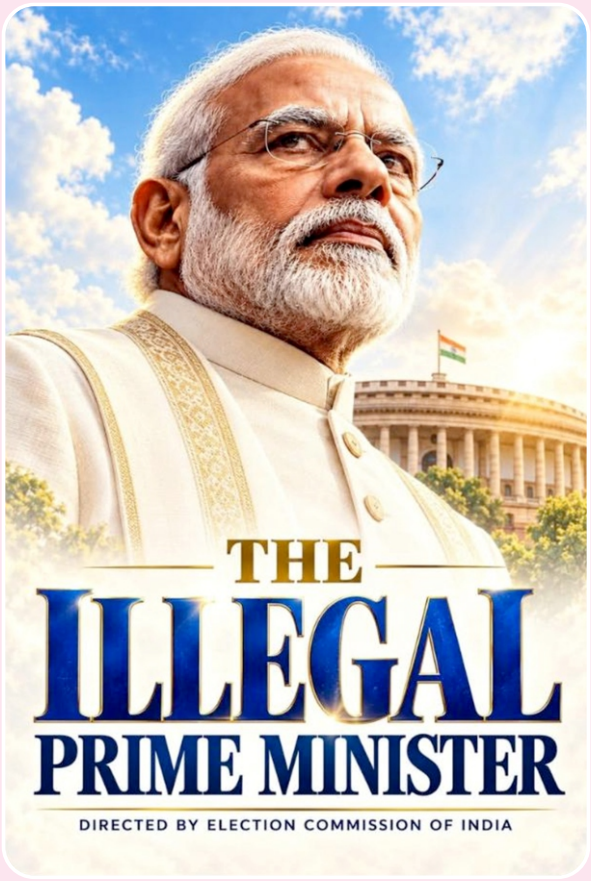
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'Completely illegal knocking out of citizen': Former top court judge Rohinton Nariman on Bengal SIR

The former Supreme Court judge referred to the petition challenging the 2023 law on the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and said the sooner it is decided, the better

Express News Service



Former Supreme Court judge Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman TASHI TOBGYAL

Former Supreme Court judge Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman expressed grave concern over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, the appointment process of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs), and the Supreme Court's role.

Key Points Raised by Justice Nariman

- Threat to the Right to Vote: He stated that the right to vote is currently under serious peril, warning that large-scale voter exclusion through SIR has illegally removed Indian citizens from electoral rolls to serve political ends.
- West Bengal Voter Disenfranchisement: He highlighted the disenfranchisement of around 90 lakh voters during elections in West Bengal, noting that a vast majority of the voter appeals succeeded, which points to widespread illegal deletions.
- Election Commission Functioning: He criticized the poll panel's internal functioning, referencing investigations into Election Commission objections and asserting that the country cannot have an Election Commission that performs poorly or lacks independence
- Executive Control Over Appointments: He criticized executive interference in appointing electoral commissioners, pointing out that when the government itself plays a dominant role in appointing the CEC and ECs (such as under the CEC and Other Election Commissioners Act, 2023), the removal protections and independence of the office lose their meaning.
- Call for Supreme Court Intervention: He urged the Supreme Court to urgently intervene and safeguard democracy, while also criticizing the top court's past restraint or lack of intervention regarding these electoral controversies.

Former Supreme Court judge Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman has called for the Supreme Court's intervention in issues related to Special Intensive Revision (SIR), saying, "We cannot have an Election Commission that malfunctions". The senior jurist referred to The Indian Express investigation about the Election Commission and said the "right to vote", which is at the "heart of our democracy", is in "great peril". The Express investigation, dated September 23, showed that the question of who makes it to the voters' list and who is left out was being raised within the Commission itself.

The former Supreme Court judge, who has also served as Solicitor General of India, spoke at the Late CA MJ Rindani Centenary Memorial Oration at Rajkot last Sunday (September 27) on the subject, "Constitution and the Common Man."

Referring to the SIR in West Bengal ahead of the Assembly polls earlier this year, Justice Nariman said, "All of you have seen that in the West Bengal election, 90 lakh voters — it's an astounding figure — were disenfranchised. Now 90 lakh voters getting disenfranchised didn't somehow move the Supreme Court enough to stay this, so that these 90 lakh voters were out when the Bengal election took place. Out of those who were disenfranchised, some 22 lakh voters actually filed appeals; the others have all seemed to have accepted — they must be poor people, they must be people who don't have the wherewithal or the access to justice that the others had." "And of these 22 lakh voters, some one lakh voter appeals were decided, 93 per cent in favour of the voter. So can you imagine, this was a completely illegal knocking out of the common man, of the citizen of India, in order that a government obtains what it wants, and the result, as you saw in West Bengal, was something that upset the government of the day and brought in the government of the state," he said.

Saying that "very, very disturbing things are happening in our country today", the jurist said, "Equally disturbing is the fact that we discover now, thanks to The Indian Express, that the two gentlemen on either side of the Chief Election Commissioner voiced objections to whatever was going on 14 times, and somehow or the other they didn't press their right under the new Act, Section 18, to say that look, between the three of us, it's the majority vote that counts. So the two of us prevail over you, Chief Election Commissioner. They didn't do that. They were also appointees of the present government."

"So what do we have today? And as of right, as of today itself, today's newspaper tells us that there is some patch-up between these three gentlemen, to the nation's great detriment, where they have come out with some common statement saying, yes, some of the objections you people took seem to be correct, we revert to the old Form 6, and so on and so forth," Justice Nariman said. "So the first issue I wish to flag today is that the common man today under our Constitution, and at, if I may say so, the heart of our Constitution, the heart of our democracy, which is the right to vote, is at great peril. And I hope that the apex court, an institution to which I once belonged, steps in immediately and rectifies these things. You cannot have an Election Commission which functions or malfunctions like this. It's something amazing," he said.

On appointment of Chief Election Commissioner

The senior jurist referred to the petition challenging the 2023 law on the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner. A two-judge bench recently gave a split verdict on the petition and said that it should be referred to a five-judge Constitution bench. "And the sooner the Constitution Bench decides that you have to have somebody like a Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition, coupled with the Chief

Justice or his nominee, who then picks up the best name in order to see that votes actually translate into what they're supposed to translate into happens, the sooner that happens, the better," he said.

The panel that appoints the Chief Election Commissioner now has the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and a Union Cabinet minister appointed by the Prime Minister. The main opposition Congress has opposed this, saying the current system gives undue advantage to the government.

The Election Commission, Justice Nariman said, originally consisted only of the Chief Election Commissioner. "He was to be appointed by the government of the day, subject to a law made by Parliament. This is very important. And later, laws added two more commissioners, so that we have three commissioners as of date. This Chief Election Commissioner had a fixed tenure of 5 years, could not be removed save by impeachment in the same manner as a Supreme Court judge, which meant that you required a two-thirds majority in both houses, present and voting, in order to get rid of him. So it becomes difficult to get rid of, but the difficulty is, if the appointment is in the hands of the government of the day, then this removal procedure doesn't add very much to independence or impartiality. This is the first conundrum that we face," he said.

"Second, the two commissioners who are with him are also appointed by the government of the day, and they can only be removed with his concurrence, with the Chief Election Commissioner's concurrence," he said. "Recently, we had in Anoop Baranwal's case in 2023, the Supreme Court looking into the fact that so many years have passed since the Constitution came into force and Parliament making no law whatsoever under Article 324 for appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and the other Election Commissioners. So the court suggested, why don't we take a leaf out of Section 4A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, which appoints the Director of the CBI, and for that Director you require to have a collegium consisting of the Prime Minister of India, Leader of the Opposition, and the Chief Justice of India? So the court suggested that pro tem, until Parliament makes a law, we will have these three people who will select somebody who is independent and impartial.

"Now what does Parliament do? It's amazing. Parliament immediately enacts in 2023 itself, an Act for the appointment of all these people, and instead of these three functionaries, the Prime Minister has his own minister as number two, and then as Leader of the Opposition, so that again you are back to square one," he said. "Now the unfortunate part is that all this came before the court very recently. Two learned judges differ, and the ultimate thing is now that it's gone before a bench probably of five judges in order to find out whether this is good law, not good law. But meanwhile, these appointments continue only in the hands of the government of the day," the jurist said.

Courtesy **Express News Service**, 6 October 2026.

The Radical Humanist is available

At our own website: *http://www.indianrenaissanceinstitute.com* at: 'The Radical Humanist' page and also at: *http://www.lohiatoday.com/*on periodicals page, thanks to Manohar Ravela who administers the site on Ram Manohar Lohia, the great socialist leader of India.

– Mahi Pal Singh

‘ECI Wants to Exclude Voters, Not Add Them’: Ex-EC Ashok Lavasa and Ex-IAS Officer Jawhar Sircar Lead Convention on Bengal SIR

The Wire Staff

A citizens’ convention in Kolkata, organised by former MP and retired IAS officer Jawhar Sircar and CPI(M) leader Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya, questioned the legality of the SIR and called for its scrapping.

New Delhi: Former election commissioner (EC) Ashok Lavasa, on Tuesday (October 13), said voters in West Bengal had been removed from electoral rolls on the suspicion that they were not Indian citizens, rather than on the basis of evidence.

Speaking at a citizens’ convention in Kolkata demanding the scrapping of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) and the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, Lavasa alleged that electoral registration officers (EROs), the only officials authorised to delete names, had been denied access to the Election Commission of India’s (ECI) centrally-controlled ECINET software.



Ex-EC Ashoka Lavasa speaking at the convention,
Photo: By arrangement.

“EROs are only authorised officials to remove voters. But they were unable to access ECINET. This amounts to illegality. In normal course, appeals against decision by EROs can go to the district election officers or chief electoral officer,” he said, describing the exclusion of EROs as illegal.

The former EC also accused the ECI of working to keep people off the voter rolls instead of putting them on. “With the tactics deployed this time, the goal is not to include. Possibly the priority is to exclude people from the voter list on the suspicion that they are not Indian citizens and not on evidence,” he said, addressing the gathering via video link.

The citizens’ convention was organised by former MP and retired IAS officer Jawhar Sircar and Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya. It made three demands, namely cancellation of the SIR exercise, removal of the CEC and an independent probe into what the organisers called “a criminal conspiracy” behind the mass disenfranchisement of voters.

Other speakers at the convention included writer Shamik Bandyopadhyay, former vice-chancellor of Jadavpur University Ashok Nath

Basu, former IAS officer Anita Agnihotri, activist and filmmaker Prakash Raj and Aparna Bhattacharya, a journalist and data analyst who has covered the SIR extensively for *The Wire*.

The event was held in the open, in front of the Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee Centre for Culture and Research on A.J.C. Bose Road, after two of the city's main cultural venues, Kala Mandir and the Academy of Fine Arts, cancelled the organisers' bookings. Sircar said the venues refused because the gathering was seen as "anti-government".

The shift to the street drew a large crowd, including several voters whose names had been deleted during the revision.

Dissent from within the commission

Lavasa, in his speech, pointed to recent reports revealing that ECs Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi had put objections on record at least 14 times over 10 months to decisions taken without their knowledge, during the same period when the SIR was rolled out across the country.

He said the lack of public minutes and agendas made it impossible to know whether SIR-related decisions were unanimous, decided by majority or taken by the CEC alone. "This casts a doubt in the minds of the people whether the decisions of the Election Commission, including on the SIR, were unanimous or taken by majority," he said.

He also questioned the commission's use of birth-date categories drawn from the Citizenship Act to sort voters, arguing that Article 326 of the constitution requires the ECI to enrol every adult citizen who is not specifically disqualified.

"If people feel that the umpire is not neutral, they will question the winning team's victory as well," Lavasa said.

Disqualification on the basis of discrepancy

Lavasa also called out the removal of voters over discrepancies in administrative records, saying that logical errors were not grounds enough for disenfranchising a voter.

"Discrepancy cannot be ground for disqualification…All those born in India and who have attained 18 years should be on the voters' list. The people who were struck off the roll were once included by ECI in the voters' list using its procedures, " he said.

The former EC also questioned the timing of the SIR in West Bengal, arguing that the ECI went ahead with the lengthy exercise even though it knew that the time frame before the approaching state assembly elections was very short.

"Revision of rolls happened earlier also. But never in history voters were so anxious and so worried whether their names will remain or will be excluded from the list," he added.

Sircar questions form 7 applications

Sircar, a former chief electoral officer of West Bengal, called the SIR guidelines a "corporate document" and said that senior ECI officials should face criminal charges over the alleged "conspiracy" behind the mass deletions.

