every year. Prior to the meeting, notice of the *Pothuyogam* must be announced on two consecutive Sundays or holy days, and the principal items on the agenda must also be made public. Unless the eparchial statutes prescribe a specific quorum, there is no fixed quorum for the *Pothuyogam*. The Eparchial Bishop has the authority at any time either to direct that the *Pothuyogam* be convened or not convened. Furthermore, the Eparchial Bishop possesses the special right to add to, amend, or annul any decision passed by the *Pothuyogam*.

Prathinidhiyogam

Within the administrative structure of the Syro-Malabar Church, the *Prathinidhiyogam* is entrusted with the efficient conduct of the day-to-day affairs and activities of the parish. This body consists of representatives elected by all the parish members, nominated members, and ex officio members. The law further prescribes that at least thirty per cent of the representatives in the *Prathinidhiyogam* shall be women.

The duty of the *Prathinidhiyogam* is to assist, advice, and cooperate with the

Parish Priest in promoting the integral development of the parish. It is responsible for approving the monthly, quarterly, and half-yearly financial statements, and for preparing the annual accounts and budget to be presented to the *Pothuyogam*. Furthermore, it provides guidelines for the administration of parish properties and is responsible for the election of the trustees. As in the case of the *Pothuyogam*, the *Prathinidhiyogam* must be announced during the time of the Qurbana on two Sundays or holy days before it is convened. The *Prathinidhiyogam* must meet at least four times each year.

The procedural norms governing meetings and the other disciplinary regulations are the same for both the *Pothuyogam* and the *Prathinidhiyogam*. With the permission of the Eparchial Bishop, smaller parishes may function solely through the *Pothuyogam*, while larger parishes may function solely through the *Prathinidhiyogam*. Both bodies are expected to attend to every aspect of parish life and to work for its continual progress.

Thus, the *Pothuyogam* and the *Prathinidhiyogam* of the Syro-Malabar Church are indispensable ecclesiastical bodies for the orderly administration of the parish and for its spiritual as well as temporal growth. Through mutual cooperation and active participation, these assemblies strengthen parish communion and contribute significantly to the holistic development of parish life. ■

ST. THOMAS STRENGTHENS THE FAITHFUL BEFORE HIS DEATH



LITURGICAL
RESEARCH
CENTRE STUDY
SERIES

Rev. Dr. James Puliurumpil

The *Acts of Judas Thomas* gives a fair narration of the death of Jesus in the land of Mazdai and his prayer before the imprisonment in order to strengthen his followers in faith. Before his death he was first brought before the king to be questioned and imprisoned. Regarding the same *The Acts of Judas Thomas* gives the following description: 'And Judas went (back) to be imprisoned and likewise Tertia and Mygdonia and Narkia, these too went (back) to be imprisoned. And Judas said to them: "My daughters and sisters in our Lord and my companions and handmaidens of Jesus the Messiah, listen to me on this last day that I shall deliver my word to you, for I shall never speak with you again in this world. For I shall be lifted up to our Lord Jesus the Messiah; to him who sold

◆ Abide in the faith of Jesus the Messiah and look for the hope of the Son of God. And be not weary, my daughters, in persecution and be not in doubt because you are seeing me treated ignominiously and imprisoned too and dying because I am fulfilling the will of my Lord. For if I were to pray that I should not die, you know that I am able (to do so). But this which is seen (by us) is not death but a release from the world. For this reason I receive it gladly and for this reason I am delivered that I may go and receive him who is comely, him whom I love, who is beloved.

me; to him who humbled his lofty soul to my littleness and has brought me to his greatness which does not pass away and has deemed me worthy of being a servant of him in verity and in truth. And see, I rejoice that the time is fulfilled and the day has come that I may go and receive my reward from my Lord. For my Pay-master is just and he knows how I ought to be recompensed. For he is not wicked nor envious but his gifts abound. And he does not count and give for he is confident that his wealth will not fail. Listen, my daughters.

I am not Jesus but I am the servant of Jesus. I am not the Messiah but I am one who ministers before him. I am not the Son of God but I pray and beg that I may be deemed worthy of God. But do

you, my daughters, abide in the faith of Jesus the Messiah and look for the hope of the Son of God. And be not weary, my daughters, in persecution and be not in doubt because you are seeing me treated ignominiously and imprisoned too and dying because I am fulfilling the will of my Lord. For if I were to pray that I should not die, you know that I am able (to do so). But this which is seen (by us) is not death but a release from the world. For this reason I receive it gladly and for this reason I am delivered that I may go and receive him who is comely, him whom I love, who is beloved. For much have I toiled in his service and I have completed (my task) because of his grace which has supported me and has not forsaken me. Let not, therefore,

the enemy enter into you by treachery and let him not agitate your minds with doubt. Let not that perfidious disturber find an opportunity (of assailing you) because he, whom you have received and in whom you have believed is stronger than he. Look for his coming for he will come and receive you that is (to say), you shall go and see him.'

And when Judas had finished speaking to them, they entered into the dark house. And Judas said: "Our Life-giver and bearer of many things for our sake, let these doors be as they were and let them be sealed with their seals." And he left them and went himself too to be imprisoned. And they were grieved and were weeping because they knew that king Mazdai would kill him. ■

THE RADIANT FACE OF MISSIONARY ZEAL

The Missionary Congregation of the Daughters of St. Thomas the Apostle (DST)



When the Second Vatican Council ushered in a renewed missionary vision and apostolic fervour for the universal Church, the Syro-Malabar Church likewise experienced a fresh wave of renewal. Many young hearts, inspired by the gentle call of God, embraced the

path of consecrated life, leading to the birth of numerous new missionary initiatives. Among these was the Missionary Congregation of the Daughters of St. Thomas the Apostle (DST), founded by women who desired to follow in the footsteps of St. Thomas the Apostle

and dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to the missionary mandate of the Church. The profession of faith made by St. Thomas—"Let us also go, that we may die with Him" (Jn 11:16)—has become the very spirit and guiding vision of the DST Congregation. Young women who generously responded to God's call were lovingly guided by Fr. Jacob Thazhathil, who instilled in them the beauty of missionary dedication. Through his vision and with the blessings of Bishop Mar Sebastian Vayalil, the Missionary Congregation of the Daughters of St. Thomas the Apostle (DST) was officially established at Aruvithura on 3 July 1969. With its establishment, a new chapter was opened in the missionary outreach of the Syro-Malabar Church. Bishop Mar Sebastian Vayalil envisioned a congregation that would support the missionary apostolate of the Syro-Malabar eparchies established outside Kerala and across India. The first batch of twenty-six members laid the foundation of the congregation through lives marked by prayer and sacrifice. They imbibed their missionary spirit from the rich spiritual heritage of the SABS and the Sisters of Notre Dame.

What began as a small spiritual seed of hope in the history of the Church gradually grew into a flourishing tree of faith. Today, the DST Congregation is one of the Major Archiepiscopal Religious Congregations of the Syro-Malabar Church. Through prayer, self-sacrifice, and selfless service, the DST Sisters carry the light of God's love into countless hearts. Their apostolate extends across education, healthcare, missionary ministry, the press apostolate, family visitation, training centres, hostels, homes for the aged, orphanages, and numerous other charitable ministries, bringing the compassion of Christ to both villages and cities. The congregation has long crossed the geographical boundaries of Kerala and now bears witness to God's love in various parts of India as well as in Italy, Germany, and the United States of America. Today, 410 DST Sisters, serving in 78 convents, continue their ministry in different parts of the world. Their journey is a profound spiritual pilgrimage of hearts wholly dedicated to Christ—living in complete love and total self-surrender, ever ready to walk the path of sacrifice for His sake. ■

Continuation of page 1

tions with an established record of public service, thereby posing challenges to the effective functioning of the voluntary sector.

