

## **1.1 Report: First-Ever Human Hair Exporters' Meet organised jointly by PLEXCONCIL & West Bengal Human Hair Association on 30<sup>th</sup> July at Digha, Purba Medinipur**

### **Background:**

India is one of the largest sources of human hair in the world, with significant collection and processing hubs in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha. Indian hair is globally renowned for its natural quality, strength, and durability, particularly favored in European, African, and American markets for use in wigs, extensions, and fashion accessories.

However, over the past few years, the Indian human hair industry has been facing serious challenges due to the increasing export of unprocessed (raw) hair to neighboring countries like Myanmar and Bangladesh. These countries are processing the raw hair and exporting the finished products — directly competing with India in the international market.

In this context, the Human Hair Exporters' Meet was organized for the first time to provide a platform for stakeholders to discuss critical issues, raise policy-level demands, and explore collective strategies for growth.

### **Meeting synopsis**

Mr Manoj Samata, Secretary, West Bengal Human Hair Association welcomed all the dignitaries. The welcome note emphasized the socio-economic

importance of the human hair sector, particularly in rural and semi-urban regions where women and artisans are engaged in sorting, cleaning, and processing of human hair. Mr. Sekh Mukul Ali, Senior Exporter & Mr. Masood Mallick, Human Hair Industry Representative made a detailed presentation highlighted the following:

- Current Scenario:





Indian raw hair, collected through temples, salons, and rural collection centers, is being exported in bulk to Myanmar and Bangladesh, where it is processed and re-exported. As a result, Indian processing units are losing access to raw material, hampering their production and causing job losses.

- Economic Impact:

If the trend continues, thousands of jobs — especially those held by women in rural hair sorting and processing units — will be lost. The sector provides direct and indirect employment to nearly 10 lakh people in West Bengal alone.

- Competitor Advantage:

Myanmar and Bangladesh benefit from lower labor costs and government support, allowing them to process Indian raw hair and sell finished products at competitive prices in Europe and Africa. This undermines Indian value-added exporters.

- Key Demand:

An immediate ban on the export of raw human hair was proposed. This would ensure raw material availability for domestic processors and promote value addition within India.

Speaking on this occasion, Mr. Cherian informed that human hair is a labour intensive sector as it provides employment to several hawkers, self-employed women and youth across the country. Indian human hair enjoys great demand in the western countries because of its thin texture, which is favourable for producing value added products such as wigs. Therefore, India has an edge over China in this sector. West Bengal contributes around 90% to the processed human hair output of the country.”

Mr. Cherian emphasised that there is great potential for value addition and export of human hair from India with targeted government support. He said, “Already, two lakh hawkers are engaged across various villages to collect human hair waste from households. This sector not only supports employment, rural livelihood and women’s empowerment, but also contributes to Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan as human hair, which otherwise goes as waste in the

garbage, is collected for further processing and value addition across homes in villages.”



Ministry should engage with Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) and the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology to develop advanced technologies for dyeing in order to process raw human hair.”

Mr. Cherian concluded his remarks by pointing out that human hair sector has great potential to contribute to India’s USD 1 trillion merchandise export vision. He said, “India has potential to boost human hair exports by Rs. 25,000 – Rs. 30,000 crore in the next 15 years, which will have multiplier effect on employment and economic growth of the country.”

#### Government Representation & Response:

The meeting was attended by key government functionaries, including:

- Mr Soumendu Ray, IRS , Deputy Commissioner of Customs – Kolkata Airport
- Dr R Sampath Kumar, ITS , Joint DGFT (Directorate General of Foreign Trade) – Kolkata
- Dr. Mou Sen, Joint Director – MSME Department, Government of West Bengal

They offered the following observations:

- Acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and the economic implications for the state and national MSME sector.

Mr. Cherian sought government support in discouraging exports of raw human hair so that it is adequately available for local processing industry to produce value added products. Mr. Cherian also suggested government intervention to develop technologies for dyeing human hair. He said, “In future, India’s Commerce

- Advised the Association and Council to submit a formal representation with data-backed justifications for policy changes (ban).
- Expressed willingness to facilitate meetings with relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Ministry of MSME, and CBIC for further discussions.