"They need to be tried on criminal conspiracy charges, even if they do resign after the current movement," he said.

He demanded that the commission disclose who filed the large number of form 7 applications, used to object to a voter's voter's inclusion or seek the removal of a name from the electoral roll. He also criticised the slow pace at which roughly 30 lakh wrongly-excluded voters were restored to the roll.

Figures cited at the convention showed that, in West Bengal, 6,39,049 form 7 applications had been processed, of which 5,72,330 had resulted in deletions, a success rate of about 90%. Of the 34,13,481 form 6 applications seeking the addition of names, only 7,07,606 – or 21% – had been accepted. More than 7.26 lakh addition requests had been rejected and about 4.86 lakh had not been processed at all.

Investigative reports from Uttar Pradesh, cited by critics, state that the ECI's ERONET

software generated 87,127 form 7 applications on its own, 85,858 of which reportedly gave no reason for deletion. Similarly, in West Bengal, 5,38,320 form 7 applications were allegedly generated by the EROs without a reason for deletions.

Moreover, as per a report submitted by the ECI to the Supreme Court, around 38.3 lakh appeals to SIR deletions have been filed before tribunals. Of these, 22.2 lakh appeals concerned voters who had been excluded, while 16.1 lakh appeals challenged the inclusion of names.



Photo: By arrangement.

'A human tragedy'

Agnihotri, who has overseen roll revisions herself, called the process "a human tragedy".

"We were always told that voting is an important right of the people, and we took extra effort to include even the last person in the rolls so they could exercise their rights," she said, "Now it's reversed. All efforts are being made to see how people can be excluded."

Agnihotri questioned how any government could claim a real mandate in seats where the number of excluded voters was larger than the winning margin.

Former Rajya Sabha MP Bhattacharya said the deletions fell hardest on religious minorities, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and other groups that often lack the long paper trail the SIR demands. He added that the commission had a duty to make sure no eligible voter was removed in the name of 'cleaning the rolls'.

Raj called the SIR the "most dangerous disease" facing Indian democracy and said it aimed to "divide the country into two – people who can vote and people who cannot vote."

Raj contextualised the revision within a broader, multi-year strategy by the ruling political establishment to dismantle opposition forces nationwide. "Even before Gyanesh Kumar came (as the CEC), they (BJP) broke parties in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Bihar," he said.

He also claimed that the Union government's efforts to defend the chief election commissioner, who is currently under fire for major irregularities in the SIR process, were evidence of such a relationship.

"This regime of Modi and Shah used ECI. You have seen how they broke parties in Maharashtra and Bihar before SIR and Gyanesh Kumar came into picture. They have centralised data; they have used Form 7 to delete minority votes. The way Modi govt wants to save CEC shows how ECI helped them. As civil society, it is time that we come together," said Raj.

Concerns over the scale of the revision

In West Bengal, around 60 lakh voters were placed under adjudication during the SIR process. Murshidabad, Malda and Uttar Dinajpur together accounted for more than 24 lakh of them. *The Wire* has previously reported on individual polling booths in Lalgola, Murshidabad, were the flagged voters were overwhelmingly Muslim, while a fully Hindu booth nearby had zero people flagged.



Photo: By arrangement.

Aparna shared the case of Sahinura Begum, 26, of Raiganj in Uttar Dinajpur. Marked "under adjudication" on the February 28 final roll, she was finally cleared on March 27. Six days later, an unknown person filed an appeal to have her name struck off again. A tribunal dismissed the appeal on April 18.

"Sahinura won. But think about it. A citizen had to prove twice that she is a voter in her own country, and the second test was completely manufactured," she said.

Citing the ECI's own submission to the Supreme Court on September 16, she said 16 lakh of the 38 lakh appeals before the tribunals sought to delete other people's names, many of them voters already cleared by judicial officers. "The tribunal that was set up to correct mistakes has today become a new route for cutting names," Aparna added.

ECI's defence of SIR

The commission has defended the revision as necessary to clear the rolls of dead, shifted and duplicate voters. It claims that filing a form 7 application does not automatically lead to deletion without a hearing and that party booth-level agents provide local oversight.

On October 9, the ECI capped the number of form 7 applications one person can file at 10, citing "unsubstantiated bulk objections", and recommended prosecution for false declarations. Organisers of the citizens' convention notes that the step came too late.

In May, the Supreme Court upheld the SIR's validity under Article 324 but ruled that the ECI cannot make a final decision on anyone's citizenship. It had also ordered for Aadhaar card to be accepted as a 12th identity document, directing the commission to publish lists of deleted voters.

Meanwhile, Union ministers have dismissed opposition protests over irregularities in the SIR exercise as "street drama".

The convention was held three days after more than 240 opposition MPs, led by Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge, met President Droupadi Murmu with a memorandum seeking to halt the SIR.

This article went live on October fourteenth, two thousand twenty six, at fourteen minutes past twelve at noon.

Courtesy **The Wire**, Oct 14 2026.

14 times in 10 months, two Election Commissioners objected on record to poll panel steps

From keeping them in the dark to adding new voters, deleting names, Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi flagged "unauthorised, illegal" moves.

Ritika Chopra

The Election Commission of India's (ECI) Special Intensive Revision (SIR), which began in Bihar in June 2025, an otherwise routine clean-up of the rolls, has struck more than 13 crore names off the draft voter rolls in 30 States and Union Territories. This has put the Election Commission at the centre of intense public debate over its role in deciding who gets to vote – and who doesn't.

An investigation by *The Indian Express* reveals that questions were raised on these very issues within the three-member Election Commission (EC) itself, time and again through much of this same period. By two of the three Election Commissioners, Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi, no less.

Why this matters

2 out of 3 Election Commissioners complained about being kept in the dark about various steps, including adding new voters, and deleting names.

They called steps on new voters 'unauthorised, illegal'; warned against voter database access being 'centralised' in Delhi, bypassing state officials.

On concerns over integrity of voter software, dissenting Commissioners even knocked on the Cabinet Secretary's door.

This marks an unprecedented rupture inside the Election Commission and reveals a cloud over its conduct.

The national rollout of the SIR has been under the supervision of all three Commissioners. But Sandhu and Joshi have formally objected, on record, at least 14 times over the last 10 months – four times on a single day – to decisions taken and orders issued, they say, without their knowledge. The stakes couldn't be higher.

MEET THE TWO ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

SUKHBIR SINGH SANDHU



HE JOINED as Election Commissioner on March 15, 2024. A 1988-batch IAS officer of the Uttarakhand cadre, he served as Chief Secretary of Uttarakhand from July 2021 to January 2024. Prior to that, from 2019 to 2021, he was Chairman of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). In February 2024, he briefly served as Secretary to the Lokpal.
He also served as Collector of Haridwar, Gautam Buddha Nagar (NOIDA) and Udham Singh Nagar districts. He was Principal Secretary to four Chief Ministers across three political parties between 2007 and 2014.
Sandhu completed his MBBS from Government Medical College, Amritsar, and has a Master's in History from Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. He is also a Law graduate.

VIVEK JOSHI

HE JOINED as an Election Commissioner on February 19, 2025. A 1989-batch IAS officer of the Haryana cadre, he served as Chief Secretary of Haryana. He has also served in the Ministries of Textiles, Women and Child Development, and Finance. In Haryana, he was Deputy Commissioner of Jind, Hisar and Panchkula, and Divisional Commissioner of Ambala. He has been a board member of the Reserve Bank of India and the State Bank of India.
Joshi has a PhD in International Economics from the Graduate Institute, Geneva, and a B.E. in Mechanical Engineering (1987) from Roorkee University, now known as IIT Roorkee.



— DEEPAK TENGURIYA

For, the objections relate to the core of the Election Commission's mandate: new voter registration, deletion and restoration of voters in the rolls; filing of appeals against orders restoring voters in the SIR process; and the custody, and security, of the entire electoral roll itself. All objections related to these were copied to Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, too. Some were sent to Deputy Election Commissioners under their watch.

In one such written objection, Sandhu complains that the EC acted against the written advice of two Commissioners and claim its action was "unauthorised and illegal." Most recently, in a radical departure from the norm, Joshi and Sandhu wrote separately to the Cabinet Secretary complaining about changes in work allocation that, in effect, removed a layer of oversight of the IT backbone for the electoral rolls. They made it clear: these changes had been done without their knowledge and they struck them down.

It was after this, on September 9, that the CEC and the two ECs met, their first full meeting in four months.

The Indian Express has seen each of these exchanges, and interviewed a range of officials in New Delhi, Kolkata, Goa and Mumbai, to reconstruct the extent of the disquiet within, unprecedented in scale and significance within the constitutional authority that is entrusted with the free and fair conduct of the nation's elections.

More so, because all three were handpicked by the NDA government and appointed under the 2023 Act by a selection panel of the Prime Minister, Union Home Minister and the Leader of Opposition. The Opposition member, Congress's Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, recorded a dissent over the appointment process when Sandhu and Gyanesh Kumar were named Election Commissioners in March 2024. LoP Rahul Gandhi, too, recorded his dissent when Kumar was elevated to CEC and Joshi appointed in February 2025.

On September 21, *The Indian Express* sent a questionnaire to the Commission on the issues flagged by the two Election Commissioners asking what was done to address their concerns. There was no response. Both the ECs were also sent emails on September 21, asking them whether their concerns were addressed. Both the emails also sought responses on whether these issues were flagged during the September 9 meeting. Both emails were followed up by phone calls on Monday and Tuesday. There was no response.

TEN MONTHS, 14 NOTES: THE OBJECTIONS ON RECORD

Five of the 14 notes by ECs Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi were copied to Chief Election Commissioner

1. **OCT 28, 2025 — SANDHU:** Letters, orders in ECI's name without Commission's approval.
2. **APR 16, 2026 — SANDHU:** Getting to know about new IT modules, portals from media.
3. **APR 16 — SANDHU:** Official communications issued without Commission's approval.
4. **APR 16 — JOSHI:** For over a year, got no agenda before, minutes after, Commission's meetings.
5. **APR 16 — JOSHI:** Officers on foreign trips without Commission's approval.
6. **APR 24 — JOSHI:** Reiterates no official communications without Commission's approval.
7. **MAY 16 — JOSHI:** Don't change Form 6 (new voter) without Govt approval; Sandhu agrees on May 19.
8. **MAY 29 — JOSHI:** Warns electoral roll database is being centralised, needs audit; Sandhu endorses on July 13.
9. **JUL 29 — JOSHI TO CABINET SECRETARY:** Official redistributing work without knowledge.
10. **JUL 29 — SANDHU TO CABINET SECRETARY:** Reiterates work roster issue, seeks action against official.
11. **JUL 30:** Joshi and Sandhu strike down new allocation order.
12. **AUG 12 — SANDHU:** Who authorised appeals on EC's behalf were West Bengal's tribunals?
13. **AUG 13 — SANDHU:** Form-6 change is 'unauthorised and illegal'.
14. **AUG 14 — SANDHU:** Field officers can't access ECI Net system. DG(IT) has no power to restrict.

1. Who's a "new voter", why was Form-6 changed?

In July this year, as first reported by *The Indian Express*, a form that every adult citizen has to fill to become a voter started asking a question it never did earlier. Linking the application to the SIR, it asked if the new voter or their parents/ grandparents "exist" in the "electoral roll of last SIR." Applicants could not proceed without answering it. This despite the fact that in May, Joshi had warned on file that Form 6 could not be changed in this manner without the government amending the rules, and Sandhu had agreed. The change was made anyway.

After *The Indian Express* first reported this change in July, Sandhu put on record on August 13 that it was "unauthorised and illegal" and "must be removed immediately". Until Monday morning, that question was still there.

2. Who should have access to the electoral roll?

The Commission's strongest defence against every political allegation on electoral roll rigging has been that the roll preparation is decentralised. Each constituency's voters' list is prepared and controlled by its Electoral Registration Officer, a statutory authority on the ground. Usually, the ERO is the Sub-Divisional Magistrate. This list sits on a software, ERONet, and its successor ECINet. Over the past year, the two Commissioners have repeatedly questioned whether EROs' access to this list is now being restricted.

This was what Joshi red-flagged in May this year — the SIR was gathering pace across states — as "gradual centralisation of the electoral roll database" and proposed an audit to certify that "no one, except the concerned statutory authorities, has credentials to make any change in the (voter) database."