The Proposed 2026 Amendments - A Matter of Concern

The proposed amendments presently before Parliament raise concerns that extend beyond routine regulatory compliance, particularly for genuine Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) receiving foreign contributions for bona fide religious and/or charitable purposes. While greater transparency and accountability are essential, certain proposals may have disproportionate operational consequences for otherwise compliant organisations.

Procedural lapses, delays in renewal, suspension of registration, or adverse classification could restrict the receipt and utilisation of foreign contributions and, in certain cases, even affect control over assets created from legitimate foreign donations. The tighter compliance framework may also increase administrative costs, disrupt programme continuity, create donor uncertainty, and divert valuable organisational resources from public service to regulatory compliance and risk management.

The principal concerns are summarised below:

1. Risk of Loss of Control over Legitimately Acquired Assets

The Bill proposes a mechanism under which a Designated Authority may take over, manage and, where necessary, dispose of unutilised foreign contributions and assets created from foreign contributions in specified circumstances. This may result in organisations losing control over assets such as land, buildings, vehicles, equipment and other

infrastructure created over several years, even where the organisation has acted bona fide and the adverse action arises from procedural or technical non-compliance rather than any misuse of funds.

2. Disproportionate Consequences of Renewal Delays

Delays in renewal, whether arising from administrative reasons or procedural deficiencies, may have serious operational consequences. A genuine NPO could find itself unable to receive or utilise foreign contributions, not because of any wrongdoing, but owing to technical or timing-related non-compliance.

3. Uncertainty Regarding "Defunct" or "Inoperative" Status

The proposed framework does not clearly define the circumstances in which an organisation may be regarded as "defunct" or "inoperative". Temporary inactivity due to project cycles, restructuring, leadership transition or pending litigation could potentially expose an organisation to restrictive consequences.

4. Operational Disruption During Suspension

Restrictions on dealing with assets during the period of suspension may affect routine activities such as maintenance, repairs, insurance renewal and safeguarding of assets. This could interrupt ongoing projects and adversely affect beneficiaries.

5. Risk of Funds Remaining Unutilised

Where utilisation of foreign contributions received under prior permission is linked to prescribed timelines, delays caused by factors beyond the organisation's control, such as regulatory approvals, natural calamities, supply-chain disruptions or litigation, may result in funds remaining unusable and

expose the organisation to unintended non-compliance.

6. Chilling Effect on Donors and Governance

The possibility of tighter regulatory action, including vesting or disposal of assets, may discourage foreign donors from supporting Indian charities and deter competent professionals from serving as trustees or office-bearers because of increased fiduciary and reputational risks.

7. No Hearing or Appeal on denial of Registration or Renewal

A significant concern is the absence of a clear statutory requirement to provide an opportunity of being heard before refusal of registration or renewal, and the lack of a specific appellate mechanism against such decisions. Consequently, an organisation may not only lose the ability to receive future foreign contributions but may also face restrictions affecting the continued control and use of assets created from past foreign funding.

8. Limited Remedies and Costly Litigation

Although an appeal to the District Judge is available in certain cases, litigation is often expensive and time-consuming. During prolonged legal proceedings, the organisation's programmes, finances and beneficiaries may suffer.

9. Crediting Funds to the Consolidated Fund of India

The proposal to credit unutilised foreign contributions or sale proceeds to the Consolidated Fund of India could defeat the intention of donors who contributed funds for specific charitable purposes. Such a provision may also adversely affect donor confidence and the credibility

of the organisation.

10. Wide Regulatory Discretion

Several provisions of the proposed framework depend upon matters to be "prescribed" or "notified". This may result in a situation where significant aspects of the regulatory framework are effectively determined through subordinate legislation and administrative directions, thereby conferring wide discretionary powers on the executive without corresponding legislative scrutiny. Excessive reliance on delegated legislation and administrative discretion may result in inconsistent interpretation and uneven application across similarly placed organisations.

11. Complexity in Determining Asset Ownership

Many assets of NPOs are funded partly through domestic resources and partly through foreign contributions, or are used across multiple projects. Determining whether an asset has been created wholly or partly out of foreign contributions may therefore become contentious, leading to disputes, uncertainty and possible restrictions on its use.

Conclusion

The cumulative effect of these proposals is likely to be felt most acutely by small and medium-sized NPOs, many of which operate with limited administrative capacity and without specialised legal or compliance support. There is a genuine concern that organisations driven primarily by public service may increasingly be compelled to devote scarce resources to regulatory compliance and litigation rather than to the charitable activities for which they were established. ■

THE FEAST OF DUKRANA AND S CELEBRATED WITH

THE FEAST OF DUKRANA AND SYRO-MALABAR SABHAD

Kakkanad: The Syro-Malabar Sabhadhinam celebrations and the observance of the Feast of Dukrana were held at Mount St. Thomas, the headquarters of the Syro-Malabar Church. The celebrations began with the hoisting of the Church flag by Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil. The Major Archbishop was the principal celebrant of the solemn *Raza Qurbana*, while Bishop Mar Bosco Puthur delivered the homily.

The public meeting was inaugurated by Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil. During the function, the Major Archbishop honoured Kerala Ministers Sun-



THIS IS THE TIME TO PROCLAIM THE STRENGTH OF THE CHURCH": MAJOR ARCHBISHOP



His Beatitude Mar Raphael Thattil, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, called upon the faithful to confidently witness to the strength and mission of the Church while inaugurating the feast of Dukhrana and Syro-Malabar Sabhadhinam celebrations at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad. In his inaugural

address, the Major Archbishop said that this is a time for the Church to boldly proclaim its strength. He emphasized that the greatness of the Church is not measured by the size of its membership but by the invaluable service it renders to society. The Syro-Malabar Church, he noted, has made outstanding contribu-

tions both within Kerala and beyond, particularly in the fields of education and healthcare. Among the Eastern Catholic Churches, the Syro-Malabar Church continues to make exemplary contributions through its vibrant pastoral activity and missionary zeal. Mar Ra-

phael Thattil urged the faithful to ensure that the Church's growth is matched by an equally strong witness to the Gospel. He stressed the importance of remaining faithful to the right path while deepening the spirit of communion within the Church. Even as dioceses continue to strengthen their local pastoral initiatives, he said, they must also foster a deeper sense of unity and shared responsibility as one Church.

STUDYING IN CHURCH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS HAS BEEN A MATTER OF PRIDE: SHRI SUNNY JOSEPH



Delivering the reply address at the Syro-Malabar Sabhadhinam celebrations held at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad, on July 3, Honourable Minister of Electricity Shri Sunny Joseph said that it had been a matter of great pride for him to have received his education in Church-run institutions from his early school years through higher education. He acknowledged the invaluable contribution of the Church in the fields of education and social development, noting that generations of students have been shaped by the values and quality of education imparted by these institutions.

GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO ADDRESSING THE CHURCH'S CONCERNS: SHRI MONS JOSEPH



Speaking at the Syro-Malabar Sabhadhinam celebrations held at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad, Honourable Minister of Water Resources Shri Mons Joseph* reaffirmed the Government's commitment to addressing the concerns raised by the Church, including the challenges faced by the high-range regions of the State. In his reply address, the Minister said that the Government remains committed to finding practical solutions to the issues affecting the Church and the people. He noted that while the Government is making determined efforts to overcome the various challenges confronting the State, these efforts must be complemented by God's grace and the collective support of society. Mons Joseph assured that the Government would continue to make every possible human effort to ensure the progress and welfare of the State.

