

Bihar Polls: Anganwadi Workers to Verify Burqa-Clad Voters' Identity

Gyanesh Kumar had said Aanganwadi workers will be present at all polling booths in Bihar to help verify the identity of burqa-clad voters



Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar had said Aanganwadi workers will be present at all polling booths in Bihar to help verify the identity of burqa-clad voters. File photo – PTI

New Delhi: The Election Commission on Friday October 30, 2025 said special arrangements will be made at polling stations in Bihar for “dignified” identification of women voters in burqa or purdah. In a statement, the poll authority said to encourage participation of ‘purdanasheen’ (in burqa or purdah) women, “special arrangements” will be made at the polling stations as per its instructions for their “dignified identification” in the presence of lady polling officers or attendants while ensuring their privacy.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday to announce

schedule for Bihar elections, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar had said Aanganwadi workers will be present at all polling booths in Bihar to help verify the identity of burqa-clad voters.

Responding to a question about ‘ghungat’ and burqa clad women during a press conference, Kumar said there are clear guidelines of the Election Commission about the verification of identity inside polling booths and they will be strictly followed. “Our anganwadi workers will be deployed at all polling booths for verifying the identity of burqa-clad women.

The guidelines of the commission are very clear about this — that how identity is verified inside a polling station and they will be strictly followed,” he said.

On Thursday, the poll authority had said up to 90,712 Anganwadi Sevikas will be deployed on poll duty.

Bihar BJP president Dilip Jaiswal had on Saturday last urged the Commission to ensure that faces of women turning up at booths in burqas were tallied with voter cards.

The elections for 243 assembly constituencies in Bihar will be held in two phases — November 6 and 11 — while the counting of votes will be on November 14.

Education is the Mantra of Social Development – CM Vishnu Deo Sai



Our Government is Committed to the Welfare of Fishing Community – Chief Minister CM participates in National Fishermen Awareness Conference

Raipur: “Life is incomplete without education. Education is not merely a means to secure a job, but a path to success in life. Education is the mantra of social development. Whether it is the art of living, business, agriculture, or any other field — education plays a vital role in every sphere of success,” said Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, while addressing the National Fishermen Awareness Conference at Balbir Singh Juneja Indoor Stadium, Raipur on Sunday October 5, 2025 .

The Chief Minister said that the state government has been consistently working to strengthen the education sector since its inception. “At the time of state formation, there was only one medical college in Chhattisgarh. Today, the state has around 15 medical colleges,” he said. “Institutions of national and

international repute — IIT, IIIT, IIM, Law University, AIIMS and CIPET — have been established in Chhattisgarh, benefitting local students immensely.”

CM Sai further informed that construction of Nalanda Campuses is underway in every district of the state, providing both direction and opportunity to the youth.

Highlighting the importance of social unity, the Chief Minister said, “Society must remain organized, because a strong society builds a strong nation.” He cautioned that addiction is a major obstacle to social progress and urged the community to take a pledge towards de-addiction and social reform.

Referring to the initiatives for fisherfolk, the Chief Minister said, “Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the



Government of India launched the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, a revolutionary step that has elevated the standard of living of fishermen across the country.” He added that, “In line with this, the Chhattisgarh Government has recently ended the contractor system at the Gangrel Dam and restored fishing rights to farmers in the submergence areas.”

CM Sai said that his government is continuously working to integrate the fishing community into the mainstream of development. “Several schemes have been initiated in the fisheries sector. The

state’s first Aqua Park is being built at the Hasdeo Bango Reservoir at a cost of about ₹37 crore. The park will open up new opportunities in four key areas — fish production, processing, export, and tourism,” he said. He also mentioned that at present, fish farming is being carried out in 800 cages at the reservoir, benefiting several local panchayats. “This is a major step towards increasing the income of our fishermen and strengthening the rural economy,” the Chief Minister emphasized.

CM Sai extended warm greetings and best wishes to all office-bearers

of the National Fishermen Association and the hardworking fishermen and women from across the country for the successful organisation of the conference.

Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister of State Dr. Rajbhushan Chaudhary Nishad said that the Nishad community has a glorious history and tradition. “It is essential that the new generation learns about and takes pride in this heritage,” he remarked. He added, “Our visionary Prime Minister Narendra Modi has always given an esteemed place to the Nishad community. When the grand temple of Lord Ram Lalla was built in Ayodhya, Prime Minister Modi also ensured the construction of the Nishad Raj Temple on the banks of the Saryu River, thereby honoring the community. The Nishad community will always remain grateful to him for this gesture.”

Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma, in his address, said that the Nishad community is extremely hardworking and industrious. “The contribution of the Nishad community to the progress of society is exemplary,” he said.

The event was also attended by MLA Sunil Soni, Chairman of Chhattisgarh Fishermen Welfare Board Bharat Matiyara, along with community leaders, office-bearers, and public representatives from across Chhattisgarh and other states.



Chhattisgarh has always been a land of literature and culture: CM Vishnu Deo Sai

State-level Youth Kavi Sammelan held in the sacred land of Lord Ram's maternal home and Mata Shabri's devotion



CM Vishnu Deo Sai lightening the lamp to inaugurate Kavi Sammelan on Saturday October 4, 2025 Night -Photo Credit CG/PR

Raipur : Chhattisgarh's literary, cultural, and artistic heritage received a vibrant celebration on Saturday October 4, 2025 night with the organisation of the State-Level Youth Kavi Sammelan. Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said that the soil of Chhattisgarh has always been the land of literature and culture.

Paying homage to the sacred land revered as Lord Ram's maternal home and the abode of Mata Shabri, the Chief Minister said, "This is the land that has eternally nurtured creativity, art and thought."

Recalling the rich legacy of literary masters, CM Sai

said that Mahakavi Kalidas composed his immortal work Meghaduta on this very land, while Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh and Padumlal Punnalal Bakshi drew their inspiration from the same soil. He also paid tribute to Raja Chakradhar Singh, the legendary music maestro from his former parliamentary constituency, Raigarh, who enriched Indian classical traditions with his genius.

The Chief Minister lauded the Chhattisgarh State Youth Commission and the Department of Sports and Youth Welfare for organising the event, calling it an innovative platform that

nurtures young writers, poets, and artists by giving their creativity a stage. He added that the state government is continuously creating opportunities for young talent to grow and express themselves.

Congratulating the three winners selected from divisional-level competitions, CM Sai said, "Through this platform, young poets will receive guidance from renowned poets of the country — a learning experience that will inspire their creative journey and help shape their literary future."

Chhattisgarh's culture is a living blend of songs, dance and emotions: Dy CM Arun Sao



Nidhi Tiwari from Bilaspur district secures the first position, and CM Sai personally felicitates her extending his best wishes for her bright and successful future-Photo Credit-CG/PR

Addressing the gathering, Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Sports and Youth Welfare Arun Sao said that the conference was not merely a competition but an opportunity for young poets to learn, create and evolve.

“Chhattisgarh’s art and culture have been vibrant since ancient times — here, songs accompany every phase of life, from birth to death,” he remarked. Giving a vivid example, Sao said that during the sowing season, the air resonates with the melodious strains of Dadariya folk songs. “This land has a rich tradition of musical instruments, songs, dances, and folk arts. It is the land of saints, sages, and poets — a land that has always guided humanity towards harmony and inspiration,” he added.

The Deputy Chief Minister wished all the young poets a bright future and called upon them to use their words and creations to bring about positive social change.

Renowned poets captivate the audience

Kavi Sammelan witnessed enthralling performances by eminent poets Shashikant Yadav, Dinesh Bawra, Nilotpal Mrinal, Kavita Tiwari, and Manu Vaishali, whose powerful and emotional recitations mesmerised the audience. The auditorium echoed with rounds of applause as listeners responded enthusiastically to each rendition.

In the State-Level Youth Poetry Competition, Nidhi Tiwari from Bilaspur district secured the first position, Meera Mridu won second

place, and Alisha Sheikh from Korea district stood third. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai personally felicitated all the winners and extended his best wishes for their bright and successful future.

The event was attended by Higher Education Minister Tank Ram Verma, Women and Child Development Minister Laxmi Rajwade, Skill Development Minister Guru Khushwant Saheb, Tourism and Culture Minister Rajesh Agrawal, MLA Motilal Sahu, and Chairman of the Chhattisgarh State Youth Commission Vishw Vijay Singh Tomar, along with chairpersons of various boards and commissions, public representatives, writers, poets, and a large gathering of enthusiastic art and literature lovers.

Chhattisgarh becomes the ideal state in the mining sector

Chhattisgarh's mining sector contributes approximately 10 percent to the state's GDP, while its share in the country's total mineral production is approximately 17 percent. The state's mineral revenue has increased 34-fold in 25 years. While mineral revenue was only ₹429 crore at the time of state formation, it increased to ₹14,592 crore in 2024-25. This achievement is the result of the state's robust mineral policy and continuous administrative reforms.