In August, Sandhu reiterated this. He recorded that state-level election officials were reporting they "don't have proper and complete access" to the ERONet portal, the digital system through which they maintain the electoral roll. He flagged that the Election Commission's Director General of IT Seema Khanna "doesn't have any legal authority to restrict proper and complete access and freedom to operate, as given by law, to the statutory authorities."

The defence the Election Commission has relied on for decades, the two ECs were saying, is being dismantled from inside its own IT division.

3. West Bengal: who authorised the appeals?

The SIR was the most deeply contested in West Bengal. There was no evidence of its role in the election outcome. Of the 294 seats that went to polls, in 49, the SIR deletions exceeded the victory margin. But in these, the spoils were almost evenly shared — 26 were won by BJP and 21 by TMC. But the manner in which names were struck off prompted the Supreme Court, in February 2026, to take the last leg of the SIR out of the Commission's hands and get judicial officers to decide on the plight of 60 lakh voters flagged for "logical discrepancies." Of these, 27 lakh electors were subsequently deleted by the Commission. The court then ordered tribunals of retired High Court judges to hear appeals against those decisions.

Last week, the Commission told the court that there were 38 lakh appeals pending before the tribunals: 22.21 lakh filed by deleted voters seeking to be restored. The other 16.10 lakh were filed against voters the judicial officers had included, seeking their deletion. The Commission did not say who filed those. This was the issue flagged by Sandhu — about the Commission appealing against voters whom judicial officers had included.

In August, he wrote to Commission officials asking, "Who was authorised to file these appeals on behalf of ECI, and by whom?"

and "Who actually filed these appeals on behalf of ECI?" He recorded that neither he nor Joshi nor the current Chief Electoral Officer of West Bengal had been informed about the basis or process of filing the appeals.

4. Goa: why did the software reject eligible voters?

The same centralisation, which Joshi and Sandhu had flagged repeatedly, ended up disenfranchising potential voters in Goa. On January 29, the Supreme Court ordered that voters flagged for "logical discrepancies" during the SIR be allowed to submit documents and be heard before the final roll was published. A "logical discrepancy" is a mismatch the software throws up when it tries to link a voter to a parent or relative on an older roll: a name that doesn't match, an age gap that doesn't add up.

Goa's EROs heard these cases. On the documents produced, they found 97 voters eligible for the final roll. The software had no way to record that decision.

Between February 11 and 17, the office of Goa's Chief Electoral Officer wrote eight times to Gyanesh Bharti, the Senior Deputy Election Commissioner in charge of the state, copying Director General of IT Seema Khanna every time, asking for the rollback option that would let EROs reverse the earlier deletions as the Supreme Court had directed. The requests went unanswered as the deadline for publication of the final electoral roll approached. The provision was not enabled in time. The 97 were left off the final voters' roll in Goa. Ninety seven voters is a small number, however this goes far beyond 97 — it is the Election Commission of India's job to ensure that every valid vote gets counted.

Objections within: what the law requires

The Commission is a constitutional body under Article 324, made up of the Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners who are equal in rank. The CEC is first among equals. He does not have the power to decide alone.

Under the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, all business of the Commission, says Section 18, "shall, as far as possible, be transacted unanimously". If the CEC and the Election Commissioners "differ in opinion on any matter", the matter "shall be decided according to the opinion of the majority." The same section allows the Commission to settle its own procedure and the division of its work, but only "by unanimous decision".

Key Takeaways

- 01
  Two out of three Election Commissioners have lodged **14 formal objections** against poll panel decisions, led by chief Gyanesh Kumar in 10 months.
- 02
  Commissioners **Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi** say key decisions were made without their knowledge or approval.
- 03
  The internal rift focuses on the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** affecting 13 crore voter names.
- 04
  ECs challenged **"unauthorised, illegal"** changes to Form 6 for new voter registration.
- 05
  Concerns raised over the **"gradual centralisation"** of the electoral roll database via IT divisions.
- 06
  Centralised software now **overrides ground-level Electoral Registration Officer**

(ERO) decisions, blocking eligible voters.

- 07
  Centralising digital systems **erodes the EC's traditional decentralised safeguard** against rigging.
- 08
  Officials questioned the **legal authority of the IT Director General** to restrict access for statutory officers.
- 09
  Software issues in Goa led to the **disenfranchisement of 97 eligible voters** despite Supreme Court orders.
- 10
  The rift highlights tensions over the **2023 Act mandate** that EC business be transacted unanimously.
- 11
  Objections were copied to **CEC Gyanesh Kumar**, signalling an unprecedented constitutional authority rift.
- 12
  Unlike past individual dissents, this rift sees the **Commission majority sidelined** from decisions.

Indeed, both Commissioners invoked these provisions in their notes to remind the Commission's officers how it is meant to work. On April 16, Sandhu told the Commission's senior officers that "many communications go out in the name of the ECI but they do not have the approval of the Commission", and that from then on every communication must have it, "as per the provisions of 2023 Act".

Eight days later, Joshi told the same officers that "several communications are disseminated in the name of the ECI without the requisite approval of 'the Commission'," and that all future communications must have that approval, "in accordance with the provisions of Article 324 of the Constitution" and the Act.



Ritika Chopra

An award-winning journalist with 19 years of experience reporting on politics, governance, and public policy, Ritika Chopra is currently Resident Editor of The Indian Express, Mumbai. She oversees the edition's editorial coverage and reporting on the city and the wider region. Previously, she has served as Chief of the National Bureau (Government) and National Education Editor in New Delhi, leading coverage of government policy and education. Ritika has closely tracked the Union Government, with a focus on politically sensitive institutions such as the Election Commission of India and the Education Ministry, and has authored investigative reports that have prompted official responses. Ritika joined The Indian Express in 2015. Previously, she was part of the political bureau at The Economic Times, India's largest financial daily. Her journalism career began in Kolkata, her birthplace, with the Hindustan Times in 2006 as an intern, before moving to Delhi in 2007. Since then, she has been reporting from the capital on politics, education, social sectors, and the Election Commission of India.

Courtesy **Express investigation** 25 September 2026.

With its press note, the Election Commission makes the case against itself

What more must the CEC do to deserve impeachment?" I had asked in this column ('The move to impeach the CEC, though symbolic, matters', IE, March 17), supporting an Opposition-led motion of impeachment against Gyanesh Kumar.

I was wrong. The exposé by The Indian Express, among the finest pieces of investigative journalism in recent times, shows that the Chief Election Commissioner could do much more than anyone had imagined. And if there was any room for doubt, the Election Commission's own statement has officially removed it.

The ECI's press note of September 26 is a formal admission of guilt. The two-page note is a sound legal basis to impeach the CEC. And also to remove the other two Election Commissioners who have approved this note.

Just to recap: The Constitution (Article 324(5), read with Article 124 (4)) does not allow the removal of the CEC except through impeachment on grounds of "proved misbehaviour or incapacity". So, while impeachment does not require proving "criminality", "misbehaviour or incapacity" does not apply to any kind of misconduct, ordinary error or a mistaken interpretation in good faith. Impeachment should kick in only in cases of gross misconduct involving the wilful breach of fundamental norms of such an office.

The Supreme Court, in Anoop Baranwal, has formulated the norms expected of the Election Commissioners. There are also the six internationally recognised "Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct": Independence, impartiality, integrity, propriety, equality, and competence and diligence. Can anyone accuse Gyanesh Kumar of any of these virtues? In the last article, I had built a case around normative principles and substantive consequences: Blatant partisanship, impropriety and abuse of office for mass disenfranchisement. Now, we can add multiple and wilful gross violations of law to make a robust legal case against the CEC and the other ECs.



Yogendra Yadav

Read paragraph 1(vi) of the press note issued by the Election Commission: "For all Commission's meeting (sic), agenda will be circulated in advance and minutes will be issued." This is an astounding statement, especially when read in the light of The Indian Express exposé that the absence of any agenda or minutes for the past year was indeed one of the objections raised on April 16 this year by Vivek Joshi, one of the ECs. Thus, this is a formal admission that this constitutional authority has been carrying out its business without the minimum procedures required of any committee or society, or even a local club.

Unless the Commission comes out with minutes of those meetings, we must assume that there is no paper to back up the series of momentous decisions taken in the name of the Election Commission, especially those regarding the SIR. This presumption of illegality must apply to even the three SIR orders, which all the ECs now present as "unanimous". The question is not whether the three Commissioners, then or now, agree on those orders but whether the decision was proposed, deliberated upon, agreed to and recorded as such by the entire Commission before these orders were announced and implemented. In the absence of any proof to the contrary, we

must assume that this gross lapse proves both incapacity and grave dereliction of constitutional duties.

Next, turn to paragraph 1(iii) and 3(iii), which relate to the much-debated issue of changes to Form 6. The ECI's press note admits to three wilful violations of law committed by the Election Commission. First, it misrepresents the apex court order to say, "The declaration attached to Form 6 for SIR has been upheld by the Hon'ble Supreme Court." As several legal commentators have pointed out, the Court didn't quite do so. Second, the decision to revert to the original Form 6 for the non-SIR period, clearly in response to the objection of the two ECs that this change in the statutory form was "unauthorised and illegal", is an admission that the modified form being used by the ECI so far was gross violation of law, especially after it was put on notice by no less than the Commission members. Third, the claim that the 97 wrongfully deleted voters in Goa have been helped to become voters by filling in Form 6 is another proof of wilful violation of law. The ECI is asking voters who it knows existed on pre-SIR rolls, but were found to be wrongfully deleted, to sign a false statement. They have to pretend that they are "new" voters and undertake: "I am applying for inclusion in Electoral Roll for the first time." They are also made to sign affirming that a false statement carries a punishment of imprisonment of up to one year. Over the past year, the ECI has forced millions of voters to commit this illegality, for it failed to evolve any procedure to rectify its own error of wrongful exclusions.

Paragraph 1(iv) of the note proposes to set up a committee of experts, again in response to objections by Commission members, to "review ECINET to double-check that it complies with the provisions of the Acts and Rules". This is another breathtaking admission: The ECI is now not sure whether the online portal and software already used to delete more than 13 crore names from the electoral rolls was in accordance with law. As per The Indian

Express report, two Commissioners were sure that it was not. Besides, the note promises "further flexibility" to "field officers", who include the EROs, the sole legal authority responsible for any inclusion or exclusion in electoral rolls, who had repeatedly complained of being shut out from this system. Now they will enjoy some "flexibility", not the authority given to them by law.

Finally, let us note what the ECI still does not mention: Who authorised the 16 lakh-plus appeals filed against the voters who had managed to get their names back on the rolls in Bengal? Perhaps the note found this breach of law too scandalous to be mentioned.

All you now need to know is Section 32(1) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, which holds that it is a criminal offence for any election official to do anything in the preparation of electoral rolls that is "without reasonable cause, guilty of any act or omission in breach of such official duty". And ask yourself if the entire Election Commission is not guilty of this criminal offence.

Courtesy **The Indian Express**, 29 September 2026.

Thanks, especially for the very timely much needed exposure on the cover page (**The Radical Humanist, October 2026**).This explains why the order of the Constitution Bench in the case of NJAC for refinalising the Memorandum of Procedure for appointment of judges of constitutional courts has remained unimplementd for the last 10 years.

S.N. Shukla

‘No Protection For Acts Done in Violation of Rules’: Former Minister R.K. Singh Calls for Criminal Case Against CEC

The Wire Staff

Singh alleged that the Election Commission’s use of revised electoral rolls – while appeals against the deletions were still pending – was illegal.



Former Minister of Power and New & Renewable Energy, R.K. Singh.
Photo: Screengrab from X.

New Delhi: A day after slamming the Election Commission’s Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in an open letter and demanding criminal cases against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, Former Union home secretary R.K. Singh has clarified that the immunity against prosecution granted to the three election commissioners does not extend to “acts done in violation of the laws and rules”.

A day earlier, he had written a scathing open letter saying criminal cases should be filed against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar. To this, he received responses suggesting the CEC has immunity from criminal proceedings under Section 16 of the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023. That information, he said, was “incorrect”.

“Some people have referred to the immunity against prosecution granted to the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners under Sec 16 of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners Appointments Act 2023. This protection is available to the CEC and ECs only for acts done in the discharge of their official duties. It does not give any protection for acts done in violation of the laws and rules; because violation of laws and rules are not part of discharge of official duties of the CEC and the ECs. So they can be

prosecuted for acts done in violation of the law," Singh wrote in a post on X.