CHRISTIAN CHURCH HAS PLAYED A PIVOTAL ROLE IN MAKING EDUCATION ACCESSIBLE: SHRI ROJI M. JOHN

Speaking at the Syro-Malabar Church Sabhadhinam celebrations held at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad, Honourable Minister for Higher Education Roji M. John* praised the Christian Church for its outstanding contribution to the growth and democratization of education in India. He noted that the educational institutions established and administered by the Church enjoy widespread acceptance and have earned a reputation for excellence throughout India. Pointing to the influence of Christian education in the northern states, Roji M. John observed that even schools not managed by the Church are often given Christian names, reflecting the high regard and credibility that Christian institutions have earned through their commitment to quality education and value-based formation.



SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH HAS GREATER ROLE TO PLAY IN ADVANCING EDUCATION: SHRI APU JOHN JOSEPH

Speaking at the Syro-Malabar Sabhadhinam celebrations held at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad, Shri Apu John Joseph the Honourable Chief Whip said that the Syro-Malabar Church has the potential to make even greater contributions to the advancement of education in Kerala. He noted that the Church's long-standing commitment to education has played a significant role in the State's progress and should be carried forward with renewed vision. Emphasizing the importance of holistic education, Shri Apu John Joseph said that the school education system must be further strengthened to nurture individuals with a strong sense of civic responsibility, moral values, and social commitment.



MAR THOMAS ELAVANAL CHOSEN FOR PAURASTHYA RATHNAM AWARD



Kakkanad: Bishop Mar Thomas Elavanal, Bishop Emeritus of the Eparchy of Kalyan and former Chairman of the Syro-Malabar Liturgical Commission, has been selected for the *Paurasthya Rathnam* 2026 Award instituted by the commission for liturgy. The award, presented once every two years, recognises outstanding contributions made by members of the Church in the fields of Eastern liturgical the-

ology, liturgical art, and liturgical music. The award was sponsored by Rev. Dr. Thomas Mannoorampampil, a priest of the Archeparchy of Tellicherry and former Professor of Liturgy at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor. The award selection committee consisted of Bishop Mar Pauly Kannookadan, Chairman of the Liturgical Commission; Archbishop Mar Thomas Tharayil and Bishop Mar Joseph

Kodakallil, Episcopal Members of the Commission; Rev. Dr. Abraham Kavilpurayidathil, Curia Chancellor of the Syro-Malabar Church; and Rev. Fr. Jiffy Mekkattukulam, Secretary of the Liturgical Commission. The committee particularly acknowledged Bishop Mar Thomas Elavanal's invaluable contribution to the restoration and preservation of the authentic liturgical heritage of the Syro-Malabar Church and to

fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Sacred Liturgy among the faithful. The award carries a cash prize of ₹50,000 and a citation. It will be presented by Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil during the closing session of the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church, to be held at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad, in August 2026.

SYRO-MALABAR SABHADHINAM GREAT SOLEMNITY

SABHADHINAM OBSERVED AT MOUNT ST. THOMAS, KAKKANAD

ny Joseph (Minister for Electricity), Mons Joseph (Minister for Water Resources), Roji M. John (Minister for Higher Education), and Chief Whip Apu John Joseph, all members of the Syro-Malabar Church, in recognition of their public service.

The Major Archbishop also felicitated Chevalier Davis Edukulathur, an expatriate businessman and an active member of the Catholic Congress.

The flag-off of the Catholic Congress Global Meet Flag Relay was inaugurated by the Major Archbishop, and the flag was received by Global President Prof. Rajeev Kochuparambil.

The Major Archbishop released the second volume of the *History of Christianity in India* series. The first copy was received by Minister Sunny Joseph. During the function, Fr. Jiffy Mekkattukulam, Secretary of the Syro-Malabar Liturgical Commission, announced that the *Paurasthya Rathnam Award* would be conferred on Bishop Mar Thomas Elavanal.

Bishop Mar Tony Neelankavil, Chairman of the Liturgy Research Centre (LRC), Rev. Dr. Pius Malekandathil, Vicar General of the Eparchy of Kothamangalam, Rev. Dr. Abraham Kavilpurayidathil, Curia Chancellor, and Rev. Fr. Joseph Tholanickal, Finance Officer, also addressed the gathering.

A video presentation prepared by the Media Commission highlighting the activities of the Syro-Malabar Church during the past year was screened. This was followed by *Thriyekam*, a cultural programme led by Rev. Fr. Shaji Thumbayil. Priests, religious, and lay representatives from various eparchies of the Syro-Malabar Church participated in the celebrations.



CHEVALIER DAVIS EDUKULATHUR HONOURED



Chevalier Davis Edukulathur, a member of the Archeparchy of Thrissur, President of the Middle East Catholic Congress, and a prominent expatriate entrepreneur, was honoured during the Syro-Malabar

Sabhadhinam celebrations following his recent investiture as a *Chevalier* by Pope Leo XIV.

A member of Peringottukara Parish in the Archeparchy of Thrissur, Chev. Davis Edukulathur was felicitated as

‘HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA’ VOLUME II RELEASED



Kakkanad: The second volume of the *History of Christianity in India* series, titled *Spread of Christianity in India up to AD 1500: Dynamics of Difference*, published by the Liturgical Research Centre (LRC) as part of the Syro-Malabar *Sabhadhinam* celebrations, was released

by His Beatitude Mar Raphael Thattil, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. Kerala Minister for Electricity, Mr. Sunny Joseph, received the first copy during the release ceremony. The volume presents an authoritative and scholarly study of the spread of Christianity

in India up to AD 1500. It examines how the Christian faith took root and developed across the Indian subcontinent long before the arrival of the European colonial powers. Drawing extensively on historical records and academic research, the book explores how the Christian community in India became deeply integrated into the country's cultural and social fabric while preserving its distinctive regional identities and traditions. The volume has been designed as a valuable resource for Church historians, researchers, and students of ecclesiastical history.

Published by Primus Publications, the volume is edited by Rev. Dr. Pius Malekandathil, Dr. K. S. Mathew, Rev. Dr. James Puliurumpil, and Rev. Dr. Francis Thonippara. Introducing the publication, Bishop Mar Tony Neelankavil and Rev. Dr. Pius Malekandathil observed that the work makes a significant contribution to the study of Indian Christian heritage by presenting it on the basis of historical documentation and scholarly research. They also noted that the series plays a vital role in transmitting the rich historical heritage and research tradition of the Syro-Malabar Church to future generations.

PANIC ATTACKS: A CAUSE FOR CONCERN



Rev. Dr. Sijon Kuzhikkattumyalil
Consultant Psychologist

Studies indicate that between 1.5 and 3.5 percent of people in our society may experience problems related to panic disorder at least once during their lifetime. The condition is twice as common among women as among men. In most cases, symptoms begin to appear around the age of twenty-five. Panic disorder often develops following distressing life events such as divorce, loss of employment, or the death of a loved one. However, scientific evidence increasingly suggests that individuals who experienced psychological trauma during childhood are at a greater risk of developing panic disorder. People with panic disorder are also more likely to suffer from other mental health conditions. Some resort to excessive use of alcohol or sleeping pills in an attempt to self-medicate, eventually becoming dependent on them.