The mineral-rich state of Chhattisgarh has made significant progress in the mining sector in recent years—Photo Credit—CG/PR

Raipur: The mineral-rich state of Chhattisgarh has made significant progress in the mining sector in recent years. Focusing on transparency, accountability,

and technological innovation, the state has implemented numerous structural reforms in mineral administration, resulting in Chhattisgarh becoming one of the leading

mining states in the country. New discoveries in the state, including world-class iron ore, coal, limestone, bauxite, and tin ore, have demonstrated the availability

of critical, strategic, and rare earth minerals, strengthening the state's global reputation.

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Under the Mineral Auction Rules 2015, established under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, as amended in 2015, 60 mineral blocks have been successfully auctioned in the state so far. These include 15 iron ore, 14 bauxite, 18 limestone, and 13 critical and strategic mineral blocks. The auction process for five new blocks (two limestone, one iron ore, one gold, and one base metal block) has also been initiated.

The Directorate of Geology and Mining, Chhattisgarh, has signed MoUs with IIT Mumbai, IIT (ISM) Dhanbad,

and Coal India Limited for long-term collaboration in the field of mining research and exploration. This partnership has accelerated the scientific exploration of critical and strategic minerals.

In accordance with the Prime Minister's Mineral Area Welfare Scheme Guidelines 2024, the District Mineral Foundation Trust Rules, 2025, have been notified in the state. So far, the state has received contributions of ₹16,119 crore, under which 105,653 works have been approved, of which 74,454 have been completed. DMF Portal 2.0 has been implemented to ensure transparency in financial approval, monitoring, and management.

The Mineral Online 2.0 portal, developed by the Mineral Department, has fully digitised the state's mineral administration. The system is secure, multi-functional, and user-friendly, promoting

transparency and efficiency. This initiative is establishing Chhattisgarh as a national model state in mining management. In accordance with the principles of ease of doing business, the allocation of sand mines in the state is now being done through a completely online system. An MoU has been signed with MSTC for this purpose. The new system eliminates human intervention, making the entire process transparent, fair, and secure.

Under the Star Rating System implemented under the Minor Minerals Rules, 2015, mines are being evaluated on standards of mining, environmental management, safety measures, and sustainable development. Under this system, three mines have been awarded 5-star ratings and 32 mines have been awarded 4-star ratings, a testament to the state's commitment to scientific and responsible mining.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said that mineral wealth is not just an economic source, but the foundation for the state's all-round development. Chhattisgarh has presented an ideal administrative model through coordinated efforts towards policy reforms, digital transparency, and sustainable development in the mining sector. This progress of the state is not only a sign of economic strength but also a lasting step towards public interest-based development.

Rs 1.84 Lakh Crore in Unclaimed Financial Assets, Sitharaman Urges Claim

Ahmedabad: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday October 4, 2025 said financial assets worth Rs 1.84 lakh crore were lying unclaimed with banks and regulators, and officials need to ensure these reach the rightful owners.

Sitharaman launched the three-month Apki Poonji, Apka Adhikar (Your Money, Your Right) campaign from Gandhinagar in the presence of Gujarat Finance Minister Kanubhai Desai and senior officials from the banks and the finance ministry.

Speaking on the occasion, the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs said that financial assets worth Rs 1.84 lakh crore were lying unclaimed with banks and regulators in the form of bank deposits, insurance, provident fund or shares.

She urged officials to work on three As Awareness, Access and Action to ensure these unclaimed assets reach rightful owners during the three-month-long campaign.

“Unclaimed monies are lying with the banks or with the RBI or with the IEPF (Investor Education and Protection Fund). We have to find the rightful owners and claimants of those funds and hand the money over to them,” Sitharaman said.

“As per the DFS (Department of Financial Services), Rs 1,84,000 crore is lying there. It is safe. I can assure you it is absolutely safe. You come when you want with proper papers. Money will be given to you. The government is the custodian for it. It can be through the bank or through SEBI. It can be through any other agency. But it is lying



■ *Finance Minister launches 'Apki Poonji, Apka Adhikar' campaign to ensure unclaimed money reaches rightful owners*

■ *Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlights Rs 1.84 lakh crore lying unclaimed in banks and regulators, urging officials to spread awareness, provide access, and facilitate claims under the three-month campaign.*

there in safe custody,” she assured. If the asset remains unclaimed for a long time due to any reason, it gets transferred from one entity to another, the minister said. From banks, it goes to the RBI in case of deposits, and in case of stocks or similar assets, it goes from SEBI to “another centre or the IEPF”, she said.

“The RBI has created the UDGAM (Unclaimed Deposits Gateway To Access Information)

portal. So, it is moving from one unclaimed area to another, which is holding this unclaimed deposit. The moment you claim it, you get it. So, I honestly think it is high time that all of us spread the word to everyone,” Sitharaman said. On the ‘awareness’ front, the minister urged government and bank officials to create awareness among people so that they come forward and claim their rightful assets, such as insurance policies lying unclaimed despite maturity.

“The first A is awareness. Build awareness. Tell them that your money is lying there, come with this document and take it. You can become ambassadors and tell people if they have yet to claim their rightful asset. Just ask them to find the papers and register on the portal,” she said.

The minister further spoke about extending “access” to those rightful claimants, either through RBI’s UDGAM portal or stalls created by banks for this purpose. “The third A is action, where you (officials) act on whatever you have, like small bits of papers,” she said, adding that a “concerted attempt” will make the campaign successful.

Sitharaman said that it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who persuaded her and the ministry to “move from one place to another and call up people asking them to claim their dues. So, bridge the gap and make sure people can take it.”

Sitharaman also lauded the Gujarat Gramin Bank for assuring her that its officials would visit every village in the state to look for rightful owners of unclaimed deposits lying in the bank.

Modi Lauds Trump's Efforts In Bringing Peace in Gaza

"We welcome President Trump's leadership as peace efforts in Gaza make decisive progress. Indications of the release of hostages mark a significant step forward. India will continue to strongly support all efforts towards a durable and just peace," PM said in a post on X. — PTI

On Tuesday PM had said Trump's comprehensive plan to end the Gaza conflict provides a viable pathway to long term and sustainable peace between the Palestinian and Israeli people, as also for the larger West Asian region

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday lauded the efforts being made by the United States of America President Donald Trump to bring peace and stability in Gaza. He said indications by Hamas to release the remaining Israeli hostages mark a significant step forward.

In a social media post, PM said India welcomes such moves and will continue to strongly support all efforts towards a durable and just peace in the region.

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The statement comes shortly after Trump ordered Israel to stop bombing the Gaza Strip after Hamas said it had accepted some elements of his 12-point plan to end the nearly two-year war and return all the remaining hostages taken in the October 7, 2023, attack. Hamas said it was willing to release the hostages and hand over power to other Palestinians, but that other aspects of the plan require further consultations among Palestinians.

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plan to end the Gaza conflict provides a viable pathway to long term and sustainable peace between the Palestinian and Israeli people, as also for the larger West Asian region.

"We welcome President Donald J. Trump's announcement of a comprehensive plan to end the Gaza conflict. It provides a viable pathway to long term and sustainable peace, security and development for the Palestinian and Israeli people, as also for the larger West Asian region. We hope that all concerned will come together behind President Trump's initiative and support this effort to end conflict and secure peace," PM had said in a post on X which was shared by Trump on his social media platform Truth Social.

Hamas on Friday night accepted certain parts of Trump's Gaza peace plan, including ending the war, Israel's withdrawal, the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian captives, aid and recovery efforts, and opposition to Palestinian expulsion from the territory after Trump threatened Hamas to accept his peace plan by Sunday, 6 pm (US time) or face "all hell".

Chhattisgarh: Shah Rules Out Talks With Naxals

Union Home Minister Amit Shah On Saturday Ruled Out Talks With The Maoists And Asked Them To Surrender By March 31, 2026, Or Face Intensified Operations: Reports



Raipur: Union home minister Amit Shah on Saturday October 4, 2025 ruled out talks with the Maoists and asked them to surrender by March 31, 2026, or face intensified operations.

Addressing the Bastar Dussehra Lokotsav and Swadeshi Mela at Jagdalpur, headquarters of Bastar in Chhattisgarh, Shah reiterated his assertion that Naxalism will be rooted out of the country by March 31, 2026, and exhorted

the Maoists to surrender by the deadline.

“Some people have called for talks (with Naxals). What is there to talk about? The Chhattisgarh government has framed a lucrative surrender and rehabilitation policy for Naxals. Lay down your arms and join the mainstream.” Shah exhorted the Naxals. He said that the Chhattisgarh government and the Centre are committed to development

across Bastar and all Naxal-affected areas.

The Union minister regretted that some people in Delhi have been spreading misinformation for years that backwardness breeds Naxalism and the Maoists are fighting for development. “But the fact is that Naxalism is the root cause of the backwardness of a region. Bastar has been deprived of development because of Naxalism,” he added.