In the open letter, he wrote that this was the first time in India's history that the government was on a mission to disenfranchise people. "[Until] now, the efforts of the Government and the Election Commission have always been to enroll all eligible voters. It was a mission to deepen democracy and empower all citizens. This is the first time in the history of the country that the mission is to disenfranchise people," Singh wrote.

Singh said that the SIR has been conducted in violation of the provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1950. He also raised questions about Kumar's role and the decision-making process within the poll panel.

The former minister said Section 21 of the Act permits a special revision only in special cases, with reasons recorded in writing and for a constituency or part of a constituency.

"An order for intensive revision for the whole country was illegal. An exception allowed for special cases cannot become the rule. The Supreme Court order upholding the general SIR was wrong. Another question is - who took the decision for SIR in the whole country? Was it the full commission; or only Gyanesh Kumar," Singh wrote on X.

Singh also alleged that the Election Commission's use of revised electoral rolls – while appeals against the deletions were still pending – was illegal as section 21 of the Act says that the original electoral roll shall remain in force until the disposal of all appeals.

"The revised electoral rolls become complete only after all the appeals filed against inclusion or deletion are disposed off. Where the appeals were still pending, the original Electoral roll which was valid on the date of notification was to be used. Contrary to this the new roll with deletions was used during the elections even though appeals against deletions were still pending. This was illegal," Singh said.

He further alleged that voters were removed without following the procedure mentioned under Section 22 of the Act and said that the EC's move was "blatantly illegal".

"Section 22 of the RP Act provides that the Electoral Registration Officer, and not anyone else, can remove a voter's name from the roll and that also only on the grounds listed in Section 22(a), (b), and (c); and only after a specific enquiry, after giving the concerned person a reasonable opportunity of being heard, and only after appeals against his order are disposed off. Gyanesh Kumar removed the names of all the voters who had been listed by the EROs after 2003, without any basis, without any enquiry, and without any show cause to the registered voters. This was blatantly illegal," Singh alleged.

Citing the Supreme Court's 1995 judgment in *Lal Babu Hussain and Others v. Electoral Registration Officer and Others*, Singh said the burden of producing evidence to establish that an enrolled voter should be disqualified lies with the authorities, rather than the voter.

Singh also questioned the addition of an appendix to Form 6, alleging that Kumar added it despite the opposition of two election commissioners. He said the appendix required applicants to provide the serial number of their parents' names in the 2003 electoral roll, which he argued created difficulties for young voters trying to register themselves as new voters.

The former home secretary also raised questions over bulk objections filed through Form, asking who filed the objections, how they were accepted and acted upon, and why the people who signed the forms did not appear.

On West Bengal, Singh claimed that 16 lakh voters found eligible by Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) were not included in the electoral roll because the EC had filed appeals against their inclusion, while in Goa, 97 voters were left off the rolls despite the ERO finding them eligible.

(To be Contd....on Page -32)

'Election Commission Is Shameless'

Shobha Warrier

'Their functioning is flawed, they are not accountable, they are opaque, they are non-transparent, they have lost credibility.'



IMAGE: Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, centre,, flanked by Election Commissioners Dr. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi at Nirvachan Sadan, the Election Commission of India office in New Delhi, April 8, 2026. ***Photograph: @ECISVEEP/ANI Photo***

Key Points

- 'Election Commission faces questions over transparency, accountability and alleged irregularities in election procedures and voter-roll revisions.'
- 'Concerns have been raised over Form 6 amendments, centralised voter deletions and additions, and Bengal's Form 7 filings.'
- 'Questions have emerged over the absence of full commission meetings and unresolved objections concerning the Election Commission's functioning.'
- 'The Special Intensive Revision has triggered debate over electoral rolls, voting rights and the treatment of existing voters.'
- 'Concerns over the Election Commission's credibility have intensified amid scrutiny of its appointment, functioning and institutional independence.'

Political economist **Parakala Prabhakar** has been a one-man army relentlessly fighting the working of the Election Commission of India, and the SIR process.

In 2024 after the Lok Sabha elections, he told **Rediff**, **'All is not well with the Election Commission. They refused to be transparent and accountable.'**

In 2025, he told **Rediff**, **'This election commission has to go. It is the most partial. It functions more like a government department than an autonomous body.'**

In May 2026, questioning the SIR process, he told **Rediff**, **'SIR is nothing but bringing the NRC-CAA through backdoor. You are killing lakhs and lakhs of citizenships.'**

"If you are now deleting 13.5 crore people who exercised their franchise in 2024, doesn't that render the Government of India today, the Cabinet and the Lok Sabha absolutely illegitimate? It does," Mr Prabhakar tells **Rediff**'s **Shobha Warrier** in the first of a two-part interview.

The *Indian Express* expose showed that two of the election commissioners were not in sync with the CEC and he was taking decisions on his own.

Still, all the three appeared together as if there was no discord between them.

Do you think this Election Commission has the moral right to be in office? In 2025, you had said that the Election Commission had to go as it functioned as a government department.

Last time when I said the Election Commission should go and it should be suspended, I said it on the basis of the way they conducted the elections, and the discrepancy that was found out between the percentage of polling announced and the final percentage of polling.

I also said that because it was blatantly clear that they implemented the model code of conduct, giving a free run for hate speeches by the ruling party.

The way the elections were phased out were very illogical. There were two states which have more or less the same number of seats, but one state goes for polling in one day, the other state goes for polling in four days, five days, or six days.

All these pointed to the possibility of a heavily compromised election and partisan behaviour by the election commissioners, especially the Chief Election Commissioner.

The Election Commission has become very opaque, non-transparent, unaccountable, unapproachable and unresponsive.

Even when you express in court, they just brush it aside, or they don't give access to it.

It had a stonewalling effect.

On the basis of that, I have been arguing since 2014 that this Election Commission should go.

I supported my argument that the 2024 Lok Sabha mandate was a stolen mandate or a compromised mandate.

Also, the subsequent assembly elections, Jharkhand, Haryana, Maharashtra, etc were also compromised.

I said so based on the data taken directly from the Election Commission of India.

It was not an investigative job; it was just there in plain sight.

Now, with the *Indian Express* investigative report by those two brilliant journalists, it is in the open that the Chief Election Commissioner was indulging in a lot of irregularities, especially with regard to the implementation, the designing of the Special Intensive Revision (*SIR*).

And the Election Commission is not even properly functioning according to the procedures and rules and regulations laid down by the constitution.

On top of that, the Election Commission had given a press note purportedly refuting the investigative report by the *Indian Express*.

I would like to describe the two clarifications offered by the Election Commission of India as a big joke, because neither of them addresses any core issue that was raised in the investigative report.

What did the report tell us? It told us that Form 6 was amended when the Election Commission of India had no authority to do so. Even the government has to take the permission of the Lok Sabha to do it. That is something which the Election Commission's clarifications don't address.

The other important concern was that in Goa, 97 voters were found not eligible. When the

Electoral Registration Officers (*EROs*) tried to put them back on the electoral roll, they could not do it.

That was because the deletions and additions, contrary to the rules and procedure, are now being done in a centralised way.

So, it exposes the lie of the Election Commission that, it was the local people who were adding and deleting.

This issue also was not addressed by both these press releases.

The other one is, in Bengal, the Election Commission of India filed or authorised people to file Form 7 in as many as 16 lakh cases. Who authorised and who really filed this Form 7? The press releases do not address this.

The investigative report also says that for the last four months, not a single full commission meeting was held. This also was not addressed by the press note.

Then, 14 notes of objections, dissent, misgivings about the functioning of the Election Commission of India went unanswered.

The second press release gives you a couple of things which are very important.

One, the press release said that henceforth, minutes of the meeting would be recorded. When they say henceforth it will be done, what does it mean? That they were not doing it? This is absolutely against the norms.

On a lighter note, why couldn't they give us a photograph of a full Election Commission meeting in progress?

On the investigative report on dissent by the two election commissioners was also not addressed in the press release.

Let me employ 'what if kind of logic. What if all the three election commissioners were on the same page about denying access to EROs. Is it okay? It's not okay.

What if all the three election commissioners are okay with the submission of Form 7 on behalf of the Election Commission to delete the voters already back on the voters list in Bengal? Is it okay? It's not okay.

What if all the three election commissioners are okay with a full-fledged meeting not conducted? What if all the three election commissioners are okay when some of the misgivings, and objections are not addressed?

Is it okay? It is not okay. It's not okay with me as a citizen.

Even if the two election commissioners have objections, the Election Commission as a full body is at fault.

They have compromised the integrity of the Election Commission.

My issue with the Election Commission is not only because of SIR. Of course, it is also to do with SIR.

I have been questioning the way they conducted the elections, about the way they decided the phasing of elections, about the way they implemented the model code of conduct, about the way they did not announce the polling figures.



IMAGE: A protest demanding Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar's resignation near Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, October 3, 2026.
Photograph: Ritik Sharma/ANI Photo

Thats why I asked whether they have the moral right to be in office.

No, they don't have.

They have to quit. They are shameless that they're not quitting. The body has to be dissolved. The Election Commission needs to be disbanded.



IMAGE: The Shivaji Park protest in Mumbai to demand Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar's resignation, October 2, 2026.
Photograph: Afsar Dayatar/Rediff

Quite a few former CECs expressed the opinion that this Election Commission has lost the trust of people as it was functioning not as an independent body. Do you think people do not trust this Election Commission anymore?

That is very clear. I have mentioned this before also.

In 2023, there was a very big survey by the Lokniti CSDS about the credibility of the Election Commission of India. Over 30% of the people felt that the Election Commission was functioning as according to the wishes of the government.

Compare that with the 2001 speech of then President K R Narayanan during the golden jubilee of the Election Commission of India. He said that the Election Commission'S credibility is much higher than even the judiciary.

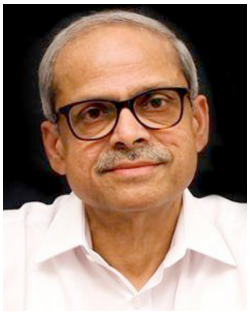
Compare the downfall of the Election Commission of India today.

Looking at the way the Election Commission is appointed and constituted by the executive, with two to one majority.

A Supreme Court judge recently said, the presence of the Leader of the Opposition is only ornamental now in the selection of the Election Commission of India.

It means the election is flawed, their functioning is flawed, and they are not accountable, they are opaque, they are non-transparent, they are unresponsive, and they have lost credibility.

So, it calls for the immediate disbanding and dissolution of the Election Commission.



Do you think SIR should be scrapped and they should go back to the old voters' list? Was there anything wrong with the old voters' list, and how elections were conducted till then?

IMAGE:
Parakala Prabhakar

Let me start with this. The Election Commission of India is saying that the old voters' list had too many irregularities, too many dead people, etc etc.

So, they are in a way blaming all the previous election commissions that they have not done their job.

The second one is that if all the elections conducted on the basis of the old electoral roll are unsound elections, including the 2024 election, 2019 election, and 2014 election, it has very, very serious implications.

If you are now deleting 13.5 crore people who exercised their franchise in 2024, doesn't that render the Government of India today, the Cabinet and the Lok Sabha absolutely illegitimate? It does.

The other thing is, what it does in its wake is, it creates two classes of people in India.

One with franchise, the other without franchise.

Feature Presentation: Aslam Hunani/ Rediff

Courtesy **Rediff.com**, October 05, 2026.

The Crisis Looming Over Indian Democracy: Gen Z's Resistance, Dissent Within the Election Commission, and the Opacity of the Electoral Database

Pratap Saharan

From The Guardian's Editorial Warning to Vote for Democracy's 16 Questions: Is the redibility of India's Electoral System Facing a Defining Test?

The questions being raised about Indian democracy are no longer confined to political accusations and counter-accusations. On the one hand, there is growing discontent among the younger generation, controversy surrounding the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, and reports of police action against protesters and journalists. On the other hand, serious questions are being raised about the Election Commission's internal functioning, access privileges relating to the electoral database, and its cybersecurity. Viewed together, these developments bring fundamental questions concerning institutional transparency and citizens' voting rights to the forefront.

In this context, an editorial in the prestigious British newspaper *The Guardian* criticised the alleged crackdown by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government against young protesters. The editorial was titled: *"The Guardian view on Narendra Modi's Gen Z crackdown: he cannot arrest his way out of a democratic crisis."* Its central message was that suppressing dissent cannot resolve a democratic crisis. The editorial viewed the protests by young people in the context of the discontent arising from questions surrounding the electoral process, employment, opportunities, and institutional accountability.