Causes

Research suggests that panic disorder



der may result from an imbalance in the chemical messengers used by the nerve cells of the limbic system—the part of the brain responsible for regulating emotions. This imbalance may lead to excessive levels of adrenaline in the brain and bloodstream. The brainstem, the limbic system, and the prefrontal cortex all play important roles in regulating anxiety. Panic disorder also has a hereditary component, with studies estimating the genetic risk at approximately 4.8 percent.

Symptoms

A person may be diagnosed with panic disorder if at least four of the fol-

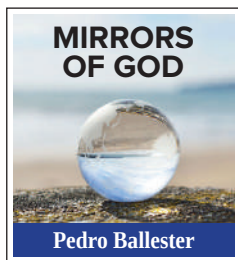
lowing symptoms occur together: sudden palpitations without any apparent cause, excessive sweating, trembling, difficulty in breathing, chest discomfort, abdominal distress, nausea, dizziness, a feeling of unreality or detachment from one's surroundings, fear of losing control, fear of imminent death, and numbness or sensations of heat spreading through the limbs or other parts of the body.

A proper assessment includes a detailed evaluation of the anxious thoughts experienced by the individual, the physical symptoms accompanying the panic attack, the person's behavioural respons-

es during an episode, and an assessment for any coexisting mental illnesses. Once a thorough physical and psychological evaluation confirms the diagnosis of panic disorder, treatment under a mental health professional is strongly recommended. As with other physical and mental illnesses, several effective medications are available for the management of panic disorder, and consultation with a psychiatrist is essential.

Psychological Treatment Approaches

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) helps patients understand the underlying causes of their condition through structured behavioural training and teaches them effective strategies to manage their symptoms. Breathing exercises, relaxation techniques, and other practical methods for controlling panic attacks form an integral part of this therapy. CBT has shown significant improvement in most patients. With sustained treatment over an extended period, about 30 to 40 percent of patients experience almost complete recovery. Although complete remission may not occur in nearly half of the cases, appropriate treatment enables them to lead normal daily lives without significant impairment.



Vinayak Nirmal

A group of friends had come to visit one of their companions who was undergoing treatment in hospital. Despite the pain of his illness, he welcomed each of them with warmth and affection. After enquiring personally about each of them, he asked them all one final question: "Are you happy?"

"Yes," they replied. One of them then turned the question back to their sick friend. "And what about you? Are you happy?" To the others, it seemed an unnecessary question. How could someone confined to a hospital bed with a terminal illness possibly be happy? Surely happiness belonged to healthy young people enjoying life to the fullest. Yet, to everyone's surprise, the young man replied: "I have never been happier in my life. These have been the happiest three years of my life." The young man was Pedro Ballester.

A few days after this conversation, Pedro passed away—on 13 January 2018, to be precise—after a courageous three-year battle with cancer and its painful treatments. At his bedside were his parents, brothers, friends, and members of *Opus Dei*. They surrounded him, praying the *Salve Regina*. In the midst of those prayers, Pedro peacefully closed his eyes

A GEN Z SAINT



forever—quietly, like a flower gently falling from its stem.

Pedro Ballester was born on 22 May 1996 in Manchester, England. His parents were the Spanish couple Dr. Pedro Ballester Nebot and Esperanza Arenas Arguelles. They had moved to England for professional reasons, and Pedro was born there. He was the eldest of three sons. In 2004, the family moved to Harrogate in Yorkshire.

Pedro was an intelligent and hard-working young man. Though shaped by both Spanish and English cultures, he embraced only the best of each. He was friendly, sincere, and cheerful by nature. Friendship meant a great deal to him. He was also a member of *Opus Dei*, founded by St. Josemaría Escrivá.

Pedro was deeply inspired by the saint's teaching that "the holiness God asks of you is achieved through the little things of everyday life." "When he once told me that he wanted to share something important, I assumed he had fallen in love," his brother Carlo later recalled. "Only later did I realise that he had fallen in love with Christ."

In September 2014, Pedro began studying Chemical Engineering at the prestigious *Imperial College London*. It was around the same time that he was diagnosed with cancer. Although he tried to continue both his studies and treatment, his education was often interrupted by his illness.

In 2015, Pedro experienced one of the most memorable moments of his life when he had the opportunity to meet Pope Francis.

Following that encounter, his illness worsened. United with Christ on the Cross, Pedro sought to offer all his sufferings to God.

In January 2018, Pedro Ballester departed from this world. He was only twenty-one years old.

Hundreds of people who attended his funeral at Southern Cemetery in Man-

chester left with a deep conviction that they had participated in the funeral of a saint.

Their conviction proved well founded.

In recognition of the profound witness of faith and holiness that inspired countless people, the diocesan process for Pedro Ballester's cause of canonisation was initiated shortly afterwards. Those who knew him personally have submitted letters, diaries, personal testimonies, and cherished memories to assist the investigation. More than sixty people—including family members and close friends—have also been formally interviewed as part of the preliminary inquiry.

When the lengthy canonisation process eventually reaches its conclusion, Pedro Ballester will be remembered as one of the first saints of Generation Z. Reflecting on Pedro's witness, Fr. Joseph Evans, who attended his funeral, remarked that Pedro had become an extraordinary example of joy in the midst of suffering for young people.

As the hospital chaplain who accompanied him during his illness, Fr. Evans offered this honest reflection: "There were moments when suffering overwhelmed him. Because his illness lasted so long, he sometimes wept. At times he became frustrated or reacted against those who dismissed his emotions as excessive. Yet Pedro's struggle was real, and his courage was truly extraordinary." There can be little doubt that Pedro Ballester embodied in his own life the words of St. Josemaría Escrivá: "One does not have to wait until old age to become a saint."

CBI DELEGATION MEETS UNION HOME MINISTER AMIT SHAH ON FCRA AMENDMENTS



New Delhi: A high-level delegation of the *Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI)* met Union Home Minister Amit Shah on 10 July 2026 to discuss the proposed *Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026* and the new FCRA Rules notified on 22 June 2026. The delegation submitted a memorandum expressing seri-

ous concerns regarding the proposed legislative changes and the newly notified rules.

The delegation urged the Government either to withdraw the FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026 and the subsequent guidelines issued on 22 June 2026, or to undertake a comprehensive revision of both. They strongly opposed the provisions empow-

ering government-appointed authorities to take custody of or liquidate the assets of NGOs whose FCRA registrations are suspended or cancelled. The representatives also pointed out that the absence of precise legal definitions in certain provisions could lead to the misuse of the law against genuine charitable organisations. They further re-

quested that the term '*proselytisation*' be removed from the list of prohibited activities. In addition, the CBCI recommended that any authority entrusted with the management of vested assets should function under strict and independent judicial oversight.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah assured the delegation

that the proposed amendments would not have retrospective effect. He stated that legally acquired existing assets and ongoing development projects would not be adversely affected by the proposed legislation. The Home Minister further clarified that the law was not intended to target Christian organisations, noting that they receive only a small proportion of the total foreign contributions coming into the country. He also assured the delegation that the concerns raised would be examined during the forthcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament.

The delegation was led by CBCI President Cardinal Antony Poola and included CBCI Secretary General Archbishop Anil Couto and Deputy Secretary Rev. Dr. Mathew Koickal.

ENTREPRENEURS' MEET HELD IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF TELlichERRY



Iritty: An Entrepreneurs' Meet organised by the Archdiocese of Tellicherry was held at the Haritha Industrial Park, Kunnoth. The gathering was inaugurated by Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplany. He observed that holistic development becomes possible only when those who move ahead also help those behind them to grow. Successful

entrepreneurs, he said, should be willing to mentor emerging entrepreneurs so that more enterprises and employment opportunities can be created in society.