The Union home minister pointed out that today, basic amenities like roads, electricity, drinking water and toilets in every house and welfare schemes like ₹5 lakhs health insurance and 5 kg free rice have reached every village in India, but Bastar has been deprived of all these benefits because of Naxalism.

“All these benefits will reach every village in Bastar by 2030, as the pace of development in the region is set to pick up after the end of Naxalism by March 31, 2026,” Mr Shah said, adding, “Naxals will no longer be allowed to disrupt peace or development in Bastar when Maoism comes to an end.”

“The Narendra Modi government has given more than ₹4-lakh crores to Chhattisgarh for development works in 10 years. On behalf of the PM, I want to assure you that after March 31, 2026, Naxalites will not be able to stop your development. They will not be able to stop your rights,” Shah said.

Earlier in the day, Shah paid obeisance at the shrine of Maa Danteswari, the presiding deity of Bastar, and prayed for strength for the security forces to end the red terror in the region by March 31, 2026. He hailed the



During the visit, Union Home Minister Shah interacted with the representatives of various tribe groups at the Muria Durbar and lent an ear to their grievances.

Unique Bastar Dussehra, which runs for 75 days, is billed as the world's longest festival. Mr Shah reached Raipur on Friday night on a two-day visit to Chhattisgarh.

Chhattisgarh government for effectively tackling Naxalism, saying that more than 500 Maoists have surrendered in Bastar in the last month.

In his address, Shah announced that each Naxal-free village in Bastar will be granted ₹1 crore to undertake development works. Shah, who

attended the Muria Durbar, the traditional tribal council meeting held as part of the Bastar Dussehra festival, said that the rich cultural heritage and democratic ethos of the tribals have impressed him a lot and declared that he would advise people in Delhi to visit Muria Durbar.



● *Farrukh Dhondy is an Indian-born British writer, playwright, screenwriter, activist, and television executive known for his multifaceted career and outspoken views. Originally from Pune, he moved to the United Kingdom for his university education and became a prominent figure in literary and media circles, as well as a political activist.*



*My adopted back is the duck's
With feathers that brush off the
rain So, no matter how many
f****s*

*Are shot at me, it's my g nain
And a sign of the abuser's loss:
Though curses come like
monsoon flak*

*They make me smile, I don't give
a toss -*

*Water flowing off a duck's back?
"From The Ghoolies of Gaali
Gulley, by Bachchoo*



OF CABBAGES AND KINGS | UK Labour Battles Reform Challenge, Drive To Spew Hate Over Immigration

-By- Farrukh Dhondy

Autumn was to Keats a season of mists and mellow fruitfulness. To British hacks -- journalists -- it's the season of party conferences, which this year's so far have given prime attention and space to the issue of immigration.

The opinion polls now say that Labour's main opposition is not the Conservative Party any longer but the relatively new "national-socialist" (echoes anyone?) party called Reform, whose leader Nigel Farage uses anti-immigrant policies to rouse the rabble.

Remember Donald Trump had claimed Haitian immigrants were eating American pet cats and dogs? Mr Farage recently claimed that immigrants are eating British swans.

The agency in charge of swans says it's utter nonsense.

Of course, the main target of this anti-immigration propaganda from Nigelaatika and his party, to focus the antagonisms and get some specific people within its sights, are Muslim asylum-seekers and even the resident, naturalised, passport-holding British Muslims.

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So, at the recent rally called by the openly-racist, criminal demagogue Tommy Robinson, his followers carried Christian crosses -- not to signal their devotion to Jesus, or any love-thy-neighbour sentiment, but to signal their anti-Muslim credentials

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paedo-pimp Jeffrey Epstein, Elon Musk, appeared by video to provoke the crowd to take to the streets to “reclaim” the streets of what he termed a “divided Britain”.

And then there is President Trump’s statement on no less a platform that the United Nations General Assembly, where he claims that Sadiq Khan, the elected mayor of London, is imposing Sharia law on the British capital city. That really is as absurd as claiming that the Pope is currently on Haj pilgrimage to Mecca, or even that the Pope, being American, is an ardent MAGAwalla!

But things get more and more absurd. There’s a fellow called Douglas Murray who is, through his regular columns in the ultra-right-wing press, a dedicated competitor in the Swastika Stakes. This last week he published a reaction to Keir Starmer, France, Germany, Canada, Australia and now others announcing their recognition of a Palestinian state. His theory in this article was that Muslim immigrants have so infiltrated the governments of all these countries that their Prime Ministers have been coerced by Islamic force majeure of some sort to take this decision.

There is now firm evidence through the opinion polls that this nasty, lying propaganda is making an impact. Last week several public polls said that Reform was leading Labour and that could mean that Nigel Farage would, if an election was to be held now, become Britain’s Prime Minister.

Labour has had to take these polls seriously -- and it has. A few weeks before their annual conference, the Labour government and Labour Party suffered two major setbacks. The Deputy PM, Angela Rayner, was tainted with the claim that she had bought a house and dodged paying tax on the transfer of funds she used to buy it. She claimed, to my mind plausibly, that it was an error of judgment as she followed what she thought was the advice she’d been given by an estate agent and not a criminal intent to dodge tax. Nevertheless, such was the outcry from the Opposition and their supporters in the press, that she thought it best for the government and party to resign, which she did.

Then there was the questioning of Keir Starmer’s judgment when it was revealed that Peter Mandelson, whom he had appointed as ambassador to the United

Or would it extend to writing erudite essays on Milton’s works?

■ Farrukh Dhondy is an Indian-born British writer, playwright, screenwriter, activist, and television executive known for his multifaceted career and outspoken views. Originally from Pune, he moved to the United Kingdom for his university education and became a prominent figure in literary and media circles, as well as a political activist.

States, was a firm friend and supporter of Jeffrey Epstein and continued to be even after the latter’s conviction in 2008. Mandelson resigned -- another blow to Sir Keir Starmer’s judgement and leadership.

His shuffling of the Cabinet after Ms Rayner’s departure may be seen as a fightback. He moved an MP, Shabana Mahmood, from the post of justice secretary to home secretary. Ms Mahmood, in her new job, immediately addressed what could be seen as an attempt to challenge the Reform Party’s appeal to voters on the immigrant issue.

Reform has made some rather rash statements which they think will convince Britain’s gullible, right-wing voters to propel them into the government. They are promising, without quite saying how, to “stop the boats”, which means prevent asylum-seekers coming across the English Channel from France, in some weeks by their hundreds. They now say they will not allow them to stay and parcel them off to countries like Afghanistan, who will be induced with monetary payments to take them. Their fate there would not be of any concern to the Reform government, even if torture or execution would face these deportees.

Ms Mahmood’s plans, touted as contrastingly decent, fair and inclusive, would ensure that all immigrants contribute to Britain’s economy in some useful and non-substitutable way and also that new immigrants pass tests of proficiency in the English language.

She hasn’t quite defined how far she wants this proficiency to go. Would it entail being able to outline the prices of a pack of cigarettes to potential customers, to know the words to politely refuse to sell alcohol to under-age buyers or calling emergency to report shoplifting?

What A Disgrace! Going From Gully Cricket to Gaalis Kirkit

By Shobhaa De



The team had legitimate grounds -- Mr Naqvi is also the interior minister of Pakistan, besides being the head of the Pakistan Cricket Board. As an important minister, Mr Naqvi has frequently bad-mouthed India and been a very vocal anti-India politician



● Irreverent, provocative, opinionated... Shobhaa De has been challenging status quo for four decades... and is at her best when she punctures inflated egos.

“My real trophy is my team”, declared India’s cricket captain Suryakumar Yadav, after he and the Men in Blue were denied the joy of lifting the real trophy, at the end of the disgraceful Asia Cup final in Dubai last Sunday. There has been enough commentary on the churlishness on parade, but what really took the cake (or kebab) was the sight of the Asian Cricket Council chairman, Mohsin Naqvi, walking off with the trophy after the Indian team had refused to accept it from him. The team had legitimate grounds -- Mr Naqvi is also the interior minister of Pakistan, besides being the head of the Pakistan Cricket Board. As an important minister, Mr Naqvi has frequently bad-mouthed India and been a very vocal anti-India politician. Now here comes the asli sawaal -- let’s announce a decision to not play Pakistan in future. That would effectively end the pathetic pantomime of being players without



By converting a bat into an AK-47, Sahibzada Farhan managed to grab eyeballs. And raise eyebrows! But the team still lost. Unfortunately, politics and cricket cannot be compartmentalised when it comes to India-Pakistan matches. — Internet

borders and prevent ugly scenes of ungentlemanly, unsportsmanlike conduct, watched by millions of shocked spectators. Cricket fans deserve better. Remember, cricket is not just a game. It is a religion. And with religion comes fanaticism, which in turn fuels hatred. Neither country needs more conflict at a time when the wounds are still festering.