#### Stakeholder Interaction & Open House:

During the interactive session, exporters, unit owners, and local cluster representatives shared their personal experiences:

- A consistent theme was the sharp decline in availability of raw hair for local processing over the past 2-3 years.
- Exporters noted that earlier, Indian value-added hair products dominated the African and European markets, but now buyers are switching to cheaper processed hair from Myanmar and Bangladesh.
- Processors requested training, testing facilities, and government recognition under MSME or Handicrafts schemes to avail subsidies and upgrade their equipment.

#### Key Recommendations from the Meet:

1. Ban on export of unprocessed raw human hair.
2. Creation of Human Hair Processing Clusters with common facilities (cleaning, grading, packaging, testing).
3. Inclusion of human hair industry in MSME support schemes for upgradation and capacity building.
4. Promotion of “Make in India” and “Export from India” campaigns for finished hair products.
5. Support for international marketing, buyer-seller meets, and trade fair participation.

#### **Conclusion:**

The First Human Hair Exporters' Meet at Digha marked a significant step in organizing the voices of grassroots industry stakeholders and initiating a structured dialogue with the government. The overwhelming demand was clear

— India must retain and process its raw human hair within the country to sustain livelihoods, promote exports, and compete globally.

The event concluded with a resolution to submit a formal memorandum to the Ministry of Commerce & Industry and other concerned authorities. PLEXCONCIL assured continued advocacy on behalf of the industry.



## 1.2 Visit to Human Hair Processing cluster at Purba Medinipur on 31st July 2025



Mr. Benjamin Cherian, Chairman of the Human Hair Panel of PLEXCONCIL, along with Mr. S.K. Mukul Ali, Member of the Committee of Administration (COA)-PLEXCONCIL, Mr. Nilotpal Biswas, Regional Director (East), and a group of leading exporters from the southern states and West Bengal, undertook a field visit to several human hair processing villages located in the Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal. The purpose of the visit was to gain firsthand insight into the prevailing ground-level conditions and challenges faced by grassroots stakeholders involved in the human hair value chain.

The delegation visited multiple households engaged in traditional hair cleaning, untangling, and sorting work. These cottage-level processing units are predominantly run by women, many of whom rely solely on this activity to support their families. During the interactions, a unified and urgent concern emerged — the severe scarcity of raw human hair and the exponential rise in its procurement cost in the market.



The workers reported that earlier, raw hair was available at reasonable rates, allowing them to earn a modest but stable income. However, with the growing volume of raw hair exports—particularly to neighboring countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar—the domestic availability of quality raw material has drastically declined. This scarcity has pushed

up prices, making it unaffordable for small processors and women-led units to continue their work. Many stated that they are forced to remain idle for days due to non-availability of raw material, leading to loss of income and growing financial distress.