It was decided during the meeting to establish a cold storage facility at the Haritha Industrial Park. Several entrepreneurs who participated in

the gathering expressed their willingness to invest in the project. Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplany also announced that the Archdiocese of Tellicherry would implement various initiatives to encourage new entrepreneurs. More than eighty businesspersons engaged in different ventures within Kerala, other parts of India, and abroad

participated in the programme. Entrepreneurs shared their success stories as well as the challenges they faced during the initial stages of their ventures and highlighted new investment opportunities. They also encouraged the establishment of enterprises in agriculture and fruit-based industries. The proposed cold storage facility is intended to preserve agricultural produce, including tapioca and fruits grown by farmers, enabling them to market their products when prices are more favourable.

The meeting was addressed by Protosyncellus Msgr. Antony Muthukunnel, Vicar General Msgr. Sebastian Palakkuzhy, Chancellor Rev. Dr. Joseph

Muttathukunnel, Rev. Fr. Philip Kaviyil, Global Director of the Catholic Congress, Procurator Rev. Dr. Joseph Kakkaramattathil, Pastoral Council Secretary George Thayyil, and Rev. Fr. Jais Kurishummoottil, Marketing Manager of Bio Mountain. Sessions and discussions were led by Sibi Paikada, Sunny Manimalatharappel, Jacob Scaria Ambalathottil, Rev. Fr. Benny Nirappel, and Jaxer George Tholani. The Haritha Industrial Park has been established on ten acres of land allotted by the Archdiocese of Tellicherry. The authorities also informed that nearly six acres remain available, providing opportunities for new entrepreneurs to establish their ventures.

NO ONE IS LEFT ALONE IN OLD AGE: BISHOP MAR JOHN NELLIKUNNEL



Rajakkad: Bishop Mar John Nellikunnel of the Eparchy of Idukki said that society must be able to convey the message of hope that no one is alone in old age and that everyone should work together to foster a culture of caring for the elderly. He was inaugurating the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly celebrations organised by the Family Apostolate at Christ the King Forane Church.

He observed that we are living in a time when elderly parents are increasingly neglected and left isolated amid the

pressures of modern life. The younger generation, he said, should gratefully remember that it was the hard work and sacrificial lives of the older generation that laid the foundation for both families and society. Children should be taught from an early age to love and care for their ageing parents. Respect for the elderly, he added, should not remain limited to annual observances but must become a way of life.

During the celebration, more than 250 senior citizens were honoured and presented

with gifts. The programme was led by Vicar General Msgr. Jose Karivelickal, Rev. Fr. Mathew Karotkoherackal, and Rev. Fr. Mathew Azhakanackunnel. World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly was also observed at St. Mary's Church, Udayagiri, under the leadership of the Mission League and the Thirubalasakhyam. The programme was coordinated by the Eparchial Director, Rev. Fr. Philip Aikkara. Similar celebrations were organised with extensive programmes in all the parishes of the Eparchy.

KALYAN ARCHDIOCESEAL DAY CELEBRATED



Kalyan: The first Archdiocese Day following the elevation of the Eparchy of Kalyan to an Archdiocese was celebrated on 27 June 2026 at St. Thomas Cathedral, Kalyan West.

Around six hundred faithful, priests, religious, trustees, and lay representatives from different parts of the Archdiocese participated in the celebrations. Mar Thomas Elavanal, former head and second Bishop of the Archdiocese, was the chief guest.

The celebrations commenced with the Holy Qurba-

na and special prayers offered for the continued growth and future mission of the Archdiocese. During the public meeting, Archbishop Mar Sebastian Vaniyapurackal reviewed the various pastoral and missionary initiatives of the Archdiocese and expressed gratitude to the faithful for their generous co-operation. In his address, Mar Thomas Elavanal highlighted the importance of Divine Providence in the growth of the Archdiocese. The programme also included cultural performances and a felicitation

BISHOP MAR GREGORY KAROTEMPREL LAID TO REST

A SHEPARD WHO RENDERED EXEMPLARY SERVICE TO THE GROWTH OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH



Rajkot: The faithful bid a final farewell to Bishop Mar Gregory Karotemprel CMI, the former Bishop of the Eparchy of Rajkot, Gujarat. The funeral liturgy, held at the Sacred Heart Cathedral, Rajkot, was presided over by Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil of the Syro-Malabar Church.

In his homily, the Major Archbishop paid tribute to the late Bishop, describing him as a shepherd who rendered exemplary service to the growth of both the Eparchy of Rajkot and the Syro-Malabar Church. He remarked that Bishop Mar Gregory's dedicated ministry and enduring contributions would always be remembered with gratitude. Bishop Mar Jose Chittooparambil of Rajkot was the principal celebrant of the Holy Qurbana offered in the Gujarati language.

Among those present were Archbishops Mar Kuriakose Bharanikulangara, Mar Sebastian Vaniyapurackal, and Dr. Thomas Macwan; Bishops Mar Joseph Arumachadath, Mar Mathew Nellikkunnel, Mar Joseph Kollamparambil,

Mar Joseph Kollamparambil CMI, Mar Tony Neelankavil, Mar Ephrem Nariculam, Dr. Athanasius Rethna Swamy, Mar James Athickalam, Dr. Jose Sebastian Thekkumcherikunnel, and Mar John Vadakel; CMI Prior General Rev. Fr. Dr. Paul Achandy; Superiors General and Provincial Superiors of various religious congregations; priests; religious; and a large number of faithful.

Bishop Mar Gregory Karotemprel was born on 6 May 1933 at Chemmalamattam, Pala. He joined the CMI Congregation and made his first religious profession on 8 December 1955. He was ordained a priest on 17 May 1963. While serving as Provincial Superior of the CMI Congregation, he was appointed Bishop of Rajkot by Pope St. John Paul II on 22 January 1983. He received episcopal ordination on 24 April 1983.

After shepherding the Eparchy of Rajkot for twenty-seven years, he retired from active pastoral governance in June 2010. During his episcopate,

he made outstanding contributions to the spiritual and institutional development of the Eparchy. He founded numerous English and Gujarati medium schools, as well as institutions of higher education such as Christ College, Christ Institute of Management, and Christ Polytechnic Institute. He also founded two religious congregations: *Dev Priya* and the *Society of St. Alphonsa*.

Bishop Mar Gregory spent his retirement at the Rajkot Provincial House and passed away on 19 July 2026 at the age of ninety-three. Affectionately known as *Prem Mandir*, he was laid to rest in a specially prepared crypt beneath the Sacred Heart Cathedral, which he himself had built.

Beyond the boundaries of the Eparchy of Rajkot, Bishop Mar Gregory Karotemprel rendered exceptional service to the global growth and pastoral mission of the Syro-Malabar Church. As the Apostolic Visitor for the Syro-Malabar faithful in North America and Canada, and as Chairman of the Commission for Evangeli-

zation and Migrant Communities, he provided visionary leadership that significantly strengthened the pastoral care of Syro-Malabar communities across the world. His foresight and dedicated efforts served as an enduring inspiration and laid a strong foundation for the establishment and growth of Syro-Malabar eparchies and ecclesiastical structures in North America, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Europe.

As Chairman of the Commission for Evangelization and Migrant Communities, he played a pivotal role in formulating pastoral policies aimed at safeguarding and promoting the liturgical heritage, ecclesial identity, canonical rights, and faith tradition of Syro-Malabar migrant faithful throughout the world. His vision led to the establishment of the Mission Fund, created to strengthen emerging mission centres and to provide both financial and spiritual support for evangelization in new territories. This initiative remains a lasting testament to his foresight and unwavering commitment to the mission of the Church.