India won. Fair and square. But

Pakistan kept the trophy! And the team medals. Pakistan is no longer considered a “rival” on any level. Let’s not elevate Pakistan to that stature when the ground realities are radically different. No matter which cricketer makes crude gestures on the field, the truth of the matter cannot be challenged. By converting a bat into an AK-47, Sahibzada Farhan managed to grab eyeballs. And raise eyebrows! But

■ *Players turn into gladiators, and the pitch is converted into a war zone. Absurd? Of course. But who can argue with irrational emotions at fever pitch? Were the Pakistani players specifically briefed to behave as they did? Conversely, were our boys instructed not to shake hands with the opposite team? Whose call was it to withhold the standard handshake and snub the Pakistani team? Bad call, mates. Either the organisers take a stand in advance and withdraw from a tournament on ethical, moral and/or political grounds, or play with a straight bat.*

the team still lost. Unfortunately, politics and cricket cannot be compartmentalised when it comes to India-Pakistan matches.

But then comes the question of money. Big money. Those who control the purse strings may be reluctant to take a stand and lose out on the big bucks. For this is what cricket has been turned into -- a Big Bazaar.

There's much more at stake than national pride and honour. Throw in drama on the field and viewers get a spectacle. An unfiltered reality show with not one but many Bigg Bosses lurking in the background, gleefully watching the money roll in.

This is a good time to take a closer look at the powerful machine that manipulates cricket. A few of India's star players have walked away recently, disgusted and disillusioned by the machinations of top officials who are not answerable to anybody. Their vindictive attitude and victimisation of certain players is an open secret. But nobody dares to name names or bell the cat. India has abundant talent, as is evident from Tilak Varma's extraordinary story. Tilak is credited with taking India from crisis to victory during the last, tension-filled over. Tilak owes his success to one individual -- the eagle-eyed cricket coach named Salam Bayash, who spotted the 11-year-old at the Legala Cricket Academy in Lingampally, outside Hyderabad. The "T" in Tilak stands for temperament, gushed Bayash, after his "boy" video-called him from the ground on Sunday.

Cricket is replete with similar success stories which inspire youngsters to play and compete ferociously, given the chance. Imagine these same idealistic kids growing into young adults and encountering ugly skirmishes that sully the spirit of the game. It is being whispered that the Pakistani team was brainwashed and inadvertently

became victims of a "Deep State" conspiracy. If true, it's nothing less than a crime. But to expect India-Pakistan cricket to be divorced from politics is also wishful thinking. The atmosphere is far too vitiated. But a primer for the future is worth framing in the long-term interests of the game. There is enough hatred across the world, impacting the lives of innocents. Should cricket really be added to the boiling cauldron?

Stick to cricket, boys. Your job is to bring your best game to the field. Leave all the references to "Sindoor" and "Tilaks" to political leaders who capitalise on jingoism and word play to score political points. When you win, India wins. Baat khatam!

Dussehra is the feel-good period across India. Victory over Evil vaghera, vaghera. In Mumbai, Dussehra signals the end of Navratri, which means Dandiya sticks will be reluctantly put away till next year and Dandiya Queen Falguni Pathak will disappear ... till she mysteriously reappears twelve months later, belting out dandiya beats like no other. This year, most of the dandiya celebrations got washed out by unseasonal rains, dampening the enthusiasm of young dancers, some of whom save through the year to create elaborate costumes for the nine

nights of revelry, swirling and twirling in anti-clockwise circles for hours. But wait, something snapped in 2025 -- bonhomie. Politics struck again, and groupism raised its ugly head. A few aggressive dancers arrived with bouncers and created barricades with dupattas to keep out "others". Bullies ruled as "chunnis" turned into weapons of mass discrimination while gangs battled it out, shoving and pushing past burly bodyguards guarding the turf. Rowdies at the NESCO garba evening had a free run.

Axe Falls On Secy For Dark Screen at PM Rally; What About Taxpayer?

-BY- Dilip Cherian



The irony writes itself. A glitch that inconveniences a Prime Minister for ten minutes is career-ending; glitches that inconvenience millions of citizens for years are just "teething troubles"



● Love them, hate them ignore them at national peril, is the babu guarantee and Dilip's belief. Share significant babu escapades

When the screen at Prime Minister Modi's rally in Banswara went dark for ten minutes, the fallout was swift: Rajasthan's infotech secretary Archana Singh lost her job. Ten minutes of blank screen, ten seconds of bureaucratic chopping.

It's hard not to smile wryly at the contrast. For years now, taxpayers and professionals have been battling with portals run by the finance ministry, such as income tax, GST, and MCA, you name it, where glitches are practically a way of life. Courts have stepped in, professional bodies have protested, and taxpayers have coughed up late fees running into thousands of crores, all because the government's own tech systems stumble at critical hours. Yet, no secretary has been sent packing for those meltdowns.

Of course, political optics are unforgiving. A rally is theatre,



● *Courts have stepped in, professional bodies have protested, and taxpayers have coughed up late fees running into thousands of crores, all because the government's own tech systems stumble at critical hours. Yet, no secretary has been sent packing for those meltdowns. – Internet*

and in theatre, you don't dim the lights on the star. But perhaps the same urgency should apply to the everyday stage where citizens file taxes, businesses comply with regulations, and professionals keep the economy moving. If accountability is the buzzword, then let's spread

it evenly. After all, the real "screen going blank" moment is when taxpayers log in at 11:59 pm on deadline day and find themselves staring at a frozen page.

UPSC exam needs an upgrade

The UPSC civil services

exam has steadily slipped into becoming a test of memory rather than judgement. What once rewarded depth, analysis, and the ability to argue a case has turned into a sprint through short answers, where the candidate who can reproduce facts at speed is seen as “best prepared”. But in a world where search engines and AI tools can churn out information instantly, valuing recall over reasoning looks increasingly misplaced.

Governance today is not about remembering lists or definitions but about making decisions under pressure, weighing competing interests and showing the moral fibre to say no when necessary. Yet the exam’s design makes it fertile ground for coaching factories, privileging formulaic answers and disadvantaging those who think differently or lack the resources to spend years in a training mill. That narrows the pool, not just socially but intellectually, at a time when the country badly needs broader perspectives.

India aspires to be a hub of digital innovation and global leadership, but its most important recruitment gateway still measures success by rote. A system that prizes quick recall over critical thought risks producing administrators better at quoting than at governing. The real test should be of how future officers handle complexity, ambiguity, and accountability, which are qualities the current format struggles to capture.

Babus love revenue, not science

When a Union minister publicly admits that officials treat the science department like the last seat left on a crowded train, you know there’s a problem. Jitendra Singh’s candid lament that 24 out of 28 states have “reluctant officers” manning science portfolios, reveals what most in the innovation ecosystem already whisper: Science and tech don’t excite India’s bureaucracy.

It’s not hard to see why. For ambitious IAS

■ *The irony writes itself. A glitch that inconveniences a Prime Minister for ten minutes is career-ending; glitches that inconvenience millions of citizens for years are just “teething troubles.” It’s like Trump who recently theatrically spoke about the “escalator” incident at the UN. It made the headlines, but wasn’t exactly system-shaking. Meanwhile, ordinary professionals dealing with frozen tax portals probably fantasise about storming out of their offices daily.*

officers, science departments lack the glamour and clout of home affairs or revenue. Those ministries command headlines, wield power, and offer far more “visibility.” Science? It’s quietly nurturing start-ups, pushing R&D, and trying to create the next big leap. Less flash, fewer headlines, and apparently, little incentive.

But here’s the irony. India’s tech and innovation ecosystem is among the fastest growing in the world. We are a global hub for start-ups, AI development and digital services. Yet, at the state level, the very people meant to shepherd this growth are often indifferent placeholders. It’s like asking someone who hates cricket to captain Team India; they’ll show up, but don’t expect runs on the board.

Mr Singh is right to call it a “mindset problem.” Bureaucratic inertia, a lack of risk appetite and a blind spot for the transformative role of science are holding back momentum. What India needs are senior officers who don’t see science as a punishment posting, but as the portfolio that can redefine the nation’s future.



● Syed Ata Hasnain | a retired lieutenant-general, is a former commander of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps. He is also associated with the Vivekananda International Foundation and the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies.



What we are witnessing today is not the wholesale rejection of globalisation, but a deep backlash against its side-effects. The benefits of integration have not evenly spread



The Age of Backlash: Why Gen Z Angry, World Uneasy

-By-Syed Ata Hasnain



● The generational dimension of this change is important. A great deal of the anger visible today, particularly from Gen Z, is born of unfulfilled expectations. This is a generation that grew up entirely within the globalized era, immersed in digital networks that connected them to global culture, markets and communities. Yet in many countries, especially in the developing world, they face joblessness, precarious employment, corruption, and a lack of upward mobility. — Internet

Globalisation, in the years after the Cold War, was seen as one of humanity's most promising experiments. It broke barriers, fostered interdependence, and opened unprecedented opportunities for trade, development and collaboration. The promise was genuine. Prosperity could spread beyond borders, countries could access new avenues of growth and talent could move more freely. The information revolution and the rise of the Internet seemed to flatten hierarchies and give

individuals the tools to plug directly into the world economy. For a while, this new openness felt transformative, millions were lifted out of poverty and entire sectors — from IT services to global finance — were re-engineered to levels unimaginable before. Yet even as globalisation delivered these profound benefits, it also carried seeds of discontent. The very features that made it powerful — free flows of goods, capital and people — also created winners and losers.