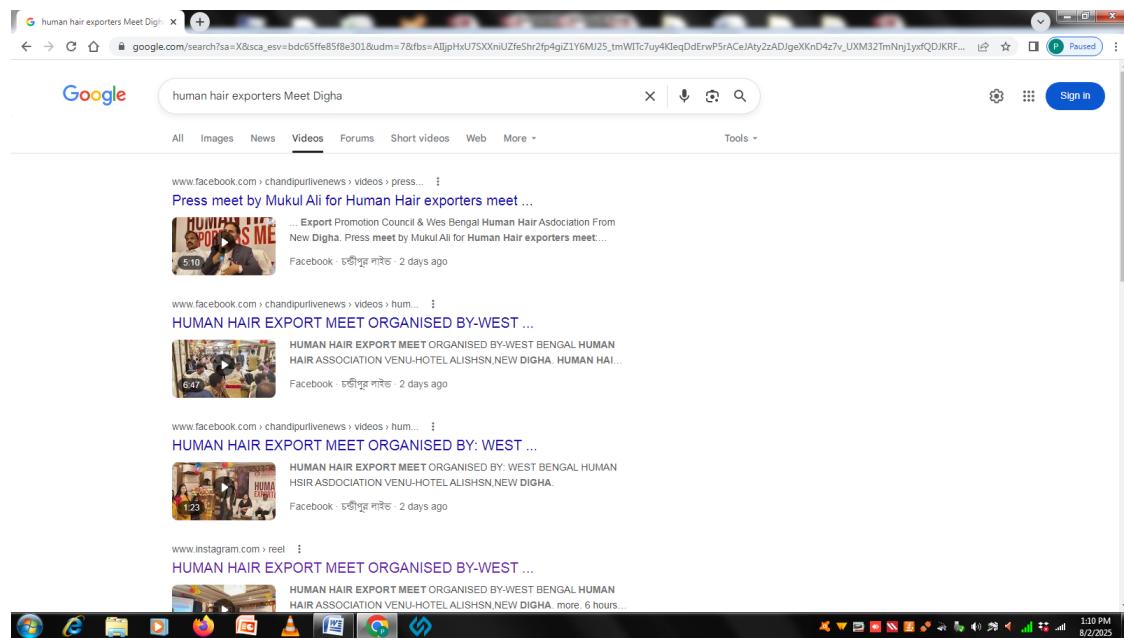
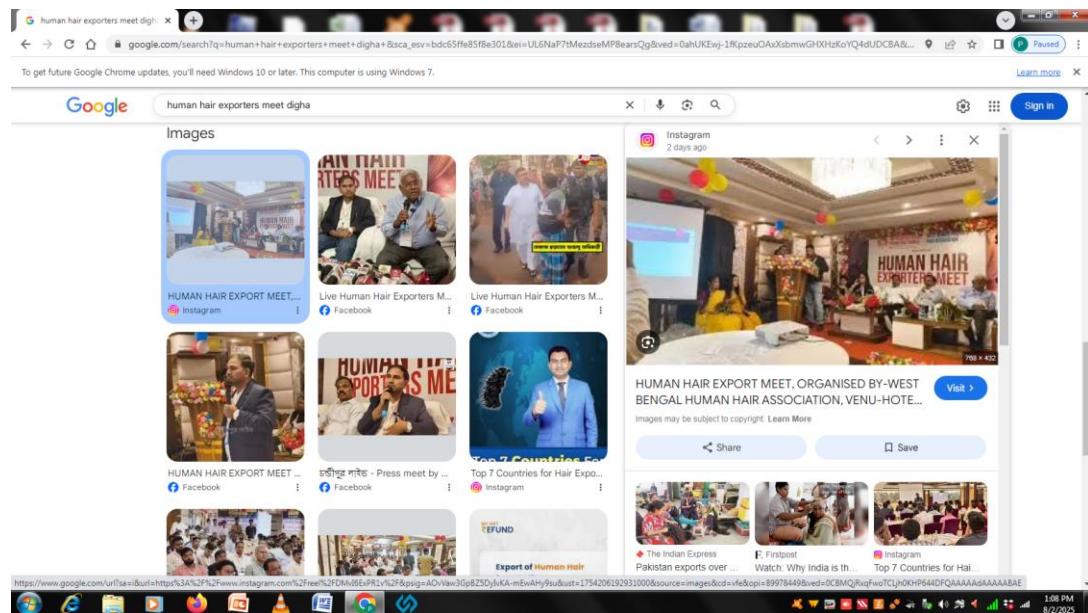
In every village visited, the message was clear: unless immediate steps are taken to regulate the export of raw human hair and ensure sufficient availability for domestic processing, thousands of grassroots workers, especially women, will be left without any livelihood support. The delegation observed that this is not just an economic concern but also a looming social crisis, as entire families stand to lose their

source of income.

The workers earnestly requested the visiting team to escalate their concerns to the appropriate authorities and urged the government to review the current export policy, particularly for raw human hair under HS Code 0501. They called for a ban, to discourage mass raw hair exports and to protect the domestic value-added hair processing industry.



### **3. Media Coverage**



#### ***Name of the Media***

- ***Khobor Bangla***
- ***JB Live News***
- ***Chandipur Live News***
- ***Medinipur Barta***