As the founding Chairman of the Syro-Malabar Church's Internet Mission, Bishop Mar Gregory Karotemprel proved himself to be a visionary leader who was far ahead of his time. Recognizing the immense potential of digital media and web technologies, he worked tirelessly to employ them as effective instruments for evangelization and for fostering greater unity among the worldwide Syro-Malabar community. His pioneering contributions in this field will remain an enduring part of the Church's history.

Deeply committed to social justice and the dignity of every human person, he founded the Dalit Vikas Society, making a significant contribution to the social and economic empowerment and educational advancement of marginalized and Dalit communities. The Mission Fund, the Internet Mission, and the Dalit Vikas Society stand today as enduring monuments to his extraordinary ability to discern the emerging pastoral needs of his time and to respond to them with remarkable vision, creativity, and commitment.

CATHOLIC CONGRESS ESTABLISHES EPARCHIAL COMMITTEE IN AUSTRALIA



Melbourne: The Catholic Congress, the official community organisation of the Syro-Malabar Church, has constituted its Eparchial Committee in the St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Melbourne.

Prakash Joseph (Perth) was elected President, Ranjith Joseph (New South Wales) Secretary, and Sabu Thomas (Melbourne) Treasurer. Lal Jose (Darwin) and Shyla Painadath (Melbourne) were elected Vice Presidents, while Sheril Varghese (Melbourne) and Saju Palatty (New Zealand) were

chosen as Joint Secretaries. The Executive Committee members elected were Neots Vakkachan (Sunshine Coast), Joy Mathew (Melbourne), Johnikutty (New South Wales), Royis Joseph Poikayil (Perth), Tom Xavier (Melbourne), and Aji Edayar John (Brisbane).

The new leadership team was elected during the two-day National Leadership Meet held at *Santhome Grove*, the Pastoral Centre of the St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Melbourne.

The National Leadership

Meet commenced with the celebration of the Holy Qurbana led by Bishop Mar John Panamthottathil. Bishop Mar Remigiose Inchananiyil of the Eparchy of Thamarassery delivered the keynote address online, while Catholic Congress Global President Rajeev Kochuparambil offered felicitations. Vicar General Msgr. Francis Kolanchery and Eparchial Director Dr. John Puthuva also addressed the gathering. The National Leadership Meet concluded with the celebration of the Holy Qurbana.

PILGRIMAGE TO BHARANANGANAM ORGANIZED BY THE EPARCHY OF THAMARASSERY



Bharananganam: On July 21, in connection with the feast of St. Alphonsa, the Eparchy of Thamarassery organized its annual pilgrimage to Bharananganam under the leadership of Bishop Mar Remigiose Inchananiyil. Around forty priests, more than one hundred women religious, and nearly one thousand faithful from across the eparchy participated in the pilgrimage.

The annual pilgrimage has been a long-standing tradition of the Eparchy of Thamarassery in honour of St. Alphonsa, the patroness of the eparchy. Bishop Mar Remigiose Inchananiyil

was the principal celebrant of the Holy Qurbana at the Bharananganam Pilgrimage Centre. Mons. Abraham Vayalil, Proto-Syncellus, Rev. Fr. Milton Mulangassery, Rev. Fr. Sunny Kalappurakkal, Rev. Fr. Joseph Kalarickal, together with all the priests who accompanied the pilgrims from the eparchy, celebrated the Holy Qurbana.

The pilgrimage offered the faithful from the various parishes of the eparchy a deeply enriching spiritual experience that will remain a cherished memory.



DIARY OF THE MAJOR ARCHBISHOP

FROM 28 JUNE - 27 JULY

JUNE

- **28 Sunday** : Celebrated Holy Qurbana and inaugurated the Academic Year 2026 at Sacred Heart Minor Seminary of the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly.
- **29 Monday** : Attended the farewell meeting of Rev. Fr. Seby Kulangara, outgoing Executive Director of the Syro-Malabar Church Internet Mission.

JUNE

- **1 Wednesday** : Graced with his presence the Dukrana celebration hosted by the Archeparchy of Changanacherry at Lourdes Forane Church, Trivandrum.
- **3 Friday** : Celebrated Raza Qurbana at Mount St. Thomas as part of the Dukrana – Sabhadinam celebrations; inaugurated the public meeting; honored newly elected ministers of the State

of Kerala together with Chevalier Devis Edukulathur, the Guest of Honour and published the second volume of the history book.

- **4 Saturday** : Celebrated Holy Qurbana at the Navajyoti Provincial House of the Holy Family Congregation, Thrissur.
- **5 Sunday** : Celebrated the Golden Jubilee Thanksgiving Holy Qurbana at St. Thomas Church, Padavarad in the Archeparchy of Trichur.
- **7-16:** Attended the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Eparchy of Chicago and the Episcopal Ordination of Mar Jacob Angadiath in Chicago, USA.
- **12 Sunday** : Blessed and inaugurated the Divine Mercy Hall of the Divine Mercy Syro-Malabar Church in Edinburg, Texas, of the Eparchy of Chicago.
- **13 Monday** : Blessed the Shekinah Global News

Office and celebrated Holy Qurbana at St. Mary's Knanaya Church in Missouri City, Texas.

- **14 Tuesday** : Presided over the administration of the Sacraments of Initiation at St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Church in West Hartford, Connecticut.
- **15 Wednesday** : Visited the Archbishop and Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Hartford.
- **16 Thursday** : Visited the Central Office of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA) in New York.
- **18 Saturday** : Inaugurated the annual meeting of the Syro-Malabar Kuwait Returnees Forum at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad.
- **Tuesday 21:** Presided over the funeral rites of the deceased Bishop Mar Gregory Karotemprel CMI at Prem Mandir, the Sacred Heart Cathedral of the Eparchy of Rajkot.
- **20-27:** Participated in the 12th Plenary Assembly of the FABC in Jakarta, Indonesia.

SYRO-MALABAR PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMISSION OPPOSES PROPOSAL TO MAKE EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE MANDATORY FOR APPOINTMENTS IN AIDED SCHOOLS

Kakkanad: The Syro-Malabar Public Affairs Commission has expressed its strong opposition to the directive of the Director of General Education requiring temporary and daily-wage appointments of teaching and non-teaching staff in aided schools to be made exclusively through the Employment Exchange. In a statement, Archbishop Mar Andrews Thazhath, Chairman of the Syro-Malabar

Public Affairs Commission, said that the directive is contrary to the constitutional rights of minority institutions and infringes upon the administrative autonomy guaranteed to the managements of aided educational institutions. The Commission observed that aided educational institutions have played a decisive role in the educational and social development of Kerala. It further noted that the respon-

sibility of ensuring the right to education and maintaining quality education is shared by the Government and the managements of aided institutions, including those run by the Christian minority community. Archbishop Mar Andrews Thazhath stated that any directive that undermines the legitimate administrative rights of such managements is unacceptable.

The Commission pointed

out that, according to a circular issued on 15 July 2026 by the Regional Deputy Director of General Education, Kannur, all temporary and daily-wage appointments to teaching and non-teaching posts in aided schools are to be made only from the list provided by the Employment Exchange. The circular cites as its basis a communication issued by the Director of General Education on 27 June

2026. The Syro-Malabar Public Affairs Commission urged the Government to immediately review this decision, which it said violates the constitutional rights of minority educational institutions and restricts the freedom of their managements. It further demanded that the directive issued by the Director of General Education and all consequential actions taken on its basis be withdrawn.