A useful comparison lies

■ *How should India prepare itself? First, by building resilience into its economy; diversifying supply chains, investing in strategic technologies and expanding manufacturing capacity in sectors like semiconductors and clean energy. Second, by stabilising its neighborhood through rapid, visible assistance compacts that reassure smaller states and prevent their collapse into chronic unrest; the Sri Lanka aid package being the model. Third, by strengthening intelligence and security capabilities that can anticipate cross-border radicalization and digitally mobilized unrest. Fourth, by giving its own Gen Z a genuine stake in the system – through transparent governance and employment pipelines. Finally, India must cultivate a diplomatic posture that is simultaneously pragmatic and principled; pragmatic in hedging against bloc politics and protecting national interests.*

with the Industrial Revolution. It, too, created vast opportunities, lifting productivity and broadening horizons, and in doing so encouraged a more liberal and tolerant culture as aspirations multiplied. Yet that surge of change also triggered fierce geopolitical competition, with the late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessing a chain of devastating wars. Globalisation has avoided such direct military conflict, but it has widened inequality between nations and generated waves of social unrest that now destabilise politics.

What we are witnessing today is not the wholesale rejection of globalisation, but a deep backlash against its side-effects. The benefits of integration have not evenly spread. Industrial workers in developed economies found their jobs outsourced or automated, while rural populations in developing countries often saw little of the promised dividends. Migration, while supplying talent and labour to countries in need, unsettled local identities and triggered fears of cultural erosion. Global supply chains, celebrated for efficiency, proved vulnerable when crises like the Covid-19 pandemic or geopolitical conflicts struck.

Above all, the disproportionate distribution of wealth has left ordinary citizens disillusioned. The promise of prosperity gave way to vulnerability — exposure to distant shocks and decisions beyond local control.

This shift has bred a political and social mood that is unmistakably moving toward anti-globalisation. Across the world, governments are cautious about free trade, inclined to restrict migration, and willing to put national resilience above international openness; isolation is seemingly preferred. Borders are hardening not only against goods and people but also against flows of technology and ideas, as great power competition between the United States and China accelerates. The result is a splintering into blocs, with supply chains re-engineered to reduce dependence on rivals and bilateral security pacts proliferating at the expense of multilateral consensus. The generational dimension of this change is important. A great deal of the anger visible today, particularly from Gen Z, is born of unfulfilled expectations. This is a generation that grew up entirely within the globalized era, immersed in digital networks that connected them to global culture, markets and communities.

Modi Praises RSS Chief Bhagwat's Vijaydashmi Speech



● Marking 100 years of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Chief Mohan Bhagwat on Thursday emphasised the importance of individual character building and the central role of the Shakha system in nurturing discipline and value-driven citizens

In a post on X, PM Modi said, “An inspiring address by Param Pujya Sarsanghchalak Dr. Mohan Bhagwat Ji, highlighting the rich contributions of the RSS to nation-building and emphasising the innate potential of our land to attain new heights of glory, thereby benefiting our entire planet.” – Internet

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his admiration for the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Chief Mohan Bhagwat's address on Thursday October 2, 2025, stating that Bhagwat's speech highlighted the rich contributions of the RSS to nation-building and emphasised the innate potential of India to achieve new heights of glory, benefiting the entire planet. In a post on X, PM Modi said, “An inspiring address by Param Pujya Sarsanghchalak Dr. Mohan Bhagwat Ji, highlighting the rich contributions of the RSS to nation-building and emphasising the innate potential of our land to attain new heights of glory, thereby benefiting our entire planet.”

Marking 100 years of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Chief Mohan Bhagwat on Thursday emphasised the importance of individual character building and the central role of the Shakha system in nurturing discipline and value-driven citizens.

Delivering his annual Vijaydashami speech in Nagpur on Thursday, Bhagwat said, “The system for creating individuals was destroyed in our society during the long period of foreign invasion... the Sangh Shakha is such a system. For the past 100 years, Sangh Karyakartas have consistently sustained the system in all kinds of circumstances. We must continue to do this in the future... that is why Swayamsevak must undertake the discipline of changing their own habits by actively participating in the daily Shakha activities. The Shakha exists to nurture individual and collective qualities and spirit to create a favourable atmosphere for better basic human values and solidarity within the society, while actively engaging and cooperating in social activities.”

Applauding the work done by the Swayamsevak in maintaining dialogue with society-oriented individuals, the party chief said, “Swayamsevak have

actively engaged in various aspects of social life, as well as diverse organisations and institutions. This includes both local and national-level organisations. Swayamsevaks continue to cooperate and engage in dialogue with numerous individuals who are actively working in society. The Sangh has drawn certain observations and conclusions based on its collective experience.”He further emphasised the need for the country to have a successful development model based on holistic and integrated outlook to be protected from the upcoming challenges.

“We are still operating within those politics and frameworks, the inadequacies of which have been exposed to us... in the long run, we will have to make a gradual shift... However, there is no other way to protect ourselves from the challenges that we and the world are encountering... We need to create a successful development model based on our holistic and integrated outlook and present it to the world...” he said.

Further, the RSS chief highlighted the need for role models devoted to society, embodying transparency and selflessness, and treating society as their own.”The task of creating an ideal model of the country for the world is not the sole responsibility of the system... we need to create social awareness, and those undertaking this need to become living examples of change. At every level, there should be persons who can become role models, devoted to society, who embody transparency and selflessness, and consider their society as their own and conduct themselves with good behaviour towards this,” he added. Further, he emphasised the need for social harmony, respect for diversity and the primacy of national unity, and performance by the government in accordance with the law rather than being influenced by bias or undue pressure.”Our country has immense diversity. Many languages, multiple religions, diverse lifestyles and a variety of cuisines due to geographic diversity, caste and sub-caste – all these diversities have existed since

inception... As a society, a country, a culture, and a nation, we are united. We must remember that this larger identity is above everything else for us. Because of this, our attitudes towards each other in society are required to be harmonious and respectful. Everyone has their own beliefs, icons and places of worship. We should be careful not to disrespect these in thought, word, or action. Awareness must be created for this. All of us should follow rules, maintain order, and demonstrate harmonious behaviour. Taking the law into one’s hands and coming out on the streets or engaging in hooliganism and violence, on a small matter or merely out of suspicion- this tendency is not correct. A show of strength is deliberately done to provoke a particular community. The consequences of falling into their trap are evil, both in the short and long term. It is necessary to curb such tendencies. The government should operate in accordance with the law, rather than being influenced by bias or undue pressure from anyone...” he further stated.

Stressing on the importance of upholding the idea of making Bharat a prosperous country contributing immensely to the world, Bhagwat said, “The Hindu society is the upholder and guardian of the noble idea of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’. This is why it is the duty of the Hindu society to make Bharat prosperous and a country that contributes immensely to the entire world. The Sangh has been working to organise the entire Hindu society, which, on the basis of its organised strength, safeguarding its Dharma, can offer a new path to the world, and make Bharat prosperous. An organized society can fulfill all its duties on its own. No separate effort will be needed from outside.”

The RSS chief further ensured that that the work of ‘Vyakti Nirman’ would be spread across the country and aim at bringing gradual changes in the society conduct through the five initiatives of social harmony, preservation of family values, environmental protection, selfhood and self-reliance.”

'Rahul Gandhi First LoP To Speak Against Country Abroad': Kiren Rijiju Slams Colombia Remarks, Cites Indira Gandhi



File Photo of Union Minister Kiren Rijiju and Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi-Photo Credit-PTI

New Delhi : Union Minister Kiren Rijiju on Sunday October 5, 2025 criticised Congress MP and Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi over his remarks in Colombia, saying that he is the first LoP who went abroad and spoke against the country and its system and democracy.

He further alleged that Rahul Gandhi is misrepresenting the facts

- Kiren Rijiju criticised Rahul Gandhi's remarks in Colombia, accusing him of misrepresenting India and tarnishing its reputation. Rijiju stated Gandhi is first LoP to speak against the country abroad.

about India, and his actions could tarnish the country's reputation.

In an interview with ANI, Rijiju said, "I have also heard what Rahul Gandhi said in Colombia, he said India cannot

lead the world. What he said is very wrong. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has taken lead in various fields. Our LoP went abroad and said that India cannot be a

global leader. The problem is that if people abroad get the impression that everyone in India is like Rahul Gandhi, it would tarnish the country's reputation."