The significance of these developments is further heightened by reports of disagreements within the Election Commission over electoral rolls and administrative procedures. At the same time, the citizens' organisation Vote for Democracy has raised 16 questions concerning the management and security of the electoral database. Together, these three aspects give rise to a debate that every citizen of India needs to understand.

1. Gen Z's Resistance and the Democratic Crisis

The Guardian's editorial places the resistance of young protesters within the broader context of democratic discontent. According to the editorial, the youth movement and the actions taken against its participants have exposed growing tensions between those in power and citizens.

The discontent among the younger generation is not confined to a single political issue. Concerns such as a lack of employment, complaints of irregularities in examinations, unequal opportunities, and institutional accountability also form part of the background to this discontent. Questions raised over the revision of electoral rolls have further intensified this debate.

The editorial's central argument is that arrests and repressive action do not eliminate citizens' grievances. When young people raise questions about their democratic participation and rights, responding to those questions becomes an institutional responsibility.

The role of journalists is also important in this context. Reports of alleged mistreatment, detention, and the confiscation of equipment belonging to journalists reporting from protest sites have raised concerns about press freedom. In a democracy, ensuring citizens' right to protest is just as important as providing the public with independent information about events.

2. Dissent Within the Election

Commission: Have Serious Procedural Questions Emerged?

Reports concerning the Election Commission's internal functioning constitute the second important aspect of these developments.

A report published by India Today on 24 September 2026 referred to objections reportedly raised by Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi regarding certain decisions of the Commission. According to the report, these objections concerned issues such as the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), changes to Form 6 for voter registration, procedures for deleting and restoring names on electoral rolls, appeals, and access to electoral software.

In light of these reports, an important question arises: How transparent is the Election Commission's decision-making process, and how are disagreements resolved when they are formally recorded?

In a tweet, former bureaucrat Ashish Joshi claimed that both Election Commissioners were refusing to accept verbal instructions from the Chief Election Commissioner and had directed the Election Commission Secretariat to follow the prescribed rules governing communications. Joshi also stated in his tweet that office notes would be submitted in accordance with established procedures rather than prepared on the basis of verbal instructions.

If this claim is independently verified, the matter would go beyond an administrative disagreement between officials. It would raise questions about written orders, the documentation of decisions, and the importance of procedural accountability within a constitutional institution.

However, Joshi's tweet alone cannot be regarded as conclusive proof of an institutional revolt. Nevertheless, the issue it raises is clear: *Through what procedures are important decisions made within a constitutional body such as the Election Commission, and how is their official record maintained?*

3. Vote for Democracy's 16 Questions: Who Controls the Electoral Database?

The 16 questions raised by Vote for Democracy bring the most technical, yet extremely important, aspect of this controversy into focus. They centre on the Election Commission's database, user privileges, access controls, and cybersecurity arrangements.

Broadly, these questions can be understood under six major categories.

First: Categories of Database Access and User Privileges

The organisation has asked how many categories of users exist within the Election Commission's database and what types of privileges each category enjoys. Are certain users permitted only to view information, or can they also modify the data?

This question is important because the privileges of different officials must be clearly defined within a digital system. Users must exercise their access rights strictly within the limits prescribed for them.

Second: User Administration and Approval of Privileges

Vote for Democracy has asked who administers user accounts and which officials or offices perform the roles of proposer, reviewer, and approver in the process of granting access to the database.

The organisation has also asked who manages privileges and what procedures govern the granting or withdrawal of these rights.

This arrangement is important because if an individual is granted more privileges than necessary, or if access rights are not reviewed regularly, the security of sensitive information may be compromised.

Third: Database Access for Judicial Officers Involved in SIR

The question is: Under which user category were judges participating in the SIR exercise in West Bengal granted access to the database?

The answer could help clarify how digital access is assigned to officials performing different responsibilities and whether a clear documentary record of their access privileges exists.

Fourth: Independent Audits and International Security Standards

Vote for Democracy has asked whether the Election Commission's database access-control system is certified in accordance with any international standard.

If such certification exists, what is the relevant standard, what is its validity period, and when was the audit conducted? Has an independent third party audited the access-control process? If so, can its report and final assessment be made public?

The organisation has also asked when the last audit of access controls was conducted and what triggers such an audit. Is it conducted at regular intervals, following a change, or in response to some other event?

These questions lie at the heart of accountability in digital security. The security of a system should be assessed not merely on the assurances of those operating it, but also through testing, documentation, and independent review.

Fifth: TCS's Role and Technical Security

The organisation's questions also seek clarity regarding the role of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS).

Does the company merely provide technical assistance, or does it also play a role in administering access to the database? If it does have such a role, what are its limits?

Vote for Democracy has also sought information about the technology used in the database, third-party tools, their certifications, and the firewall arrangements.

The organisation has asked whether the database access tool connects directly to the firewall, which security systems are being used, and whether a combination of hardware-based and software-based security measures is in place.

Sixth: External Connections, Monitoring, and Legal Compliance

The final category includes questions concerning the monitoring of external database connections, traffic logs, eligibility criteria for members of the access-control team, and verification of legal compliance.

The organisation wants to know who inspects external connections, how long their records are retained, and who is held responsible in the event of a security breach.

The importance of these questions is clear. In any sensitive digital system, identifying authorised users is not enough. It is also necessary to ensure that their privileges are defined, their activities are recorded, and accountability is established whenever rules are violated.

The fundamental question here is not to claim that the database has been compromised, but to establish how its security, monitoring, and accountability can be verified.

4. Electoral Rolls and Digital Systems: A Test of Democratic Trust

The purpose of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is to revise electoral rolls. However, the questions arising from this process are directly linked to citizens' voting rights.

If the name of an eligible citizen is removed from the electoral roll, that person may be unable to exercise their right to vote unless their name is restored through the prescribed procedure. This makes transparency in the processes of deleting, adding, and correcting names, along with an effective appeals mechanism, particularly important.

When the management of electoral rolls depends on digital systems, it becomes equally necessary to clearly define the privileges of users who modify data, maintain records of such changes, and establish the responsibilities of the officials concerned.

Vote for Democracy's questions focus on precisely this point. Their answers could help clarify how access to the electoral database is controlled and how its security is independently assessed.

It is important to note that questions about database security do not, by themselves, constitute proof of unauthorised changes or electoral manipulation. Nevertheless, given the importance of electoral roll accuracy and citizens' voting rights, the seriousness of these questions cannot be underestimated. *Failure to provide rational answers that dispel these doubts could itself become circumstantial evidence.*

5. Why Are These Questions So Important for Democracy?

Viewed together, these developments bring four important dimensions into focus.

First, the right of citizens to protest. The grievances of young protesters and the actions taken against them raise questions about the state of democratic freedoms.

Second, freedom of the press. Journalists' safety and freedom to report are essential to ensuring that the public receives independent information about a movement or controversy.

Third, internal accountability within constitutional institutions. The reported objections raised within the Election Commission underscore the importance of transparent decision-making and written records.

Fourth, transparency and security of the electoral database. Clearly defined privileges, independent audits, and records of activity within digital systems relating to electoral rolls are important for maintaining public trust.

These four dimensions are interconnected. Voting rights can be meaningfully exercised only when citizens are free to protest and ask questions, the media can report events, and there is sufficient public confidence in the administration of the electoral process.

Conclusion: Voters' Rights and Accountability in the Electoral System

The concerns raised in The Guardian's editorial about the youth movement and the democratic crisis, reports of dissent within the Election Commission, and Vote for Democracy's 16 questions bring several important issues concerning India's electoral system into focus.

The essence of these developments extends beyond political confrontation. It concerns the broader questions of citizens' rights, institutional procedures, and accountability in digital governance.

Is the process of making changes to electoral rolls fully recorded and auditable? Are the responsibilities of every user with access to the database clearly defined? Are independent security audits conducted? Are proper records maintained of objections raised within the constitutional institution? And is sufficient public information available to enable citizens to obtain answers to these questions?

The answers are important both for the credibility of the electoral process and for maintaining public trust.

The strength of a democracy cannot be measured solely by how frequently elections are held. It must also be assessed by the reliability of its electoral rolls, the transparency of institutional decisions, the security of its digital systems, and the effectiveness of the procedures available to citizens for protecting their rights.

The challenge facing India today is not to allow these questions to remain confined to political accusations, but to obtain factual and documentary answers to them. A name on an electoral roll is not merely a digital entry. It represents a citizen's democratic right.

And when the voting rights of millions of citizens are at stake, transparency, security, and accountability cease to be mere administrative formalities. They become fundamental conditions for public trust in democracy.

https://www.facebook.com/share/p/19RpTCYQDE/?mibextid=wwXIfr

Over 2,000 Citizens Petition CJI Seeking Urgent Judicial Intervention on SIR

The Wire Staff

'Free and fair elections are the bedrock of Indian democracy and form part of the basic structure of our Constitution.'



Voters in Odisha's Bhadrak. Photo: Madhu Sudan Chatterjee/The Wire.

New Delhi: More than 2,000 academics, lawyers, journalists, artists, activists and concerned citizens have signed a petition addressed to the Chief Justice of India and other judges of the Supreme Court, seeking urgent judicial intervention on the functioning of the Election Commission of India and the ongoing and controversial special intensive revision of electoral rolls.

The petition raises serious concerns about the alleged centralisation of the voter database, changes to electoral forms, the role of the ECINet technology platform in the revision process, and the possibility of large-scale deletion of voters.

The petition urges the Supreme Court to take suo motu cognisance and examine the functioning of the Election Commission.

The signatories include prominent academics, former public officials, lawyers, journalists, writers, artists and human rights activists from across India.

As many as 100 former civil servants have issued a similar call to suspend the SIR.

An open letter to the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India and companion justices of the Supreme Court of India

Subject: Urgent petition for suo motu judicial intervention concerning unconstitutional functioning of the Election Commission of India, centralization of voter database, and immediate stay/cancellation of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR)

To,

The Hon'ble Chief Justice of India and Hon'ble Companion Judges,
Supreme Court of India,
Tilak Marg, New Delhi – 110001.

Respected Chief Justice and Hon'ble Justices,

We are writing this open letter to draw the immediate, urgent attention of the Supreme Court of India to grave irregularities, institutional rupture, and alleged illegalities occurring at the highest level within the Election Commission of India (ECI). Investigative reporting by The Indian Express has revealed that the fundamental integrity of India's electoral roll and voter database is being severely compromised under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise.

1. Internal Dissent & Bypassing Statutory Mandates:

According to official records, two of the three Election Commissioners—Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi—have objected on file at least 14 times over 10 months regarding decisions taken without their knowledge or consent. The multi-member framework under Article 324 of the Constitution mandates collective, majority-driven decision-making. However, key operational directives and software modifications have reportedly been executed unilaterally under Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, directly overriding written objections by the majority of the Commission.

2. Unauthorised & Illegal Alterations to Form 6:

Without statutory backing or multi-member approval, changes were made to Form 6 (new voter registration) requiring first-time voters to declare whether their names or parents' names appeared in past SIR rolls. Election Commissioner Sandhu explicitly recorded on file that this addition was "unauthorised and illegal," causing unnecessary harassment to young voters.

Despite these written objections, the modification remains active.

3. Centralized Tech Infrastructure (ECINet) Overriding Field Officers:

Under Section 13B of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) are the sole statutory authorities empowered to add, modify, or delete names from electoral rolls. However, the centralized software system (ECINet), managed directly from ECI headquarters in Delhi, has effectively overridden local statutory authorities:

Deprivation of Franchise in Goa: In Goa, EROs cleared 97 legitimate voters after verifying theirdocuments. Yet, due to centralized backend software locks, local officers were blocked from restoring these names to the final rolls.

Appeals against inclusion of voters in West Bengal: In West Bengal, more than 16 lakh appeals were filed seeking deletion of voters that judicial officers had included on the electoral rolls. This was done without the knowledge or authorisation of 2 of the 3 Commissioners and the West Bengal CEO.

4. Arbitrary Mass Deletions:

The ongoing SIR exercise has struck out over 13 crore voters across 30 States and Union Territories, raising severe public concern over systemic disenfranchisement and lack of due process.