THROUGH ST. ALPHONSA'S POWERFUL INTERCESSION, I HAVE NEVER FAILED TO RECEIVE WHAT I ASKED": MAJOR ARCHBISHOP



Bharananganam: "There has never been an occasion when my prayers through St Alphonsa have gone unanswered. As one who has personally experienced extraordinary joy, peace, and consolation whenever I

have visited this holy shrine, I entrust to St Alphonsa the intentions of our families, priests, religious, and the entire Syro-Malabar Church," said Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil while delivering the homily

during the Holy Qurbana on the Feast of St Alphonsa at St Mary's Forane Church Bharananganam.

The Major Archbishop described St Alphonsa as a precious treasure of the Syro-Malabar Church and as a ladder through which God's blessings descend upon the earth and through which human prayers, tears, and petitions ascend to heaven.

Recalling St Alphonsa's constant prayer, "My Jesus, hide me in the wound of Your Heart," he urged the faithful to

embrace the Pentecostal experience by remaining close to the God who never abandons His children in times of suffering. He emphasized that suffering is an experience of salvation, a privileged moment of drawing closer to the Lord, and that every trial prepares believers for a greater mission. Referring to the funeral sermon delivered by Fr. Romulus CMI at the time of St Alphonsa's death, the Major Archbishop observed that its message remains deeply relevant even today. Addressing

those who wept over the death of a 36-year-old nun, Fr. Romulus had said: "These tears will become a shower of blessings from heaven." Following St Alphonsa's death, the Cherupushpa Mission League was established, inspiring countless missionaries to proclaim the Gospel not only throughout India but also in many parts of the world. The Major Archbishop concluded by saying that St Alphonsa is a providential gift entrusted to the Syro-Malabar Church and reminded the faithful never to waste those moments of suffering in which God comes close, embraces His people, and blesses them.

KCBC TEMPERANCE COMMISSION URGES IMMEDIATE ANNOUNCEMENT OF STATE LIQUOR POLICY



Kochi: The State Leadership Meeting of the KCBC Temperance Commission has urged the UDF Government to announce its liquor policy without further delay, insisting that the new policy should be aimed at gradually reducing the availability of alcohol. The meeting opposed granting permission for the production of low-alcohol beverages and stressed that the

new liquor policy should remain faithful to the UDF's election manifesto, as well as the liquor policies implemented by the governments led by A. K. Antony and Oommen Chandy, which envisaged a phased reduction in the alcohol content of liquor with the ultimate goal of total prohibition. While appreciating the Government's strong measures

against narcotic drugs, the Commission reminded that alcohol is also an intoxicating substance and should not be overlooked in anti-drug initiatives.

The meeting further observed that it was contradictory to exclude experienced anti-drug activists with decades of service from the selection of *Toofan Warriors*. It called upon the Gov-

ernment to include the resource team of the KCBC Temperance Commission in its anti-drug awareness programmes. The Commission also urged that persons with criminal backgrounds, goondas, habitual drinkers, and organisations involved in serving alcohol should not be associated with anti-drug campaigns.

The meeting, held at the POC,

Palarivattom, was inaugurated by Bishop Dr. Ambrose Puthenveetil, Chairman of the KCBC Temperance Commission. Rev. Fr. Thomas Shaiju, Secretary, presided over the meeting. Among those who addressed the gathering were Rev. Fr. Thomas Tharayil, Deputy Secretary of the KCBC; Mr. Prasad Kuruvila, State Secretary of the Commission; Rev. Fr. Jacob Vellamaruthunkal; Rev. Fr. Devassy Panthallookkaran; Rev. Fr. Antony Arackal; Mr. C. X. Bony; Mr. V. D. Raju; Mr. Antony Jacob; Mr. Anthonykutty Chethalan; and Mr. K. P. Mathew.

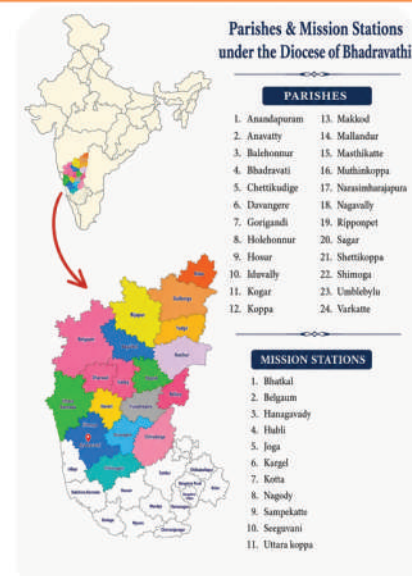
EPARCHY OF BHADRAVATHI



A Migrant-missionary Church in the Heart-land of Karnataka

Creation and expansion of the Eparchy

The Eparchy of Bhadravathi was established in the year 2007 by carving out the territory of the civil district of Shimoga in the State of Karnataka from the jurisdiction of the eparchy of Mananthavady. Following two territorial expansions – in 2010 to include the civil district of Chickmagalur, and in 2025 to include another 16 districts – the territory of the eparchy of Bhadravathi today consists of 18 civil districts in the State of Karnataka that extends over 130,125 sq. kilometers, serving about 10,300 Syro-Malabar faithful among a total population of 32.58 million. Little Flower Church, N.R. Pura serves as its Cathedral since 2010.



Bishop Joseph Arumachadath, mcbs

Mar Joseph Arumachadath MCBS, born on 10 April 1960 in Idukki, Kerala, joined the MCBS in 1978 and was ordained a priest in 1988. Holding a Doctorate in Dogmatic Theology from Leuven University, Belgium, he served the Congregation in several leadership roles before being appointed the first Bishop of Bhadravathi on 21 August 2007. He was consecrated on 25 October 2007.

Bodhana – Eparchial Pastoral Centre

Inaugurated on 18 May 2017, Bodhana, the Diocesan Pastoral Centre, is the heart of diocesan life. It serves as the Bishop's residence and as the centre for pastoral administration, the formation of clergy and laity, leadership training, diocesan meetings, retreats, youth and family programmes, and evangelization initiatives.



Faith Formation and Pastoral Care



The Eparchy comprises 24 parishes and 11 mission stations, united in proclaiming the Gospel and nurturing vibrant Christian communities. Guided by a Common Pastoral Plan adapted to regional needs, pastoral care and faith formation are carried out through 22 diocesan commissions. The secretaries of these commissions—comprising priests, religious sisters, and lay faithful—together with the eparchial authorities, form the Core Team for Eparchial Pastoral Care.

SOCIAL OUTREACH INITIATIVES OF THE EPARCHY

MSSS & ASWS

Through the Malnad Social Service Society (MSSS) and Anugraha Social Welfare Society (ASWS), various social outreach projects are planned and executed. Key Outreach Programs include: Women Empowerment, Education of those in the Peripheries, Free Tuition for tent dwellers and children in slums, Scholarship for Children from Bigger Families, Scholarship for Higher Studies, Cancer Awareness and Support Outreach.



Anugraha Palliative Care Centre – Compassion in Action

Anugraha Palliative Care Centre offers free, compassionate care to terminally ill patients and extends home-based care to those without family support, witnessing Christ's healing love through dignity and accompaniment.

Bhadra Farm Fresh – Agriculture & Livelihood

As most of our families depend on agriculture, the Eparchy promotes scientific farming practices, skill development and sustainable marketing initiatives to improve livelihoods. Bhadra Farm Fresh promotes organic farming by connecting producers and consumers across the Diocese. It promotes the cultivation of exotic fruits and high-value spices by offering agricultural training and farm visits.