"There are intelligent people in our country, we have good leaders and people with good ideology. But if Rahul Gandhi speaks like this, people would think that such people are higher in number in India. This is not right..." the Union Minister stated.

The Parliamentary Affairs Minister further defended BJP's response on Rahul Gandhi's statements, saying that the party's response is not driven by personal animosity, but rather due to his actions as the Leader of Opposition (LoP).

He further stated that no previous leader of oppositions, including Indira Gandhi, Lal Krishna Advani, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Sushma Swaraj, and Sharad Pawar, has ever made statements against the country or government while abroad.

Asked why BJP always react to Gandhi's remarks, Rijiju said, "We have nothing to do with him personally. He is LoP... If he speaks irresponsibly, we will not like it. Even Indira Gandhi ji was LoP after losing elections, but she never spoke about the country

outside and all other LoPs after her, whether it is Lal Krishna Advani, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Sushma Swaraj, Sharad Pawar..."

"Show me one LoP who has ever gone outside India and made statements against the country or the Government. Rahul Gandhi is the first LoP who goes abroad and speaks against the country, our system and our democracy," the Union Minister asserted.

Recently, at an event at EIA University of Colombia, Rahul Gandhi took a swipe at the Narendra Modi government, asserting that the biggest challenge India is witnessing is the attack on its democracy.

"India has strong capabilities in areas like engineering and healthcare, so I am very optimistic about the country. But at the same time, there are also flaws in the structure that India has to correct. The biggest challenge is the attack on democracy taking place in India," Gandhi said.

The Congress leader argued that the democratic system remains crucial for diversity, allowing different traditions, customs, and ideas, including religious beliefs, to thrive. However, he added, the democratic system in India is under attack, which is a "major

risk" or threat.

"India has multiple religions, traditions, and languages — in fact, the country is essentially a conversation between all these people and cultures. Different traditions, religions, and ideas require space, and the best method for creating that space is the democratic system," Gandhi said.

"Currently, there is a wholesale attack on this democratic system, and that is a major risk. Another big risk is the tension between different conceptions in parts of the country. With 16-17 major languages and many religions, it is crucial to allow these diverse traditions to thrive and give them the space they need," he added.

Gandhi also attacked the RSS-BJP duo, saying that "cowardice" was at the heart of their ideology.

"This is the nature of BJP-RSS. If you notice a statement of the foreign minister, he said, 'China is much more powerful than us. How can I pick a fight with them?' At the heart of the ideology is cowardice," the Congress leader said.

The BJP has raised strong objections against remarks made by Rahul Gandhi, labelling them as "anti-India" and "insulting" to the nation.

Gandhi Jayanti and the Next Chapter of Swachh Bharat



The impact of Swachh Bharat Mission is well known and has been studied by various organizations of repute and the assets created under this program also tell their own story



● The writer is Union Minister of State for the Ministry of Jal Shakti and the Ministry of Railways | Member of Parliament, Tumakuru Lok Sabha Constituency she punctures inflated egos.

On Gandhi Jayanti, we recall Mahatma Gandhi's timeless conviction: "Sanitation is more important than independence." It was not a metaphor, but a call to action. It signalled that dignity, health, and discipline must form the bedrock of national progress.

It has been eleven years since the launch of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), India has made sanitation a people's movement a Jan Andolan. What began with the vision of making India Open Defecation Free by our Hon'ble Prime Minister has now grown into a culture of cleanliness, hygiene, and community ownership reiterating the belief of "Swabhav Swachhata, Sanskar Swachhata".

The impact of Swachh Bharat Mission is well known and has been studied by various organizations of repute and the

assets created under this program also tell their own story. Under SBM-Grameen, over 11.5 crore toilets have been constructed and today more than 4.7 lakh villages have declared themselves as ODF Plus Model meaning they are equipped with solid and liquid waste management systems and are visually clean. The true impact lies not in these statistics alone, but in the lived experiences of families living in rural areas. This includes places where women who no longer need to walk long distances to relieve themselves; and healthier children; cleaner water bodies where wastewater and plastics are better managed and witnessing panchayats and women's groups taking local leadership in waste management.

The SBM-G program has evolved — from infrastructure to behaviour, from construction

to long-term culture. The journey from ODF to ODF Plus model has not been about ticking boxes, but about ensuring that households, schools, anganwadi centres, and public spaces reflect the success of the rural water and sanitation missions.

Swachhotsav: Cleanliness as Sanskar

The Swachhata Hi Seva (SHS), the annual SBM campaign, with this year's theme — Swachhotsav reminds us that festivals, fairs, and gatherings are not just about celebrations they are also opportunities to practice responsibility and reiterate the thought of Sanskaar in Swachhata. This year through the course of the campaign, it has been heartening to witness communities adopting once more cleanliness as part of their culture, not as an afterthought. Celebrating

festivals responsibly with appropriate waste segregation systems and reduced usage of single use plastic and adoption of eco friendly sanitation facilities through the course of SHS has been a true Swachhotsav where we are not just celebrating, we are institutionalising practices, making these practices become a habit, which in time become heritage.

Sanitation and India's Growth Story

As India positions itself as a key player in the global economy, sanitation and hygiene are not peripheral pieces, they are central cornerstones. Tourists and investors judge India not only by airports, malls and business centers, but also by the cleanliness of its towns, ghats, villages, and public spaces. A clean temple precinct, a litter-free beach, or a heritage site with safe sanitation facilities makes visitors stay longer, enjoy more, and return. Swachhata is thus not only about pride it is about revenue and livelihoods for local communities

For investors, the availability of clean water, waste management systems, and hygienic living conditions for workers is a basic prerequisite. Sanitation is not only social policy it is an economic infrastructure.

Fewer sick days, healthier children, and reduced disease

burden free up family incomes and improve workforce productivity. This, in turn, feeds directly into India's economic momentum. A nation that is clean is a nation that is investible and attractive to the world. At the heart of this mission is jan bhagidari as SBM has always been a movement powered by people. In villages, Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSCs) and Gram Panchayats must continue to institutional anchors of this effort as they ensure every household voice is represented in decisions around rural WASH that will focus on making services responsive, accountable, and sustainable. The next chapter of SBM will continue to deepen the partnership with Panchayats, VWSCs, women's collectives, and youth clubs. The SBM journey is not just about sustaining toilets or drains, it is about unlocking economic opportunities through sanitation. Panchayats near heritage and spiritual sites should be supported to maintain good sanitation facilities, ensuring that India's cultural wealth is matched by civic pride. Waste-to-wealth initiatives should be promoted and marketed to create jobs, income streams, and green enterprises. With clean surroundings, safe water, and reliable waste management, rural areas are attractive destinations

for agro-processing, handicrafts, and local enterprises. The focus for the mission must continue to be on leveraging technology creating both efficiency and employment and on addressing the dignity and welfare of our sanitation workers/safai mitras.

The focus must be on implementing more campaigns to promote mechanised waste handling, enhancing access of sanitation workers to social security schemes and insurance, and providing education support for their families. A clean India must also be a just India that protects those who protect our hygiene. As we celebrate Gandhi Jayanti and mark eleven years of the Swachh Bharat Mission, the vision is clear of making all villages Swachh Sujal Gaon that integrate sanitation with water security and making sanitation move beyond dignity and health to being also about growth and opportunity. We must remember that Swachhata is the first impression of Bharat to the world and it has power to strengthen tourism, enable business, protect families and build pride in our nation. Eleven years of this mission that has stood for credible, lived outcomes. That is how we honour Bapu's vision, and that is how we build the India of tomorrow.



Bihar Election CEC Gyanesh Kumar Confirms Polls To Be Held Before This Date, Stresses SIR Conducted As Per Law

The ECI is preparing for Bihar Assembly elections, ensuring completion before November 22. Reforms piloted in Bihar, like SIR, will be adopted nationwide. The ECI is capping voters per booth at 1200.

● Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar-Photo Credit -PTI

New Delhi: The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) of India, Gyanesh Kumar, confirmed on Sunday October 5, 2025 that the Bihar Assembly elections will take place before November 22, 2025, when the current legislative term concludes. Bihar has a total of 243 assembly constituencies, including two reserved for Scheduled Tribes (STs) and 38 for Scheduled Castes (SCs).

Speaking at a press conference in Patna, Kumar outlined key details of the upcoming polls. "Bihar has 243 assembly constituencies – 2 for STs and 38 for SCs. The term of the Bihar Legislative Assembly ends on November 22, 2025, and

elections will be held before that time... The Election Commission trained booth-level officers for the first time... SIR was launched on June 24, 2025, and completed by the deadline..." he said, as per news agency ANI.

Revising electoral rolls before every election is lawful under the People's Representative Act, he stressed, adding that it cannot be done after the elections conclude.

Kumar urged citizens to participate enthusiastically in the elections, likening the experience to the celebration of the Chhath festival. "We congratulate the voters of India. Thank you to everyone for the successful SIR process. I appeal

to all the voters of Bihar to celebrate this festival of democracy with the same enthusiasm as you celebrate Chhath. Everyone should vote and ensure their participation," he added.