PRAYERS & RELIEF SOUGHT

In light of these unprecedented developments that threaten the constitutional structure of free and fair elections, the undersigned humbly urge the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India to exercise its inherent suo motu jurisdiction and order the following:

1. Take Suo Motu Cognizance: Initiate suo motu proceedings into the operational and administrative conduct of the Election Commission of India regarding the SIR exercise and the deployment of ECINet.

2. Rescind / Cancel the Special Intensive Revision (SIR): Immediately stay and rescind the SIR exercise across all States and Union Territories pending a thorough, independent judicial review of its legality and procedural integrity in light of the new facts that have emerged.

3. Direction for Investigation & Accountability: Direct an independent, court-monitored investigation into the arbitrary, unauthorized changes to voter registration software/forms and direct appropriate penal/procedural action against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and responsible officials for overriding statutory procedures and disregarding the constitutional mandate of the multi-member Commission.

4. Audit of ECINet Infrastructure: Direct an immediate, comprehensive security and legal audit of the ECINet software platform by an independent expert committee appointed by this Hon'ble Court to restore decentralized control to local Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) as mandated by law and verify whether any persons other than statutory officers had access to the platform.

5. Restoration of Disenfranchised Voters: Order the immediate reinstatement of voters whose names were deleted due to technical glitches, software locks, or unauthorized procedural modifications.

Free and fair elections are the bedrock of Indian democracy and form part of the basic structure of our Constitution. When the institutional safeguards designed to protect the electoral roll are compromised from within, judicial intervention becomes vital to preserve public faith in the democratic process.

Yours sincerely,

(2000 Signatutes)

The signatories include prominent academics, former public officials, lawyers, journalists, writers, artists and human rights activists from across India.

Courtesy **The Wire**, 26/Sep/2026

Dear Mahi Pal Singh,

At the outset, Congratulation for great grand success of the meeting of the IRI at Dehradun, Uttarakhand, as is clearly visible from the pics/videos shared by you. Salute to your (including Chairman, Shri Vinod Jain, Treasurer, Sheo Raj Singh & all the other members who attended the meeting at Dehradun) commitment, dedication, never ending hard work, enthusism in carrying forward the aims and objectives of the IRI. I am sorry, due to health issues I could not participate in the IRI's meeting.

- **Ved Prakash Arya**

Delhi Police: Law-Enforcement Agency or an Unaccountable Power Centre?

S.R. Darapuri



A police force is entrusted with the State's most consequential power over the individual: the power to stop, search, detain, arrest, interrogate and, in legally defined circumstances, use physical force. In a constitutional democracy, that power carries an equally consequential obligation—the police must themselves remain subject to law, judicial scrutiny and institutional accountability.

Recent allegations involving Delhi Police personnel, including allegations of sexual harassment and assault against women journalists at Jantar Mantar on 3 October 2026, therefore raise a question considerably more serious than whether particular officers behaved improperly. They raise the question of **whether the institutional safeguards surrounding police power are strong enough to prevent authority from becoming impunity**. Three women journalists alleged sexual harassment by police personnel during the protest; one alleged sexual assault by ACP Vivek Bhagat. Delhi Police transferred the complaints to its Crime Branch for investigation. These allegations remain allegations and must be determined through due process.

Earlier, during a protest by the 'Kakroach Janata Party' at Jantar Mantar on July 20, allegations were raised against Delhi Police personnel: a senior officer reportedly slapped a woman without provocation, an inspector allegedly shoved a baton against a woman's posterior, and another staff member reportedly engaged in inappropriate physical contact with a female protester. Surprisingly, there is no information regarding any investigation or disciplinary action taken against these officers to date. This is despite the Supreme Court's clear directive in "Shailendra Mani Tripathi vs. Union of India" (Writ Petition No. 280/2026)—specifically in paragraph 23—stating that the constitution of the HPEC (High-Powered Empowered Committee) would not prevent or restrain police or security forces from taking administrative or disciplinary action against officers found violating conduct rules. Such inaction naturally emboldens these officers, a consequence of which became evident on October

It would be neither accurate nor intellectually defensible to conclude from such allegations that the entire Delhi Police has become a "gang of ruffians and molesters." A police organisation contains thousands of personnel performing fundamentally different functions, and allegations against individual officers cannot automatically establish collective guilt. But the opposite error is equally dangerous: treating each allegation as an isolated act of individual misconduct while ignoring the institutional conditions that determine whether victims can complain, whether evidence is preserved, whether investigations are genuinely independent, and whether offending officers actually face consequences.

The central thesis of this essay is therefore: The constitutional danger is not that Delhi

Police consists of "ruffians and molesters"; it is that any police institution can become an unaccountable power centre when the coercive authority of its officers is stronger than the mechanisms available to restrain, investigate and punish its misuse. Repeated allegations of abuse, particularly where the accused are themselves police officers, must consequently be examined not merely as questions of individual misconduct but as tests of institutional accountability.

This distinction matters because police misconduct and police impunity are different problems. Misconduct concerns what an individual officer allegedly did. Impunity concerns what the institution does—or fails to do—after that conduct is alleged. A single officer can commit a crime without proving institutional corruption; conversely, an institution can exhibit systemic accountability failures even though most of its officers act professionally and lawfully.

The decisive question, therefore, is not simply "Did an officer misbehave?" It is:

When the person accused of abusing State power is himself an agent of the State, who has the power, independence and institutional authority to hold him accountable?

That is the question through which the Delhi Police should be examined—not through rhetoric, but through the constitutional guarantees of equality, liberty, dignity, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly; the safeguards governing arrest and detention; the independence of investigations; the treatment of women and journalists; and the effectiveness of mechanisms designed to prevent police impunity.

A constitutional democracy does not require a weak police force. It requires a powerful police force that is itself demonstrably subject to law. The stronger the coercive power entrusted to the police, the stronger the safeguards against its abuse must be.

The issue, ultimately, is not whether Delhi Police is "good" or "bad." It is whether its institutional architecture makes abuse of power difficult, detection credible, investigation independent and accountability unavoidable. That is the standard by which a democratic police force should be judged.

S.R. Darapuri is I.P.S.(Retd), National President,, All India Peoples Front.

'No Protection For Acts Done in...

Contd. from page - (19)

Singh also accused the EC of being unaware of the living conditions of the most marginalised people in the country while referring to the 'logical discrepancy' clause introduced by the commission.

"A ridiculous thing was brought up called 'logical discrepancy'. Gyanesh Kumar does not have any idea of how the poor live in India. Their children are not born in hospitals. They do not have birth certificates. They do not have calendars in their homes. When the BLO approached them to enroll them in the voter list they gave their estimated year of birth. Similarly, when their fathers' names were enrolled in the electoral roll, they gave their estimated year of birth. The dumb people in the Election Commission, under Gyanesh Kumar, said that any difference of less than 15 years between father and children would be a logical discrepancy justifying excluding their names. The 'Logical Discrepancy' names were excluded without enquiry, contrary to sec 21 of the Act," Singh said.

This article went live on September thirtieth, two thousand twenty six, at thirty-nine minutes past three in the afternoon.

Courtesy **The Wire**, Sep 30 2026.

The RSS at 101: Organisation, Hindutva and Indian Democracy in India

Dr. Suresh Khairnar



The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has, in its 101-year journey, effectively hijacked India's democracy itself.

After the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–1922) against British rule in the Indian freedom struggle was abruptly halted by Mahatma Gandhi due to the violence in the peasant uprising at Chauri Chaura, and after the Khilafat Movement (1920–1924) against British rule in Turkey lost its purpose when Mustafa Kemal Pasha came to power on 29 October 1923 and himself abolished the centuries-old Sultanate (Caliphate) by declaring Turkey a modern secular state, a situation of confusion arose in India.

According to page 4 of the book *Purvokta*, written by RSS swayamsevak C. P. Bhishikar:

"A change was coming over the country. What happened after the Khilafat movement of 1921 left Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar stunned. Indian Muslims themselves proved that they are Muslims first and Indians afterwards. Therefore, when the Khilafat movement ended in Turkey, they also withdrew from the joint movement for national independence. The entire atmosphere was poisoned with anti-Hindu hatred. Only 'Allahu Akbar' could be heard; 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' was nowhere. Immediately after this, Muslim riots broke out in Bannu, Kohat, Multan, Kanpur, Nagpur and other places. Doctorji used to say that these were not Hindu-Muslim riots; they were simply Muslim riots, because everywhere it was they who started the riots and they who carried out the attacks. The climax of these riots was the Moplah outbreak in Kerala, in which arson, loot, rape and forcible religious conversions took place. The nation was stunned. Doctorji thought: 'Is this Khilafat or Afât (calamity)?'"

From the very establishment of the Congress in 1885, both Hindu nationalists and hardline religious Muslims were present within it. Dr. Hedgewar was also under the influence of Lokmanya Tilak. After Tilak's death on 1 August 1920, at the reception committee of the December 1920 Nagpur session of the Congress, Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar and his guru Dr. Munje were responsible for organisation and management. When the resolution moved by Mahatma Gandhi for the removal of untouchability and the promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity was passed at that session, and when the membership fee for ordinary Indians was reduced to a nominal four annas, the Hindu nationalists inside the Congress sat up in alarm. Right or wrong, whether necessary in the circumstances of the time or not, this was the understanding of the founder of the RSS and his

associates. On this basis, they chose a separate path. From the same book, it is clear that they had already reached this conclusion:

"It has been proved that in India the Hindu alone is the nation, and Hindutva alone is nationalism. Thinkers who shut their eyes to reality refused to look at the political reality of the nation, but the realist Dr. Hedgewar was not a creature roaming in the world of dreams. The truth had become clear. Only Hindus could free Hindusthan. Only they could protect Hindu culture. Only Hindu power could save the country. The facts themselves were proving this. Hindu youth had to be organised on the basis of individual character and unbroken love for the motherland. There was no other way. The agony of a great soul found expression in the establishment of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. With five friends he started the daily programme of the RSS. This great day was the auspicious Vijayadashami of 1925."

Yet the fact that in the 22-year journey of the organisation founded in 1925 until 15 August 1947 there is no record of any participation in India's freedom struggle remains an unsolved puzzle. On the contrary, there is a record of recruiting their own people into the British police and administration. The country is still paying the price for that today. After independence, whichever party has formed the government in India, because people of the RSS have held important positions in the police administration and the judiciary, the police administration and our justice system have remained Hindutva-oriented and therefore hostile to Dalits, minorities, Adivasis and women.

The behaviour of the police administration and the judiciary during all the riots that took place in India after independence provides ample evidence of this. Justice Madan, who headed the commission appointed to inquire into the Bhiwandi-Jalgaon riots of the 1980s in Maharashtra, clearly wrote in his report:

"Even if direct evidence of the involvement of RSS swayamsevaks is not found in the inquiry into any riot, the work of creating a riot mentality has been continuously carried on by the RSS in its shakhas. The organised work of generating hatred against minority communities in people's minds has been going on since 1925. Therefore the main reason for all the riots in India after independence is the RSS's spreading of hatred against minority communities."

RSS people have the habit of exaggerating the role and importance of Dr. Hedgewar. The entire ideological conception of the RSS is presented as having arisen in the consciousness of the first Sarsanghchalak as a divine blessing, divine inspiration, or the blazing desire for national regeneration. This may fulfil the need of an organisation established on the model of mystical sects, but it is not in accordance with the facts.

What emerged on that particular day, Vijayadashami of 1925, cannot even be called a shakha of the RSS. At Hedgewar's house, only five like-minded persons gathered with the purpose of opening an institution that would serve as a nursery or kindergarten for militant organisers of Hindu society. These five were: (1) Dr. B. S. Munje, (2) Dr. L. V. Paranjpe, (3) Dr. K. B. Hedgewar, (4) Dr. Tholkar, and the fifth member was Barrister Savarkar's brother, (5) Babarao Savarkar.

But in the officially published literature of the RSS, only the figure of five is given; the names of the individuals are not. This is because all the founders were from the Hindu Mahasabha, and the RSS is hesitant to reveal its connection with the Hindu Mahasabha. This has been the working method of the RSS from the beginning: keeping one particular individual at the centre, creating an imaginary halo around him, projecting him, and thereby trying to expand the organisation.

For example, among the founders, Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar and the second chief, Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, are still placed in the category of divine men and glorified the most. An RSS swayamsevak stays away from any kind

of publicity and works with devotion. And this is true. Because compared to the first and second chiefs, there is far less discussion of the third chief, Balasaheb Deoras, the fourth chief, Professor Rajendra Singh, the fifth chief, K. S. Sudarshan, and the present chief, Mohan Bhagwat.