Holy Fire – Night Vigil

Holy Fire – Night Vigil is a weekly spiritual renewal programme of the Diocese of Bhadravathi, held every Friday from 6:30 p.m. to 5:30 a.m. Organized by the Diocesan Renewal Team, it brings together the faithful for the Holy Eucharist, Adoration, Praise and Worship, Confession and the Holy Rosary, fostering deeper faith and renewal in Christ.

🏛️ 25 Parishes, 🏠 11 Mission Stations, 👥 10,300 Faithful,
👤 41 Priests, 🙋 22 Incardinated Priests, 🎓 12 Seminarians,
👩 118 Sisters, 🏫 15 Schools, ♿ 2 Special Schools,
🏠 2 Children's Homes, 🧓 2 Old Age Homes, ❤️ 1 Palliative Centre

Eparchial Curia

Bishop : Mar Arumachadath Joseph, mcbs
Vicar General : Rev. Fr. Thottankara Joseph, mcbs
Chancellor : Rev. Fr. Vellaramkalayil Thomas (Tino)
Finance Officer : Rev. Fr. Odackal Antony
Judicial Vicar : Rev. Fr. Pathiyamoola Jose, mcbs

FABC PLENARY ASSEMBLY CONCLUDES, OFFERING A NEW DIRECTION FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ASIA



Jakarta: The 12th Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) concluded in Jakarta after charting a renewed pastoral vision for the Catholic Church in Asia. Held from 20 to 26 July, the Assembly was centred on the theme, "A Call to Synodal Conversion and the Mission of Building Bridges in Asia."

Pope Leo XIV sent a video message assuring the participants of his prayers. In his message, he urged the local Churches to strengthen the bonds of communion among themselves, become enduring signs of God's presence in their respective nations, and build bridges of fra-

ternity throughout Asia.

Around 120 participants representing the various *sui iuris* Churches from 22 Asian countries attended the Assembly. Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery

for Evangelization, delivered the keynote address. On the final day, he was the principal celebrant of the Holy *Qurbana* and also led the day of recollection. Cardinal Oswald Gracias participated as the Special Repre-

sentative of Pope Leo XIV and was the principal celebrant of the inaugural Holy *Qurbana*.

Representing the Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church were Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil, in his capacity as President of the Synod, together with Archbishop Mar Andrews Thazhath, Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplany, Archbishop Mar Sebastian Vadakel, and Archbishop Mar Antony Prince Panengadan.

The Assembly provided significant pastoral direction for the future mission of the universal Church. Discussions focused on political polarization across Asia, religious challenges, forced migration, and the Church's mission in the digital

age. The bishops emphasized that continuous synodal conversion is essential for embracing the diverse cultures and peoples within the Church and called upon the Church to become an instrument of unity after the example of Christ. They also noted that synodality is not merely a method of governance but a journey of conversion that transforms hearts for missionary witness.

The Assembly concluded with the celebration of the Holy *Qurbana* at Jakarta Cathedral, followed by an inter-religious gathering. The delegates also made a symbolic visit through the historic "Tunnel of Friendship," which connects the Cathedral with the Istiqlal Mosque, marking the close of the Assembly.



VATICAN PUBLISHES NEW BOOK ON POPE LEO XIV'S MESSAGES OF PEACE

Vatican City: The Vatican Publishing House has released a new volume bringing together the official messages and addresses of Pope Leo XIV on global peace. Titled *Disarmed and Disarming: Peace is a Gift*, the book has been edited by renowned journalist Alessandro Banfi.

One of the principal features of the publication is a special

foreword written by Pope Leo XIV. In it, the Holy Father reflects on the lasting peace bestowed upon the world by the Risen Christ. He recalls that Jesus, who accepted injustice and remained unarmed, proclaimed through His Resurrection the message of authentic and lasting peace.

The book emphasizes that, at a time when humanity takes

pride in technological advancement and military capability, true peace can only be achieved through the disarmament of hearts and nations rather than through an arms race.

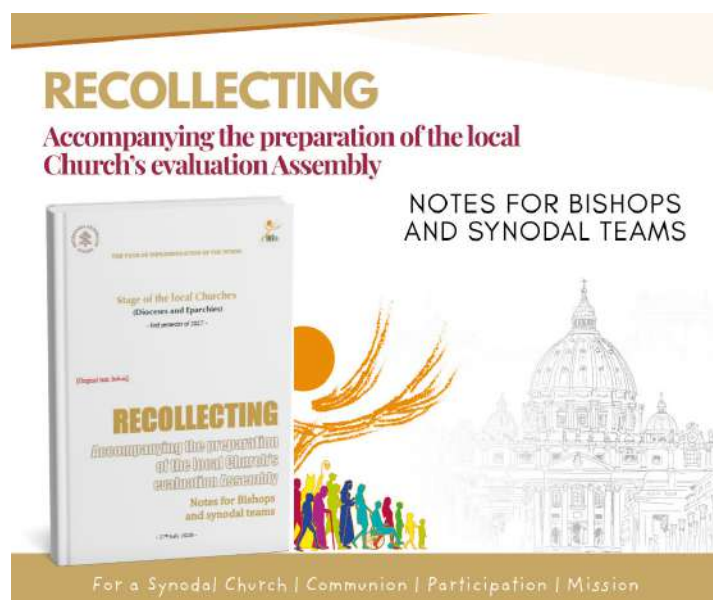
Expressing concern over the approximately 103 armed conflicts currently affecting the world, Pope Leo XIV makes particular reference to the hu-

manitarian crises in Ukraine, the Middle East, Sudan, Myanmar, Yemen, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Pope reminds readers that peace is not solely the responsibility of political leaders but a daily responsibility shared by every individual. The volume concludes by stressing that lasting peace begins not by blaming others but through personal conversion and transformation within families and communities.



RESOURCE PUBLISHED FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH SYNODAL EVALUATION ASSEMBLIES



Vatican City: The General Secretariat of the Synod has published a new resource enti-

tled *Recollecting: Accompanying the Preparation of the Local Church's Evaluation Assembly*,

offering practical guidance and norms for the preparation and celebration of the Local Church Synodal Evaluation Assemblies to be held in dioceses and Eastern Catholic Churches throughout the world in 2027. According to a statement issued by the Secretariat, the resource is available in several languages on the official Synod website, www.synod.va.

The resource is intended to assist dioceses and eparchies in preparing for and conducting the Evaluation Assemblies that will take place during the first half of 2027, marking the conclusion of the local phase of the 2021-2028 Synodal Journey. Explaining the significance of the title *Recollecting*, Cardinal

Mario Grech, Secretary General of the Synod, said that it refers to recognizing the fruits that the Lord has brought forth during the synodal journey of each local Church and allowing oneself to move forward under the guidance of the Holy Spirit into the next stage of the process. He emphasized that evaluation is not merely an administrative or technical exercise but a spiritual experience of gratitude, discernment, and truth.

The resource is divided into two principal sections. The first provides guidance for preparing a descriptive report in which each local Church presents the experiences and fruits of its synodal journey. The second outlines the preparation and cel-

ebration of the Evaluation Assembly under the leadership of the diocesan bishop or eparch. It also specifies that the Assembly's final report, together with a Letter to the Other Churches, is to be submitted to the General Secretariat of the Synod by 30 June 2027. Following the diocesan and eparchial Evaluation Assemblies, meetings of the Episcopal Conferences and the hierarchical structures of the Eastern Catholic Churches will take place during the second half of 2027. Continental Assemblies will then be held during the first four months of 2028. The entire synodal process will culminate in the Ecclesial Assembly to be held in the Vatican in October 2028, marking the conclusion of the implementation phase of the Synodal Journey that began in 2021.