The CEC also lauded the efforts of Bihar's booth-level officers in ensuring a clean voter list, highlighting their exemplary work. "Recently, the voter list cleansing work was carried out in Bihar, and the booth-level officers present before us not only carried out the work of cleansing the voter list in their booths, but 90,277 booth-level officers of Bihar performed a work that is exemplary across the country... Just as Vaishali in Bihar showed the world the path to democracy. Together, you will become a source of inspiration for the country in the work of cleansing the voter list," Kumar said.

“Even now, there is time until ten days before the final nomination date. If any individual or political party feels that a legitimate voter is missing from the list or an ineligible voter is included, they can file their claim or objection. All claims and objections will be resolved at the ERO level. After the nomination process, the voter list will be frozen and no changes will be made until the conclusion of the election,” he emphasised.

CEC Gyanesh Kumar On Aadhaar Inclusion

On inclusion of Aadhaar in the list of documents, CEC Gyanesh Kumar said, “...According to the Supreme Court’s orders and under the Aadhaar Act, Aadhaar cannot be considered proof of date of birth, proof of residence, or proof of citizenship.”

“The Election Commission requested Aadhaar card within the enumeration form itself. Providing your Aadhaar number is not mandatory under the Aadhaar Act, nor under Section 26 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950. It is optional. It depends on the Aadhaar holder. Even under the Aadhaar Act, the Aadhaar card is neither proof of residence nor proof of citizenship. If anyone got Aadhaar card after 2023 or downloaded it after 2023, the Aadhaar card itself, under several orders of the Supreme Court, states that the Aadhaar card

is not proof of date of birth,” he added. “The Supreme Court did say, and we are following that order, that Aadhaar cards should be accepted. We were also accepting Aadhaar cards in the enumeration form and still are... However, the Supreme Court also stated in its order that the Aadhaar card will not be proof of citizenship....the Supreme Court has also stated that it is not proof of citizenship. Other documents may be required for eligibility,” he further stated.

CEC Kumar On First Poll Measures Set To Begin With Bihar Election

The Election Commission has introduced several new measures to improve voter convenience and transparency. Notably, no polling station will now accommodate more than 1,200 voters. Booth-level officials will carry identification cards, while voters’ mobile phones can be deposited outside polling booths. Full webcasting will be conducted at every polling station.

The CEC also announced enhancements to ballot papers: “When the ballot paper is inserted into the EVM, the photo on it is black and white, making identification difficult, although the election symbol remains. The serial number should also be larger. Starting with the Bihar elections, the serial number font

will be larger nationwide, and candidates’ photographs will be in colour,” he said.

Regarding vote-counting procedures, Kumar explained that mismatches between Form 17C and the EVM counting unit will now trigger careful review, and postal ballots will be counted before the final two rounds of EVM counting. Additionally, the Election Commission is gradually implementing ECINET, enabling citizens to access digital index cards with details of total voters and male-female participation within days after the election.

Bihar Election 2025

The electoral contest in Bihar is expected to primarily pit the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, against the Mahagathbandhan alliance, spearheaded by the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). Currently, the NDA holds 131 seats in the 243-member assembly — BJP 80, JD(U) 45, HAM(S) 4, and two Independents — while the Mahagathbandhan has 111 seats, comprising RJD 77, Congress 19, CPI(ML) 11, CPI(M) 2, and CPI 2. Political activity has intensified across the state, with parties ramping up campaigns and exchanging charges ahead of the high-stakes election.

20 dead as heavy rain triggers massive landslides in Darjeeling hills; Mamata to visit area on Oct 6

Union Home Minister Amit Shah On Saturday Ruled Out Talks With The Maoists And Asked Them To Surrender By March 31, 2026, Or Face Intensified Operations: Reports



● *Darjeeling landslide : Locals look at a damaged road after landslides due to heavy rainfall, in Darjeeling district, West Bengal on Sunday October 5, 2025 -Photo Credit-PTI*

Darjeeling (WB): At least 20 people, including several children, were killed and scores injured as relentless downpours unleashed massive landslides across the Mirik and Darjeeling hills in West Bengal on Sunday October 5, 2025, sweeping away homes, severing road links, isolating villages, and leaving hundreds of tourists stranded, officials said.

According to reports compiled by the NDRF and the district administration, fatalities were reported from several locations

– Sarsaly, Jasbirgaon, Mirik Basti, Dhar Gaon (Mehi), Nagrakata and Mirik Lake area.

Stating that the loss of lives is tragic, North Bengal Development Minister Udayan Guha told PTI that the situation is “alarming.”

“As of now the death toll is 20. It is likely to go up. I am on my way to the area,” he said in the evening.

According to the NDRF statement, at least 11 people have died in Mirik, the worst affected area in the landslide, and seven injured have been rescued from the

area.

In Darjeeling, seven people died and the rescue operations were underway with the help of police, local administration and disaster response teams.

“Seven deaths have been reported due to a major landslide in Darjeeling subdivision triggered by heavy rainfall since last night. The rescue and relief work is on,” Darjeeling Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) Richard Lepcha told PTI.

Hundreds of tourists, who had flocked to the Darjeeling hills to

enjoy Durga Puja and post-Puja festivities, have been left stranded as heavy rainfall triggered massive landslides.

Many of them, including families and groups from Kolkata and other parts of Bengal, were visiting popular spots such as Mirik, Ghoom, and Lepchajagat when the rains lashed the hills since Saturday.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced compensation for the victims without specifying the amount and the number of deaths. She said she would visit north Bengal on October 6 to assess the situation.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also expressed condolences over the deaths and said the situation in Darjeeling and surrounding areas is being closely monitored.

At least 40 people were rescued from debris in Dhar Gaon, Nagarakata, where heavy mudslides flattened several houses.

Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari claimed he has information that the disaster claimed 21 lives.

The landslides disrupted traffic movement on key routes, including the Mirik-Sukhiapokhri road, while communication lines to several hilltop settlements were snapped.

Speaking to TV9 Bangla news channel over the phone, the CM described the situation as “grave”.

“Due to incessant rain in Bhutan, water has overflowed into North Bengal. This disaster is unfortunate – natural calamities are beyond our control. We are deeply saddened. I held virtual meetings with officials of five affected districts along with the chief secretary. I have been monitoring the situation since 6 am,” she said.

According to Banerjee, more than 300 mm of rainfall occurred in just 12 hours, causing severe flooding and landslides across at least seven locations.

She compared the situation to the intense flooding that Kolkata experienced last month during the festive season.

“There has been continuous, heavy rain for 12 hours. Landslides have occurred at seven locations. I am keeping a close watch and hope to reach by around 3 pm

on Monday,” she said.

Thousands of tourists have been stranded across the region due to the landslides and road blockages. The CM assured them that the state government would make arrangements to bring them back safely and appealed to tourists not to panic or rush to leave.

“Many tourists are stranded. I request them not to hurry. Please stay where you are. Hotels must not overcharge them. Their safety is our responsibility, and the administration will ensure that,” she said.

Banerjee also announced that the families of those killed in the disaster would receive government compensation and employment for one of their members.

A senior police officer said heavy and continuous rain has severely hampered rescue operations.

“The terrain is slippery, and several houses have been damaged. The extent of damage is still being assessed. Earthmovers are finding it extremely difficult to operate on these slopes,” he said.

Several families in Mirik have been shifted to safer places as precautionary measures, while temporary relief camps have been set up in coordination with local NGOs and the district administration.

In a post on X, Modi said, “Deeply pained by the loss of lives due to a bridge mishap in Darjeeling. Condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. May the injured recover soon. The situation in Darjeeling and surrounding areas is being closely monitored in the wake of heavy rains and landslides. We are committed to providing all possible assistance to those affected.”

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert for extremely heavy rainfall in sub-Himalayan West Bengal, including Darjeeling and Kalimpong, till October 6, warning of more landslides and road blockages due to saturated soil conditions. According to the NDRF, road connectivity remains severely disrupted in Darjeeling district and North Sikkim, and an iron bridge connecting Siliguri with the Mirik-Darjeeling route has been damaged, cutting off access to the region.



● K.C. Singh | The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry.

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Trump's Gaza Peace Plan: Good Start, Hurdles Loom

By- K.C. Singh



● Simultaneously, Israeli national security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, representing a far-right ruling coalition party, led 1,300 illegal Israeli settlers to intrude at the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, the third holiest Islamic site. It was condemned by Islamic nations, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar and others. — Internet

The crisis over Gaza, triggered by the brutal Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, has begun deescalating. On September 29, US President Donald Trump announced his 20-point plan to resolve it. With both the Israeli Cabinet and Hamas giving their approval to its contours, Phase-1 has begun.