In the drawing rooms of any RSS believer's house, only the photographs of Dr. K. B. Hedgewar and Golwalkar Guruji are found hanging on the walls. This is 'ekachalakanuvarti' (following one leader).

On the 80th birthday of Barrister Vinayak Damodar Savarkar on 15 May 1963, Golwalkar said in his speech that the scientific explanation of the principle of nationalism was obtained by him only from Savarkar's book titled *Hindutva*. In the same sequence, he made the sensational revelation that his book titled *We, Or Our Nationhood Defined* (1939) is actually a condensed translation of Barrister Savarkar's brother Babarao Savarkar's book *Rashtra Mimansa*.

However, before recruiting 12–15-year-old schoolchildren into the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, they first examine the child's loyalty and capacity for obedience. Sometimes children who wanted to join were stopped because of their questioning nature. Because the RSS is a semi-regimented organisation, children who ask questions or children of any religion other than Hinduism are forbidden entry.

I myself am an example of having been expelled from the RSS in the 1970s. I was a former swayamsevak (1965–66). My geography teacher had encouraged me to come to the RSS shakha. In the early days of going to the shakha, I tried to bring my Muslim friends as well. They were not given entry; instead, on 23 October 1966, the day of Dussehra, the RSS expelled me. On this 20 October Dussehra day, 60 years of that event are being completed.

What is the organisational strength of the RSS in its 101-year journey? And how can one prepare to confront it?

The present organisational strength of the Sangh has been recorded since the 1990s as the world's largest organisation. From two crore people participating in its daily activities to 87,000 daily shakhas, 14,000 weekly shakhas and 7,000 monthly shakhas, its expansion covers 86,293 different areas of the country (these are 2016 figures). Between 2015 and 2016, the number of shakhas increased from 51,332 to 57,000, with the help of 6,000 pracharaks. It is mobilised to propagate Hindu nationalism.

Abroad too, some NRI Hindus working there are included in the shakhas of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Therefore, for the first time in the 101-year history of the RSS, a controversial tour by a Sarsanghchalak took place only last month to America, Canada and some European countries.

In addition, after 1980, apart from the Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram and the Vishva Hindu Parishad, separate units have been formed for every field of life. These include the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, Swadeshi Jagaran Manch, Akhil Bharatiya Grahak Sangh, Senior Citizens' Forum, Vijnana Bharati, Jnana Prabodhini, Akhil Bharatiya Adhivakta Sangh, medical associations, journalists' associations, Laghu Udyog Bharati, Samarasata Manch, Rashtra Sevika Samiti, Vishva Hindu Parishad, Vivekananda Kendra, and institutions in every field of life, as well as Deendayal Research Institute, Rambhau Mhalgi Academy, Hedgewar Academy, Golwalkar Academy and Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Academy established at various places in the country and abroad.

Similarly, after Balasaheb Deoras became Sarsanghchalak in 1971, he was the first Sarsanghchalak who, looking at identity politics, felt the need to change the Brahminical character of the Sangh in a multi-caste country like India. And he also made a historic beginning in changing it. For this reason, to promote work among

Adivasis and Dalits, he established Vanvasi Kalyan Ashrams and the Samarasata Manch, and through voluntary organisations for welfare programmes in the fields of health and education, mainly in Adivasi-Dalit and rural areas, the number of projects increased tenfold from 5,000 during his tenure to 1,40,000 in 1998 and 1,65,000 in 2012.

Ram Nath Kovind, a Dalit from the RSS shakha of Paraukha village in Kanpur district of Uttar Pradesh, attended the RSS centenary celebrations at the RSS headquarters in Nagpur on 2 October 2025 as the chief guest. The present President, who rose to power thanks to the activities of the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram among the Adivasis of Odisha, attended the programmes of the Rashtra Sevika Samiti (the women's organisation created by the RSS) as chief guest on 2 March 2026.

The most important point is that Narendra Modi, from a state like Gujarat, despite being from the OBC Teli caste, joined the RSS shakha of Vadnagar as a swayamsevak at the age of 7. Later, at the age of 20, he officially became a full-time pracharak, and until the age of 50, his workplace remained Hedgewar Bhavan in Ahmedabad. Then the RSS itself directly nominated him as Chief Minister of Gujarat on 7 October, 25 years ago in 2001. And today, as Prime Minister of the country, he is working according to the RSS principle of 'ekachalakanuvarti'.

After touring the Adivasi areas of Maharashtra, Deoras told journalists that "the 45–48 departmental structure of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh does not accept India's federal system. Therefore, they have created departments in their own language and for their own convenience. Workers need to be specially mobilised to work purely in the field of service. The most important thing is that after organising a seminar with the BJP and the Sangh on public schemes, a beginning was made to increase dialogue between the two, and a beginning was made to bring policy schemes before the public. And in this way, an important beginning was also made to strengthen mutual exchange and cooperation in India's cultural and political affairs."

Compared to Golwalkar and Hedgewar, who as the first and second chiefs occupied that post for about 48 years in the Sangh's 101-year journey, and if Deoras's 21 years are added, the tenure of the first three Sarsanghchalaks alone comes to 69 years, which is at least three-fourths of the Sangh's 101 years. And today's Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh exists only because of their hard work and imagination.

Many people accuse the Sangh of 'ekachalakanuvarti', and that is correct. But looking at the expansion of the Sangh's work across the country today, it seems that they created this organisational structure after very careful ground-level thinking so that it could be given a permanent form.

Balasaheb Deoras, during his 21-year tenure as Sarsanghchalak from 1973–94, decided to change the Brahminical and city-centred character of the Sangh and send hundreds of young people to work for welfare activities in rural areas and among Bahujan-Dalit and Adivasi communities. As a result, considerable work was done during Deoras's time to establish the Sangh's foothold from the northeastern states to the Adivasi areas and rural areas of the country.

In the same way, taking cognisance of the 21st century, he made special efforts to change his policies and membership. Because of the 400% increase in national economic development after 1990, according to the World Bank, urbanisation doubled from 18% in 1960 to 26% in 1990 and 33% in 2015. According to the McKinsey Institute, the middle class grew from 14% in 2005 to 29% in 2015, and their estimate is 44% in 2025. The biggest example of this is the increase in the number of mobile phone users.

(To be concluded...)

The Humanist Frame
The Place of Conservation

E.M. Nicholson

(Summarized by : **Vinod Jain**)

Man, like other animals, began life in a natural habitat. Unlike other animals, he has outgrown and almost forgotten it. This basic fact has much to do with many present-day human problems, economic, social and psychological. On the one hand, they have neither had the wish, nor possessed the mental training, to rethink what it means in terms of the future of our increasingly technological civilization. On the other hand those able to grasp the historical, economic, social and technological evolution of mankind have often been illiterate in terms of the life and earth sciences.

It is an almost universal rule for animals to satisfy their everyday requirements for food and shelter by 'cropping' current surpluses of plant or animal life without imperilling their yield in future years. Many cases are indeed known where animals indirectly enrich the soil or the fauna and flora of their habitat while directly exploiting a part of it. Mites, nematodes (eelworms) and innumerable other tiny animals help to make soil by such activities as breaking down dead leaves and releasing their stored nutrients, while millipedes and earthworms generate or regenerate soils by passing them through their guts. Some earthworms, in turn, can exist only where they can find dung of grazing animals.....

Just as Evolution has produced higher forms of life, so the ecological interplay of different plants and animals has often raised the biological potential of their common home, and has thus enabled more complex and more specialised communities to develop out of simpler or poorer ones....

Sometimes natural catastrophes such as storms, floods and droughts may temporarily and locally set the clock back. Occasionally also the natural regulation of animal population fails to prevent a local plague or epidemic. Often these setbacks bring compensation by opening opportunities for development in new directions....

Man is the main violator of this law. At quite early stages in prehistory, man stumbled on means of over-exploiting his habitat for short-term gain, especially by the lavish use of fire....From the Indus Valley to Greece and Italy the regions which cradled civilization are with few exceptions deforested.

Until the past five centuries, although damage was done to a high proportion of the earth's limited resources, but it was limited by the small number of humans. As lately as some three hundred years ago, the entire area of European settlement in the old and new worlds had to support only just over 100 million people at fairly low consumption standards, against ten times as many today { that is around the year 1960}. World population, now close to 3,000,000,000 has increased some six times in just over three centuries {that was around the year 1960, now in 2025 the population has reached 8billion in place of 3billion}.

With the discoveries in other continents by European explorers, and due to exploitation by them, the need for restraint, i.e.need for conservation became increasingly acute.... Cultures such as those of India and China, which contained elements of conscious and universal reverence and respect for the earth and its creatures, and even taboo on the killing of some animals, were themselves encroached upon.

The mining of the land, and the destruction of biological capital, happened fastest in the newly occupied white man's countries. It was in these, and particularly the United States, that

the shock of sudden extinctions of abundant animals such as the passenger pigeon and (very nearly) the bison, brought the earliest revulsion from unreflecting exploitation...

In industrial Europe, nineteenth century invention and materialism proliferated immense mounds of mining spoil and urban refuge, sewage pollution of rivers and estuaries, smoke pollution of the air and of everything exposed to it....These became regarded as normal accompaniments of nineteenth century 'progress', and if they were complained of, it was rather because of their dirt, smell or other inconvenience than as a violation of trusteeship.

All these abuses continued throughout the first half of the twentieth century, with the addition of toxic chemical pollution of the air in the form of smog, massive oil pollution not only of fresh but of tidal and even marine waters, wholesale killing of fish and other aquatic life through the removal of oxygen from water (for instance by heated water pumped out from electrical generating stations), drying up of rivers or mingling of biologically incompatible streams through diversion tunnels for hydro-electric schemes, destruction of wild life through spraying land and water with chemical poisons, and the beginnings of the pollution of the deep ocean by radioactive waste and of the upper air by radioactive fall-out following nuclear tests.

This second wave of modern devastation of life and its habitats differed from the first in being much less localized and in having more pervasive and widespread indirect and cumulative as well as direct and immediate effects. The impact also spread to regions of the earth hitherto relatively immune from exposure to advanced industrial technology, including many of the industrially under-developed countries....Another result was the building up of long stretches of shoreline for seaside resorts and the indiscriminate spread of week-end and vacation dwellings, etc., fauna and flora over hitherto inviolate country. These last-named blots and encroachments on nature were uniquely unfortunate, and absurdly symptomatic of human perversion and perversity, because they were deliberately located in places of special beauty and wildness, which qualities they were bound to destroy, thus triggering off a similar process elsewhere among the frustrated seekers for the rest and peace which they themselves had already eliminated in the developed areas....

A slum is a neighborhood reduced to squalor through too many people seeking to take too much out of it and to put too little in. A pest is an animal which finds means of flourishing at the expense of its environment, and becomes a nuisance or a menace to others. Why is it that modern man is rapidly turning the earth into a slum and himself into its only serious pest? And why is it that apparently enlightened people, and advanced governments and international agencies, are united in pressing forward towards this squalid and unworthy goal. How can evils so evident to every eye, ear and nose be so often ignored, as they did not exist, or were of no account? How can it be taken for granted, as something not even needing to be argued, that the permanent, general and irrevocable destruction of what has taken millennia to create is automatically justified in order to make room for any fashionable ephemeral technological project?

History shows plenty of examples of the astonishing capacity of the human mind to close itself against situations which it may be convenient to ignore. Awakening follows only when the warnings of the far-sighted are reinforced by compelling evidence of evil results.

There is no escape from the truth that the more the world's human population grows the longer it will take and the harder it will be to end the tragic hunger and poverty in which most people at this moment spend most of their days....Every new mouth to be fed takes, and must take, priority over the provision of schools

and universities, of playing-fields and theatres, of libraries, and in fact of all that distinguishes civilization from mere existence....All over the world we see at work the inexorable law that the more people there are per square mile the less liberty there can be per person.

As long as this problem of world population remains unsolved — and it can still be solved with intelligence and goodwill — the outlook for conservation of the earth's resources must become increasingly grim every day.

As the true threat of sheer weight of numbers not only to material standards but also to freedom and spiritual values becomes manifest the churches may have some awkward questions to answer.

Here religion touches conservation, often unhelpfully, because it is above all the influence of churches, exerted through pressure upon governments and through international agencies, which inhibits the logical and scientific maching of birth-control or family planning with death-control or medical aid. The neglect and avoidance of the conservation and family planning issues in most serious discussions about the under-developed countries is a sign of moral irresponsibility as well as intellectual failure.

Conservation is a testing-point for civilizations. Societies which are either scientifically enlightened or imbued with a moral sense of responsibility conserve. Those which are steeped in ignorance over the consequences of their actions, or are too greedy or irresponsible to care, do not conserve. Our today falls perilously near to the second group.

The reasons for this are worth discussing further. Conservation calls for restraint, and in so far as the benefit accrues to our fellow-men it is mainly to posterity, who have no vote and will not be able to take us personally to task if we leave them in a mess. It is difficult enough to pacify the anxieties and demands of the living. If we can make it easier at the expense of the unborn, why worry? It needs character and objectivity to act as a trustee, and to tell those present that the absent are not always wrong.

Whether or not there is any sound theological reason why the Christian churches should have shut their eyes to the unwisdom and immorality of handing down a spoiled earth to our children (it is feared that their rigidity will continue). For the fulfilment of mankind's destiny and for adequate measures of conservation, we must look to Humanism to lead the way. If a Humanist religion of any sort ever emerges, then such conservation must be part of it.

Conservation deserves a place in the Humanist frame on other grounds as well. Conservation is applied ecology, and ecology is the relation of plants and animals (including man) to their environment and to one another. Few even of the most sophisticated and artificial human activities are entirely divorced from nature. Many of these depend on manipulating natural processes without attempting to understand them, except just so far as is essential for successful exploitation. Conservation therefore draws us towards not only a scientific but a philosophical and historical approach to the problems of the earth and our place on it. It propounds from a different angle the question raised elsewhere in this volume 'What are people for?' ... Every glance cast towards outer space reminds us how very little we know yet about the planet which is our home, its rocks, soils, waters and atmosphere, and the plants and animals which have to share it with their selfish and destructive dominant neighbour

Scientifically, there is at our disposal an immense storehouse of material for research, which is annually being depleted by short-sighted projects whose promoters do not begin to understand their long-term consequences. Reservoirs of special genes lost when a species of local stock of wild or domesticated animals or plants is wiped out can never be replaced: any contribution which they might have yielded when we come to understand many times more

than we now do about breeding from such material will have been closed to us forever. Methods of working with, rather than against or regardless of, nature cannot be successfully studied except in the field, in flourishing living communities which have not become warped or diseased through thoughtless interference by man. Often these need to be large if they are to be securely self-perpetuating, and to avoid relapsing to a state when it becomes necessary to manage them like zoological or botanic gardens. They must be free also from invading pests and diseases encouraged by civilization, and from the intrusion of polluted air and water. Some must be kept utterly undisturbed, while others must be available for scientific investigations and experiments, and others again more generally accessible for the education and enjoyment of visitors of all kinds.

A bold and comprehensive programme of conservation and research can contribute much towards the attainment of harmony between world resources and population. Spendthrift attitudes to the land and its use and management are still resulting in heavy annual losses of irreplaceable top-soil blown away by the wind or swept down by water. Even town-dwellers are becoming deeply disturbed at the reckless application of strong poisons — herbicides and insecticides — without the least scientific evidence that they will not cumulatively build up permanent toxic hazards to animals, including man. Even the users are worried over the emergence of resistant strains of 'weeds' and 'pests' against which known methods may become ineffective. As lately as a quarter of a century ago most farmers were pretty satisfied with their state of knowledge, yet looking back on it in the light of modern practice and modern yields based on the application of a limited segment of science we can see now that their outlook and techniques were in many respects hopelessly inadequate and ineffective for getting the best out of their land and labour. It would be stupid to assume that this process has ended, and that other sciences, notably ecology, cannot contribute to further transformations in our knowledge and outlook.

An attitude of understanding and respect for conservation and the setting aside of areas for research and education could in some regions even now bring quicker and more substantial results than costly and much publicized development projects. Excessive or unwisely managed grazing, the abuse of forests, or the failure to use trees as allies in conservation of water and soil, underlie an immense amount of human poverty. This could be remedied by following out and demonstrating for different regions scientific principles already known, or becoming known, but not yet widely applied. For example, the sustained carrying capacity of many wild pastures may be much increased by identifying and bringing under scientific rotational use relatively small areas vital to livestock for trace elements essential to their health. Enormous losses of nitrogen, and thus of food—production, which are now taking place could probably be prevented by ecological techniques and by correcting wrong methods of effluent disposal. Unwise burning practices, and primitive attitudes to control of predators and pests are among other sources of chronic economic and social loss.

There is no real substitute for a comprehensive policy of conservation founded on active understanding, deep knowledge and above all serious belief in its fundamental principles. It is no coincidence that a world which is complacently engineering the obliteration of many natural habitats, and the early extermination as wild species of many of its most outstanding animals and plants, is also suffering in physical and mental health, enjoyment, amenity and income from polluted air, rivers and beaches, poisoned and tasteless

foods, soil erosion over vast areas, deterioration of pastures, deforestation with flooding and loss of pure water supplies, growing congestion and lack of elbow-room due to lack of sense about land use and land management and about the right relation of people to this little, much-abused earth. In dumb protest and futile gestures of escape from these intolerable conditions millions of unconscious refugees calling themselves tourists pour out annually like lemmings from the main centres of the trouble, heading for national parks, shorelines, mountains, islands and other places in search of peace, quiet and refreshment. But this Holy Grail nearly always eludes them, for they have brought with them it's antithesis, the present Zeitgeist, and they are destined to ruin and lose that which they seek blindfold. Yet they cannot give up the quest, since the craving which they cannot understand or explain is for an essential element in their nature which this civilization has filtered out of their lives, leaving them suffering from a kind of spiritual scurvy.

Out of this awareness, and of the ubiquity and conspicuousness of these evils, and the acute discomfort and inconvenience which they are causing to so many, the truth must soon dawn on people. An articulate demand will come for a more responsible, vigorous and scientific attitude towards the inherent human obligation of trusteeship for the future of the land and the sea and all that is on or in them. Such a demand will find scientists and others concerned ready with some of the answers and eager to get to work on the rest. But will it come too late? Unless conservation is promptly, fully and universally recognized as part of the duty of all men at all times while they are guests or tenants on this earth, the remedies found for particular evils will not add up to a whole worthy of mankind. The earth must in part be used as our home, in part be tended as our garden, in part be managed for our many needs in work and leisure, and in part be guarded against ourselves by a self-denying ordinance so that it may be handed down to posterity in a state of nature.

(To be concluded...)

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'Fool Proof'

Wah wah Black Sheep
Have you any proof?
Yes S. I. R, Yes S. I. R.,
Three bags foolproof
One's with my Masters
One brings me shame
One is with Cockroaches
Who must take the blame...
- **Gobble D. Gook**





Delete Two More Names

They do not agree
with me
But that doesn't mean
we fight
I maintain I am
democratic
They are becoming
Naxalite.
- **Gobble D. Gook**

Report of the Board of Trustees Meeting held at Dehradun on 18 October 2026

A meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Indian Renaissance Institute was held today at Dehradun. The meeting was attended by 25 members including 10 Trustees and presided over by Mr. Vinod Kumar Jain.

After condfirmation of the Minutes of the last BoT meeting held on 1st February 2026, the details and progress of the 13, Mohini Road case at the High Court at Naini Tal and the hurdles being put in the case by Mr. N.D. Pancholi were presented. It was informed that efforts for an amicable settlement of the outstanding issues with Mr. N.D. Pancholi, initiated in the interest of the IRI, had failed. It was decided to initiate legal action againt Mr. Pancholi in the cases of embazzlement of IRI funds by him immediately.

Then Mr. Sheo Raj Singh presented the report on the financial status of the IRI which was approved unanimously.

Lastly, the membership of the following 8 persons for Life Membership of the IRI was considered and sanctioned by the Board of Trustees:

1. Dr. Jitendra Bharti
2. Mr. Dharmendra Joshi
3. Mr. Samdarshi Barthwal
4. Dr. Karnail Singh Randhawa
5. Mr. Sanjeev Prasad Ghildiyal
6. Mr. Nawal Sharma
7. Mr. Arun Kumar
8. Mr. Raghunath Mall.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to all the members and Mr. Vinod Kumar Jain by the Secretary.

Mahi Pal Singh, Secretary IRI.
18 October 2026.

The Board of Trustees Meeting of the Indian Renaissance Institute held at Dehradun





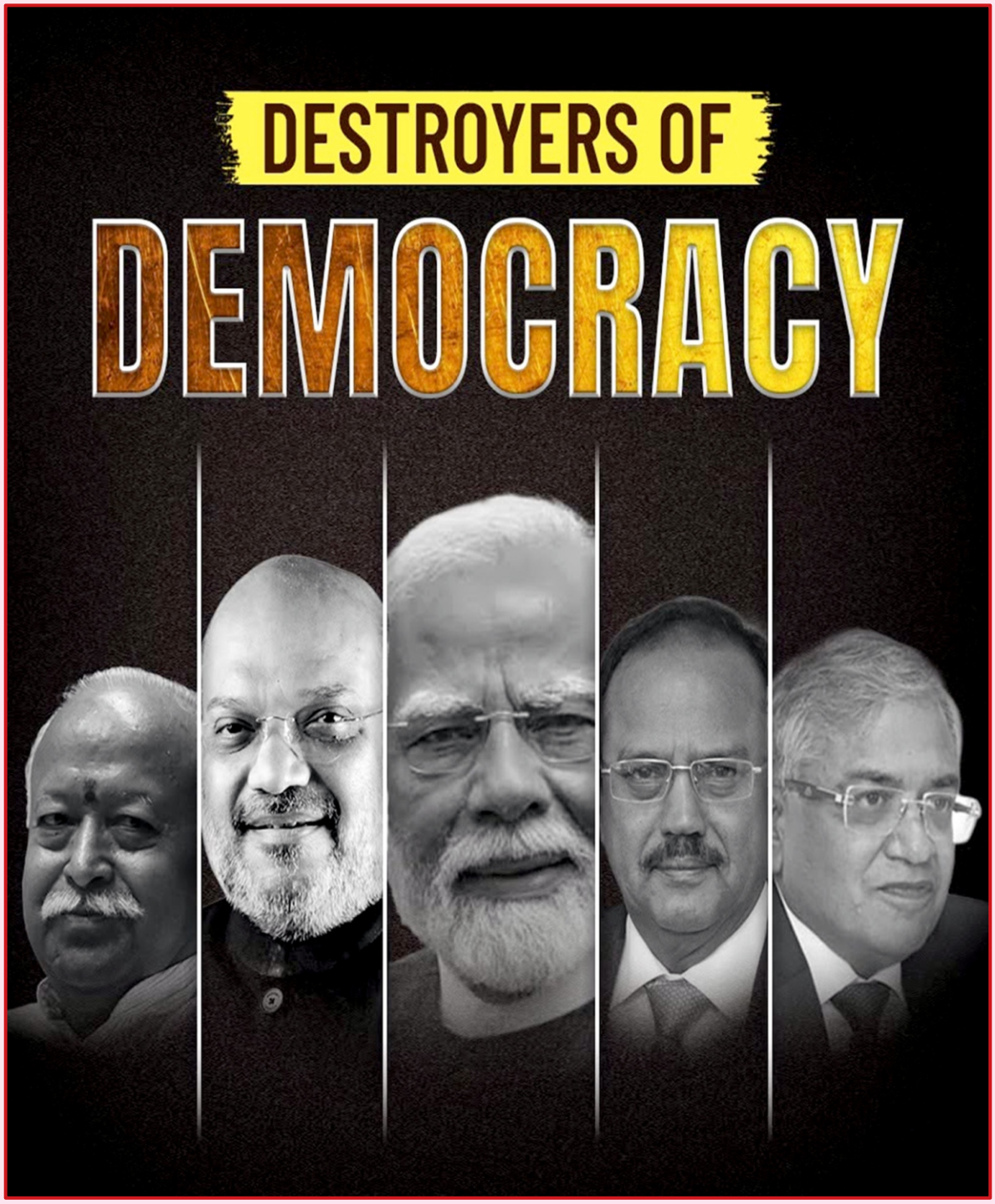
Some of the members who attended the Board of Trustees Meeting of the Indian Renaissance Institute at Dehradun held on 18th October 2026 including eight new members of the IRI who joined as Life Members on the same day





Participants discussing various issues in the meeting

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