This involves the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) retreating to a “yellow line”, skirting Gaza City etc, but well within Gaza. Hamas has agreed to release 20 hostages and hand over the remains of another 28. Israel in return must release about 250 Palestinians serving life terms and another 1722 detainees picked up from Gaza. Hamas seeks

the release of some high-profile prisoners, who can help unite Palestinians politically, across Gaza and the West Bank. So far, Israel has not accepted this demand.

Simultaneously, Israeli national security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, representing a far-right ruling coalition party, led 1,300 illegal Israeli settlers to intrude at the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, the third holiest Islamic site. It was condemned by Islamic nations, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar and others. The Palestinian foreign ministry saw it as an attempt “to thwart international efforts, including President Trump’s efforts, to halt the Israeli aggression and war against our

people in Gaza”.

This underscores the threat to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's governing coalition from his far-right partners. Perhaps with his reputation restored, Mr Netanyahu may not fear seeking a fresh mandate.

Since the UNSC Resolution 242 (1967), followed by Resolution 338 (1973), the core principle for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian issue has been “land for security”. US President Bill Clinton got Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to shake hands at the White House in September 1993. That kicked off the Oslo peace process. President Clinton's final attempt, days before his presidency ended, in December 2000 is the closest any US leader has come to resolving the lingering dispute. But once the 9/11 attacks in 2001 occurred in the United States, the global attention shifted to counter-terrorism and combating Al-Qaeda. For two decades, the Palestinian issue appeared defunct. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tactically kept Hamas, controlling Gaza, isolated from the Palestinian Authority, wielding limited powers in the West Bank. Gaza functioned like an open-air jail with its occupants granted controlled access to Israeli territory. Meanwhile, as Mr Netanyahu came under increasing pressure of criminal prosecution for alleged corruption, he aligned with the far-right political parties. Consequently, he allowed more illegal settlements in the West Bank area. Hamas' 2023 attack caught the Israeli intelligence and government off-guard. It also revived the Palestinian issue.

■ *The US, under President Joe Biden, backed Israel targeting Hamas. The support persisted despite the mounting civilian massacre. Much earlier, in the early part of his first term as President, Donald Trump had announced recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 2017. Following this, the US embassy was shifted there from Tel Aviv in May 2018. This unilateral concession, without extracting Israeli concessions, was unwise.*

Following the 2023 attack, Israel began to decapitate Hezbollah and kill Hamas' top leadership, in Gaza and abroad. Once Mr Trump was back in the White House in January 2025, Israel even attacked Iranian nuclear enrichment facilities.

The US joined in bombing parts of the programme entrenched under mountains. President Trump gave Israel a free hand over six months, while his chant seeking the Nobel Peace Prize got more persistent. The Israeli air attack on the supposed location of the top Hamas leadership, negotiating a ceasefire, in Qatar boomeranged. President Trump felt embarrassed as the Qataris had snuggled up to him with a Boeing 747 gift and the continued hosting of a US military base.

This was the last straw which motivated the US to seek an end to Israel's Gaza operation. However, the next steps can be extremely challenging. First, the demilitarisation of Gaza and disarming of Hamas. Second, having Hamas abandon power, which it has wielded since 2007. Its surviving fighters must also opt for exile or amnesty. Finally, the issue of transitional government, consisting of select Palestinians and experts.

Overseeing that would be another body, led by President Trump, called the “Board of Peace”. The composition of these bodies and the methodology to disarm Hamas are unclear. Meanwhile, the Nobel Peace Prize has gone to a Venezuelan pro-democracy activist, Maria Corina Machado.

She shrewdly dedicated her award to President Trump. She is now in hiding and requires the US pressure on the Venezuelan government to institute democratic reforms and free elections. According to Alfred Nobel the award is to be bestowed on a person, who during the preceding year conferred “the greatest benefit on mankind”.

Targeting The Ugly Indian: New India Myth Justified?

By- Ranjona Banerji



The Internet is flooded with videos and images of Indians "misbehaving", in India and in other lands

● Ranjona Banerji frequently posts about Indian and international news, often commenting on politics and social issues.



● Representational AI Image.

Picture the scene. A street in some picturesque European town. People chatting, drinking wine or coffee, eating, shopping, milling around. Suddenly, a long sharp sweet note from a flute rises and falls. Other instruments join in. People look around, and watch as musicians fill the street and the windows above. Strains of Mozart rise to a crescendo, matched by the

awe and wonder of the people who realise they are part of a flash mob.

This to many is a sign of shared civilisation. Shared beauty and experience, a drop of joy in a mundane world.

Here's another scene. La Tomatina or the tomato festival in Spain where people throw tomatoes at each other in the streets of Bunol. It used to be

a free-for-all with no limits on participants. Now it's a ticketed event limited to 20,000 people. Suddenly, a group of Indians break into a happy Garba dance, weaving through the crowds in streets red with tomato pulp.

This impromptu dance is not seen as a sign of joy and an expression of culture by some Indians. It is seen as a brash

imposition of an alien culture, too much chilli in this tomato soup. I do not know how the other participants view the dance.

But I have heard that foreigners will pay money to be part of a big fat Indian Bollywood wedding. The Internet is flooded with videos and images of Indians “misbehaving”, in India and in other lands. Some of the comments are full of pride and others are full of anger and shame. Both for the same behaviour.

Have we become worse in the way we behave, both within and outside India? Are we more entitled, less aware of those around us, less considerate, more brash?

Or are we falling prey to a reverse racism, where we are so desperate for Western or white acceptance that we are unable to celebrate our own joy?

Several explanations exist for this behaviour. And some justifications. There is possibly a mass fear that if you do not jump up and stand in a line with your bags in hand before the plane lands, you may never get off. It is also possible that everyone one of those 200 people has an emergency that requires they get out of the plane immediately. Some look at criticism of this behaviour as a class thing – that people who once travelled by train, now travel by air and if you don't like how they behave you are a classist git and twit. However, it is also true that

■ *I cannot lie. The loud, obnoxious, entitled behaviour of some Indians, in India and elsewhere, can be unbearable. The most annoying to me is the totally inexplicable and dangerous need to jump out of your seat before a plane lands, just to get your cases out of the holds. You ignore the crew begging you to sit down. You ignore warnings that it is dangerous. You are lost in some world where if you do not stand up now, you may never leave the plane. Never mind the danger you place yourself and others in. After this mad rush, you jam yourselves into a queue in the aisle of the plane for 10 minutes, while it lands, taxis, docks, doors open and so on.*

the people who behave like this are of all social classes. So, is it entitlement of a new India? This reasoning began when talented cricketers emerged out of small-town India and it seemed to some city folk that they were far too boisterous in their celebrations because small town folk are like that. Other said that it was classist to think like that, because the rules of small-town India were now the rules of India itself. A certain amount of political misbehaviour also uses this excuse. Yet, how real is this reasoning? It is, for the most part, the middle classes of India that behave with the most entitlement. Whether it's with how they drive or show off or ignore and flout local customs whether in India or abroad. Perhaps I should separate loud noises from all arguments because being noisy appears to be a trait that is integral to our psyche. We have to scream top volume whenever we can and very often when we should not. Indian tourists are increasingly unwelcome in different places,

because of the lack of respect for others. Goa and Uttarakhand are fed up with tourist behaviour, even if they need the money from tourism. Thailand is similarly wary of large groups of Indians and this makes life difficult for Indians who try to follow local rules and customs. Much of the internal anger comes from law-abiding Indians, which is a small but vocal category. However, I am torn between all the arguments, for and against. I do not for instance agree that poor and small-town Indians behave badly as a matter of course, because they do not understand Western societal standards. I do not agree that poor and small-town Indians behave badly at all. The worst behaviour comes from the middle classes, from people with new money and from some sort of natural exuberance at being able to do all these things denied to them before. The worst vulgarity happens when the rich celebrate – massive weddings, massive fireworks displays at Diwali and so on.



Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge has appointed Ashok Gehlot, Bhupesh Baghel, and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury as senior observers for the upcoming Bihar Assembly elections, with 41 others named as district observers-Photo Credit -PTI

Congress Names Gehlot, Baghel, Adhir as Senior Bihar Poll Observers

■ *Party names 41 district election observers as part of its Bihar poll strategy*

New Delhi: The Congress on Saturday October 4, 2025 appointed former chief ministers Ashok Gehlot, Bhupesh Baghel, and ex-Congress leader in Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, as senior observers for the upcoming Bihar Assembly elections. “The Congress president (Mallikarjun Kharge) has appointed the following leaders as AICC senior observers for the upcoming Assembly elections in Bihar with immediate effect — Ashok Gehlot, Bhupesh Baghel and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury.

The Congress president

has also approved a proposal for the appointment of district election observers, as enclosed, for the upcoming Assembly elections in Bihar, with immediate effect, AICC general secretary K C Venugopal said in a statement.

The Congress chief has appointed a set of 41 leaders from across the country as election observers in every district of the state. Bihar elections are slated later this year and the Congress is leaving no stone unturned to return to power in the state alongwith its allies by ousting the ruling NDA.